

# AMERICAN GRAFFITI



## Message from the Director

Greetings from Northwestern where the term has begun and the fall is upon us. Well past its 40th year now, the Program in American Studies not only attracts some of the best students in the College but the University as a whole.

So much of the essence of the American Studies Program is animated by the intellectual conversations and faculty mentorship enabled by the core seminars; seminars that usually have low student-to-teacher ratios. I am grateful for the faculty who taught in the Program last year and equally so for those teaching this year. We are especially excited about this year's courses, including the 301 sequence offered by Professors Rebecca Zorach (Art History), Robert Orsi (Religious Studies), and Lane Fenrich (Gender and Sexuality Studies), as well as Professor Shana Bernstein leading the capstone 390 seminar. In addition to these, two other elective courses should be noted. The Program in American Studies, in collaboration with African American Studies and Gender and Sexuality Studies, welcomes Professor Marlon Bailey this fall where he will teach, at the undergraduate level, a course on black feminist theory. In the winter, Professor Ana Aparicio will offer a course on immigration jointly listed with Latina and Latino Studies.

There is a kind of ebb and flow to most units at Northwestern with respect to faculty appointments and the American Studies Program will miss dearly Professor Kate Baldwin who left Evanston to assume a position at Tulane University. Like her position here, Kate will similarly cross a number of units at Tulane as Professor of English, with joint

appointments in Communications and Gender and Sexuality Studies. Professor Brian Edwards, who has also played an important role in our program, will be joining Tulane as Dean of the School of Liberal Arts.

My mentioning the Program's 40+ years earlier is a reminder of the symbolism of the Class of 2018 as well as the incoming cohort. The very first cohort of brave undergraduates from the 1970s seeking to do something called "interdisciplinary studies" produced a graduating class of four students. This year's cohort was exactly the same number. The rich history of the American Studies Program to the College was also symbolized this past year by having our first pair of parent-child graduates with Freddy Levenson and his father James Levenson (AMST '85). This past year also saw one of the largest applicant pools in recent years. We took a banner class with a diverse group of extremely talented students.

I'll close here in much the same way I began this note, with thanks to our generous colleagues and in amazement of our talented undergraduates. In producing an exemplary senior thesis, this year's winner of the Carl Smith Prize for Outstanding Essay, Chelsea Hammersmith not only embodied the challenge of our program but also the intellectual promise of interdisciplinary scholarship guided by her advisor, Professor Amy Partridge. This spirit of collaboration is one of the many things that makes American Studies at Northwestern so special.

Warmly,  
Ivy





Introducing Senior Symposium presenters



Leading the 301 Seminar



With Michael A. Fitts, President of Tulane University.

## Farewell from Kate

I'm deeply honored to have worked with so many American Studies students and colleagues during my time at Northwestern. Getting to participate in the process that is the American Studies major was a highlight of my decade on the faculty. Saying goodbye to my final cohort of seniors last spring was especially bittersweet, as I cherished the senior seminar as one of the Program's unique hallmarks. It was a place where I frequently learned as much as I taught, a place where the enterprise of education was distilled to its finest texture. I continue to be awed by the achievements of our alums, who are impressive in so many areas. And I look forward to seeing how the next iteration of American Studies students shape the future that is theirs."

## Northwestern at the ASA

Last fall we sent a cohort of AMST majors, in addition to students from affinity units in African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Latina and Latino Studies, to the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association. The theme of the conference was "Pedagogies of Dissent."

Collaborating with the Directors of Undergraduate Studies in these units, the Program sponsored twenty undergraduates to attend lectures and plenaries to get a glimpse of the different kinds of questions that animate the broader field of American Studies. We were also able to organize a special session for undergraduates to be in conversation with both the ASA's then-current President Professor Kandice Chuh and President-Elect Professor Roderick Ferguson. After the conference, we held a follow-up



Northwestern Students at "We Demand: A Special Session for Undergraduates"

# Student Events

discussion with the undergraduate attendees reflecting on how the conference shaped their perspectives about debates in the field and how it framed their classroom experiences on campus; we are grateful to Professors Elvia Mendoza and Doug Ishii for joining us to moderate this conversation.

The occasion of the 2017 ASA meeting also gave us the opportunity to honor our own Professor Janice Radway, who served as President of the American Studies Association in 1998-99. Widely acclaimed as one of the most important scholars of her generation, she is the author of *Reading the Romance* (1984) and *A Feeling for Books* (1999), as well as co-editor of *American Studies: An Anthology* (2009), among many other notable works. At Northwestern, Jan teaches courses across American Studies, Communication Studies, and Gender and Sexuality Studies; her course “Girlhood in American Culture” is a perennial favorite with the majors. A long train of colleagues and former students, including Northwestern alumni Andrew Levin (AMST '12), Angela Wu (Media, Technology, and Society '14), and Leigh Meredith (Rhetoric and Public Culture '16), came to celebrate Jan. Admired as a mentor, teacher, and scholar, the evening was filled with anecdotes from colleagues about learning “how to be-in-the-classroom by imitating Jan” to those from students recalling her advice to “always historicize.”



Professor Radway with two of her former graduate students.

## American Studies at the Moth

Later in the year, the Student Advisory Board suggested an event that was equal parts academic and social. Ruby Phillips ('20) has been participating in the Moth, the highly regarded and highly pressurized story-telling contest organized by Chicago's Public Radio Station WBEZ. All of the majors wanted to support Ruby personally and no small number of them were especially invested in the particular event given their academic interests in “writing for social change.”



Aliana Ruxin ('19), Nick Anderson ('19), Hannah Givertz ('18), Frederick Levenson ('18), Claire Fahey ('19), Ruby Phillips ('20), Chelsea Hammersmith ('18), Gabrielle Grossman ('20), Irina Huang ('19)



## Hannah Wolfe Givertz

“Home Cooking in a Box: Tracing the Shift in Care Work from Swanson to Blue Apron”

Advisor: Professor Hi'ilei Hobart, Program in Asian American Studies



## Ajoni Anwar Hopkins

“The Music of Childish Gambino: A Black Nerd’s Redefinition of Authentic Black Masculinity”

Advisor: Professor Alejandro Carrión, Program in Latina and Latino Studies



## Chelsea Molly Hammersmith

“Future Periods: Digitized Menstruation & the Politics of Risk, Liberation, and the Self”

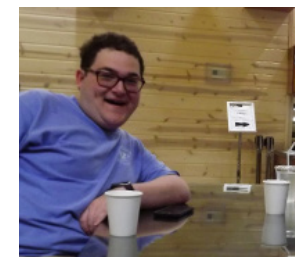
Advisor: Professor Amy Partridge, Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies  
American Studies Carl Smith Award for Outstanding Senior Essay



## Frederick Miles Levenson

“Two Straw Men and the Creation of the World”

Advisor: Professor Henry Binford, Department of History





# Current Students

Over the last year, **Irina Huang** ('19) has been focused on mental health advocacy. She spent last school year in a year-long creative nonfiction workshop, writing about her experiences living with OCD. This school year, she is working on her American Studies senior thesis, which focuses on how the general public talks about, and understands, OCD (e.g., "I'm so OCD," "that's so OCD"). Her argument is that OCD has become a sort of "model mental illness," parallel to the way Asian Americans are contemporarily known as the model minority. This past summer, Irina attended the International OCD Foundation's annual conference in Washington D.C. As the only "Huang" at the conference, Irina was reminded of how important mental health advocacy is in the Asian American community, something she hopes to contribute to in her lifetime.



Irina Huang ('19)



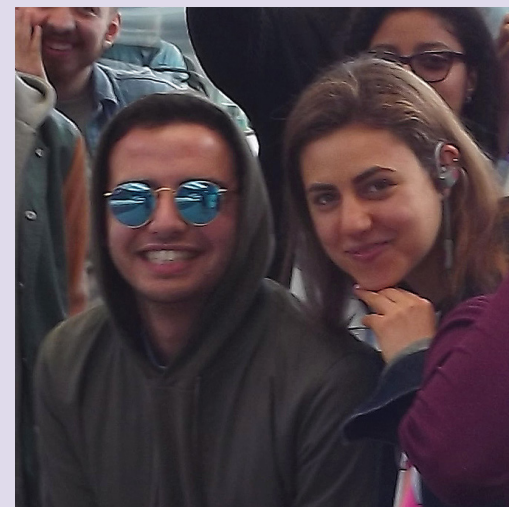
Claire Fahey ('19) and Nick Anderson ('19)

"My favorite part about American Studies is the relationships I have formed with my peers. The three seminars sophomore year make it easy to get to know one another. My American Studies peers are some of my closest friends and best thesis editors."

- **Alexis Levitt** ('19)

**Mara Kelly** ('21) is currently double majoring in American Studies and Religious Studies, with a concentration in Religion, Law, and Politics. She is also taking Arabic and will be studying abroad in Jordan this summer to further her studies. For her senior thesis, she is considering researching Islamophobia in the U.S., possibly in relation to Evangelical Christianity. She chose American Studies because she wanted to find a way to explore specific topics without the typical constraints of a major. She also really enjoys the intellectual community within American Studies.

Seniors and their advisors gather in the American Studies Lounge.



Charlie Valdes ('19) and Lexi Levitt ('19) in New York City

**Charles Valdes** ('19) spent the summer of 2018 as a Buying and Merchandise Planning Intern at The Neiman Marcus Group. He currently serves on Hillel's Student Executive Board as a Co-Vice President for Engagement. After graduating he plans to enter the Rotational Management Program at Gap Inc. in San Francisco.

**Zoe Johnson** ('20) is studying theatre and creative writing while also working with Lipstick, Northwestern's feminist theatre board. She plans on writing her senior thesis on gendered medical inequality and the medical descendants of hysteria.



Amoni Hopkins ('18), Chelsea Hammersmith ('18), Hannah Givertz ('18), and Frederick Levenson ('18)

This past summer, **Amos Pomp** ('20) completed GESI in Guatemala, working as a social consultant for Soluciones Comunitarias through Social Entrepreneur Corps in Nebaj, Guatemala. Over winter break, he and his GESI teammate will be returning to Nebaj with an Academic Year Undergraduate Research Grant to conduct follow-up research on one of their summer projects: developing a trash collection service for the town of La Pista, which had never had one. The project is called "Waste Management Efficacy and Public Health Perception in La Pista, Guatemala: An Analysis of Foreign Intervention." He hopes their research will help La Pista improve their service, help other towns develop successful waste management systems, and contribute to existing literature on international community development and foreign volunteering.



Professor Robert Orsi of the Departments of Religious Studies and History is currently Interim Director. For the academic year 2018-19, he will be teaching a core 301 seminar in the winter quarter.



Ryan Marks, Lecturer in the Program in American Studies and the Department of English, is co-teaching the Senior Research Seminar with Professor Shana Bernstein this year.



Imani McPhaden is beginning her third year as the American Studies Program Assistant.



Friends and family gather for the annual Senior Symposium.

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