Dear Colleagues, Students, and Alumni/ae:

It is a great pleasure to report to you that the undergraduate program in American Studies has had an excellent year. I’m particularly excited to announce that a new joint appointment in Latino Studies and American Studies is coming to the department this fall. We are very excited to build on our longstanding ties to the Latino Studies Program, and to enhance important resources in comparative ethnic studies for our students and majors.

The undergraduate major has continued to recruit a strong cohort of new majors each year, while graduating about 12 students annually. I would like to congratulate this year’s departmental prize winners, two of our wonderful graduates. Melanie Schmitt has won the American Studies Founder’s Award, which has been made possible by the financial support of Seymour and Phyllis Katz. Professor Katz taught in the English Department and was the “founding father” of American Studies at UMass/Boston. The Founder’s Award is given to a student who has done outstanding work in his/her American Studies major, as attested to by two or more faculty who teach in the program. Joseph Mazrimas has won distinction in American Studies and is the recipient of the American Studies book award. Both Joseph and Melanie will receive public recognition for their awards at the 2008 Honors Convocation, as well as in the Commencement Program at graduation.

When I retire in June 2009, after having served the university for 35 years, I will leave with a great deal of pride and absolute confidence in the continued reputation of American Studies as a challenging and

(Continued on page 3)
Notes from the Graduate Director, cont.

Flannery received her B.A. from the University of Florida, where she majored in English and carried a sociology minor and a concentration in Religious Studies. Colleen also brings years of experiences as a blues radio DJ; she has served as a graduate assistant in AmSt 212G: The Eighties and AmSt 101: Popular Culture in America. Michael Urso, who has a B.A. in English from the University of Rhode Island, brings strong interest as well as experience in Secondary Education. He currently works in the Pawtucket public school system, and this academic year has also assisted in AmSt 210: American Dreams/American Realities and AmSt 278L, U.S. Documentary Photography.

Eight students entered the program this academic year from Massachusetts. Dean Proserpio graduated magna cum laude from UMass Boston with a B.A. in English and German Studies with a minor in American Studies. Dean brings considerable expertise in popular music and has been working in AmSt 215: America on Film and AmSt 210: American Dreams/American Realities. Celine Nader graduated from Clark University summa cum laude in Spanish Language and Literature. She uses her Spanish fluency as a youth tutor, and has been serving as a graduate assistant in AmSt 225L: Southeast Asians in America and AmSt 206: The Sixties. Rebecca Lewis, who earned an MA in the UMB English department after receiving her BA from the University of South Carolina-Columbia, has assisted in AmSt 100: American Identities and AmSt 212G: The Eighties. Beth Anne Cooke-Cornell has a bachelor’s degree from Merrimack College and a master’s degree in English from Connecticut State; she currently teaches English at Wentworth Institute of Technology. Keira Horowitz holds a BFA in theater from Emerson College, and has teaching experience working with young people ranging from pre-school to high schoolers. Daniel Ferguson-Maltzman received his B.A. summa cum laude from UMass Boston in Psychology. And Sarah Hewitt, who comes to us from Atlantic Union College with the recommendation of our program alumna Nicole Currier (MA 2002), brings a background in both History and Biology.

This spring, I have had the pleasure of looking back over the achievements of students who are working on the program’s final requirement, the Masters Project, taking the opportunity to reflect on their stimulating research. Rosa de la Cruz-Georgio is researching an essay on the transformation of The Wizard of Oz from book to film. Taylor Bingle is writing on the implications of early twentieth-century public intellectual Randolph Bourne’s class consciousness. Katie Kuba is exploring intra-racial intimacies in the novels of Nella Larsen. Matthew Giorgio is working on a case study of Italian-American ethnic and national identity formation in Buffalo, New York. Lynne Alter has produced a historical essay locating and analyzing media reporting and interpretation of pre-election and exit polls. Jeanine Zurkus has begun to research racial segregation and public housing in Boston. Greg Kornbluh is probing the ways in which narratives of race are deployed, denied, ignored, and crafted in the world of professional basketball by various interested observers. Desiree Taylor is writing about themes of oppression and survival in Audre Lorde’s prose writing of the 1980s. And Judith Navoy is completing an essay on the changing role of the ombudsman in the American newspaper industry. We send congratulations to all of them for their splendid work, and eagerly wait to hear about their next endeavors.

This spring, the students in AmSt 606: Studies in Popular Culture and Technology enjoyed extra intellectual stimulation with a class visit from Murray Forman, one of the scholars whose book they read for class. Forman, author of The’Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip Hop, shared some important aspects of the academic process that brought him to write the book, as well as showing videos and playing hip hop music for the class to analyze together.

As the semester draws to a close, bringing some intense work requirements as students work to finish various papers, projects, and theses, here’s hoping that the colors of spring can help give us the extra energy we need. We hope that the commencement ceremony is celebratory and meaningful for our graduates and their families. And those who are continuing in the program: don’t forget to mark your calendars for August 28, which will be the date of the Fall reception. I’ll be glad to see you all there, as we welcome Judy back and get acquainted with the entering students, who promise to be challenging and congenial additions to our program.
Jean Humez Says Goodbye

By Greg Kornbluh

After a pioneering career in the UMB Women’s Studies Department, Jean Humez will be retiring from the University following this school year. As Jean has been an integral part of the American Studies Program since its inception, we wanted to take this opportunity to celebrate her contributions.

When Jean Humez came to UMB in January of 1975, after four years in the English Department at Boston University, she was one of the first dedicated hires by a Women’s Studies Department on the Eastern Seaboard. She played a major role in the early development of the Women’s Studies curriculum, and in 1982 she became one of the first instances of tenure being granted in an autonomous, interdisciplinary Women’s Studies program in the U.S. Jean’s efforts were critical in ushering Women’s Studies at UMB from a concentration to a full fledged major, and her experience in doing so made her a valuable role model for American Studies as it followed the same developmental course.

In addition to serving as the Chair of the Women’s Studies department, Jean has been doing curriculum development and teaching in American Studies since the early 1990s. When Judith Smith arrived in 1993 to assume the directorship of the American Studies Graduate Program, Jean worked with her on the development of the new core curriculum, including the creation of a new course, Gender and Sexuality in U.S. History and Culture, which Jean has taught annually ever since. Keeping the course current has given her the chance to delve into some exciting areas, as the fields of sexuality history and queer theory have really expanded in the years since the course was first developed. Though she considers herself a little impatient with theory, Jean credits her Gender and Sexuality students for helping her to see its utility. She lists the course among those she’s most enjoyed teaching, in part for the opportunity it’s provided to work with our graduate students.

Jean’s scholarship on visionary Quaker women, on women in popular culture, and on the mediated forms of autobiography used by Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth have been important to many of our MA students. In addition, many began to research their final projects through the archive and research proposal assignments in her seminar. Since 1994, Jean has been the first reader for final projects for 24 American Studies MA students, and the second reader for the work of 5 others. In addition, her Women and U.S. Social Movements and Oral History courses have long been popular with American Studies students.

Though Jean looks forward to enjoying time at her little cabin in Maine, she does intend to remain active in academia. One possible plan involves the production of a third edition of Gender, Race, and Class in Media, a text reader she first developed in the late 1990s with Gail Dines. For a new addition, she says she’d be interested in expanding the section on new technologies and the internet, and on queer theory. She also is likely to do some volunteering, perhaps at the Schlesinger Library or the Women’s Review of Books. And she’s even thinking of trying her hand at fiction.

This fall, Jean will maintain a presence on campus, helping to ensure the Women’s Studies Department’s continuity as they transition to a new chair and welcome a new tenure track faculty member.

Jean Humez

"Jean Humez has been a key member of the American Studies program for over two decades, a fabulous team player from whom I’ve sought advice on all kinds of administrative and programmatic issues. Throughout my 24 years as head of American Studies, she has been a totally dedicated and endlessly helpful partner in our endeavor. She is one of us in a very deep way, and we will miss her!"

- Lois Rudnick

Notes from the Undergraduate Chair, cont.

engaging academic major that does a great job to prepare UMB students with interdisciplinary skills and adaptive intellectual frameworks necessary to thrive during their time at UMB, and, more importantly, after they graduate.

As always, we love to hear from our alumni/ae. If you have changed your home or email address, please be sure to send us an update by filling out and returning the form on the back of the newsletter. In addition, please continue to send us information about your lives, plans, and careers so that we can keep all of you updated about one another.

Kevin Allred and Shauna Manning
Tammy Simeonidis (MA 1995) is currently working as a senior financial analyst for Mass. General Hospital.

What initially attracted you to American Studies?

During the course of my undergraduate program (in Political Science and International Organizations), I was introduced to American Studies through an elective class my junior year.

Do you happen to remember the course?

I do. The Eighties, Professor Irving Bartlett. I had started to develop an interest in labor history, which I was able to delve into in more detail in that class because of what was happening in the labor movement in the 1980s. I was looking to go to either law school or graduate school, and Professor Bartlett strongly encouraged American Studies, because of my interest in labor history. So I ended up doing that (the M.A. program), and my concentration was labor history. Another reason I ended up at UMB, because I looked at other American Studies programs, was Jim Green. Because I have such a strong interest in Labor History, I wanted to study under him, and that was a big draw for me. I had also had a class my senior year with Lois Rudnick, and that class was on immigration, The Immigrant Experience, I think it was called. I took that class as an elective my senior year of undergrad. And so between Irving Bartlett, Lois Rudnick, and then Jim Green, that was sort of the pull for me to end up going there.

What was the topic of your graduate thesis?

I did my thesis on the Miller Beer Boycott and the Teamsters Union and their retooling of the boycott, which was a centuries old tactic. They couldn’t go on strike, because if they went on strike they’d be replaced by scabs, so they continued to do their job every day, while boycotting the product they were delivering at night. It was sort of reminiscent of the labor movement at the end of the century; the wives got involved and they actually had a women’s auxiliary, and it was the most successful consumer boycott in Boston’s history, probably since the Tea Party! It ended a multi-generational contract between the distributor and Miller beer. They actually impacted Miller Beer’s market share in the Boston area, which was almost unheard of.

Did you go on to work in Labor?

My intent was to do that, and I went on to work, shortly after graduation, for the Legislature. I worked for the Senate Ways and Means Committee for a couple of years, working on the state budget, where Labor was one of my accounts. I kept an interest in it, and joined the Labor Guild, a joint labor management group run by the Archdiocese of Boston, I continued to take classes in labor history and labor management down there, but as far as an occupation, I ended up going into State Government. After the Senate Ways and Means Committee, I did a lot of policy work for the Inspector General’s Office and worked as his Deputy Chief of Public Policy, and after that I went to Medicaid. So, I sort of ended up doing policy work following American Studies.

How did your American Studies background help you out in the policy work?

I think one of the biggest things it gave me was the ability to consider perspective. Especially when working in the legislature and working with public policy, you’re sort of bombarded with all sorts of special interests and it’s important to be able to understand where different people are coming from with those perspectives. I think that American Studies sort of taught me how to look at everything, consider the source, consider perspective when looking at it. And I also developed writing skills as a result of the American Studies program, which has certainly helped with Public Policy. I was in a fiscal and a policy role, and it’s important, anytime you’re dealing with public fiscal affairs, that you can explain where the dollars are going and what’s driving the numbers, and I think that having had the background I had in American Studies enabled me to do a better job working on fiscal policy issues.

That’s interesting that the program ended up helping you in that way.

It did. Judy and Lois will readily tell you this, I did not follow the typical path. But, it worked for me. I think that, had I not gone through the American Studies Program, I don’t think I would have done nearly as well in public policy. I don’t do Public policy anymore, I have two small children, so I’m working just part-time now, but once the kids are a little bit older, I hope to go back to something in that capacity. I work for Mass. General now, in the Pharmacy. I’m a Senior Financial Analyst, which, again, is not tied to American Studies but it certainly helps, because I think the development of understanding people’s perspectives, what’s driving the numbers, all of that has played into it and enabled me. While I don’t have a finance background, I seem to have gone off on this fiscal track, and the American Studies program has served me very well with it.

Do you remember specific classes that really had an impact on you in your graduate work?

Certainly the class I took with Irving Bartlett because that was my introduction to American Studies, and because it was Irving Bartlett, who’s sort of legendary in the program. Any class I took with Judy or Lois was just phenomenal. I mean, you couldn’t beat them. Classes that stand out, I would say, Irving Bartlett’s class on the 80s. Lois’s class on immigration, that class, because labor and immigration are so closely tied, it definitely was an important class for me. Those are the classes that stand out, anything with Judy Smith, Lois Rudnick, or Irving Bartlett. And I did two independent studies with Jim Green. And Charley Shively was just fantastic.
Ayesha Kazmi (BA 2005) lives currently in London, where she researches and writes about diversity and multicultural policies.

How did you end up majoring in American Studies at UMB?
I was not a “traditional” student. I started college at Mount Holyoke College, where I began thinking of American Studies as a major. I left MHC in 1998, and when I eventually started back up at UMB, I was 25. I took American History I and II. I would say it was while I took those courses that I learned how (unexpectedly and unusually) fascinated I was with American history. I originally thought of continuing in the history department, but I realized soon that I was mainly interested in American history — so American studies (with a focus in history) became an obvious choice.

Are there any particular professors or courses that you recall having a big impact on you?
I cannot stress how much Professor Esther Kingston-Mann had a massive impact on me, and in so many ways: academically, personally ... I wouldn't even know where to begin! I am still in touch with her, and plan to always remain so.

What have you been up to since you left UMB? Did you have plans in mind when you graduated?
I got engaged just before the beginning of my final semester at UMB, and my plan was to move to London with my husband, which we did in February of 2006. I still live here (in London), despite missing home terribly. As far as career aspirations, for a very long time I had thought about going into teaching. But in my final year at UMB, I took a detour into journalism after working at "The Mass Media." Teaching is still of strong interest to me, and I would still like to plan to go into a teacher training program, either here in the UK or back in the U.S. If I do go into teaching, I think I'd like to teach either history or English. I volunteer here as a teacher, once a week at the local schools. It's sort of like an extended day program. I work on literature and writing with the students, who are usually around 13-15 years old.

Professionally, I wanted to remain in journalism and began freelancing for a lifestyle magazine shortly after I moved to London. Within six months, they offered me a position as an assistant editor. I'm still in print journalism, though at a different job. I'm actually looking to transition into broadcast – either radio or television – but it's a very challenging field to break into. I'm currently knocking on doors, which, in journalism, you really have to do. I have some contacts at the BBC who are helping me out, and I'm determined to continue to knock...

Can you tell us a little about the experience of living as an American abroad?
Haha! Well, much of the world really doesn't like us! And, to a degree, I can understand why. To be honest, I have encountered people who respond to me quite negatively when they hear my accent, but that's rare. In general, people are pretty curious about Americans, and people are often keen to know what my thoughts and perspectives are about the world's events: the war in Iraq, the war on terror, George Bush, the current elections, etc. Overall, my experiences have been fairly positive. Despite all of the similarities between the United States and England, things are very different here. Like any culture, the British have their own idiosyncrasies, which I've had to adjust to. One great thing about living abroad is the access to information about the rest of the world. The wealth of voices — documentaries, newspapers, etc. — is astounding compared to back home.

How about your work experiences? Has your background in American Studies impacted your opportunities since graduation?
Since moving here, I have had a couple of media related jobs. The first was at a magazine, where I worked as an Assistant Editor. Currently, I am working as a researcher and web content editor. I think, in general, the type of thinking required in my American Studies courses trained me well to be intellectually creative. And my knowledge of American history has certainly piqued the interests of my employers here in the UK, especially in the field of media.

What sort of research do you conduct in your current position?
My research is actually very specific to the UK. I am researching issues related to diversity and multicultural policies in the UK. I also do research on Muslims in the UK. Though my research subjects don't directly align with American Studies, the program prepared me well. As a student, I studied a lot of the topics I currently explore: diversity issues, racism, immigration, and multiculturalism. Obviously, my studies at UMB focused on the U.S., but there are some very strong parallels.

You graduated just 3 years ago — if someone had told you then where you’d be and what you’d be doing now, would you have been surprised?
Perhaps not entirely surprised, considering I knew when I graduated what I was getting myself into with my marriage and the move to London. Actually, I don’t think many people were surprised about my decision to move abroad; it’s been something that I’ve longed to do for quite a while. I suppose I’ve always wanted to participate in the rest of the world and feel like more than “only” an American. That said, I am proud to be an American who has chosen to be a citizen of the world. I hope I am representing well...

Attention: Teachers!
If you designed a curriculum unit for your MA final project and have since gone on to teach any of the materials from the project, we want to hear about it! Please send updates to american.studies@umb.edu
Faculty Updates

Paul Atwood is working on a book to be published by Pluto Press of London, UK entitled War and Empire: The American Way of Life. He is also organizing a series of summer workshops for high school teachers on teaching social responsibility, in honor of noted author and activist Grace Paley. In March, he lead a discussion on “PTSD: Then and Now” at the Brattle Theater as part of a special screening of an award-winning documentary produced by WGBH-Boston entitled Frank: Portrait of a Vietnam Veteran. Also this spring he gave a special lecture on the “Controversies of World War II” to selected middle school and high school teachers as part of a joint program sponsored by the UMB History Department and the U.S. Department of Education.

Philip Chassler has been active with a committee of his fellow Non-Tenure-Track-Faculty, working on various issues relevant to their status at UMass. This summer his review of Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century, by Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, will be published in The African American Review.


Jean Humez was a Senior Scholar at the Schlesinger Library's 2007 Summer Seminar on Gender History, which was on the theme of Biography as History. She gave a talk on the challenging problems of working with mediated life-history narratives from the nineteenth century. As she finishes up her final year before retiring, much of her time has been spent on personnel work for the Women’s Studies Department, including the recruitment of a new Assistant Professor. This fall she produced an extended article, “The Problem of Female Leadership in Early Shakerism,” which was based on her past research on Shaker women. The article was included in the exhibition catalogue that accompanied Shaker Design: Out of this World, an exhibit on display this spring at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture. She has also been doing some manuscript reviewing for university presses and writing the occasional encyclopedia article.

Aaron Lecklider presented a paper titled "Signos del Camino: The Visual Culture of Hemispheric Education in World War II" at the 2007 American Studies Association Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. He is continuing to revise his dissertation into a book manuscript, and pursuing new research on performance and sexual identity in US radical art, literature, and theater.

Shauna Lee Manning was re-elected President of the Classified Staff Union in November 2007 for a two year term. She has been active in advocating for the Educational Support Professionals (ESPs), who are vital in keeping the university running. She has attended conferences for the state affiliate, Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), and the national affiliate, National Education Association (NEA); worked on labor management committees; testified at the State House and met with state Senators on behalf of ESPs. On a personal note, Shauna’s family has grown after her husband’s reunion with his daughter. She is enjoying her adult stepdaughter and 16 month old granddaughter.

Bonnie Miller continues the research and revising of her book project on Spanish-American War visual and popular culture. She wrote a new chapter on the use of images in the campaigns supporting the annexation of Hawaii and gave talks on these findings at the Boston University American Political History Seminar in September of 2007 and at the New England American Studies Association in November of 2007. She participated in the Center for the Improvement of Teaching fall faculty seminar, and she is on maternity leave in the spring of 2008 after giving birth to her daughter, Sarina Evelyn Miller, on December 16, 2007.

Patricia Raub, as chair of the Library Reform Group, is working to protect public library services in Providence in the face of projected library and city deficits. (For information about the Library Reform Group's activities and accomplishments visit the group's website at www.libraryreformgroup.org) With Robert Goff, Patricia gave a presentation last July at the Northeast Film Archives Summer Symposium. The talk was entitled "Rhode Island on Film: Changing Views of Tourism in the Regional Travelogue," and it examined films from the 1920s through 2006 that portrayed the state of Rhode
Faculty Updates, cont.

Island in general and the city of Providence in particular as attractive destinations for visitors and business. With assistance from Lynnell Thomas and Bonnie Miller, Patricia also completed a proposal for a new American Studies course on Tourism in the United States, which will be offered in the Spring 2009 semester.

Rachel Rubin was invited to give three talks at the Tanner Symposium in Logan, Utah. The title of the symposium was *Celebracion: Latino Contributions to American Culture*; Rachel’s presentations were on the “afterlife” of the zoot suit, the graphic novels of Los Bros Hernandez, and the politics and aesthetics of the performer El Vez. Rachel has received a Joseph P. Healey Grant and a grant from the Dean’s Research Fund to work on her current book project, ‘A Place to Be Out’: *Rennies, Sword-Swallowers, Playtrons, and Haters at the American Renaissance Faire*. She wrote an obituary of Grace Paley for the *Women’s Review of Books*. She is also in the process of preparing an interview with Eugene Hutz, lead singer of the band Gogol Bordello, for publication. Rachel is filling in for Judith Smith this semester as Graduate Program Director, and is President of the Faculty Staff Union.

Lois Rudnick was a distinguished visiting professor at Utah State University, in Logan, Utah, for two days in January 2008; she gave two lectures, including one related to an exhibit in the university's art museum, spoke about her research in two undergraduate American Studies classes, and talked with graduate students about preparing applications for doctoral programs in American Studies. She gave two talks in the fall, one at the Western Literature Association in Tacoma, Washington, and another at the New England American Studies Association in November 2007, on "Queering Modernism: Cady Wells, Southwest Modernism, and the Northwest School," related to the exhibition she is curating at the University of New Mexico Museum of Art for Winter/Spring 2010. She is also editing a catalog on the life and times of Cady Wells that will be published by the Museum of New Mexico.

Judith Smith has been on leave in Spring 2008, working on her new project about film representations of multiracial citizenship: *Black and White in Color: Hollywood’s Civil Rights Imagination, 1949-1965*. She gave presentations on *Visions of Belonging* to a colloquium in American Studies at Rutgers, Newark and to a graduate colloquium in US History Since 1945 at UNC, Chapel Hill. She has been working with filmmakers on two documentary projects, one on the 1971 building take-over that resulted in the creation of the Cambridge Women’s Center, and one on the life and work of Lorraine Hansberry. She participated in a panel on African American marriage in the 20th century at the Organization of American Historians meeting in NYC at the end of March, and will be on a panel on the history of American Socialist feminism at the Berkshire Conference in Women’s History this June in Minneapolis.

Shirley Tang published the chapter, "Responding to the Basic Call to Public Engagement: Community-Centered Research As Capacity/Knowledge Building In Immigrant/Refugee Communities," in Charles R. Hale. (ed.) *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship* (University of California Press.) She was an invited speaker for a plenary roundtable at the national conference, "Southeast Asians in the Diaspora," held at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and moderated a panel, "Breaking Asian American Stereotypes," at the 14th Annual Asian Pacific American Conference on Law and Public Policy, held at Harvard University. Tang is also a member of a faculty team affiliated with the William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black History and Culture, which has received a grant for $20,000 from Sociological Initiatives Foundation to conduct a one-year study entitled “Competition or Cooperation? A Study of Strategic Alternatives in Community Building.”

Lynnell Thomas continues her research and writing on racial representation in New Orleans tourism. Her book chapter “‘The City I Used to...Visit’: Tourist New Orleans and the Racialized Response to Hurricane Katrina” was published in *Seeking Higher Ground: The Race, Public Policy, and Hurricane Katrina Reader*, edited by Manning Marable and Kristen Clarke (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Her two articles “Kissing Ass and Other Performative Acts of Resistance: Austin, Fanon, and New Orleans Tourism” and “New Orleans Unveiled: Frantz Fanon and a Reconceptualization of the Performative” were published in *Performance Research 12.3* (September 2007) and *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 5 (Summer 2007), respectively. She presented the paper “Contested Creoles in New Orleans History and Popular Memory” at the 2007 American Studies Association Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, PA. As a Center for the Improvement of Teaching (CIT) board member, Thomas made presentations at the 2008 CIT Conference as part of the panel “Enhancing Teaching and Learning with Course Websites and Other Educational Technology: Faculty and Student Perspectives” and at the 2007 CIT/IT “Forum on the Technology and Teaching Landscape at UMass Boston.”
Professor Paul Atwood, a founder of UMB’s William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences, teaches about war and American culture for the American Studies Department. Since 2002 he has intermittently led an intermediate undergraduate seminar titled War in American Culture. Paul lists his objective for that course as a relatively straightforward inquiry into the role of war in our society: “What I’m really trying to get students to think about,” he says, “is whether the United States is a peace loving nation, or war is the American way of life. I think all of the evidence indicates that it’s the latter.”

Paul also teaches courses on the 1940s, the 1960s, and a 300 level course which he developed, called “The United States and the Middle East: WWII to the Present.” Each course provides the opportunity to engage students in discussion of war, a task which he sees as an ongoing challenge. Professor Atwood himself was an undergrad at UMB in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and as a former Marine he was very involved in anti-Vietnam War activism. Comparing today’s students to those of his era, he sees a level of cynicism that many in his generation lacked. “Students today are less naïve, in a certain sense, than my generation was. I think all of the evidence indicates that it’s the latter.”

Paul began his academic career in UMass Boston’s Veteran’s Upward Bound, so this prize is a fitting tribute his life and interests. If you would like to contribute to this award, either in Jim’s memory or to help U.S. veterans begin their academic careers, please contact Shauna Manning at 617-287-6776 or shauna.manning@umb.edu. All donations are fully tax deductible and no amount is too small to donate.

For more information on Veterans Upward Bound, go to their website at www.veterans-ub.umb.edu
All are welcome to attend the VUB graduation ceremonies each semester.

Teaching War in Wartime
By Greg Kornbluh

Professor Paul Atwood, a founder of UMB’s William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences, teaches about war and American culture for the American Studies Department. Since 2002 he has intermittently led an intermediate undergraduate seminar titled War in American Culture. Paul lists his objective for that course as a relatively straightforward inquiry into the role of war in our society: “What I’m really trying to get students to think about,” he says, “is whether the United States is a peace loving nation, or war is the American way of life. I think all of the evidence indicates that it’s the latter.”

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Still, as faculty advisor to the student anti-war group, he notes the work of a handful of dedicated individuals who try to get their fellow students involved in the anti-war cause. These committed student activists are a definite minority among students across the country, who seem to Paul to manifest disappointing levels of disinterest and passivity. One reason often cited for such dispassion is the sense that many people today lack a direct connection to the war, but in the case of UMB, Paul doesn’t necessarily accept that argument. “Here at UMass Boston,” he says, “there are more vets on campus of these two wars (in Iraq and Afghanistan) than there would be at Boston University or Tufts, and students here are more likely to have a relative or know somebody who’s serving in the military.” Paul is aware of the obstacles to student activism today: “I don’t want to seem too negative about UMass students,” he says, “because I realize that most of them have to work and have all kinds of pressure on them so they don’t really have tremendous amounts of time. That was always the case, even back in the sixties, but the pressures today are even more intense.”

Ultimately, Professor Atwood sees the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan as moral issues that he worries are not registering with young people today. With this spring marking the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Professor Atwood reflects that MLK always said that “silence is complicity.” Dr. King’s stance continues to guide Paul’s teaching in American Studies.
Artist Miguel Luciano Visits UMB
By Celine Nader

Last fall, the American Studies and Latino Studies Departments co-sponsored a visit by visual artist Miguel Luciano. Coinciding with his Artist Residency and gallery exhibit at La Casa de La Cultura / Center for Latino Arts in Boston’s South End, Luciano’s lecture provided an eloquent glimpse of his intention to use art to address Puerto Rican and Nuyorican identity politics. Luciano, who was born in Puerto Rico, holds a BFA from the New World School of the Arts in Miami, Florida and an MFA from the University of Florida at Gainesville, and lives currently in Brooklyn, New York. Luciano problematizes the links between consumer culture and colonialism, national pride and shame, and voice and silence in his provocative, playful, and engaging works. His paintings, drawings and installations are examples of what the scholar Rachel Buff has called “respon(ses) to the violence of imperialism with social struggle and cultural creativity.” The following are examples of some of the newer works that he discussed with the UMass audience.

A customized pair of Nike sneakers, Machetero Air Force Ones (seen below), pays tribute to Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, the assassinated leader of Los Macheteros, a clandestine Puerto Rican Nationalist revolutionary group who’ve fought for independence in Puerto Rico since the 1970’s. At the same time, the shoes problematize the idea of “buying” revolution, while Luciano tips his hat to the urban style associated with New York City / Nueva Yol (Uptown) youth culture.

The photograph “Plátano Pride” (seen above, right), is a part of Luciano’s “Pure Plantainum” series. The young boy in this image meets viewers with a youthful, defiant gaze, prideful of his Platinum-gilded Plátano pendant and, by extension, himself. But the rotting plantain inside of the golden exterior belies the suggestion that all is well in the web of identity politics. Plantains are a symbol of Caribbean cultures that carry with them the associations of the back-breaking plantation work central to their cultivation and harvesting for mass-markets and export. Furthermore, Luciano suggests that the widespread consumerism represented by the platinum exterior of the plantain is in fact a plague rotting out the culture from within. “Plátano Pride” also evokes the saying “la mancha del plátano” (“the stain of the plantain), a phrase used both to celebrate and disparage the dark color of one’s skin. Rather than simple condemnation or celebration, the Plantainum Series evocatively employs multiple layers of meaning to underscore some of the ambivalences within Puerto Rican national imagination and identity. Puerto Ricans, Luciano suggests throughout his work, have distinct, multiple, and at times seemingly contradictory experiences with nationality, nationalism, the mainland, the island, and the ambiguities inherent to the space between.
Kevin Allred (MA 2007) will enter the doctoral program in Women’s and Gender Studies at Rutgers University this fall.


Brian Comfort (MA 2007) is transferring from the American Studies track in the PhD Program in English at UMASS Amherst, to the PhD program in History, where he has received full funding. He is especially looking forward to the opportunity to work with 20th century U.S. historians Laura Lovett and Chris Appy.


Lance Eaton (MA 2006) is teaching at both Salem State and North Shore Community College. At Salem State he teaches World History, and at North Shore he teaches American Literature and The Culture of Comic Books. He is also serving as the Area Chair for Comics & Graphic Novels for the Northeast Popular Culture Association. In addition, an essay of his has been accepted for a forthcoming anthology on 9/11 and Popular Culture from Greenwood Press.

Molly Geidel (MA 2005) is ABD in American Studies at Boston University, where she has been teaching courses in Women’s Studies. This year she also taught “The Sixties” for us at UMB. Drew Hannon (MA 2007) presented papers on his work on the San Francisco Diggers at the Tenth Yale American Studies Symposium and at “New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness,” held at Queen’s University, in Ontario. He is completing his first year in Yale’s American Studies doctoral program.

Drew Hannon (MA 2007) presented papers on his work on the San Francisco Diggers at the Tenth Yale American Studies Symposium and at “New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness," held at Queen's University, in Ontario. He is completing his first year in Yale’s American Studies doctoral program.

Yuya Kiuchi (MA 2006) has successfully completed his comprehensive oral defense and dissertation proposal defense, making him ABD in American Studies at Michigan State University. His dissertation topic is the history of cable television in Boston and Detroit’s African American communities. Yuya’s Japanese translation of Barack Obama’s Dreams From My Father was published last December.

Kevin Laux (BA 2007) has been accepted to the Master’s of Art and Teaching program at Simmons College, where he will be doing a one-year intensive degree (including a year-long teaching internship) in order to be certified as an elementary school teacher.


Kara Lee McCormack (MA 2004), at the University of New Mexico, is beginning a dissertation on western films produced in the Soviet Union during the Cold War. She recently designed and taught her own “Introduction to Popular Culture” course and is working as book review editor for The New Mexico Historical Review. She has a paper accepted to present at the fall ASA national conference.

Hector Reisemberg (MA 2003) is the Latino family liaison for the Cambridge school department, where he is using oral history skills learned from Jean Humez to help Cambridge students begin a Latino family/community oral history project.

“I feel that the support I received and the quality of the teaching at UMass, especially in the American Studies Department, was one of the main factors in my being able to continue my studies and to be accepted at a program with a reputation like that of Simmons.”

- Kevin Laux
Final Projects from the Master’s Program

The following are abstracts of MA Projects completed since our last publication. Bound copies of the projects are available for reading in the American Studies conference room.

Kevin Allred, “I am never one thing or the other: Queer Artists of Color Reinterpret Violence and Identity”

My project analyzes community events, mainstream and alternative news accounts, documentary film, performance art and poetry, and music to explore how violence functions in the lives and cultural productions of queer people of color. Using various media representations of the murder of Sakia Gunn, a young black lesbian, as a starting point to interrogate the separation of intersectional identity in the aftermath of a violent event, I move to close readings of different cultural productions in which artists utilize violence (through subject matter, allusion, metaphor, and even direct language) to assert the whole of their identities rather than allowing them to be separated in silence. In the end, my analysis exposes the ways these artists are forcing their audiences to confront individual complicity in violent systems of oppression and domination in order to ultimately forge connections out of violence rather than further separations. They accomplish this by embracing their own vulnerability and bravely telling their own stories; stories that are too often silenced. Cultural texts analyzed include Boston’s 2006 Transgender Day of Remembrance, Jennie Livingston’s Paris is Burning, Arthur Dong’s Licensed To Kill, performance poetry and art by Justin Chin, music by Deadlee and Doria Roberts, and the poetry of Staceyann Chin.

Lynne Alter, “Media Reporting and Interpretation of Pre-Election and Exit Polls”

This project considers the difference in coverage of polling data and debates in the fall of 2000 in two newspapers with different partisan stances, in the context of the history of polling, the history of newspaper coverage of elections with a focus on the use of polling data, and the debates about polling and electoral news that surfaced in the closely contested election of 2000. The essay synthesizes scholarship on the history of news media and polling as well as analysis of recent electoral coverage to provide the background of how partisanship affected the presentation of polling data in the fall of 2000. The essay considers the interdependent aspects of polling and newspapers in bolstering their claims of credibility and in creating dramatic accounts with commercial appeal/rewards, as well as the changing dynamics between newspapers and the networks, and newspapers and cable news, briefly touching on the new frontier of instant internet news and blogs. Also discussed are the problematic substitution of polling for more substantial electoral coverage, the need for independent polling data, the uncertain meanings of polling language, the changing environment for polling, especially the declining numbers of people willing or able to respond to telephone polls, the use of push polling or uses of a kind of pretend polling to spread negative information about a candidate, and the attraction but unreliability of internet polling. Still, even if increasingly skeptical, and reliant on journalists to interpret poll numbers, audiences remain avid consumers of poll results. The potential for polling data to be differentially covered and interpreted, according to editorial direction, is what creates the opening for partisan editorial policies to shape the presentation of polling results, as demonstrated by close reading of electoral news in The Washington Post vs. The Washington Times in 2000.


This essay explores the strength and abilities of the Vietnamese Catholic church in handling crises like migration and natural disasters. Oral histories and newspaper archives confirm the church’s ability to retain tight-knit Vietnamese communities after major events. The essay explores the Vietnamese cultural adaptation that occurred upon resettling to the New Orleans area after the Fall of Saigon in 1975 and the transformation of the community from insularity (pre Hurricane Katrina) into city-wide interaction through the political process after Hurricane Katrina. The Catholic Church and religious leaders played major roles in migration and rebuilding after these major events.


This study examines the works of Satyra Pearson Bennett, a resident of Cambridge, Massachusetts during 1929-1959, in her social, religious and political communities. It looks at her leadership approach in social and political organizing and shows how she inserts herself into arenas previously closed to women, especially African American women during this era in the Cambridge/Boston area. Interviews with individuals who knew and worked with Mrs. Pearson in these communities give their impressions of this powerful woman as they share their memories of her. Mrs. Pearson’s personal and business correspondence, family records, social programs and church documents were donated to The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University when her sister died. The Ozeline Wise Papers, 1854-1988 at Harvard University provides a rich collection of primary resource documents that chronicles many events in Mrs. Pearson’s life that otherwise would have gone unnoticed. Secondary resources, publications, community newspapers and books provide a comprehensive view of the background of women and the African American community during this period. This research highlights the importance and influence of Victorian values, religion, family pride, community participation, and education in the African American community. It stresses the everyday struggles of African American women while giving

(Continued on page 12)
insight to their attempts of gaining entrance onto the dominant culture’s stage.
During the period of 1929-1955, by becoming a conduit for social change, Satyra Bennett Pearson’s story addresses the determination of one woman and the strategies she used in dealing with various social and political adversities in the Cambridge/Boston community. Mrs. Pearson’s story highlights the work of community activists by removing these women from the shadows of society and placing them front and center on the dominant culture’s stage. Through their grassroots leadership style and commitment to change they affected the social landscape in the Cambridge/Boston area.

Jason Schaaf, “The Hollywood Landscape 1930-45 as Seen Through the Fiction of Fitzgerald, Huxley, McCoy, and West”

During the 1930s a great wave of established novelists and writers found their way to Hollywood to take part in the blossoming of the studio system, which now included demands for their writing abilities (or at least their names for window dressing on posters). As writer and critic S.N. Berman of the New York Times stated in hindsight about this migration in 1966, “It was as crowded with artists as Renaissance Florence.” While their initial reason for coming could be mostly whittled down to the lucrative yearly contracts offered by the largest studios, once settled, authors such as Aldous Huxley, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nathanael West and many others found wildly different views of the Los Angeles and Hollywood they later constructed for their own stories. Within these “Hollywood” stories and pieces, Huxley’s After Many a Summer Dies the Swan and Ape and Essence, Fitzgerald’s, The Love of the Last Tycoon: A Western, and Nathanael West’s Day of the Locust, the city around them became not only a geographical area but also a set of embedded cultural, economic, and political assumptions that predetermined the reasoning and subsequent actions of characters within the texts. I use these Hollywood novels and stories to locate and scrutinize how these authors constructed space and architecture to formulate larger ideas about Los Angeles and the studio system they were employed by. I explore and historicize the ways in which literary authors have used landscape not just as setting, but as a character.

Zoe Sherman, “Shaping Land Use, Shaping Community: The Massachusetts Community Preservation Act”

In 2000, the Massachusetts legislature passed the Community Preservation Act which allowed cities and towns to create a separately administered fund to be used for preserving open space, preserving historic resources, and creating affordable housing. These three concerns do not seem to be an obvious grouping. To determine how they came to be linked together in this legislation, I traced the history of each. The history begins in the period after the Civil War when all three were taken up by reformers with similar motivations having to do with fears that immigration, urbanization, and industrialization were causing damaging changes. Early reformers and their successors did not generally see their causes as connected, although citizen concern and government policy regarding all three developed in parallel over the next hundred years. The 1960s was a decade of great activity around all three issues and by the end of the decade the three were increasingly discussed together, along with issues such as transportation, employment, and community control. This led, in the 1970s, into critiques of the dominant pattern of development, which was termed sprawl and held responsible for destroying open space and historic buildings and making housing unaffordable. The Community Preservation Act can best be understood in the context of efforts to counteract sprawl.

Current Graduate Student News

Beth Anne Cornell presented her paper “The professor doth protest too much…: What the Wikipedia debate reveals about academic culture,” at the American Popular Culture Association/Popular Culture Association Conference in October. She also presented “Gender and Sexuality Education for the Technical Student,” at the Frontiers in Education Conference, where the topic was ‘Racing Toward Innovation in Engineering Education.”

Colleen Flannery is working on an oral history project with survivors of war. She has been speaking to Iraq veterans, Vietnam veterans and Rwandese refugees, among others. She invites people who have been touched by war to contact her at csflannery@hotmail.com.

Valerie Jimenez, Riva Pearson, Dean Proserpio and Mike Urso attended the National Association of Ethnic Studies Conference in Atlanta this April.
Upcoming American Studies National Events

New England American Studies Association Conference

2008 American Studies Association Annual Meeting

Northeast Popular Culture Association Conference
UMass Dartmouth, Dartmouth, MA, October 31-November 1, 2008.

2008 Popular Culture / American Culture Association National Conference

American Studies Summer Institute

Last summer, several American Studies graduate students took part in the American Studies Summer Institute at the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, which is run in collaboration with our American Studies Department. The topic was “Spreading the News: Mass Media In America, Past and Present,” and Professor Judy Smith was among the program’s many speakers. Lynne Alter’s MA final project, “Media Reporting and Interpretation of Pre-Election and Exit Polls,” built off of work that she produced for the summer institute, and Judith Navoy, too, found the program helpful for her study of American newspaper ombudsmen.

This summer, the JFK Library will again host the Institute. This summer’s topic is “Law and Disorder in Times of War: Security, Surveillance and Civil Liberties.” Meeting daily from July 7-18, the institute will examine the legal dilemmas and tensions accompanying the United States’ involvement throughout its history in war and major conflicts. Issues related to war powers, the conduct of war, interrogation, treatment of enemy combatants, surveillance, security, and civil liberties will be addressed by a series of distinguished speakers.

Participants may earn three graduate credits in American Studies. For those wishing to receive graduate credit, the fee for this grant-supported course is $195. (A non-credit option is available for $100.) Graduate students must complete a major paper. Teachers who wish to receive graduate credit must complete a 10-page research paper, annotated bibliography, and lesson plan. Teachers may receive PDPs upon completion of a lesson plan.

This year’s registration deadline is May 31. For more information, call the Kennedy Library Education department at 617-514-1581.

New American Studies Course Announced

Patricia Raub, Bonnie Miller and Lynnell Thomas have designed a new American Studies course called U.S. Travel and Tourism, which will be taught by Patricia for the first time in Spring 2009 (the course is listed as AMST 250). Using concepts and methods from the disciplines of history, anthropology, and cultural studies, this course explores the nature of tourism and how it affects and reflects U.S. culture. Among the tourist destinations studied will be Niagara Falls, Miami Beach, Disneyland, and Boston’s Freedom Trail. Students will examine issues relating to heritage tourism and eco-tourism, and they will assess the impact of tourism upon host communities.

The course is designed to examine how tourism, the world’s largest industry, shapes our understanding of the past, our perceptions of ourselves and others, and our notions of place. Tourist encounters often place inequalities based upon class, race, and ethnicity in sharp relief. The goal for the course is to convey an understanding of tourism as a complex social and cultural phenomenon characterized by negotiation and even conflict over political and economic power and status.
Student Awards

Melanie Schmitt (BA 2008) has won the American Studies Founder’s Award, which has been made possible by the financial support of Seymour and Phyllis Katz. Professor Katz taught in the English Department and was the "founding father" of American Studies at UMass Boston. The Founder's Award is given annually to a graduating American Studies major who has demonstrated sustained enthusiasm and done outstanding work within the program.

Melanie is our third recipient of this new award in American Studies. She also is the recipient of a Beacon Leadership Award for her work as a student mentor. She came to UMass Boston from Germany, and will be staying to pursue graduate work in American Studies here at UMB next fall.

Joseph Mazrimas (BA 2008) is the recipient of the American Studies Book Award, given for distinction in the Undergraduate major. Joseph’s interests in American Studies include media and popular culture as well as the U.S. in the global economy. He has recently begun working as a “Connectivity Consultant” for Eze Castle Software.

Department Wish List

We wish to send a warm thank you to all of you who have responded to our requests in the past. Your generosity is greatly appreciated, and it enables us to continue to offer our students a multi-media experience. The following items would get heavy use in American Studies courses, and we would like to have our own copies on hand. If anyone would like to donate the funds to buy these items—or to purchase them yourselves and send them to us—we’d be very grateful!

- Video or DVD of Making Sense of the Sixties. This is somewhat hard to find, but we’d love a copy for the department.
- DVD copy of The Richard Pryor Show.
- DVD of the first season of Sanford and Son.
- DVD or gently used VHS copy of the documentary Comic Book Confidential
Student Awards, continued

Judith Navoy (MA 2008) is the winner of the American Studies Graduate Book Prize for excellence in Graduate work. Her final project, “‘Between the Certain and the Arbitrary’: Is There a Place for the Newspaper Ombudsman in Today’s Media Universe?”, is a study of the evolving role of the ombudsman in American newspapers. Her essay creatively explores the ombudsman’s role as an aspect of ongoing and deep-rooted debates about the public responsibilities of the press, and as a surrogate for reader participation in the production of news. Judith, who recently moved to Corning, New York, to take a new position as Manager of Executive Communications for Corning Incorporated, with responsibility for writing speeches and overseeing communications for the CEO, COO, and CTO, will be honored at the Graduate Convocation on May 29th.

Greg Kornbluh (MA 2008) is the recipient of the Michael Lenz Award for non-traditional research for his final project “Courting Context: The NBA as a Site of White Contact with Blackness.” The project consists of a series of case studies examining how a selection of academics, professional basketball players, sportswriters, and fans talk about the NBA by affirming or denying the ways that race impacts and intersects with professional basketball.

The Michael Lenz Award honors an American Studies MA student from Paynesville, Minnesota, who matriculated in fall 2000 and died tragically on March 2, 2001. Michael was an accomplished poet and world traveler who brought his creativity to American Studies and saw connections where others saw differences. We continue to celebrate his delight in the power of words and ideas and his spirit of joy and openness by presenting this annual award to the student whose final project best exemplifies a creative direction in research.
We want to hear from you!

The American Studies Department newsletter comes out every spring with the purpose of creating links among faculty, students presently enrolled in the program, American Studies alumni, members of other American Studies programs, and members of related programs. Please share your news with our community. Let us know what you are doing by filling out the form below and mailing it to: American Studies Department, UMASS Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. Or you can email your news to: american.studies@umb.edu. We also welcome comments on how we can improve the newsletter.

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