Kristin Buterbaugh, American Studies Program, Class of 2009

I came to Northwestern knowing that I would someday become a physician. At the start of university, I had a very conventional idea of how I would practice medicine. However, the interdisciplinary framework of American Studies broadened my view on the importance of historical and cultural competency in medicine and compelled me to reconceptualize what kind of doctor I would become. Thanks to my intellectual rearing in the American Studies program, I was accepted to the Mount Sinai School of Medicine during my sophomore year at Northwestern through the Humanities and Medicine Early Acceptance Program. I credit the American Studies program and the program’s advisors during my time at NU (Professors Kate Baldwin and Jay Grossman) for instilling in me the interdisciplinary goal to bridge the “two cultures” of the sciences and the arts.

Since graduating from Northwestern in June 2009, I have moved to the University of Cambridge to pursue a Masters of Philosophy in the History and Philosophy of Science (HPS) on a Gates Cambridge Scholarship. My research interests in the history of medicine concentrate on gender, reproduction, and technology. My work throughout the year has focused on uncovering the voices of marginalized groups in the history of medicine, whether it be the historical construction of the medical student, the female voice, or discreditable medical practices. Continuing in this vein, my dissertation focuses on the consideration of disability and the male body in the history of medicine.

Outside of academics, this year has proved to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience! I have participated in storied traditions such as formal dinners in medieval buildings, “punting” on the River Cam, and singing arias for the King’s College Choir in the famed King’s Chapel. I have also received a warm welcome into the Gates Cambridge Community. Through our many events, I have made lifelong friends and stretched my intellectual limits. In particular, I will recall discussions from the Gates Scholars’ academic symposium on “Theory and Practice” as I continue to bridge the humanities and medicine in my future professional career.

Kristin Buterbaugh, American Studies Program, Class of 2009

Notes from Abroad continued

A Message from the Director

By Kate Baldwin

I am with great excitement that I write my first Director’s message for the American Studies Newsletter. I am fortunate to be following in the footsteps of esteemed professors. Much is owed to them: Carl Smith and Jay Grossman have given generously of their time and expertise to guide me around the stars and stripes of the Program. And, in no small part to their tutelage, it has been a flag ship period for American Studies.

We have had two phenomenal years of research, writing, teaching, and extra-curriculars. All in all, it has been a period of tremendous growth. From hosting Open Houses and the new reading group titled Middle Mondays, to hearing Michael Chabon lecture to a standing room only crowd and attending the Presidential Inauguration in D.C., it has been a period that has engendered an enormous sense of community and togetherness in the Program.

In addition, we have had the pleasure of new faculty joining our ranks. Teaching the seminar over the past two years were Professors Martin Redish of the Law School, Professor Lyman W. Butterfield of the English Department, Professor Joe Barzon of History, Professor John Cribby of English and Latino/a Studies, Professor Jan Radway of Communication Studies, and Professor Jay Grossman of English. Professor Julia Sven continued to teach her over-subscribed seminar on Faulkner. Jim Walsh taught his revamped course on the Voting Rights Act, and Larry Staffhagen continued to comment on the “Bad News” around us.

Welcome into the Gates Cambridge Community. I have also received a warm welcome into the Gates Cambridge Community. Through our many events, I have made lifelong friends and stretched my intellectual limits. In particular, I will recall discussions from the Gates Scholars’ academic symposium on “Theory and Practice” as I continue to bridge the humanities and medicine in my future professional career.

The newsletter of the American Studies Program at Northwestern University

Judd A. and Marjorie Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences

The University, the review was prompted by an initiative to promote more collaboration between our program and other programs affiliated with American Studies, such as African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Performance Studies, and the newly announced Program in Latino/a Studies. The result of the review thus far has resulted in only a slight change.

The structure of the program remains the same: all students take the seminar in their first year as majors, and all seniors take the senior seminar. All majors must pass their “major requirements” from ten related courses, and complete two quarters of the American History survey. The one change is that students who enter as sophomores are no longer required to take two years of the seminar. This arrangement opens up some space in our seminar for interested majors in the programs mentioned above, and also provides the opportunity for us to benefit from the faculty resources of these programs. It is a win-win situation for the program, as our faculty pool expands and our students benefit from the insights and interests of students in these affiliated programs. In lieu of the seminar, second-year majors who do not seniors are responsible for running the Middle Mondays reading group. This group meets once a quarter, and last year we read pieces as wide-ranging as an article from an academic, Edgar Allen Poe’s “Chillings,” and Abraham Lincoln’s second inaugural address. In addition, I have revived the American Studies Reading Group. This is a faculty and graduate student group that gathers each quarter to read a book, which is then discussed with one volunteer faculty leading the discussion. One of my first books was Louise Minkoff’s A History of Heaven, American Minimaries and the Radial Conversion of the Middle East. This book was the American Studies Association’s prize for best book of 2008.

Speaking of inaugurations: the American Studies Program witnessed the swearing-in of our nation’s first African American President. It was a momentous celebration: a First Lady, a Second Lady, and the F. A. N. S. A. It was a momentous celebration: a First Lady, a Second Lady, and the F. A. N. S. A. It was a momentous celebration: a First Lady, a Second Lady, and the F. A. N. S. A. It was a momentous celebration: a First Lady, a Second Lady, and the F. A. N. S. A.
A Message from the Director

the Battle of Manassas, we were interested to learn alongside our Revolutionary History class notes that the twentieth-century claim to fame for Manassas is its link to Linn's Bobbin.

Other highlights of the 2009-10 academic year included visits to MOCA and a performance of Oedipus by Chicago’s Steppenwolf, an event titled “Lunatic’s Language,” celebrating the Lincoln bicentennial, which included Lincoln scholar Garry Wills, Doug Wilson, and NU’s own Professor Donald Zaverbisky presenting accounts of the second inaugural address. This event was co-sponsored by a variety of departments, including Communication Studies, History and English.

In April 2009, we hosted the Pulitzer Prize winning author Michael Chabon, as part of our “Great Authors” lecture series, which continues to be generously supported by the office of the President. This series asks its speakers to comment on an American author of their choosing, and Mr. Chabon wrote a lecture on Poe for the event. A quick Google search revealed that the talk showed up on many blogs as the Chicago literary event of the spring!

Also in 2009, we welcomed Professor Carla Kaplan to campus where she read a section from her new book, Mrs. Annie of Harlem, a study of the white-female patrons of the Harlem Renaissance. And in October we helped to fund a symposium to mark the 50th anniversary of Lorraine Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun. In the winter of 2009, Harlan Curry read to us from her memoir of growing up as a black youth in Harlem. As always, the Program seeks to collaborate with departments and programs across the campus to produce programming that keeps students stimulated and enthused.

Over the winter holidays we raised money and wrapped gifts for NUSAC’s outreach programs: our winter party is a wrapping party! We also toured the American art of Chicago’s Art Institute, which continues to be generously supported by the office of the President. This series asks its speakers to comment on an American author of their choosing, and Mr. Chabon wrote a lecture on Poe for the event. A quick Google search revealed that the talk showed up on many blogs as the Chicago literary event of the spring!

Notes from Abroad

Sam Kleiner, American Studies Program, Class of 2009

I didn’t know what I should expect in undertaking two years at Oxford after graduating I had only visited the UK once before, when I was twelve, and I approached my departure with a bit of apprehension. A year later, I can confidently say that all of my worrying was unnecessary.

Oxford’s towers may be ancient and the winters may be freezing (with only a few hours of sunlight) but the university is filled with teachers and students who have unlimited interest in their subject, and yours as well. My college, St. Antony’s College, prides itself on being the most cosmopolitan of the graduate colleges with students from every country studying different facets of international politics. Over a dinner in hall, I would find that our table would regularly have six or more countries represented at it. My peers in the MPhil in International Relations are researching everything from UN peacekeeping to international financial regulation but we all have been able to help each other move projects forward.

The year has taken me to places that I had never thought I would travel to. Going to a small fishing town in Cornwall has been equally as important to me as visiting London and the ease of travel within the UK has made travel throughout Europe an easy option for our eight-week long breaks from class. Whether it was being in Berlin for the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall or going to Gabay for St. Patrick’s day with friends or traveling by bus across Turkey with a high-school friend, the year has brought new views into how I view the world.

Perhaps the most invigorating part of the year, though, has been to further define my own research interests. American Studies prepared me to confront questions in unorthodox ways and to think creatively with research. I knew that I was interested in constitutional and international law and ended up being interested in America’s entry into the Korean War (an action taken under UN authorization without Congressional authorization). Rather than write about what had already been written, I spent a week at the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri doing archival research (a skill I had learned in my research for American Studies). Over the next months, I will be writing up those discoveries for my thesis.

As I return to Oxford for my 2nd year I intend to make the most of my time there. It is anything like this past year. I know it will be filled with many unforgettable moments.