

# American Culture

The Program in American Culture  
at the University of Michigan

Fall 2006



American Culture has long been home to some pretty amazing students! But recently, the Ann Arbor News included our very own John Low and Sharon Lee in its M-Edition naming the University of Michigan's 2006-07 A-MAIZ-ING students. Read more about John and Sharon on page 6.

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## Dear Alumni, Students, Faculty, and Friends of the Program in American Culture,

I often commence these letters with seasonal musings, in part because one of the things I find joyous about the Midwest is the changing sense of the landscape. Imagine me waxing rapturous, then, about the new briskness of the air, the coming brilliance of the fall leaves, the pleasures of new students, new colleagues, and a new semester. Landscape and weather mark, in visceral terms, the changes of our lives, and in the institutions in which we reside. The Program in American Culture is one of those institutions and, as usual, there is much to report!

We are saddened by the departure of colleagues Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, who with her wonderful partner Alvia Golden, has retired to an excellent apartment in New York City, just blocks from the United Nations where she can keep an eye on things, and Maria Montoya, who, along with her family and partner Rick Hills, is in “the city” as well, exploring a new position at New York University. Maria and Carroll—you are greatly missed, and you have our very best wishes. At the same time, we are overjoyed to welcome two new colleagues, Amy Sara Carroll and Evelyn Alsultany. Both are fresh off postdoctoral fellowships (Amy at Northwestern; Evelyn here at Michigan), and ready to jump into the flurry of activity that characterizes our program.

Welcome to new lecturers MacDonald Moore (contemporary media), Catherine Daligga (American Humor), Margaret Noori (Ojibwe language and culture), John Bacon (sports and culture) and to new graduate students Christine Abreu, Alex Olson, Rachel Quinn, Kirisitina Sailiata, Stephanie Teves, Kiara Vigil, and Stephen Wisniewski.

Congratulations to undergraduates Cynthia Biro and Theresa Martin, 2006-07 recipients of American Culture’s Siegel Scholarships. We’d like to extend a particular welcome to our new undergraduate concentrators! We are so pleased that you have decided to join the Program in American Culture!!

In our newsletter last spring I let you know that we were in the midst of an external review process. Last fall, the Program embarked upon a detailed self study, which produced a document of 300+ pages, full of data, historical accounts, assessments of the present, and hopes for the future. In March, we were visited by three reviewers, all major scholars and administrators in the areas of American and ethnic studies. I am pleased to report that their assessment was overwhelmingly positive! The reviewers placed our Program at the leading edge of the recent movements to integrate American and ethnic studies institutionally, and named the Asian/Pacific Islander American Program “the best on the North American continent.” They praised the “translatinidad” approach of the Latino/a Studies program, the depth and range of the Native American studies programs, our efforts to build Arab American studies at Michigan, our partnerships with the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies, and our ongoing interest in questions of American culture and in communicating with public audiences. The study also gave us a number of issues to chew on, many of which had been raised in our own discussions. Indeed, if you find my musing on seasonal changes in Ann Arbor deficient on this occasion, it is because the changes within the Program seem so much more compelling.

An academic program is often described as a “community,” and there is an undertone of intention lurking in that word, as if we all arrive with similar intents and goals. Though there’s an element of truth in that sensibility, in many other ways an academic program is much more a mixed neighborhood, full of strangers thrown together through circumstance, forced to negotiate their differences and probe for their commonalities. Last year was, in many ways, a year of such probing and negotiation and, while such processes (as in a neighborhood) are ongoing, I think it fair to say that as a group of “neighbors,” our faculty and students were successful in practicing a tolerance and open-mindedness that bodes well for our future. In the next two years, our faculty demographic will shift radically, as we seek to tenure and promote fourteen of our colleagues. And we’ll be embarking on new initiatives, aimed particularly at better serving our undergraduate student population. In other words, the external review offered us a moment to pause and take stock. We’re reveling in that moment for a while longer, about to take a deep breath and plunge once again into the waters, as we continue to work to make American Culture the nation’s premier American and Ethnic Studies program.

Regards to you all!

Phil Deloria  
Director, Program in American Culture



## American Culture News

**Director:** Philip Deloria

### Ethnic Studies Directors:

Greg Dowd, Native American Studies

Catherine Benamou, Latina/o Studies

Amy Stillman, Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies

### Graphic Design and Layout:

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### Editor:

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Please submit any changes, corrections, letters, updates, and/or suggestions to Linda Weiss at [lweiss@umich.edu](mailto:lweiss@umich.edu).

The Program in American Culture promotes publicly engaged and socially committed scholarship and teaching aimed at understanding the struggles and creativity that have produced the societies and cultures of America.

In particular, we seek to illuminate the significance, the lived experience, and the relation among race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and class, both within and beyond national borders.

The Program brings the history and interpretive strategies of Ethnic Studies into conversation with critical approaches to Literature, History, Cultural Studies, and Social Sciences, as well as with knowledge produced outside the boundaries of the university.

### Regents of the University of Michigan:

David A. Brandon  
Laurence B. Deitch  
Olivia P. Maynard  
Rebecca McGowan  
Andrea Fischer Newman  
Andrew C. Richner  
S. Martin Taylor  
Katherine E. White

## Faculty News

**Evelyn Alsultany** joins us this year as Assistant Professor of Arab American Studies and American Culture.

**Paul Anderson** has been promoted to associate professor with tenure. He is the author of the highly praised *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Duke University Press, 2001).

**Amy Carroll** joins us this year as a new assistant professor of Latina/o Studies, American Culture, and English. She is also the proud new parent of Césaire José. We welcome both to the American Culture community!

**June Howard** has received a Michigan Humanities Award for Fall 2006. LSA and the Office for the Vice President of Research award ten of these highly competitive fellowships annually to faculty working on major scholarly or creative projects in the humanities and interpretive social sciences.

**Scott Kurashige** has been promoted to associate professor with tenure. His book, *Gateway to a New World: Los Angeles and the Shifting Ground of American Race Relations* (Princeton University Press) is scheduled for release in 2007.

**Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes** (Assistant Professor of Latina/o Studies, American Culture, and Spanish) received a Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation 2006 Career Enhancement Fellowship for Junior Faculty and a Ford Foundation 2006 Postdoctoral Diversity

Fellowship (declined) to work on his project "Translocas and Transmachos: Trans Diasporic Puerto Rican Drag" during the 2006-2007 academic year.

**Tiya Miles** is winner of the American Studies Association's Lora Romero Distinguished First Book prize for her visionary work, *Ties That Bind* (California, 2005).

**Andrea Smith** has been named the University of Michigan Human Rights Fellow for 2006-07. "Andy" has been involved in human rights organizing for many years, particularly among indigenous populations. As the Human Rights Fellow, Andy will teach a course, *Human Rights and Social Justice Organizing* in the winter term. She will also give the 2007 Human Rights Lecture at the University of Michigan, 'Glocal' Organizing: *The U.S. Human Rights Movement*.

**Penny Von Eschen** has been promoted to full professor with tenure. She is author of the acclaimed, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2004).

**Michael Witgen** is winner of a 2006 Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowship. During his fellowship year, Michael will be traveling to archives in Washington, D.C., St. Paul, Minnesota, and Ottawa, Canada to finish research on his current manuscript project.

Please join us in congratulating AC Faculty on their fine achievements!

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## FACULTY PROFILE: INTERVIEW



Catherine Benamou, Associate Professor of American Culture and Screen Arts and Cultures is Acting Director of Latina/o Studies. Her first book, *It's All True: Orson Welles' Pan-American Odyssey* (University of California Press) is scheduled for release in Winter, 2007. She and assistant professor Kristin Hass recently revisited this project.

**Hass:** What a wonderful rich book Catherine. Congratulations! And what an amazing set of stories it embodies – the story of Welles, the long story of the film, the stories of the lives all of the people who have been touched by the making of the film and, implicitly, the story of your own involvement with the film as a producer and a scholar. For a scholar with such deep interest in Latin America and Latina/o Studies, Welles doesn't seem like an obvious choice. Why Welles?

**Benamou:** Yes, I am someone who trained as a Latin Americanist – and who converted to scholarship in Latina/o studies. My interests have been hemispheric for sometime so, yes – Welles is not an obvious choice. In fact, as a student I was not that wild about Welles. I only started to get interested when I discovered that he had traveled abroad to make films and that he not only had a strong interest in translation – but that he acquired whole new dimensions as a film maker through other film histories. He was deeply influenced by film practices and communities that have not been written about much in English. Brazilian film history, in particular, shaped Welles. And when he went to Brazil, he made a different kind of film. In the US he was associated with high profile art films at the peak of the studio system. But when he went to Brazil, he turned to ethnographic filmmaking. I was intrigued by how he bridged that gap. What did it require technologically, culturally? What were the processes of translation involved?

Two images from *It's All True* that drew me to Welles come immediately to mind. One is of fishermen on a raft from the Northeast and the other is of a famous Afro-Brazilian actor and musician, Grande Othelo. These images represent two very different regions in Brazil and moments in film history. The second evokes the *chanchada*, a self-conscious imitation of Hollywood in Brazil – which was even more popular than the Hollywood films despite the sometimes comparatively poor technical qualities of the films. The first stark image is an association with Leftist social movements of the 1950s and 1960s that were in touch with European New Wave Cinema. In Brazil, working on *It's All True*, Welles brought these together. This was not the kind of work people tend to associate with

Welles but it is fascinating.

For me the plot only thickened when I found out that those two episodes had been linked to another episode – Mexican bull-fighting (a life long fascination of Welles) – along with the story of jazz music, as viewed through the life of Louis Armstrong, with whom Welles corresponded.

I should add here that the great producer and long time friend of Welles, Richard Wilson, drew me into thinking about Welles and the film when he spoke about them both at a Welles symposium in New York many years ago. When Richard saw the exhibit I had put together about *It's All True* with powerful images and document fragments, but little background information, he invited me to assist him with the film's preservation.

**Hass:** So what drew Welles to this material? What inspired *It's All True*?

**Benamou:** It was to have been a four-part film. The episode “My Friend Bonito” can be traced back to Welles's fascination with Robert Flaherty and his contact with Mexico through Dolores Del Río. Then he was asked to make a film as part of a World War II era propaganda campaign – part of the Good Neighbor Policy then being promoted by the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, established and run by Nelson Rockefeller. Welles was named “Good Will” ambassador to Brazil, but the impression he made was very different from that left by others in the program.

As you can imagine, the politics of the Good Neighbor Policy were tricky. The US government wanted to draw Brazilians away from Fascism through cultural exchange. This was complemented by Rockefeller's and Jock Whitney's interest in trade. There was, as you can imagine, a fairly dramatic structural inequality in the motion picture trade between Latin America and the US. It was pretty asymmetrical. The history is that in the period of the Spanish American war many new filmic technologies were developed and exported, feeding into the development of film as a transnational phenomenon. But the export of images made in the US to be viewed by Latin American audiences was the norm. Rockefeller wanted to reach into the hinterlands to educate people in remote areas about health and culture and, of course, to build good will.

For the most part, the “Good Neighbor” films extracted aspects of Latin American culture without very much participation from Latin Americans. This inspired some protests and some systems of vetting the films were put in place. Local businessmen in Latin American capitals were appointed to committees to filter out egregious misrepresentations and unwanted political content, such as Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, which was banned in Brazil.

**Hass:** When he was commissioned, Welles – a post-*Citizen Kane* Welles – was shooting the much maligned *The Magnificent Ambersons*, a grand Hollywood art film. How did Welles get to the very different work in *It's All True*?

**Benamou:** Welles had a few important personal relationships that led and enriched his border crossing experiences and that helped



## V WITH CATHERINE BENAMOU

him to develop an alternative vision. He worked closely with photographer Genevieve Naylor. She had been dispatched by the OCIAA to Brazil, had worked in the Works Progress Administration as a photographer, and was interested in the parts of Brazil that Welles wasn't supposed to see. She helped him to slip through the gauntlet of Brazilian state censorship and showed him slums and compromised public spaces in Rio. One of the aspects of Brazilian life Welles was asked to shoot was Carnival. Naylor took him outside of the main showcase Carnival to the local festivities – pushing him to see carnival in different terms. (I should add that one of my frustrations with Welles' scholarship is its insistently masculinist orientation. Naylor's influence on Welles works against this for me.)

The other significant relationship for Welles was with Robert Meltzer. Meltzer was a screenwriter (considered by many to be the uncredited writer of *The Great Dictator*), a jazz pianist, and an active part of the Hollywood Left. He traveled to Brazil with Welles to help with the writing and development of *It's All True*. Welles sent him out to do urban ethnography and Meltzer became fascinated with the cultural figure of the Malandro. The Malandro was a dandy of mixed race, an Afro-urban male with street smarts and possibilities for upward mobility. The Malandro was a negative figure in the minds of many in the Vargas government but to many others in racially complicated and geoculturally isolated Brazil he was heroic. Meltzer introduced Welles to the Malandro (played by Grande Othelo in the film) and educated him about Samba. He showed Welles Samba as a generic category that takes on different rhythms and cadences in different social spaces. Together they came to conceive of the Malandro as a main character in the "Carnaval" episode. (The shooting of the film eventually became split into three parts – bullfighting in Mexico, Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, and life in a fishing community in Ceará, Northeastern Brazil.)

In the "Carnaval" section of the film, the Malandro becomes the figure that links the spaces of Carnival. Welles does not use the standard ethnographic and dramatic tool of the voice-over narration. He does something quite different. You get a popular figure moving through various social spaces and driving the film. And in the process you get a commentary on the Malandro's anxiety over the uneven effects of cultural modernity being promoted by Vargas; work, self-discipline, Christian devotion, an embrace of industrialization and legal marriage – virtues associated with the upwardly mobile or modern elite – were strongly advocated by his regime.

Meltzer and Welles further complicate their project by structuring the plot through what they had learned about Samba. The entire plot is organized according to musical ideas – the cadences and pleasures of the Samba, and the social work it achieves in a complex urban setting. Certainly this is a departure from Hollywood practices of music in film. Hollywood musical numbers are interludes – spectators are not, as a rule, expected to appreciate the social connotations of nationalizing vernacular music. But this is what Welles wanted to do, across the Americas.

A third collaborator who influenced the kind of film Welles

wanted *It's All True* to be was journalist Ed Morel. He was from the community in the state of Ceará that was home to the *jangadeiros*. Shortly before Welles began shooting in Brazil, the *jangadeiros* had sailed a raft 1,650 miles to Rio de Janeiro to speak to President Vargas about the harsh working conditions and lack of medical or death benefits available to them. Vargas signed their benefits into law but it did little to help them. Nevertheless, they became heroes to many and their story was broadcast so widely that Welles read about them in *Time* magazine before he left the US. He wanted to include them in his film and Morel was his connection. Morel had known many of the fishermen since childhood, was a licensed journalist under the Vargas regime, and was interested in popular revolt. Morel wrote the treatment for this part of the film and he, too, dropped the trope of voice over narration. He used the diary of a self-educated *jangadeiro* nicknamed Jacaré, or "alligator," to drive the plot.

**Hass:** One of the things that is so fascinating about the book is the strange relation of the life of the film with the lives of those who were filmed and those who filmed them. The section of *It's All True* on the *jangadeiros* was tragic for the *jangadeiros* and for Welles.

**Benamou:** Yes, the great tragedy of the film is that one of the fishermen – Jacaré – was killed when Welles was filming a reenactment of the trip to Rio. This happened just as Welles was beginning to lose support for the film. He had been ensconced in the studio system in Hollywood, in the arms of RKO. But as *The Magnificent Ambersons* neared completion and did not test well, the studio lost faith in Welles' ability to bring in any money. They unceremoniously dumped him. But Welles continued to shoot "Jangadeiros," because it helped the community to reckon with Jacaré's death. We sense this in the "funeral" scene. Yet Rockefeller was also less than pleased with Welles. Welles had become interested in social movements and racial mixing in Brazil and this was not what Rockefeller was after, especially since Mexico was fast-becoming a preferred political ally and film market. Fairly quickly, the diplomatic framework for *It's All True* just sort of fell away. So Welles returned from Brazil with footage and sound and no way to complete the film. Welles eventually lost track of the footage, although he learned of its rediscovery before his death.

**Hass:** But it was found and you eventually became a producer of *It's All True* when the film was finally released in 1993. How did this happen? You move beautifully through many thematic and strategic shifts in the life of the film. And there is a wonderful richness to the work of the scholar writing about the ethnographic film which is more fiction than ethnography and which she also works to produce. Did this process ever make you dizzy? Push your thinking in new directions?

**Benamou:** Absolutely. It is difficult to write a dissertation, and then a book, while trying to produce and preserve a film. But I finally came to a point a few years ago where I was able to un-

(continued on back cover...)

## Alumni Profiles: Luke Waltzer and Paula Saha

Paula and I met when American Culture organized a meeting of majors in the fall semester of our junior year. We got to know each other in June Howard's American Culture 350 class, and started dating our senior year. After graduating, I moved to New York City to work and play while applying to graduate schools, while Paula stayed in Ann Arbor, writing for *The University Record*. Our long-distance relationship became medium-distance when she accepted a Newhouse Fellowship to attend Syracuse University to study newspaper journalism.

While Paula was in Syracuse, I worked as a production assistant at Clio, Inc., Visualizing History, a boutique firm that consulted on new media projects in the humanities, then entered graduate school at The Graduate Center, City University of New York, to pursue a Ph.D. in American History and continue to develop my interest in teaching history with

new technologies. I worked as the Durst Research Scholar with the American Social History Project through 2003 to build the foundation of the "Virtual New York City" web site.

In 1999, Paula accepted a reporting apprenticeship with the Newark *Star-Ledger*, and was assigned to a municipal beat in the suburban Essex County bureau. After completing the yearlong apprenticeship, Paula was hired by the *Star-Ledger*, where she remains a reporter today.

We were married in 2001. As we planned our wedding, it was important to us that both of our backgrounds were celebrated, and that the experience—for us, and for our guests—reflected our desire to create something shared out of our separate pasts. We prepared a Hindu-Jewish ceremony, co-officiated by a humanist Rabbi and a learned friend of the Saha family. We interwove elements of both ceremonies into a whole, mixing elements where we could, such as "The Seven Steps" from the Hindu ceremony and "The Seven Blessings" from the Jewish ceremony. The wedding exposed us and our friends and families to new experiences, and foreshadowed the life that we hope to live.

After the whirlwind wedding, we returned to our lives on the East Coast. Paula moved to the Morristown bureau of the *Star-Ledger* in 2001. In the last several years, she has written on topics as varied as local politics, education, the aftermath of 9/11, religious land use law, and sudden cardiac death in young athletes. She also authors a weekly community news column.

In 2002 I began teaching American History at Baruch College. In 2003 I accepted an Instructional Technology Fellowship with the CUNY Honors College. The fellowship is designed for advanced graduate students to support the final stages of graduate study, and the fellows provide the faculty and students support integrating technology into the core curriculum of the college.

In 2004, we began our most ambitious project when our daughter, Kaya Saha Waltzer, was born. Her name is another effort at cultural melding. It's derived from the Hebrew for "life" and the Bengali for "silhouette"—as well as being the title of a slamming Bob Marley album. Kaya's now a precocious two-year old, obsessed with video chats, the music from *Rent*, shoes of all kinds, and anything pink.

In 2006, I accepted a CUNY Writing Fellowship to work at the Bernard L. Schwartz Communication Institute at Baruch College, helping faculty learn to use weblogs and wikis in their courses, and also the E.P. Thompson Dissertation Fellowship from the History Department at The Graduate Center to support my dissertation, entitled "A Nervous Idealism: The Politics and Culture of American Adolescence, 1945-1963." The dissertation examines how, in the years after World War II and leading to the War on Poverty, contests over adolescence influenced the development of youth policy at both the local and the national level. New York City is a case study in this history.

Outside of our work, we try to make the most of living in the New York area. We spend most of our spare time visiting with family and friends who live between Washington and Boston, enjoying picnics in Central Park, doing the *New York Times* crossword puzzle together, cooking big meals, browsing shops selling items we can't afford, and watching movies. We've been fortunate to travel regularly together over the past ten years: between trips to visit family in Michigan and friends in other parts of the country, we've been to Israel and Jamaica, and went with our daughter to India this past January.

- Luke Waltzer

\*Luke and Paula are 1997 graduates of the University of Michigan. Luke received a B.A. in American Culture, Paula received a B.A. in American Culture and English.



*Blended lives and cultures:  
Luke Waltzer, Paula Saha, and daughter Kaya Saha Waltzer*

## Welcome!

American Culture is pleased to welcome the entering class of 2006. These graduate students represent the finest of their cohort and bring to us a wide range of interests and experiences. We look forward to helping these fine students achieve their professional goals.

**Christine Abreu**, Bachelor of Arts in American & Communication Studies, Ursinus College; Master of Arts in American Studies, Purdue University.

Interests: Cuban-American history, literature, and culture; Cuban exile communities and identities

**Alex Olson**, Bachelor of Arts in History, Stanford University; Master of Arts in History, University of Washington.

Interests: Modernism; 19th and early 20th century American cultural history; Native American Studies; photography and visual history.

**Rachel Quinn**, Bachelor of Arts in African American Studies, Wesleyan University

Interests: Social constructions of race in the African Diaspora, race & nationalism, mixed-race identity in popular culture.

**Kirisitina Sailiata**, Bachelor of Arts in American Studies, Macalester College

Interests: Comparative indigeneity; military; gender issues.

**Stephanie Teves**, Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Women's Studies, University of Hawaii Mano; Master of Arts in American Studies, University of Hawaii Mano

Interests: Colonialism; race and ethnicity; punk music; youth culture.

**Kiara Vigil**, Bachelor of Arts in History, Tufts University; Master of Arts in Social Studies Education, Columbia University; Master of Arts in Cultural Studies, Dartmouth College

Interests: Comparative autobiographies; gender; Native American cultural products; visual culture.

**Stephen Wisniewski**, Bachelor of Arts in Art History, Michigan State University

Interests: Museums, tourism, nostalgia, visual culture, and how memory works.

## Job Placement News from Recent Graduates

**Dolores Ines Casillas** was on a President's Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of California-Berkeley last year. She has now accepted a tenure-track offer to join the faculty of the Chicano Studies Program at UC-Santa Barbara.

**Katrina Mann** has accepted a tenure track appointment at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada. The position is in the Humanities Department where Katrina will be teaching American Studies and film studies courses, helping to build a Film Studies program.

**Congratulations, Ines and Katrina!**

## Graduate Student News

**Jan Bernabe** has been appointed to a three-year term on the American Studies Association's Minority Scholars' Committee (2006-2009). **Jan** also organized a panel, "Gestural Crossings: Filipina/o Historical and Cultural Critiques of Filipino-American Relations," and presented a paper as part of the panel entitled, "Improbable Alignments: Marlon Fuentes' *Face Fusion* Series, American Colonial Photography, and Epistemological Challenges of Filipino Identities" at the 2006 Association for Asian American Studies Conference held in Atlanta.

**Lorgia Garcia** is the winner of a Ford Dissertation Fellowship for 2006-07.

**Robert Hill** has received a Community of Scholars Fellowship from the Institute for Research on Women and Gender. Robert was also quoted in a recent New York Times article entitled, "A Safe House for the Girl Within" which describes the experiences of members of the transvestite community in New York in the early 1960s.

**Kathy Jurado** has received a Dissertation Completion/Postdoctoral Fellowship in Chicano/Latino Studies from Michigan State University.

**Justine Pas** has received a 2006-07 Dissertation Research Grant from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. Her review of Mary Patrice Erdmans' book, *The Grasinski Girls: The Choices They Had and the Choices They Made* (Ohio University Press, 2004) will be published in the University of Kansas' American Studies Journal.

**Dean Saranillio** and **Sharon Lee** participated in the Global Intercultural Exchange for Undergraduates last summer. They were part of a contingent that led a group of students to Hawaii. Students took part in a variety of service-learning projects that were designed to teach them about the history of Maui and learned about the *Sakada*, contract laborers who traveled to Hawaii between 1906 and 1946 from the Philippines.

**Matthew Stiffler** presented a paper on the Arab American experience this past June at the Second World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies held in Amman, Jordan. The paper was titled, "Speaking for a Fractured Diaspora: Lebanese in (and out of) the White House, 1974-76." Matt's paper explores the role of Arab American religious leaders as representatives of their communities for political action.

## A-MAIZ-ING STUDENTS: Sharon Lee and John Low

Graduate students Sharon Lee and John Low were recently named A-MAIZ-ING students by the Ann Arbor News! Sharon, who hopes to become a professor of American studies and documentary film maker, was praised for her leadership skills as past president of Students of Color at Rackham and her response to a racially charged incident on campus last year. John, after a successful career as an attorney, has returned to pursue a Ph.D. in American Culture. His motivation? A deep commitment to help his community, the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi of southwestern Michigan. Amazing, indeed!





## Program in American Culture

University of Michigan

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## Ethnic Studies News

### Latina/o Studies by Catherine Benamou

Over the past academic year, the Latina/o Studies Program witnessed much growth and change, and we are gearing up for a very dynamic year ahead. With regret, we bid farewell to our senior historian, Dr. Maria Montoya, who has relocated to New York University and the surrounding metropolis. After spending a year at Northwestern University as a postdoctoral fellow, our new core faculty member, Dr. Amy Carroll (Ph.D., Duke University, 2004), specializing in Latina/o performance studies and literature, has joined us with a joint appointment in American Culture and English. We have expanded our list of faculty affiliates so that our collective horizon of specialization now includes linguistics and education, as well as public health, psychology, sociology, social work, women's studies, nursing, anthropology, natural resources and environment, and music, in addition to the humanities disciplines in which we already excel. A special Whittaker I grant obtained two years ago through the office of the Provost and the Center for Learning and Teaching allowed us to revamp our gateway "Introduction to Latina/o Studies" course as a team-taught, interdisciplinary effort; since then this course, currently helmed by Prof. Maria Cotera, has acted as a magnet for new cohorts of UM students interested in Latina/o Studies as a concentration, a minor, and a home for community interaction. Thanks to a Whittaker II grant, we are beginning to build community-based components into our upper-level curriculum so that our core faculty can share their own field research with advanced undergraduate students in a tangible, socially constructive manner. As an active unit within Ethnic Studies and the wider campus community, LS is the proud co-sponsor of a plethora of upcoming cultural events, including special visits by nationally recognized performing artist Marga Gómez, performance scholar David Roman, photographers John Gallagher and Pablo Delano, essayist and historian David Romo, and a Hispanic Heritage Month keynote by stellar author Sandra Cisneros. We eagerly seek to recruit new senior faculty interested in accompanying us as we take our next steps as a pan-Latina/o, transnationally savvy, and interdisciplinary-fluent hub within the fertile, cross-disciplinary galaxy of American Culture.

### Native American Studies by Gregory Dowd

Native American Studies is bursting at the seams. Over thirty faculty and graduate students, along with a smattering of undergraduates, recently gathered for an informal celebration, and it is time we realize our growing strength. This year, we welcome as lecturers Margaret Noori (Ph.D. University of Minnesota), who is teaching the Ojibwa language courses with Hap McCue, and Drew Hayden Taylor, resident artist at the Residential Col-

lege and acclaimed Ojibwa playwright and humorist from Curve Lake Reserve and the city of Toronto. American Culture and History have added several new graduate students to our swelling ranks, among them Morgan LaBin, Kiara Vigil, Elspeth Martini and Nilanjana Majumdar.

Our recent programming included a May conference on Native American-Chicano/a Dialogues, co-sponsored with Michigan State and attended by some thirty scholars for two days of intense reflection and exchange. David Treuer of the University of Minnesota was here in September to deliver "The Clouds Overhead: Learning How to Read Native American Fiction", a lecture discussing his new novel *The Translation of Dr. Apelles* and his collection of critical essays, *Native American Fiction: A User's Guide*. Also this fall on Tues, October 24, 4:00-5:30 in 3512 Haven Hall, we will hear Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Australian Geonpulscholar of native title, whiteness, race and feminism, deliver "Writing off Indigenous Sovereignty: The Discourse of Security and Patriarchal White Sovereignty". In the winter term (Feb. 15, 4:00, Clements Library Great Room) Jonathan Lear of the University of Chicago (Philosophy) will be discussing: "Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation: Chief Plenty Coups and the Crow Nation." The presentation will draw on his new book: *Radical Hope: Ethics in the face of Cultural Devastation*.

Our faculty are winning accolades: Michael Witgen has won a Ford Foundation fellowship for this year; Andy Smith (nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 and winner that year of the Gustavus Meyers Outstanding Book award for *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*) has won the University of Michigan Center for International and Comparative Studies Human Rights fellowship for this year; Tiya Miles' *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family* won both a major book award from the American Studies Association and the Organization of American Historians' best first book award: the Frederick Jackson Turner Prize. Thanks, Tiya, Michael and Andy, for taking us to significantly new frontiers.

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derstand the film free of production pressures, and I've put this understanding to use in the preservation effort still taking place at UCLA Film and Television Archive, where 145,000 feet of nitrate negative are waiting to be preserved. We still haven't seen much of *It's All True*. I've also realized how important it is simply to open up a film text and to incorporate oral history in my reading of the scenes and the production history. Finally, it becomes very difficult to separate out issues of domestic politics from international policy, to study documentary without considering the role of the state as funder and arbiter of the circulation of visual "facts" - intersections that continue to interest me today as I look at different examples of hemispheric media. Thanks for revisiting this project with me.