



Department of American Culture • The University of Michigan

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# From the Chair

*Dear friends, colleagues, students and alumni,*



From my Haven Hall window on this early spring day, I can see the lofty but struggling elms (we lost another last summer) and the vigorous oaks and maples beginning to shade much of the Diag. Some students leaflet at the base of the Hatcher Library steps, and others hustle by on their way to, perhaps, their last final exams at the university or, as likely, to hand in their last paper—a little late. So it is with this letter, which is well past due. But there is an enormous amount of good news to share, and a great deal of achievement that I am eager to capture for you. I will call this period in our history: the era of prizes and surprises.

The Program in American Culture is no longer. What? That sounds terrible! But wait, it is actually fabulous, for we are now the Department of American Culture, a change the University Regents approved in July. Recognizing our growth and excellence, recognizing that we have been on a par with other departments, and recognizing that many of our peers across the nation had departmental status, the university readily agreed to our request to become a department.

We have over the past years added to our ranks. This year, Lisa Nakamura joins us as

Professor of American Culture and Screen Arts and Cultures. Lisa, the author of two books on race and the new media, most recently *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*, comes to us as a full professor from the University of Illinois, where she directed Asian American Studies. In addition to strengthening our own Asian/Pacific Islander studies faculty, Lisa, who is a national leader in digital studies, joins our own Assistant Professor John Cheney-Lippold in advancing the study of digital environments from a humanities perspective, informed by the social sciences. John, who writes about how digital environments construct personal identities, joined us in the fall of last year fresh from his graduate studies at the University of Southern California (See page 4). Also now working in digital areas is Associate Professor Maria Cotera, who was recognized, as lead collaborator, with a “Scalable Research Challenge” grant from the Advanced Research and Technology Collaboratory. The award encourages innovative research using advanced computational resources. Cotera’s project, “Chicana por mi Raza,” will result in both a digital archive and an interactive virtual network replicating, in some sense, the network of Chicana feminists active in the long civil rights era. Digital environments, an emerging area of study, popular among and important to our many undergraduates, is well suited to AC’s tradition, dating at least to the late 1960’s, of embracing and advancing the study of popular contemporary phenomena. Lisa’s, John’s and Maria’s work also pushes the study of race and racism—core AC concerns—into new virtual, territory.

With that (perhaps unfortunate) frontier metaphor, let me introduce you as well to Scott Richard Lyons, who joined our Native American studies faculty in 2011 from Syracuse University. Scott, an Associate Professor of American Culture and English, is the author of *X Marks: Native American Signatures of Assent*. Already, after two

years, a sought after and demanding teacher, Scott has become a leader of interdisciplinary graduate workshops and is well known to undergraduate student groups. We are delighted to share the news of his appointment with you.

There are always prizes to announce, but in this category, last year was simply extraordinary. Professor Tiya Miles broke into the national headlines in 2011 when she won the coveted MacArthur Award, commonly called the “genius” award. Tiya’s work on American Indian dispossession and slavery in the American Indian southeast is now widely known and celebrated, but what I want to share with you is this: the glee in American Culture was palpable. That someone so excellent and also so dedicated to serving others—Tiya, for example, is the Chair of the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies—would win such an honor boosted us all. Tiya also was boosted: to the rank of Collegiate Professor, a rank also recently achieved by Mary Kelley, Alan Wald, Philip J. Deloria and Jonathan Freedman. Collegiate Professors must excel in all areas—teaching, scholarship and service. The university is clearly noticing that American Culture is a potent unit.

And so are national institutions. Scott Kurashige has been appointed for a stint as a Sachs-Goldman fellow to advise the Smithsonian Institutions’ Museum of American History, and Phil Deloria serves on the board of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian.

One of the more important campus-wide awards is the Golden Apple Award, a teaching award, the winner of which is selected entirely by students. Only one is offered a year, and last spring it went to AC’s own Dr. Bruce Conforth. Astonishingly, Bruce also had been just selected by the Princeton Review as the “Best Professor,” and MTV selected Bruce to be filmed and broadcast

“ *we remain committed to the study of the historical and contemporary, confrontational and conflicted, making of culture and cultures in the place we call America.* ”

as one of its professors delivering their “last lecture.” Bruce, an authority on the blues and on American musical cultures more generally, received the Golden Apple award by urging students to pursue their calling. Following up on that extraordinary event, we learned that Dr. Richard Meisler, AC’s long-serving undergraduate advisor, had won the college’s Excellence in Education Award, only a handful of which are distributed each year at this enormous university. Richard has already won a major advising award for his work with undergraduates. Our undergraduate teaching also gained extramural notice in 2011, when Professor Yeidy Rivero’s approach to the classroom was featured in the [Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education](#). Yeidy joined us in January 2011 from Indiana University, where she had won undergraduate teaching awards. And last, but not least, this year saw one of our graduate students, Alexander Olson, win the Rackham Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award.

Encouraged by this tremendous recognition of our undergraduate teaching excellence, we continue to examine and strive to improve our undergraduate program. For example, we learned that our recently designed “minor” in American Culture has been accepted by the college, adding another credential to our unit. We now offer majors and minors in American Culture and Latina/o Studies, and we offer additional minors in Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies and Native American Studies. A certificate in Arab American studies is also available to our students. And this year, under the leadership of director Anthony Mora, our undergraduate committee has deeply involved undergraduates in the project of reforming our curriculum (See Page 5). Four students and five faculty members serve on that committee.

Several years ago we undertook a similar self-study and active reform of our graduate

program, and it is already clear that, with both additional funding and stricter deadlines, graduate students are moving more deliberately toward their degrees. Another prize winner from last year is relevant here, for Professor Philip J. Deloria won the Rackham Graduate School’s John D’Arms Graduate Student Mentoring Award. This means that we have recently won major prizes at every level of basic academic activity: research, undergraduate teaching, and graduate mentoring.

But AC, of course, is more than a center of teaching and individual scholarship, though it is that. It is also, by design and from inception, a hub, or better, a network of intellectual exchange and interdisciplinarity, as it has been since its founding sixty years ago. And one strong feature of our department is its eagerness to provide high quality seminars, workshops, and presentations for the university and Ann Arbor communities. With generous support from an alumnus, Greg Goldring ‘08, we have been able to plan two symposia, both on aspects of contemporary popular culture and American media that brought more than one hundred undergraduates and many faculty and graduate students into active conversation about issues relating to reality TV, new media, drama, and ‘zines. We have had many other conferences and symposia, including a visit by Maya Soetoro-Ng (the U.S. President’s sister), a symposium on the Port Huron Statement a half-century later, the Algonquian languages association annual meeting, a major symposium on the Native American Literary Renaissance, and a symposium on the Literary Left of the twentieth century. This barely taps the surface of the vigorous programming that we bring to the campus.

AC remains committed to its historic role in advancing diversity. In recognition of our efforts and success, we received last year the 2011 Rhetaugh J. Dumas Progress in

Diversifying Award from the university’s Academic Women’s Caucus.

We remain very active in the American Studies Association (ASA) and many of us ventured to the ASA annual meeting, held this year in San Juan, Puerto Rico, a city well known to at least two of our faculty members. There, you guessed it, yet another prize was bestowed on one of our faculty members, as Professor Alan Wald received the association’s Mary C. Turpie Prize, which recognizes his extraordinary record of teaching and mentoring, as well as his intellectual and administrative service to the field of American Studies. With three past presidents in our ranks and with at least one current counselor on the ASA board, we are a force to be reckoned with in that organization.

We continue to be deeply involved in issues relating to the civic engagement of scholars in the community. Along these lines, our own Professor Matthew Countryman heads the University’s Arts of Citizenship program, and Professor Julie Ellison was brought to the White House (yes, that white house) to participate in a national discussion of higher education’s involvement with the public titled, “For Democracy’s Future.”

Since my last letter, then, we have been showered with prizes and surprises, from Professor Miles’ extraordinary achievement to our own transition from program to department. But we remain AC (or, as undergraduates say: “AMCULT”), and we remain committed to the study of the historical and contemporary, confrontational and conflicted, making of culture and cultures in the place we call America.

Sincerely,

**Gregory E. Dowd**



# Preparing Our Students for the Digital Future

*One of the most exciting recent developments in the field of American studies and other academic disciplines has been the emergence of a field known as “digital humanities.” American Culture has taken a leading role on our campus, and nationally, in developing this critically important area for our undergraduate and graduate students. Given how digital and technological innovations have rapidly altered almost every aspect of our daily life in the U.S., it is small wonder that our current undergraduates are flocking to new classes on digital cultures. Yet, because it is such a new concept for those of us not reared with a tablet in the cradle, we asked our leading scholars in digital humanities, **Lisa Nakamura** and **John Cheney-Lippold**, to take a moment to outline what it means for our department and American studies:*

Digital humanities shifts academic business as usual by drawing on a new and diverse set of approaches to the study of culture and society. A digital humanist might create an online resource about American history that is free to the public, or they might analyze race, gender, and identity in born-digital texts such as blogs, online forums, or video games. Digital humanists might also study the histories of specific platforms, devices, or media made and used in the U.S. or reveal racial, gender, and sexuality profiling in search engines. Digital humanists can even be makers of digital resources themselves while serving as interpreters or theorists of digital culture. American Culture faculty and students are at the nexus of many, if not all, of these areas of the digital humanities.

We believe that the history of America is the history of technology and social transformation. In recent days, this has meant that digital media, in particular, have become especially ubiquitous. American Culture, with its already hip reputation among students, is the perfect perspective from which to study social media like Facebook, Twitter, blogging, and other culture-making practices. We bring interdisciplinary approaches to digital histories, digital media texts and discourses, and political economies to help us understand how we have become a “wired” nation; how contemporary culture is shaped by technology; and where we are going next.

Together, we are creating a new curriculum for American Culture that meets the needs and interests of contemporary undergraduate students. We teach introductory and advanced courses on Digital Culture, the Politics of Code, Race and Video Games,

Race and Digital Media, and other special topics. As you probably imagine, we bring what we study right into our classrooms. Our courses are classic liberal arts seminars and lectures enriched by innovative use of multimedia and social media. Students benefit from gaining a critical perspective on their everyday lives. After all, digital media take up a significant amount of the waking hours of U.S. users.

Yet, we also challenge students to see that there are vast inequalities in access, quality of service, digital literacy, and user experience within the U.S. So, too, we meet American Culture’s tradition of asking students to consider questions of social justice. Racism, sexism, and homophobia, after all, are the norm rather than the exception in popular social video game platforms such as Microsoft’s Xbox Live. American Culture courses are uniquely suited to addressing these emergent differences and placing them in a larger context of social discrimination, national identity, and social justice.

Our courses for graduate students similarly prepare them for research in an increasingly digitally mediated world. We train our students to use innovative methods to gather data, analyze texts, and produce original research on digital media. Twitter, Facebook, and other social awareness tools are challenging to study. Our goal is to work with graduate students on new methods of data collection, archiving, interpretation, and analysis. In some cases, they are inventing the methodologies that will define the very field of digital humanities themselves. American Culture faculty and students are at work publishing this exciting new work even



Lisa Nakamura



John Cheney-Lippold

as this newsletter goes to print (and digital!). Our scholarship reveals the intersections of profiling and surveillance, genomics and eugenics, video games, digital format histories, race, racism, gender, with digital media, software development, and media convergence.

This work has been made possible because the University of Michigan has made a public commitment to the development of the digital humanities through its cluster hire in Digital Environments, granting the Department of American Culture a lead in this exciting new field. Other unique collaborations across our campus further reflect this commitment.

Leadership in the digital humanities, we know, will require harnessing this ongoing support for faculty and student research. We have tremendous potential to grow. Indeed, we are already thinking about expanding our faculty to include a specialist in digital analytical methods. This potential faculty member would help us prepare undergraduate and doctoral students to enter the fiercely competitive job market with skills in data analysis as well as a thorough grounding in U.S. digital and technology history and culture.

The digital humanities is fundamentally a critical method. Though many may associate this term with computer-assisted forms of textual or visual analysis, our department emphasizes the critical study of digital culture and its ongoing shaping of our identities and U.S. culture as well as the use of software in humanities scholarship. It brings us to a deeper understanding about the nation and how it grapples with the rapid transformations that are ever transpiring.

## **Lisa Nakamura**

*Professor of American Culture and Screen Arts and Cultures.*

## **John Cheney-Lippold**

*Assistant Professor of American Culture*



# On the Forefront: *Liberal Arts at Work*

L-R: Joshua Neuman,  
Ari Weinberg,  
Diala Khalife,  
Abraham Liddell

Greg Dowd approached me last summer about serving as the department's Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS). Between you and me, taking charge of the undergraduate program was a daunting idea. Those who have been best at that job showed an unusual alacrity necessary to keep pace with our fabulous students and their amazing professors. On top of that, Greg informed me that this was not to be a typical year for the DUS office. The department had mandated that we take the undergraduate program into dry dock for a total overhaul of our operations. Every piece of the program was up for evaluation and reform. One thing was certain: I was going need to drink more coffee.

American Culture earned its distinction as the premier American studies program in the world because it has had an uncanny ability to reinvent itself in anticipation of new intellectual and cultural currents. Fortunately for me, that same spirit of innovation came from our brilliant Undergraduate Committee, making my duties as DUS a delight to perform. Joining me were my invaluable colleagues Evelyn Alsultany (See page 11), Brandi Hughes, Greg, and Richard Meisler, our *literally* award-winning undergraduate academic advisor (See page 3). We also welcomed the fabulous Tammy Zill, who had just joined our department as the new Undergraduate Program Coordinator last summer. Without doubt, though, the truly best ideas and greatest insights came from the four undergraduate representatives (pictured above, modeling our new student-designed t-shirts) on the committee: Ari Weinberg ('14), Abraham Liddell ('14), Joshua Neuman ('13), and Diala Khalife ('13). With such an amazing line up in the AC dugout, I just knew that we would hit it out of the park.

Together, we have forged a stronger, more nimble version of American Culture that launches at the dawn of our 60th Anniversary celebrations. This is an undergraduate program that takes into account the newest innovations in the humanities with a more profound understanding of the job market outside the academy's walls.

Indeed, if you have recently had a chance to have lunch with an American Culture undergraduate student, you have surely been

impressed by their energy and integrity. They are eager to assume their responsibilities as engaged citizens and professionals looking to effect change. Yet, like their counterparts across campus, they also have understandable anxieties about their futures when faced with an uncertain economy. They wonder openly about how to succeed in an era of belt tightening and ever changing job descriptions.

American Culture understands its responsibilities to our students and alumni in these grave times. In our year of deliberations, the Undergraduate Committee never lost sight of the practical realities that students face in seeking employment after graduation. We know, too, that this is an era when some politicians and media personalities have taken potshots at liberal arts degrees for cheap political gain. They propose that other degrees, like science or engineering, are all that we need in the nation. With great sadness, we have even witnessed a small number of universities capitulating to these loud, but few, voices by shuttering their American studies programs or radically reducing their funding. We, and the College, firmly reject such a future for Michigan and will never yield in our values. On the contrary, American Culture is doubling down on what we know that a humanities degree is worth. Our students graduate being able to engage individuals from diverse backgrounds and with multiple outlooks respectfully and productively. Technologies might change; but the ability to participate, reason, analyze, and write well will never go out of vogue.

Our new undergraduate curriculum, therefore, gives students the historical and contemporary perspectives and skills necessary to thrive in any number of careers, including teaching, law, journalism, health, social work, media, and public service. To achieve that, we are investing in critical new fields, like the digital humanities (see page 4), that engage students with the most current trends. We are also granting students greater flexibility to craft a degree plan that best meets their individual ambitions. Finally, we are creating a thrilling new course entitled "American Culture at Work" that will provide students concrete and



"real world" applications for their degrees.

The Undergraduate Committee, however, approached its efforts at reform holistically. Not only have we revamped the curriculum, we also made structural changes to the entire department to insure that undergraduate education remains at the very center of all of our endeavors. These included elevating the position of Director of Undergraduate Studies to that of Associate Chair. So, too, we have launched a major initiative to inform students about the rewarding jobs that await them once they graduate. As a kick-off event, Emily Lawsin, our Ethnic Studies Coordinator, hosted five recent alumni on a panel discussion about their careers with an American studies and/or ethnic studies degree. Those participating included Aisa Villarosa Berg ('08), Attorney, Michigan Children's Law Center; Carla Fernández-Soto ('11), Outreach Coordinator, VOCES; Nicole Fox ('04), Director of Health Education and Prevention, Department of Community Health and Family Wellness, American Indian Health and Family Services; Cornelius Harris ('05), Manager/Agent, Alter Ego Management & Booking; and Fiona Colleen Ruddy ('11), Alternative Food Program Coordinator, Eastern Market, Detroit. In one of the best Michigan events that I have personally attended, each of the panelists recounted how they use the skills they learned in American Culture and its constituent ethnic studies units every day of their working life. Such astounding alumni leave me humbled to be the caretaker for our superb undergraduate program.

I close by inviting you to come by Haven Hall. We are up to some mighty great things and I would enjoy showing you around. Mostly, though, I would love to introduce you to our brilliant students who have made the past year one of my best yet at Michigan.

**Anthony Mora**

*Director of Undergraduate Studies  
Associate Professor of American Culture,  
Latina/o Studies, and History*



# Congratulations, Graduates!

## Bachelor Degrees, American Culture

Boschan, Natalie	Butera, Mia
Campbell, Madeline	Debowski, Mariusz
Godden, Holly	Himmelrich, Ella
Hutchinson, Kathryn	Kennedy, Ariel
Khalife, Diala	Kotcher, Brynn
Mandoka, Haley	Morrison, Rachel
Neuman, Joshua	Newman, Grace
Newton, Ashley	Rabie, Serena
Reyes, Jazmine	Smith, Joshua
Stachel, Clare	Stubbs, Ian
Sullivan, Noble	Turner, Breanne
Washam, Richel'la	Zettell, Nicholas

## Bachelor Degrees, Latina/o Studies

Ayala, Guadalupe	Bowman, Amicia
Garter, Betsy	

## Minors, Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies

Chen, Gina	Cintron, Lena
Hu, Tiffany	Lin, Ada
Taras, Gene	Taguchi, Meari

## Minors, Latina/o Studies

Duarte, Jaqueline	Garcia, Odilia
Kifer, Jordan	Romo, Maria
Valente, Kelsey	Bule, Maria

## Minors, Native American Studies

Burgin, Leah	Cox, Forrest
Gonyon, Kayla	Steinhaus, Darcy

## Certificate, Arab American Studies

Awad-Farid, Sarah	Chehour, Rama
Issa, Dalal	Khalife, Diala
Mustapha, Ghada	Naim, Mohamad
Nasrallah, Ali	Rabie, Serena
Saad, Jaber	Shouhayib, Sara
Stephens, Tyrone	Zayid, Justin

## PhDs, American Culture

Christine Abreu, PhD – “Authentic Assertions, Commercial Concessions: Race, Nation, and Popular Culture in Cuban New York City and Miami 1940-1960”

Paul Farber, PhD – “Boundaries of Freedom: An American History of the Berlin Wall”

Christine Finley, PhD – “Decolonizing Sexualized Cultural Images: Bringing “Sexy Back” to Native Studies”

Alexander Olson, PhD – “The People’s Classroom: American Modernism and the Struggle for Democratic Education, 1860-1940”

Rachel Quinn, PhD – “Dominican Women’s Transnational Identities in Santo Domingo”

Aimee VonBokel, PhD – “The Inevitable and the Invisible: Stories of Race and Class in Two New York Museums”

Lee Ann Wang, PhD – “Ethnographies of Legal Inclusion: Protection, Punishment and Legal Fictions of Asian Immigrant Women”

## Joel S. Siegel Scholarship in American Culture

This year’s scholarship recipient is Jaqui Durate, who is graduating with a major in Sociology and a minor with American Culture in Latina/o Studies. Jaqui represents the best of that type of student who is attracted to the American Culture curriculum: bright, ambitious, and devoted to using her education for social justice. Jaqui is committed to helping underprivileged students attain the same types of successes that she has achieved. Michigan has provided her with both the education and opportunities she will need to accomplish her goals. She has put her training to work by participating in programs like the Michigan Public Policy and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute, where Jaqui learned to articulate new policy goals by drawing on quantitative scholarship. She has also worked with Proyecto Avance: Latino Mentoring Association (PALMA), a volunteer organization that links undergraduate students to local elementary school students. As one of their tutors, Jaqui works with young people whose first language is Spanish. This rewarding experience has only enhanced her commitment to working on education reform for minority students once she graduates.

Jaqui Durate represents the ideal student for the Siegel Scholarship and reaffirms that the type of education provided by American Culture has tangible benefits to her and the communities that she will serve in the future.

We extend our congratulations to the 2013 Joel S. Siegel Scholarship recipient, Jaqui Durate!

## In Memoriam

Joel S. Siegel, a long-time supporter of American Culture and our students, passed away on March 12th. In 1995, Mr. Siegel established the Joel S. Siegel Scholarship in American Culture which provides annual scholarship funding, based on financial need, for a student who best represents the potential for excellence in the Department of American Culture.

Dozens of students’ lives have been touched, and academic pursuits realized, by Mr. and Mrs. Siegel’s generosity over the years. The Siegel Scholarship is a lasting legacy that will benefit American Culture students for years to come. We are deeply grateful for Joel S. Siegel’s long-time support of our department and students - past, present, and future. Though he will be profoundly missed, his vision and commitment to liberal arts education continues to thrive in American Culture.



# Meet Our Students

*Over the past sixty years, American Culture has taught thousands of undergraduate students. We know that each one of those individual students left a unique mark and memories among our faculty. Walk up and down the offices of Haven Hall and you will encounter faculty members brimming with delight over the amazing seminar discussion they just left. Or they will give you a copy of an astonishing paper that they received last year that they think is better than many articles appearing in professional journals. Students are the heart and soul of our department. They challenge us to be the very best professors we can be. We wanted you to share in our enthusiasm by introducing two of our current students. Abraham Liddell and Ari Weinberg are just a sample of the tremendous talent we have the privilege of training every day in our classes.*

I am currently a junior concentrating in both history and American culture. I was first introduced to the Department of American Culture by a valued friend who was very fascinated with the ways that culture influences our thoughts and actions. American Culture, more than perhaps any other concentration, has a plethora of unique and fascinating courses. Classes range from analyzing race and ethnicity to searching for sexual or violent themes in media forms like film and literature. What makes concentrating in American Culture so valuable is that students have the ability to not only analyze America, but also better understand how they are a participant in and a recipient of American culture. By following any of the fascinating tracks in American Culture, a student comes to better know his or herself and how he/she may fit within the greater society as a whole. I plan on continuing my education and obtaining a

PhD with the hopes of working as a professor. I know that what I've learned thus far in American Culture will be of tremendous assistance in my future career goals. American Culture is a relatively young concentration, and for that reason I think that it is an exciting and dynamic field with many layers that have yet to be revealed. It is a field meant for inquisitive scholars.

## **Abraham Liddell**

I came from a high school with the motto, "we learn not for school, but for life." This applies appropriately to my experiences as an AC undergraduate--we learn in the classroom about histories and contemporary phenomenon that apply directly to life in the United States. Because AC classes demand a critical eye on seemingly neutral cultural ideals, tension arises between students in our assignments, discussions and lectures.

We are challenged on a daily basis to reconsider what we see in the media and our textbooks. For example, in my AC course titled, "American Values: The Problem of the We," we conversed about the meaning of the Confederate Flag. Though its origins stem all the way back to the American Civil War, the flag has been used as a symbol in the southern United States for several ideals: freedom, anarchy, white supremacy etc. During class there was a hot debate about whether the flag has racial meanings today. High tension arose between students, such as myself, who view the flag as distinctly racist and other students who think it is more symbolic of freedom from the federal government. I left class that day infuriated, but recognized after some reflection that my life experiences strongly influence why I view the Confederate flag as racist in a way that other students' might not. Such work comes with its frustrations, but in the end the rewards outweigh any drawbacks.

I hope to apply my critical thinking skills, ability to work through difference, and cultural historical background to my future as a professor. Between my undergraduate education and graduate school, I want to take a year or more off to work for a social justice organization such as Teach for America. I think that the time I spend outside of school can lend me time to escape the bubble of academia and further my understanding of the realities that we talk about.

## **Ari Weinberg**

## AC Undergraduate Writing Awards

Each year, we award two prizes to American Culture majors and/or minors for the best essays on a topic related to the field of American Studies/Ethnic Studies. These prizes recognize and honor the tremendously brilliant work that our students submit in our classes. This year, the competition proved quite rigorous thanks to the many excellent essays that students submitted for consideration. We extend our congratulations to our 2012-13 winners, **Jasmine Reyes** ('13) and **Lorna Mosher** ('14)!

Jasmine's paper, "**Violence and Agency in Lorraine Hansberry's play *Les Blancs***", takes a closer look at one of Hansberry's lesser known plays, one which appeared posthumously. We were impressed with the ways that Jasmine teased out more complicated and nuanced visions of colonialism at work in *Les Blancs*. She argues that Hansberry's final play assumed a more radical stance

than previous scholars might have noticed. Indeed, she compellingly outlines how the play evinces the notion that armed resistance is the best means for challenging colonial rule.

Lorna took us in a different direction with her equally insightful essay, "**To be Attractive and a Comedienne.**" Rather than taking humor as self-evident, Lorna considers how demands around gender and beauty informed past and present female comics' success and public personae. The paper outlines key changes in the ways that female comics have managed their images, from clownish figures to more recent "sexy" commentators. She concludes with a consideration of the ways that hidden assumptions about "attractability" continue to determine women comics' access to stages much more than their male counterparts.



# Navigations in American Culture: A View from First Year Grad Students

"Navigation" is a curious word. On the one hand, it implies a type of professionalism unique to nautical careers. Ship navigators are trained extensively in the tools of their trade, communicate in jargon, and share a common set of cultural and professional references and norms when they gather together. On the other hand, given a roadmap, almost anyone can "navigate" a car. Even then, if one has trouble using maps, there is always GPS or digital map services. But in these latter instances, is one still "navigating" as they respond to machine cues, or has the driver relinquished the decision-making power necessary to claim the title "navigator?"

This brief exploration of a multivalent term is akin to many of the challenges that first-year PhD students in the Department of American Culture must navigate on a daily basis. From seminars, workshops, conferences, and talks that train us in the history, professional norms, and methods of our interdisciplinary field to quotidian interactions with colleagues, new PhD students must chart a path for ourselves in a variety of intellectual and social spheres. Further, we are constantly confronted with issues in our scholarly work that require further problematization, critical reexamination, and analysis.

The six of us in the 2012-2013 cohort come from a variety of intellectual and cultural backgrounds. However, the aspects of American culture that we navigate in our work often intersect in unexpected ways that showcase the keystones of our field. Taken together, our projects cohere around a set of key terms already central to American Studies: race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, technologies of

representation and control, state power, social movements, and, of course, the nation and Empire in a transnational framework.

Joo Young Lee (B.A., U. of Delaware; M.A., Emory U.) comes to Michigan by way of Atlanta, Georgia. She — like Iván Chaar-López (B.A., History, U. of Puerto Rico; M.A., History, U. of Puerto Rico), who hails from San Juan, Puerto Rico, and myself (B.A., Political Communication, George Washington U.), from Phoenix, Arizona — is interested in digital cultures, new media, sexuality, race, and gender. Whereas Joo Young's navigations explore Korean American and Afro-Korean identity through cultural productions, Iván's work coheres around memory, violence, and mourning in social movements from the 1960s to the present. While my own studies are centered on software, the (counter)public sphere, queer studies, and pornography, the three of us share a common bond in our focus on media technologies and their effects on culture.

Proud Mainer Rachel Miller (B.A., English, Vassar Coll.) also works with issues of technological innovation, the color line, and "new media" — but in a more distant historical moment. Her research on the distribution of some of the first reproducible photographs in fundraising campaigns after the Civil War simultaneously investigates questions of race, visual culture, and activist networks in that period. Working from an archive that includes photos of freed slaves that were placed into white families' photo albums, her work challenges us to think about surveillance — of the "private" domestic sphere in the post-Civil War era by contemporary historians, and of

the "emancipated" bodies represented in the photographs.

While Iván, Joo Young, and I also have an interest in surveillance and the division between public and private, Birmingham, Alabama native Sophie Cooper (B.A., History, Yale U.; M.A., Oral History, Columbia U.) puts this question at the center of her research. She delves into the FBI's domestic counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO) of the 1960s and 70s to draw out the effects of state power on the Black Panthers and other groups. Sophie's critical navigations challenge us to think about how state-implemented technologies of control and othering discourses were deployed by both media institutions and law enforcement to monitor, suppress, and quiesce populations.

Stefan Aune (B.A., American Studies, Macalester Coll.) also puts state violence, surveillance, and technologies of control over life and death at the center of his work on settler-colonialism. His focus on Indian removal policy and the competing discourses surrounding this practice after the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 raises interesting new questions about the United States' historical status as a state of exception and Empire concerned with silencing and controlling "the Other."

As we identify new problems in our respective areas, however, none of the concepts we interrogate or deploy remain stable. American Studies is a field constantly in motion — an anti/trans/inter-discipline always at a crossroads, debating its current paradigm, and performing its own futures in doing so. As we are professionalized into academia and produce original knowledge of our own, we become a part of this process. This is the navigational process which, due to the field's unique and generative set of central questions and approaches, allows us to move fluidly within the contemporary moments through which it must pass. It is a joy and privilege to join together as emerging scholars.

## **Stephen Mollidrem**

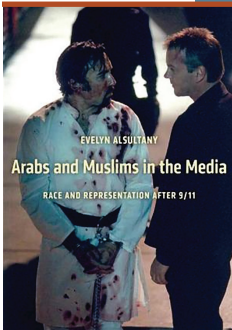
*Stephen Mollidrem is a first-year PhD student in the Department of American Culture*



L-R  
Sophie Cooper  
Ivan Chaar-Lopez  
Rachel Miller  
Stefan Aune  
Joo Young Lee  
Stephen Mollidrem

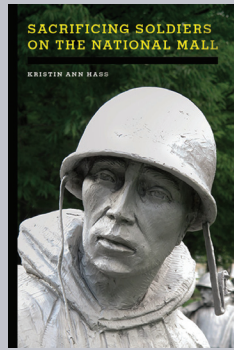


# FACULTY publications

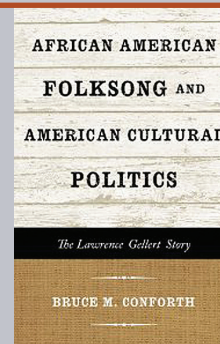


**Evelyn Alsultany**  
*Arabs and Muslims in the Media:  
Race and Representation After 9/11*

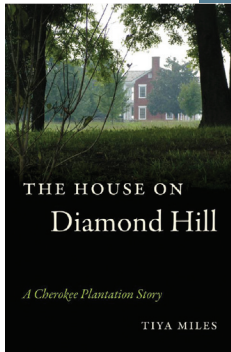
**Amy Sara Carroll**  
*Secession*



**Bruce Conforth**  
*African American Folksong and  
American Cultural Politics*

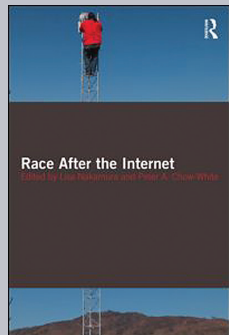
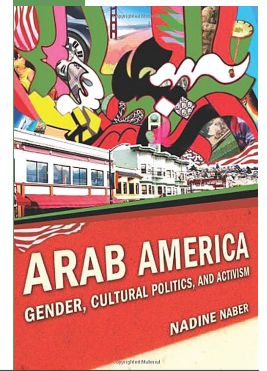


**Kristin Hass**  
*Sacrificing Soldiers on the  
National Mall*

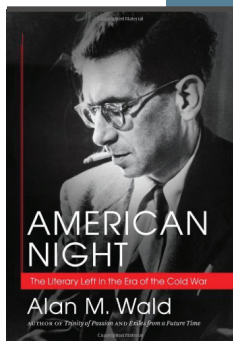


**Tiya Miles**  
*The House on Diamond Hill*

**Nadine Naber**  
*Arab America:  
Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism*

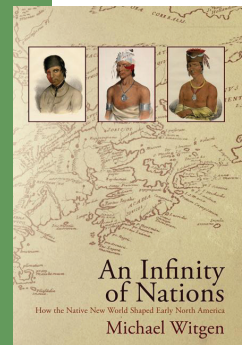


**Lisa Nakamura**  
(co-edited with Peter A. Chow-White)  
*Race After the Internet*



**Alan Wald**  
*American Night:  
The Literary Left in the Era of the Cold War*

**Michael Witgen**  
*An Infinity of Nations:  
How the Native New World Shaped Early North America*



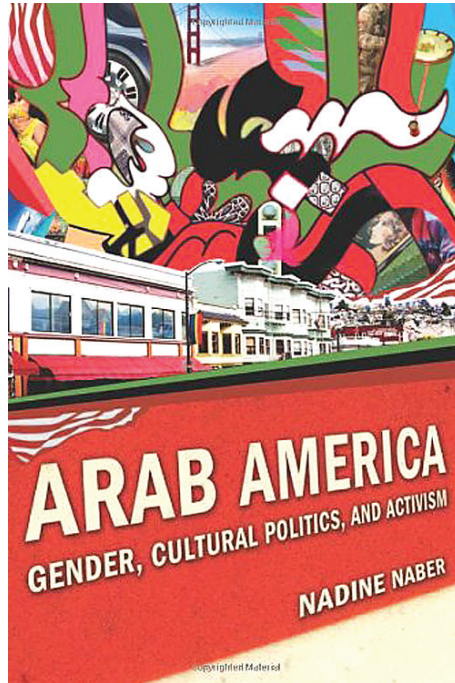


# Recent Scholarship in the Field of *Arab* American Studies

*Nadine Naber and Evelyn Alsultany, co-directors of Arab American Studies, each recently published books. Nadine Naber's Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism (NYU Press, 2012) tells the stories of second generation Arab American young adults living in the San Francisco Bay Area, revealing the complex and at times contradictory cultural and political processes through which Arabness is forged in the contemporary United States. Evelyn Alsultany's Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11 (NYU Press, 2012) examines a paradox: an increase in both the incidence of hate crimes and government policies that targeted Arabs and Muslims and the proliferation of sympathetic portrayals of Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. media.*

*American Culture asked each of these faculty members to describe their books and what they hope their work contributes to the field of Arab American Studies.*

**Nadine Naber:** As part of my work in Arab American Studies for the last fifteen years, this book is, in part, an internal critique of my own field and much of my own previous scholarship. Most Arab American Studies research—important and necessary as it is—has taken one of two approaches. First and foremost, there are analyses that interrogate the historically specific and changing effect of US government and media discourses about the Middle East on Arab American lives. This mode of analysis—perhaps in resistance to the sensationalist Orientalist focus on “backward,” “uncivilized” Arab and Muslim “culture”—remains all but silent on intra-Arab American relationships and differences, most critically those associated with gender and sexuality, as well as on any other issue falling under the rubric of “culture.” A second and less prevalent approach emphasizes “cultural” analyses, and is built upon the same assimilationist frame as the dominant middle class Arab American discourses. From this perspective,



Americanization appears as a struggle between an essentialized “Arab culture and tradition” that immigrants brought with them, and the dynamic “modern” culture they encountered in the US.

*Arab America* has been driven by my dissatisfaction with both approaches, and more broadly, by a commitment to answering these questions: How can Arab American Studies scholars respond to Orientalism in ways that do not reinforce it and how can we critique inner-communal relations of power without encouraging Arab-bashing? I have aimed to create an alternative model of Arab American identity, one that does not rely on the bifurcated and ultimately false options of the “effeminate cultural” self and the “masculinist political” self. While the former depends on and deploys an Orientalist logic, the latter claims to counter that logic through its critique of politics, war, and racism. But neither approach is sufficient for the study of gender and sexuality as lived relations of difference, power, and belonging in Arab American lives. But as all of us know, these problems are not merely academic ones; as we have seen, they are shaping the lives of

people around the world every day and are entangled in the new Orientalist discourses that reify and legitimize imperial racism, military violence, and war.

The book is based upon in-depth ethnographic research among eighty-six second generation young adults between 1998 and 2001. I believe that historically and politically situating an ethnography of Arab American life in the 1990's can challenge what has become a disempowering habit of viewing 9/11 as an essential break or rupture, more properly understood as an unprecedented “state of crisis,” instead of understanding it properly as an extension if not intensification of a post-Cold War US expansion in the Middle East. Through an analysis of the varied concepts of Arabness within middle-class Arab American families and within Arab and Muslim anti-imperialist social movements, I interrogate the dichotomies that ensnare Arab communities as they clamor for a sense of safety and belonging in the US. The book begins with an exploration of dominant middle class immigrant discourses that circulate in my interlocutors' homes and community networks—such as the concept of good Arab girls vs. bad American(ized) girls. From their stories, the themes of family, religion, gender, and sexuality emerge. These themes formed the backbone of the idealized concepts of Arab culture that circulated in their families and communities, and are the battleground on which they, and their parents, and the Arab community, and the looming world of America all wrangle. The book then moves to stories of young adults committed to anti-imperialist activism who are re-articulating dominant “Arab” and “American” narratives of family, gender, sexuality, and religion. By the end, *Arab America* puts forth a de-Orientalizing feminist mode of analysis that provides us with a language and a framework for conceptualizing how heteropatriarchy, co-constituted with multiple, interlocking power structures (such as class, race, and empire) specific to the diaspora, shape



“

*More diverse  
representations do not  
solve the problem of  
racial stereotyping.*

”

the inner-communal tensions that often ensnare Arab American movements and communities. Overall, this book illustrates that these apparently “cultural” concepts cannot be explained through Orientalist frameworks that abstract “culture” from history. Rather, they emerge against the highly invasive and shifting relations of power central to contemporary US neocolonialism and imperial formations and emanate from transnational sources and structures—Bay Area politics and social movements, imperial discourses and projects, and the experience of belonging to a “diaspora of empire.”

**Evelyn Alsultany:** Since September 11, 2001, there has been a dramatic growth in Arab American Studies. My contribution to this broader scholarly movement is to bring a Cultural Studies approach to Arab American Studies. Thus, I examine how cultural images about Arabs and Muslims participate in creating a larger field of meaning about race, religion, and gender. A distinct premise of my work is that positive representations do not solve the problem of negative representations. My work focuses on how even seemingly positive images can produce meanings that can justify exclusion and inequality. Cultural Studies opens up possibilities for examining how more diverse representations do not in themselves solve the problem of racial stereotyping.

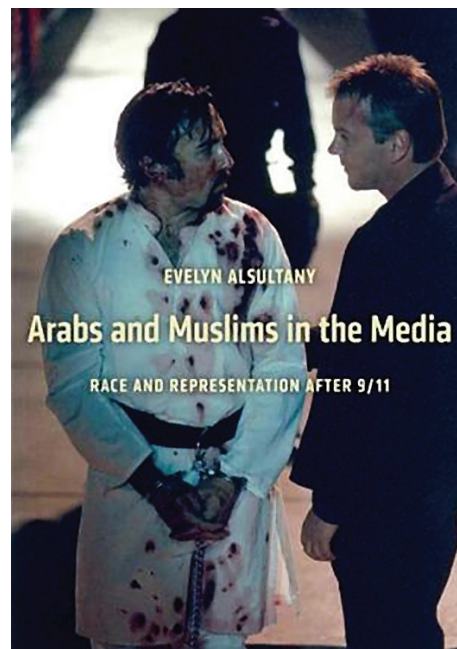
*Arabs and Muslims in the Media* was inspired by watching television after 9/11, particularly by my surprise at seeing many sympathetic representations of Arabs and Muslims. It is a historical trend that during times of war, the “enemy” — for example, Japanese during World War II, Russians during the Cold War — are demonized to facilitate passing policies that will kill or harm them. My book examines the following question: Given the increase in hate crimes and government policies that targeted Arabs and Muslims after 9/11, and public support for such policies, how do we make sense of the proliferation of sympathetic images? I set about analyzing

these sympathetic representations in TV dramas, news reports, and public service announcements in order to understand how they are operating during the War on Terror.

Many people have said to me that they believe that the ability to represent the so-called enemy in nuanced ways — to not demonize an entire people — is reflective of the dawn of a post-race era, an era where we are more aware and sensitive to stereotypes. This is partly true, but not the full story. I argue that a new standard in racial and cultural representations emerged out of the multicultural movement of the 1990s. This involves balancing a negative representation with a positive one. This has meant that if the storyline of a TV drama or film represents an Arab/Muslim as a terrorist, then the storyline also includes a “positive” representation of

an Arab or Muslim American to offset the negative depiction of the Arab/Muslim as a terrorist. I identify and examine a range of forms that these positive representations have taken, from patriotic Arab Americans to oppressed Muslim women. I argue that these positive representations should not be taken at face value to represent the dawn of a post-race era, but rather should be analyzed for their ideological work. What I found is that many of these positive portrayals of Arabs and Muslims do the “ideological work” of justifying discriminatory policies even while they are trying to avoid reproducing stereotypes.

Focusing on television dramas, news-reporting, and non-profit advertising, the book shows how positive portrayals of Arabs and Muslims do the “ideological work” of projecting a post-race U.S. that has resolved its racial inequalities. I specify several ways in which this process works: creating seemingly complex storylines and characters that are in fact predictable and formulaic; evoking sympathy for the Arab/Muslim American plight while narrating the logic of exception — that racism is wrong but necessary during times of crisis; eliciting an excess of affect for oppressed Muslim women while regulating sympathy for alleged terrorist Muslim men; and producing narratives of multicultural inclusion that reproduce restrictive notions of Americanness and acceptable forms of Muslim American identity. I argue that these seemingly positive representations of Arabs and Muslims have contributed to the formation of a new, subtle form of racism, one that projects anti-racism and multiculturalism while simultaneously producing the logics and affects necessary to legitimize exclusionary policies and practices. In the epilogue, I examine a few television shows, such as “Little Mosque on the Prairie” that present the possibility for more diverse images of Arabs and Muslims in the future.





# Wired: A/PIA and Internet Scholarship

*American Culture's vibrancy and social commitments emerge in great part from being the proud home of four ethnic studies programs at Michigan. Our Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies Program (A/PIA), in particular, is not only leading the larger AC department in new directions, it is also changing the national scholarly conversation about digital cultures and race. In this section, we check in with A/PIA to learn more about these developments*

There is no doubt that the internet has transformed contemporary American culture. Indeed, the national conversation about politics, race, gender, and identity is happening online as well as (perhaps even more than) through traditional media. Scholars are hard put to keep up with the rapid changes in digital media technology that have come to permeate all aspects of public life in the U.S. Many, for instance, do not yet realize that Asians and Pacific Islander Americans are surprisingly central to the formation of American digital culture. According to a recent Pew Internet and American Life Study, **87%** of Asians and Pacific Islander Americans are Internet users, making them one of the most “wired” groups in the United States. Along with that, **they are among the most productive creators of original content.**

Glimmers of this realization can be found in an article published in the *New York Times* on July 29, 2011 entitled, “For Asian American Stars, Many Web Fans.” The reporter describes how Asian Americans are using social media channels, such as YouTube, to broadcast content such as make-up tutorials, standup comedy, and music performances that address the experiences and social specificities of Asian American life, and they are doing so for a broad audience. Michelle Phan, a “Vietnamese-American in Los Angeles, has 1.5 million followers, the most-subscribed channel of any woman, Asian or not, on YouTube.” Performers such as Kev Jumba, and 21-year old Ryan Higa,

“a Japanese-American comic who lives in Las Vegas, has 4.1 million subscribers to his channel, in which he melds sketch comedy and personal musings. Until recently, he was No. 1 in total subscribers; he is now No. 2.” Clearly, scholars who study Asian America need to learn and understand the Internet. Likewise, internet scholars have an equal need to understand how and why Asian American content has proven so immensely popular in the world of user-generated content, especially videos.

Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies at the University of Michigan now offers a select number of courses, such as Race and Digital Games (see page 4), that grant students the critical skills and historical background needed to successfully live and work in this new digital age. Our A/PIA unit is one of the only Asian American Studies programs in the country that offers courses on these topics. These courses bring the digital into conversation with A/PIA's traditional strengths in Asian American social movements, literature, and musical form. Students might now consider how YouTube performers like Jake Shimabakuro, Ruth Ozeki, and others are turning to the Internet to disseminate their work and coalesce Asian American activist and discursive communities.

I shared my latest research in this realm at the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center last September (2011). My talk entitled, “A Different Point of View: Latino and Asian America in Cinema and New Media at the Smithsonian,” centered on the little known, but hugely influential, role of Asian/Pacific Americans on and in digital media <http://apanews.si.edu/2011/07/20/a-different-pov/>. In addition to describing the contributions of Kev Jumba and other Asian American YouTube stars, Nakamura discussed lesser-known digital authors such as George Fan, designer of “Plants versus Zombies,” a blockbuster game that sold more than 300,000 copies in the first nine days on the market.

We also see these new technologies remaking what it means to claim an “Asian American” identity. Asian Americans, of course, represent diverse and multiple ethnic and linguistic groups residing in the U.S. Through shared social media practices, Asian Americans are coming together across those divisions around themes such as racial stereotyping in media. Yet, those same platforms also permit each group to express its distinct cultural practices and forms of participation.

As Michigan students become increasingly interested in starting web or digital mobile based projects of their own, classes such as Asian American Digital Media and Digital Culture discuss some of the contributions of social media entrepreneurs like Ben Huh, whose “Cheezburger” network, started in collaboration with Eric Nakagawa in May of 2010, attracted 16 million unique visitors in 2010. Sites like 8 Asians, Angry Asian Man, and others produce social commentary on Asian American identity and politics.

Asians and Pacific Islander Americans are among the fastest-growing populations in the U.S. A/PIA at Michigan is committed to tracking the links between Asian Americans and digital culture in all of its forms.

**Lisa Nakamura**

*Professor of American Culture  
Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies,  
and Screen Arts & Cultures*



# Sonia Sotomayor and the Changing Face of

## *Latina/o America*

*American Culture's Latina/o Studies Program is one of the strongest, if not the strongest, in the nation in its own right. Students come to the unit because they have questions about what it will mean now that Latinos have become the nation's largest minority population; what have been the unique contributions Latinos have made to the United States; and how can they better understand the dramatic political wrangling that currently surrounds immigration reform? Many of our readers, we imagined, probably also have similar questions. We asked our Director of Latina/o Studies, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, to help us start to answer those questions.*

What does it mean to be a person of Latin American descent in the United States in 2013? For one, it means being part of an oxymoron: the majority minority, an increasingly growing population marked by the great success of very particular individuals accompanied by overall persistent social challenges such as poverty, lack of representation in many spheres of power, and aggressive harassment, particularly for the undocumented. This paradox is worthy of sustained attention, precisely of the sort we offer in many of the undergraduate and graduate Latina/o Studies classes we teach at the University of Michigan. How can we go about understanding this?

The publication in January of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor's memoir *My Beloved World* sheds light on some of these complexities. In her book, Justice Sotomayor traces her life experiences in great detail, from her birth to Puerto Rican parents in the Bronx in 1954, her educational experiences in Catholic parochial schools and later at Princeton and Yale Law School, to her experiences as an Assistant District Attorney in NY under Robert Morgenthau, her life in private practice in the law firm of Pavia and Harcourt, and her eventual confirmation as a judge, first at a federal District Court, then at the Court of Appeals, and in 2009 to the Supreme Court. Her memoir is filled with lucid details and moving anecdotes about the benefits of affirmative action, which she wholeheartedly endorses; the health challenges of living with type 1 diabetes; and her difficulties at successfully maintaining a personal relationship, which led to her divorce from Kevin Noonan. Sotomayor's book is an engrossing read filled with inspiring stories and profound insights about the meanings of a life well lived. It is a profoundly optimistic story that emphasizes the importance of public service, of helping others and living in community, be it that of your friends, family, or the nation-state. Fiercely insistent in her non-partisanship as an independent voter, we can see in many of her positions a historic link to causes espoused by the Democratic Party, to which she also owes her judicial career: she first became a judge due to the nomination of a Democrat, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan from New York, and was appointed to the Supreme Court thanks to the election of President Barack Obama.

Sotomayor's story is enormously inspiring but it is sobering to realize how unusual it is; how few Latinas/os there actually are at the upper echelons of power in Washington, D.C., in spite of the fact that the entire Mexican-American Southwest has been part of the U.S. since 1848, that Puerto Rico has been a colony since 1898, and that Cubans have been arriving in large numbers since 1959. Professor

John A. García's book *Latino Politics in America: Community, Culture, and Interests* (revised edition 2012) discusses this uneven electoral integration; he includes a list of the Mexican-American and Cuban-American men who have served on the Senate, listing only four, the first three from New Mexico, plus Robert Menendez (D-New Jersey); we can now add the dramatic rise of Cuban-American Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) in 2013. (Fortunately, Latinas/os have been better represented in the House.) Professor García, who is a faculty associate of our Latina/o Studies Program, has spent his life analyzing the role of Latinas/os in American politics, be it at the local, regional, state, national, or international level, nudging his fellow political scientists to engage with this matter in a serious way. In his book he offers a nuanced story of the many challenges faced and of many strategies for effectively overcoming some of these.

Sonia Sotomayor is just one of many wise Latinas to leave her mark in the United States, as we learn from Professor María Cotera's groundbreaking book *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita González and the Poetics of Culture*, published in 2008. As Cotera describes, González's efforts at documenting South Texas history and folklore led her to write books such as *Dew on the Thorn* and the novel *Caballero* (co-authored with Margaret Eimer); her political interests led to her participation in the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in the 1930s and 40s and later motivated her struggle to institute bilingual education for Spanish-speaking students with her husband Edmundo E. Mireles. Professor Cotera highlights how in spite of her fervor and talent, González (1904-1983) was frequently unable to find publishers for her books, and how it was only recently (in the 1990s) that some of these pioneering texts have seen the light.

The struggle for social justice embodied by Sonia Sotomayor's life has impacts on our own Ann Arbor campus, for example in the Coalition for Tuition Equality's efforts to achieve in-state tuition for undocumented immigrant students who have graduated from a Michigan high school but currently have to pay out-of-state fees. The Latina/o Studies Program is an active member of this coalition and has lent its voice at Board of Regents' meetings and through letter writing, for example in support of Kellogg Community College's affirmative measures on this matter. Latina/o Studies alumna Carla Fernandez (Class of 2011) works with many of these youth at the Voces Community and Cultural Center in Battle Creek, Michigan, before they enroll in KCC. Her work is a close-to-home example of how activist efforts can lead to actual change: how the positive labor of transforming American society happens at a local level as much as at the national one.

### **Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes**

*Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes is Associate Professor of American Culture, Romance Languages and Literatures, and Women's Studies, and director of the Latina/o Studies Program. He can be reached at [lawrlafo@umich.edu](mailto:lawrlafo@umich.edu).*

# Native American Studies

## *Leaders on our Campus*

Native American Studies is thriving at the University of Michigan. We have many successes and accomplishments to celebrate. In fact, the hard work and professionalism of the NAS faculty has resulted in the university asking many of us to serve in leadership positions. Currently, Philip Deloria serves as the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education; Gregory Dowd serves as the Chair of the Department of American Culture; Tiya Miles serves as the chair of the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies; and Meg Noori serves as the Director of the Comprehensive Studies Program.

Of course, our faculty continue to experience considerable success for their intellectual leadership and accomplishments as well. In addition to being awarded a Humanities Institute fellowship (see Chair's Letter), Scott Lyons has developed an exciting literary symposium, *Globalizing the Word: Transnationalism and the Making of Native American Literature*, scheduled for May 10-11, 2013. This important event will bring fourteen distinguished scholars and writers to Ann Arbor so that they might contemplate the next direction for Native

American literary studies. Scholars will consider the impact of nationalism in Native literary production and criticism, and will explore the promises or pitfalls of taking a more transnational approach to literature in an era of increasing globalization. More information about the symposium can be found on the conference website at: [www.globalizingtheword.org](http://www.globalizingtheword.org).

As mentioned in the Chair's Letter (See page 2), Tiya Miles was awarded a MacArthur Foundation fellowship in 2011 for her work in African American and Native American history, and has recently been awarded the prestigious Mellon New Directions Fellowship. Tiya's leadership outside of the academy has resulted in Eco Girls, an exciting organization for girls in urban southeast Michigan that fosters environmental stewardship, ecological literacy, cultural education, and friendship building. This fall Phil Deloria, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg Collegiate Professor, gave his collegiate lecture at the Rackham Amphitheater. Phil has also launched the Sophomore Initiative, a program designed to engage students during their second year at the University of Michigan. The Sophomore Initiative offers a dynamic set of courses targeted to enrich this critical and often transitional point in a student's education. And finally, Joe Gone is the 2013 recipient of the Stanley Sue Award for Distinguished Contributions to Diversity in Clinical Psychology from the American Psychological Association.

In addition to their scholarship and campus leadership, Phil and Tiya participated in a panel discussion entitled, "Identities in Red, Black, and White," to kick off the LSA Race Theme Semester for this winter. For those unfamiliar with the theme semesters, they provide undergraduate students opportunities to explore a particular topic (in this instance, race) through a variety of classes, exhibits, symposia, lectures and community events. The event represented NAS well, and placed us at the center of an exciting campus wide discussion about the meaning of race.

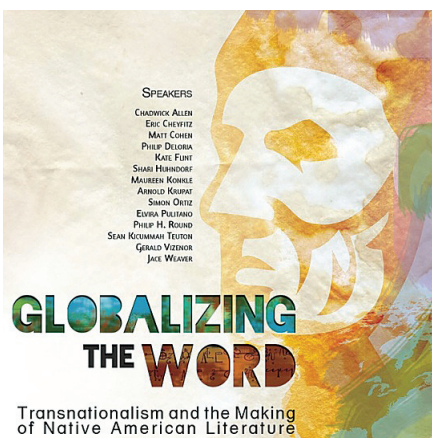
The graduate students affiliated with Native American Studies have made significant contributions to our program and have shared in our successes. In the past two years graduate students affiliated with our program completed their PhDs in History, American Culture, and Anthropology. Congratulations to Kelly Fayard, now teaching at Bowdoin College; John Lowe, teaching at Ohio State University-Newark; Angela Parker, teaching at Dartmouth College; and Kiara Vigil, teaching at Amherst College. Our present graduate students have managed to establish, fund, and operate two new workshop series, one focusing on Settler Colonialism and the other, the American Indian Studies Interdisciplinary Group, focusing on Native Studies broadly construed. Both forums draw students and faculty from throughout the university for in depth analysis and discussion of the most exiting scholarship effecting Native American Studies as a field. These programs have been integral in the development of a sense of community between faculty and grad students working in NAS.

Finally, NAS was very happy for the return of powwow to the Ann Arbor campus. The 41st annual Dance for Mother Earth Powwow was held at Crisler Arena on April 6-7 and, thanks to the hard work of the Native American Student Association, it was a great success! This annual event draws together students, faculty, and local members of the Native American community. Among those guests was the Native American leader, teacher, and lecturer Dennis Banks. Banks, one of the cofounders of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1968, took a moment to pose for a photo with Scott Lyons and me as we chatted about the new futures for our program.

**Michael Witgen**  
*Director, Native American Studies,  
 Associate Professor of American  
 Culture and History*



L-R: Michael Witgen, AC/NAS,  
 Dennis Banks, Scott Lyons, AC/NAS





*American Culture is celebrating its 60th anniversary at the University of Michigan. As one of the oldest programs in American studies in the country, we have educated generations of Wolverines about the changing meanings of U.S. citizenship and national belonging. American Culture started with a small, but dedicated, coalition of faculty and students who volunteered their time and intellectual talents.*

*They eschewed traditional academic disciplinary boundaries for new scholarly conversations about what it has meant to be "American." Over the years, we have grown and matured into an unmatched center for understanding the nation's ever increasing diversity and global connections.*

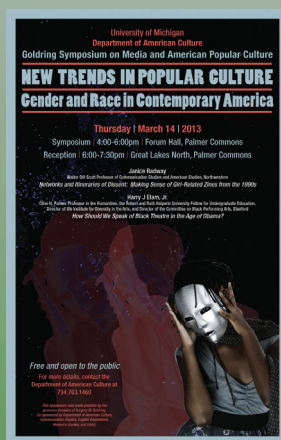
*Today, we are the top American studies department in the world. Our students and faculty are uniquely committed to social justice and the highest standards of scholarship. We are proud, too, to be home to ethnic studies programs at Michigan: Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies, Arab American Studies, Latina/o Studies, and Native American Studies.*

*For the next year, the Department of American Culture will celebrate this momentous milestone with special events, guest speakers, and unique class offerings. Join us in the festivities!*



## Goldring Symposium on Media and American Popular Cultures

American Culture serves the Michigan campus through our innovative classes and also by bringing scholars from across the nation to Ann Arbor. We give students opportunities to engage with the leading minds who are grappling with the critical issues facing the nation. Thanks to the generous support of American Culture alumnus Gregory W. Goldring, our department hosted two such symposia on new media and popular culture in 2012 and 2013. The latter of the two, entitled "New Trends in Popular Culture: Gender and Race in Contemporary America", brought to campus Janice Radway, the Walter Dill Scott Professor of Communication Studies at Northwestern University, and Harry J. Elam, the Olive H. Palmer Professor in the Humanities, Stanford University. Students and faculty enjoyed an invigorating discussion about the meanings of race and gender in current literary and dramatic works.



## American Culture NEWS Spring 2013

### Department of American Culture University of Michigan

3700 Haven Hall  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1045

Tel: 734.763.1460  
Fax: 734.936.1967  
Web: [www.lsa.umich.edu/ac](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/ac)  
Email: [ac.inq@umich.edu](mailto:ac.inq@umich.edu)

**Chair:** Gregory Dowd

**Director of Undergraduate Studies:**  
Anthony Mora

**Director of Graduate Studies:** Kristin Hass

**Ethnic Studies Directors:**  
Scott Kurashige,  
Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies  
Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes,  
Latina/o Studies  
Michael Witgen, Native American Studies

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