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Pictured (L-R): The 2014 American Culture Graduate Student Cohort (Jallicia Jolly, Kathleen Whiteley, Maryam Aziz, Kyle Frisina, Kris Hernandez, and Janee Moses), Hannah Torres, Jill Rickard, and Sahana Prasad.
Dear Alumni,

Student, Faculty and Friends of the Department of American Culture,

The Department of American Culture is very much in action this year! Sometimes that means driving out in a van to collect papers and pamphlets from Chicana activists—material that might have been lost or ignored, but instead becomes part of an archive of American history (you can learn more in the article about the student researchers working on Professor Maria Cotera’s Chicana Por Mi Raza project). It might mean taking the students in a creative writing seminar focused on race and identity to visit the Detroit Institute of Arts—as shown on the cover image, which remarkably was taken by Professor Amy Sara Carroll’s 8-year-old son Zé. We’re proud both of our ability to sponsor research and class trips, and of the transformative conversations that happen in offices and classrooms on campus every day.

For me, “American Culture in Action” mostly means showing up in the morning at our central office. We’re keeping busy in 3700 Haven Hall, because our job is to help the members of the American Culture community do their jobs. If you want to know a little more about the specifics of my role in the department, I encourage you to look at the previous issue of the Newsletter (available online), where I introduce myself.

While there’s too much activity and innovation in the Department of American Culture to describe in one newsletter, I hope you enjoy reading this small sampling. This issue touches on a new course on videogames, two new minors, our new faculty member Professor Manan Desai, and some truly incredible alumni stories.

I’d also like to assure you that we have no intention of slowing down! Right now we are interviewing candidates for two new positions, each supporting one of the new minors: one (with the Residential College) in Digital Studies & Social Justice, and one (with the Department of Women’s Studies) in Arab and Muslim American Studies. I look forward to signing up some wonderful new colleagues—and soon after that, to sending more amazing graduates out into the world. It’s an inspiring moment when someone like Deputy Director of the White House Council on Women and Girls and American Culture alumna Avra Siegel speaks about the power of American Culture at commencement (as she did last May). Our 80th Anniversary is just around the corner, and we’re eager to celebrate all that the Department and our alumni have achieved in that time. If you have a story to share in preparation for the 80th, I encourage you to get in touch—we’d love to hear from you.

Best Wishes,

June Howard
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and Chair of the Department of American Culture

PHOTOS
COVER PHOTO OF AMCULT 405 STUDENTS [L-R] LEELA DENVER, LAUREN OPATOWSKI & LIZ RAYNES AT THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS BY ZÉ CARROLL-DOMÍNGUEZ
PHOTO OF NOUR SOUBANI ON PAGE 12 PROVIDED BY NOUR SOUBANI
PHOTO OF NICKOLE FOX ON PAGE 14 PROVIDED BY NICKOLE FOX

EDITING
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ASSISTANT EDITOR: EVAN HOYE

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTWORK, AND ARTICLES BY HANNAH YUNG UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED
Last spring, best friends Jill Rickard and Hannah Torres decided to take one last class together before they graduated. They chose a Digital Studies class entitled Race, U.S. Culture, and Video Games (AMCULT 334), taught by Professor Lisa Nakamura. For their final project, they used what they’d learned all semester to create a video game entitled “Societal Hero Simulator” that manages to be simultaneously entertaining, hilarious, and a shrewd commentary on representations of race and gender in U.S. pop culture. Professor Lisa Nakamura called their game, “a low-fi, retro-looking interactive entertainment that conveyed an intimate familiarity with and affection for the video game genre with a wicked critical insight,” and their Graduate Student Instructor, Dimitri Pavlounis, praised its thoughtful cultural commentary and the way it “offers a very accessible entry point into a number of broader theoretical issues.”

We sat down with Jill and Hannah to talk about their unique game and how American Culture, Digital Studies, and the class are helping them shape the future.

STATS
JILL RICKARD (L)
Year: 2014
Majors: American Culture & Screen Arts and Cultures
Hometown: Columbus, Ohio
Favorite video game: Kingdom of Hearts

HANNAH TORRES (R)
Year: 2014
Major: English and Creative Writing
Hometown: Indianapolis, Indiana
Favorite video games: Call of Duty, Fable, & The Stanley Parable
Can you describe your game for someone who hasn’t played it?

Hannah Torres (HT): The prompt was to make a non-Twine game – Twine is an open-source tool for telling interactive, nonlinear text games. So to make a game that’s not text-based that discusses...

Jill Rickard (JR): Issues of either gender, race, or class. Ours is gender and race, not really class.

HT: Well, sub-culturally! It's under there. Not as blatant.

JR: [The game is] kind of sarcastic. It sets itself up as if it’s a test for the player to see what kind of role they would play in a video game. The whole point is a test to see if you end up stereotypically as a boy or a girl in a video game, what race you would be, and the roles that would entail. And there’s really snarky captions along the way.

HT: Yeah, it’s very sarcastic... you get points and score as a certain race or gender. But it’s rigged so that you score “white male” most of the time unless you really go out of your way to score the minority or female options. So you have to play the female and the race minority levels almost five times more than the white male levels in order to score a minority race or gender. Which was on purpose.

What inspired the project?

JR: I mean, when are you going to have another chance to make a video game for a class?

HT: This is something we want to do later in life, after grad school... this was a golden, random opportunity to test it out... and we knew our technical ability. We only had six weeks to make it - to write it, design it, and program it.

JR: We knew content was most important.

HT: And it’s really easy to see negative attributes for minority races in video games.

JR: But we decided to play off [that to explore] the more “accepted” stereotype... this term “model minority.”

HT: We figured out we wanted “positive” and “negative” attributes for each race and gender. So, as an example, [for the black person test] the black person mugs people for the negative stereotype, which is something that gets dinged every five seconds in the industry, like, “aha! This is racist.” We were poking fun of the people who design characters like that who actually think that’s okay.

JR: But then for the “positive” test, it’s a basketball game.

HT: So [if you want to score as a black person] you can be the basketball star or...

JR: The criminal.

HT: But those two stereotypes are your only options.

Why do you think video games like the one you made are important?

JR: We talked a lot about this in class. It’s a complicated question, which is kind of a cop-out answer. Partly, it’s important because it gets treated as not important. This game is not what gets played.

HT: The way the industry works right now, games that make you think aren’t [considered] games. Games that challenge the status quo of any kind often have their own little genre and get buried under everything else, all the mainstream games that are pretty and flashy and don’t make you feel bad about yourself, frankly. So, I think this genre is more important than mainstream stuff because it shows a certain kind of content that’s really smart and makes you think hard.

JR: [The game is] supposed to be funny in a way that actually makes you be like, “yeah, this is ridiculous that these stereotypes are things that exist.”

Why did you both decide to take Race, U.S. Culture, and Video Games?

JR: I really wanted to take this class! One – definitely not the only – but one of the reasons I declared an American Culture major was thinking, “I can definitely get into the video games class if I declare an AMCULT major!”

HT: I’m the gamer out of the two of us. I kind of have this staunch belief that every gamer can be smart. Not every gamer is a 12-year-old homophobic, cursing boy. I saw this class as an opportunity to discuss things I didn’t know too much about. I knew [other types of gamers existed], but I didn’t have the actual content – the scholarly backing to say that I’m not actually crazy for feeling that way.
How did Professor Nakamura and the course help shape this game?

JR: Some of the stereotypes we probably could have come up with on our own without this course. But some of them, for instance the test to see how manly you are, were from the class. One of [the tests to see if you’re a man] has to do with men being more technically adept than women, which is a stereotype we read an article about in class and talked about. And that was an idea we hadn’t thought or talked about before.

HT: Yeah, and the techie is always the ugly one in the game. Which is what made him the negative model. He’s never the good-looking, strapping, Nathan Drake model. He’s still a dude, he’s just not buff and shirtless... but, they’re both technically male. It’s a dichotomy game even though they’re both technically masculine.

JR: What both [tests] say about masculinity as opposed to femininity is that even though one is prized more than the other, especially in popular culture and video games, both of them are still more powerful and skilled than the female characters get to be.

HT: Which is reflected in your score! So no matter what, you’re still more likely to be male than female. It’s the same with race. The negative white stereotype is when you whitewash – you literally turn everyone white. And that was based on a color-blind article we read in class. The fact that we say we live in a post-racial society and everyone is colorblind. And so that stage was a literal interpretation. And it doesn’t matter if you’re the positive or the negative white stereotype, you’re still going to score higher [and end up as white character] unless you put forth the effort to be a minority.

You can skip any part of the game! So if you only want to be, say, a black female, you can just play those parts of the game and it’s very easy to manipulate. But at the end of the game there’s kind of a kicker anyway, about how it doesn’t matter.

JR: It says how if you score as a racial minority you would be either a villain or a side kick anyway. No matter what.

HT: Which is very true in video games.

How do you think what you’ve learned from Digital Studies and American Culture is going to affect what you do in the future?

JR: I’m going to law school,* but I want to work as an entertainment lawyer and be in the entertainment industry. In any kind of creative work I do in the future, I think it’s important to keep in mind how I represent characters and how to represent characters that aren’t currently present.

HT: I’ve been toying around with this idea of making sure that the content like the readings presented in class can get to people. One of the biggest problems when it comes to literature and these issues is that people don’t have [resources]... so I knew from this class that there are a lot of people who think this way about games but people just don’t hear about it. I knew I could make a conduit for that information. To be a hub to say, “hey, have you ever thought further than shooting the guy in front of you? Well so have these four other people, so go read their stuff! And make the industry a better place.” [Right now] you have to go hunting for it, so it would be better if it were all in one place... Professor Nakamura gave us so much reading that was awesome. And in the future I’d like to put out content that actually makes people think.

*Editor’s Note: Jill attends UCLA Law School.

What do the Mayor of Hamtramck, the Vice President and Senior Editor at W.W. Norton, and the Golden State Warrior’s most passionate blogger have in common? A Ph.D. in American Culture from the University of Michigan! Here are just a few of many paths a Ph.D. in American Culture can lead you on, selected by one of our favorite Ph.D. recipients, Associate Professor of American Culture and Director of Graduate Studies, Kristin Hass.
Many of our graduates have remarkable, field-changing careers. We want to hear from any and all of our alumni about where you are and what you’re doing. We are especially curious about our Ph.D’s who have had careers outside of the academy. What does American Culture in action look like for you?
Melissa Rosenbaum  
**Senior - International Studies Major, Arab and Muslim American Studies Minor**

I came to the University of Michigan after spending a gap year in Israel with a plan: pursue a major in Biology, fulfill pre-med requirements, and advocate for Israel. To satisfy the Race and Ethnicity requirement I enrolled in Professor Alsultany’s AMCULT 235, “From Harems to Terrorists: Representing the Middle East in Hollywood Cinema.” This unique topic piqued my interest and had a profound impact on my college experience. I became enthralled with the concepts of eurocentrism and ethnocentrism because I was challenged to question what I had previously learned about Muslims and Arabs and how a race, religion or ethnicity can significantly shape a person’s experience in America. I made a critical decision to pursue a major in International Studies with a focus on the Middle East to expand my personal boundaries.

I am learning how my own background and social identities – a White, Jewish, female – has shaped my own experiences. On campus, I have challenged myself because I realize that to work through a conflict, like the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is crucial to better understand all perspectives and the foundations for peoples’ beliefs. Pursuing the AMAS minor in my senior year, represents, for me, an important decision I made during my freshman year: continue to challenge myself in the classroom, reconcile differences with my classmates and professors and better understand the experiences of Muslims and Arabs in America in our post 9/11 world. I still hope to pursue a career in medicine and I am confident that my experience as an AMAS minor coupled with my International Studies major will be of utmost value to me in appreciating the differences among races, ethnicities and religions. Hopefully, in some small way I can be part of the solution to religious, ethnic and national conflicts that we must all admit are the reality of the 21st century.

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**Nour Soubani**  
**Senior - American Culture Major; International Studies Major; Arab and Muslim American Studies Minor**

Like many people, I went through different phases and ideas about what I want to “do” with my life from my first through senior year. They included medicine, public health, law, business, journalism, international affairs – the list goes on. What helped me focus my interests was a combination of classes I took and the organizations and communities I was drawn to. In my first year, I became involved in the Muslim community on campus, where I developed an interest in community organizing as it related to American Muslims, and the specific challenges related to race, gender, and other issues of identity. At the same time, I became active in SAFE, the U-M Palestinian solidarity organization, through which we build the Palestinian and Arab American community on campus as well. These activities allowed me to recognize my interest in community-building among the identities I identified with as an American Muslim Palestinian woman. So I began to take classes that gave me the academic foundation I needed to critically challenge myself in the spaces I was a part of on campus; I found these mostly in American Culture, and AMAS in particular, because the basis of each class was an analysis of power. It was a different approach than what I often encountered in classes: memorization, history, facts – Arab and Muslim American Studies took these approaches and gave me a space to contextualize and analyze the many different “truths” about power and identity in the American and global context I am a part of.

So far, my experience in AMAS classes has helped me develop my worldview, and learn how to argue my perspective and analyze different perspectives and arguments, recognizing that every argument and author comes from a place of bias. It has sparked in me an interest in academia, in writing, and in organizing in the Arab and Muslim American community. More than directing me towards a specific career path, AMAS has taught me how to think, challenge, analyze, and construct and deconstruct arguments – skills that I will employ in whatever job or position I hold in the future.
so what are you going to do with

Time and time again I was posed with that question after telling people about my coursework. Planning to major in Sociology with a minor in Native American Studies, I didn’t really know the answer, and now I’m certain that there are so many answers to that question that the only answer is, “Whatever I want!”

I am officially the first person at the University of Michigan to graduate with a Native American Studies (NAS) minor. NAS and the faculty had a big part in shaping who I am and the community work I engage in. In fact, my first job out of college is where I still am 10 years later: American Indian Health and Family Services (www.aihfs.org). Hap McCue was one of my NAS (Ojibwe Language) instructors, and he was the one who suggested that I put in my resume at AIHFS.

At AIHFS I have been involved in such an amazing community. I started as the Tobacco Project Coordinator doing work around traditional use of tobacco among the Native community while also educating people about the ills of commercial tobacco use. Later I became the Prevention Coordinator, organizing youth programs that promote culture and healthy lifestyles. After going back to earn a Master of Arts in Social Justice, I was promoted to Director of Health Education and now work with some amazing programs including suicide prevention, maternal child health, nutrition, physical activity, substance abuse prevention and more. We also work closely with our medical clinic and behavioral health services to provide opportunities for families and the community to heal mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. We pride ourselves on our foundation acknowledging that culture is core to healing and prevention and creating a space in Detroit for traditional gatherings and ceremonies. Students can also be involved in this important work. Whether students are interested in Native American Studies, health, business, social work, or community-based initiatives, there are great opportunities available at AIHFS. Students interested in interning for a semester or two for course credit, can contact NAS Director Scott Lyons (lyonssr@umich.edu). We have had dozens of interns working on projects related to mental health, insurance enrollment, youth development, and more, but we are always open to establishing internship goals that meet your specific interests. Hope to see you soon!

Nickole Fox, Class of 2004
M.A., Social Justice
nfox@aihfs.org

Meet the newest Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies faculty member, Assistant Professor Manan Desai. A U-M alumnus raised in Michigan with a love of vinyl records, he talks about his research and the importance of South Asian studies.

m a n a n
D E S A I

THE MINOR IN NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES

“So what are you going to do with that?”

—Nickole Fox (center) and family.
My research looks at the history of South Asians in North America, and is really guided by two broad questions: First, to what extent have South Asians in this country been interpellated, by both the complex racial formations in the U.S. and by those formations forged by the long project of empire? And second, how have writers, artists, and political actors resisted, negotiated, and even accommodated those interpellations?

As a graduate student, I started to explore these questions in my dissertation, a study of the cultural and political exchanges between Indian and American intellectuals before 1965 – a period of restricted South Asian immigration to the U.S. In that project, I trace the story of Indian travelers to the U.S. – the political exiles, intellectuals, muckrakers, and self-described "national ambassadors" – whose engagement with American history allowed them to begin to fashion a new vocabulary for discussing the political discourses of caste, race, nationhood, and empire. More recently, my research has moved in different directions, and I have been writing about how representations of South Asians in early- to mid-20th century U.S. popular culture – from TV shows to radio dramas to pulp fiction – reflected shifting discourses on race and empire in the American popular imagination.

Alongside these projects, I’ve been involved with the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), a non-profit that has been developing an online repository for materials related to the South Asian diaspora. Part of what motivated us in SAADA was that we saw a need to make our research accessible and resources more available to a larger public beyond academia, for whom the histories of the South Asian diaspora were either unknown or misrepresented. In many ways, joining SAADA has transformed the way I do research and understand the public role of scholarship. One thing I really hope to underscore for students at Michigan is that they have an active stake in the creation of historical knowledge, just as much as they are part of the larger unfolding history of race in the U.S.
SAHANA PRASAD

What drew you to this project?

Well, this is an epistemological project; feminist epistemology doesn’t get studied a lot within the Women’s Studies community. [Associate Professor Maria Cotera, founder of CPMR] talks a lot about the feedback loop in archives and how it affects the way knowledge gets produced. So the people who produce knowledge are the people who are in power and the people in power only produce knowledge about people in power. So then, the archives – archives everywhere – only have very selective information. And when people look at the archives to see what’s important and how they’re changing what knowledge gets passed on.

What duties do you have for this project?

It’s a mish-mash of things. A lot of what I do is scan and catalogue the archives. We’ve been converting those from .tif form to .jpg form… I upload all the scanned materials onto our online archive server and I tag them so you can search through the tags. I rescan things if information has been lost. I’ll be stitching things together – some things are too big for the scanner so we have to scan them in multiple parts – then I’ll use Photoshop to stitch them together. There’s so many things you can do on this project! It’s really nice because you never get stuck doing one thing for a really long time. It’s never boring.

I think [CPMR is] also giving people access to this knowledge. A lot of these things are personal items from personal collections: their family memorabilia and photos. Giving the public access to all these things is a really incredible opportunity for people to learn about these women’s lives. And I think that can be very inspiring to young activists, to see what kind of impact these women have made.

What do you think you’ve gotten out of this work?

After graduation, I know I want to work in advocacy. I’m interested in advocating for women of color who have experienced sexual violence. I think it’s not something people think about very often: the way in which race specifically affects the experience of sexual violence and the way healing from trauma has to incorporate people’s identities.

CPMR ties into that because I think common narratives of sexual violence focus on young white women on college campuses – which is not wrong, that experience is real and one that people have – but this standardized, documented research experience often leaves out the way that women of color experience higher rates of sexual violence, often because they’re women of color. And that’s similar to what we’re addressing in this project; we’re changing the common narratives of sexual violence.

What drew you to this project?

Specifically women of color, queer disabled women of color – their stories get left out of the archives. And what we’re doing with this project is disrupting that feedback loop.

I think [this project speaks to] the value of experiential knowledge – I don’t think there’s enough value placed on experiential knowledge, specifically in academia but also outside of academia. The knowledge that can be gained from people being forthcoming about what their experiences are is so huge.

People are more likely to respond strongly to statistics, but projects like this – projects that take the time to document people’s lives and the work they’ve done – give further weight and legitimacy to valuable experiences that we can learn from.

I think [CPMR is] also giving people access to this knowledge. A lot of these things are personal items from personal collections: their family memorabilia and photos. Giving the public access to all these things is a really incredible opportunity for people to learn about these women’s lives. And I think that can be very inspiring to young activists, to see what kind of impact these women have made.

What do you think you’ve gotten out of this work?

The research experience is great. I’ve had research experience [before working on CPMR] but it’s just been data entry. To now have research experience that integrates my field of study, my knowledge of feminist history and the intersection of race and gender and feminist history – all of those things are very important. Sometimes [history] can appear to be a nebulous cloud of knowledge that isn’t applied concretely, but this research project is concrete and linked to the history. And I think my work here will give me opportunities in the future and examples to prove that this knowledge is directly applicable and has everything to do with reality.

After graduation, I know I want to work in advocacy. I’m interested in advocating for women of color who have experienced sexual violence. I think it’s not something
Why did you get involved with this project?

The project works with Chicana feminism; my two areas of interest in American Culture* are race and gender.

get to start writing for this! Maria [Cotera] interviewed women in San Diego, so I’m looking at the women whose artifacts she collected and cataloging the artifacts, describing them, writing short biographies of the women, and watching the videos and the interviews they gave to create a complete picture of their experience. I’m getting to write some of the content for the website. And that’s helpful in any career, especially with writing, but also academia. Being able to write something cohesive and also important and valued in the community will give me a big leg up. I also think being involved with such a big research project is helpful in any sort of career; you get to work with other people and you’re trusted to work with important resources and documents.

How has your work with CPMR informed the rest of your life?

I’m involved with community work through PALMA [Proyecto Avance: Latino Mentoring Association]. We work with the Latino community of Washtenaw County with things like English language learning. I work with a young girl – I’ve worked with her since my first year in college, working to help her pass along

And Maria Cotera and I have worked closely together, particularly last winter when I had an independent study with her. We’d meet every week and get coffee and talk; we had so many interesting things to say about Chicana feminism, but also advice on life! She offered a lot of guidance for me, talking about grad school, publishing, and other opportunities; as someone to consider myself a writer, I found [Maria Cotera] very supportive.

What’s next for Chicana Por Mi Raza?

• Interviews in Los Angeles and other locations around the U.S. to add to the archives.
• Developing critical partnerships where teachers and researchers who want to do local oral history projects can access teaching materials, guidelines, and researchers who want to do local oral history projects can access teaching materials, guidelines, and the online database system to structure courses and research projects. These oral history projects can then be added to the digital archives in the CPMR archive.

* Editor’s Note: Ariel is an American Culture major.

PIECE OF ADVICE

I’LL NEVER FORGET...

Ariel and Sahana pass along some knowledge

ARIEL:

My mom, who is also one of my best friends, recommended I watch Brene Brown’s TED talk on vulnerability, which has really influenced my way of living and thinking, so I guess that’s two pieces of advice: my mom’s advice to watch the TED talk, and Brene Brown’s advice to live openly and vulnerably!

SAHANA:

One of my favorite quotes also doubles as some of the best advice I’ve ever read: “Nobody’s going to save you. No one’s going to cut you down, cut the thorns thick around you. No one’s going to storm the castle walls nor kiss awake your birth, climb down your hair, nor mount you onto the white steed. There is no one who will feed the yearning. Face it. You will have to do, do it yourself.” - Gloria Anzaldúa

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CHICANA POR MI RAZA?

• A public face via a website with curated exhibits, an accessible archive, and scholar-produced content. The site will be modeled on the South Asian American Digital Archive (a project Professor Manan Desai has worked on – see article on page 15) that involves collaborators across time and space working to produce content based on the archive.
• Interviews in Los Angeles and other locations around the U.S. to add to the archives.
• Developing critical partnerships where teachers and researchers who want to do local oral history projects can access teaching materials, guidelines, and the online database system to structure courses and research projects. These oral history projects can then be added to the digital archives in the CPMR archive.

FROM PROFESSOR MARIA COTERA:

Our undergraduate research assistants do everything from collecting and transcribing oral histories, to traveling with us to places like Texas and California, to scanning, cataloging, and interpreting the archives we collect. They experience the whole process – from the logistics it takes to set up an oral history interview, film it, and follow up, to processing and interpreting the documents we collect – so they get research experiences that will give them skills that they can’t necessarily get inside the classroom.

I want students to develop an understanding of the complexities of oral history and archival projects. I want them to have an experience that will take them outside of their comfort zone, both in terms of their skill-level and in terms of the kind of material and content we’re talking about. I hope my research assistants get the chance to witness an oral history, because listening to the stories of the women we interview and being a critical witness can be very powerful for students.

We identify the talents students bring to the table, where their interests seem to lie, and also what they want to do with their careers beyond the University; then we can steer them into activities that will really support their professional and creative aspirations. Ariel, for example, is interpreting and producing text for the website we’re developing because her forte is as a writer.
Every year for the last six years, the Department of American Culture has awarded two prizes for outstanding essays in American studies to undergraduate students. These essays exemplify our undergraduates’ ability to produce critically engaged scholarship.

**Kavitha Iyengar**, an American Culture major, delivered a history paper entitled “The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Creating the Mexican-American Frontier.” Kavitha assessed the shifting circumstances that Mexicans and Mexican Americans faced in New Mexico during the nineteenth century. Kavitha drew together a complementary set of primary and secondary sources from 1850, 1870, and 1880 to think through the changing terms and meanings of U.S. citizenship. Her paper presented a fresh outlook on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in both its English and Spanish translations. All of this suggests that Kavitha is poised to become a brilliant historian and Latina/o Studies scholar.

**Carlina Duan**, currently an English major with a minor in Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies, wrote a memorable reflection entitled “I am Not a Geisha.” Carlina thoughtfully considered how some of her own experiences have been informed by the larger discourses on race and gender that circulate in the United States. The interconnections that she made between representations of Asians and Asian Americans in consumer culture, media, and local campus events showed admirable scope. The essay had a compelling trajectory that ran from Carlina’s memory of a difficult adolescent Halloween to the condescension and micro-aggressions that all too often continue to occur at most universities today. We are certain that Carlina’s gift for keen and creative analysis will serve her well in her future endeavors.
CONGRATS
GRADS

WE CONGRATULATE
THE DEPARTMENT OF
AMERICAN CULTURE
CLASS OF 2014!

Bachelor Degrees
American Culture
Phoebe Barghouty
Myles Barkoff
Christian Brandt
Andrea Boris
Laura Cohen
Sean Cope
Erin Corrigan
Isaiah Knight
Abraham Liddell
Kelsey McInnis
Jasmine Pawlicki
David Perner
Jadee Pope
Jillian Rickard
Jordan Steiger
Akshay Verma
Andrew Weinberg

Bachelor Degrees
Latina/o Studies
Nicole Garcia

Minors
American Culture
Claudia Celovsky
Kristen Frizsimons
Payton Halbisen
Mackenzie Meter

Minors
Asian/Pacific Islander
American Studies
Gina Benedicto
Erica Gehring
Peter Ts
George Xue

Minors
Latina/o Studies
Evelyn Galvan
Elizabeth Perez
Rebecca Villedos

Certificate
Arab and Muslim
American Studies
Haneen Abudayyeh
Sahar Adora
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Brandon Baxter
Farah Erzouki
Bayan Founas
Zainab Khalil
Julianne Potter
Hanah Stiverson

Ph.D.s.
American Culture
Annah MacKenzie
Veronica Pasfield
Alyssa Walker
Stephen Wisniewski

Pictured (L-R): Rima Hassounah, Evelyn Alsultany, Ari Weinberg, Gregory Dowd, & Abraham Liddell

ASK AN ALUMNA:
How have you drawn on your degree in American Culture since graduating?

In 1993 I graduated from U-M with a B.A. in “The Politics and Society of American Culture.” I contemplated Political Science, but wasn’t getting the real-life perspective I longed for. American Culture filled that void for me. I wrote my independent study on the change in how the media covered the Presidential election in 1992 (Bill Clinton) as compared to prior TV elections. That summer, I interned for a Congressman and worked at the Democratic National Convention in NYC. Then, a couple years after graduation, I went to work for U.S. Senator Bill Bradley (also a former New York Knick) who ended up losing for the Democratic nomination against Al Gore a few years later!

I have since moved away from politics, and this year celebrated 10 years at PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers), where I am a director of public relations. Perhaps the most exciting thing I do is oversee PR for PwC’s role in counting the Oscars ballots, focusing on getting media interviews for the lead balloting partners, aka the “guys with the briefcases.” Who knew how exciting working at an accounting firm could be!

Outside of my day job, I use my skills to help promote various cultural endeavors including an artist, a rock star, and currently – a documentary film about a music industry icon. I have also taken up stand-up comedy and improv, and have created my own baseball podcast/social media character known as Bullpen Betty. And they say there is no such thing as “American Culture”!

Laura Schooler, Class of ’93

We encourage all of our alumni to write us and let us know how American Culture has changed their lives!
CONTACT

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