

# DePaul American Studies

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## Newsletter Notes, Dr. Allison McCracken

### Happy Graduation, Class of 2016!

As AMS faculty and newsletter overseer, I am really excited to introduce this issue of the newsletter, our final one for the 2015-2016 academic year. We have a lot of news to report, as well as three wonderful new profiles.

First, I am happy to report that our Chair Dr. Amy Tyson, currently on leave, was safely delivered of her new daughter Anja Karolena, on March 26; Anja joins big sister Penelope. Congratulations to the Tyson-Nunn family!

Second, American Studies hosted its annual Spring Luncheon and Awards Ceremony on May 12. Faculty and students joined in celebrating American Studies Outstanding Student 2016 (and also our newsletter editor!) Cindy Marrero-Ramos and our DeCordova Writing Award winner Zoe Krey (both pictured below at the luncheon). We are so proud of both of you!

Third, American Studies has made some changes to our major requirements. The program was evaluated last year and as a result of these suggestions, as well as contributions from our faculty and our students, the Program Committee has made changes to streamline the major in couple of important ways. Our interim director, Tom Foster, outlines these changes in more detail on the back page.

Finally, I am delighted to present another three wonderful interviews by our editor Cindy Marrero-Ramos with which to end the year. **Dr. Carolyn Bronstein**, Professor and Associate Dean of the College of Communication, is the most recent addition to our American Studies Program Committee, and the subject of this issue's faculty profile. Dr. Bronstein has been one of the most prolific scholars and engaged teachers in her College and at DePaul, and we are thrilled that she has joined the program. Graduating Senior American Studies major, **Rae-Anna Sollestre**, is a double major in Politics and tells us all about her recent internship in Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi's office in Washington, DC. Our alumni profile, **Stephanie Lash '09**, takes us through her journey since graduating, including her work with national service organizations and her decision to become a History teacher. She is currently loving her job teaching social studies at The Stem Academy junior high school in Savannah, Georgia. We love it when our students become teachers!



Happy Graduation and Summer Break to All!

Allison McCracken  
Associate Professor, American Studies

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## AMS Affiliated Faculty: Dr. Carolyn Bronstein



**Dr. Carolyn Bronstein**  
Professor & Associate Dean  
College of Communication

Dr. Carolyn Bronstein is a Professor and Associate Dean in the College of Communication. This is her first quarter as an American Studies Affiliated Faculty and we are honored to highlight her research and achievements in the faculty profile for this quarter. Dr. Bronstein came to DePaul in the fall of 2000 as an Assistant Professor while she was finishing her dissertation at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. When she first arrived at DePaul, the College of Communication did not exist as such, and it was a department within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, located in Lincoln Park. Because of its rapid growth in student enrollments and needs, Communication became its own college in 2007 and moved its main office to the Loop campus (although many faculty still teach in Lincoln Park).

Dr. Bronstein started off by teaching widely across the Communication Department curriculum, including new courses in the emerging public relations and advertising program, such as **CMN 391: Public Relations Cases** and **CMN 391: Writing for Public Relations**. She had a professional background in public relations and government affairs, but her academic training was focused in media studies, critical cultural studies, and feminist studies. As the program grew, she transitioned into other classes that better reflected her research interests and specializations.

*It's been an exciting time to be a media scholar, especially with the development of social media over the last few years, everything from Facebook and now Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat. I just think studying and teaching media gives you a window into the most cutting edge and contemporary phenomena in our society.*

As a feminist media scholar, Dr. Bronstein is interested in two main questions: how do media represent women? For example, how is a "feminine" person supposed to behave? What is a "girl" supposed to look like? What is feminine beauty and what does that look like? On the flip side of that, she is also particularly interested in how women respond to these media representations, especially grassroots groups of feminist activists. Increasingly, she is analyzing how women working within creative industry settings are responding, with efforts like the

Twitter campaign #WomenNotObjects and the trend toward "femvertising," or embedding feminist messages within mainstream advertising.

*I am very interested in social movements that are organized by women who are dissatisfied with the status quo and media representation. The fullest expression of that is in my work around the anti-pornography movements. I became very fascinated with how groups of women in the 1970s just came to decide that media representation, of all the things that were oppressing women at the time, should be privileged. Part of the argument was the fact that women were so undermined in society because of the way that they were depicted in advertising, films, record album covers, television programs and pornography. Second wave feminists pioneered a cultural critique that said that women would never achieve equality in society if women's bodies were continually exploited, denigrated, and objectified with no consequences in the culture at large.*

She investigated these issues in her book *Battling Pornography: The American Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976-1986*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2011. This book is the definitive history of the American feminist anti-pornography movement. Dr. Bronstein wanted to understand where the anti-pornography movement came from, and she found it was the culmination of almost ten years of feminist activism against media violence. The core of this book investigates the history of grassroots feminist groups all over the country who started out not opposing pornography, but opposing media materials such as violent ads. For example, a promotional album poster for the Rolling Stones' "Black and Blue" shows a woman who is bruised and battered and tied up, and the tagline reads: "I'm black and blue from the Rolling Stones and I love it!" Throughout the book, Dr. Bronstein also looked at the ideological shifts in the women's movement that led to the focus on pornography. The women's movement also addressed issues like reproductive rights, wage inequality, and sexual harassment, but by the early 1980s, pornography had become the dominant national issue and the focus of powerful groups like the New York-based Women Against Pornography.

These women believed in pornography's harms, but they also made strategic choices to narrow their message for the sake of political organization, and to organize around an issue that appealed to different groups across America. But, they soon discovered that certain groups of so-called allies, like anti-pornography morality groups, supported stronger obscenity laws but did not agree with any of the core feminist beliefs of the women's movement. Ultimately, the organized feminist anti-pornography movement dissolved when the Supreme Court ruled against feminist-inspired anti-pornography legislation in 1986, citing threats to freedom of speech.

Dr. Bronstein is currently co-editing a new book coming out this fall, published by the University of Massachusetts Press: *Porno Chic and the Sex Wars: American Sexual Representations in the 1970s*. She is co-editing the book with Dr. Whitney Strub (Associate Professor and Director of the Women and Gender Studies Program at Rutgers-Newark University). Dr. Strub was featured in our Spring 2015 Newsletter when he came to speak on campus. In addition to the volume editors, contributors include historians and film scholars Peter Alilunas, Gillian Frank, Elizabeth Fraterrigo, Lucas Hilderbrand, Nancy Semin Lingo, Laura Helen Marks, Nicholas Matte, Jennifer Christine Nash, Joe Rubin, Alex Warner, Leigh Ann Wheeler, and Greg Youmans. The book analyzes pornography in the US in the 1970s and depicts the ways in which different groups across the country accommodated the proliferation of pornography.

*I'm really excited about my chapter in the collection – it's the first study of Viva magazine, created by Penthouse publisher Bob Guccione. In 1973, Bob Guccione, a brilliant entrepreneur, realized that there was an untapped market for mainstream pornography for women. He introduced Viva, which was his version of Penthouse for women. Using archival sources and the back issues of Viva, this chapter examines how the magazine began, the amount of true erotic content it had and how Guccione stumbled in his attempts to create sexually appealing content for women, not men. As the 1970s became more conservative as we headed towards the Reagan era, and we saw the rise of the religious right and the family values doctrine, Viva could no longer fulfill its promise, because advertisers would no longer buy space. The magazine ceased publication in 1979, but I think it reveals that Guccione was ahead of his time in recognizing the importance of erotic diversity.*

Dr. Bronstein has also published a number of academic articles, one of which tackles the representations of motherhood in the media. In June of 2015, she published the article "Weighing Mothers Down: Diets, Daughters, and Maternal Obligation" in *Feminist Media Studies* that addresses reader response to the book *The Heavy: A Mother, A Daughter, A Diet – A Memoir*, by Dara-Lynn Weiss.

*The Heavy* is a controversial memoir about a mother who put her overweight seven-year-old daughter Bea on a strict diet. Once Bea became thin, the mother and daughter posed for a photoshoot in *Vogue*, which prompted a firestorm of feminist criticism about the role that women play in transmitting beauty ideals from one generation to the next, and whether mothers ought to critically interrogate and resist these ideals on behalf of their daughters. Dr. Bronstein's article provides a critical analysis of the public characterization of Weiss's parenting decisions.

*Is she a good mother or a bad mother? There's not really an easy answer. This goes back to media representation of women. In our society, there are relatively few media representations of female beauty that challenge the slim body ideal.*

Many readers thought that she [Weiss] taught her daughter realistic lessons about what it takes to be a successful woman in our society, beginning with appearance. I studied how women responded to this memoir on a wide variety of book-related and feminist blogs. One of the reader-mothers responded positively that Weiss did not sugar coat "the super important issue of weight." This reader maintained that you can't fault Weiss, and that the earlier you teach this lesson to your daughter, the bigger the favor you're doing her in terms of preserving her opportunities. She pointed out that if you allow your daughter to become fat in this society, she will pay a price in terms of her social life and career, which is actually borne out by statistics. Other mothers vociferously challenged these assertions, and insisted that mothers must not sacrifice their daughters to a culture that has set unrealistic and unachievable standards for female appearance.

Dr. Bronstein published another article recently in *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* titled "Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders: Integrating Leadership Development in Journalism and Mass Communication Education." This article discusses the importance of teaching leadership to women and was written in preparation for her experience teaching **PRAD 595: Women and Leadership**, a graduate course available to all graduate students in Communication. It examines the works of Sheryl Sandberg in *Lean In*, Herminia Ibarra's *Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader*, Joan Williams and Rachel Dempsey's *What Works for Women at Work*, and Alice Eagly and Linda Lorene Carli's *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth About How Women Become Leaders*, among other works. All of these books focus on how we can better prepare women to lead. Throughout the course, students learn about the types of challenges they are likely to face in the professional world. For example, Dr. Bronstein incorporated a unit on microaggressions, a unit on body language (feminine vs. powerful body language), and a unit on goal setting and visioning. The class now has a dedicated Facebook page, and reunions, which have been an ongoing source of support for all the members.

We really should be integrating leadership education into our Communication curriculum because if you look at the C-suite of major communication companies in the US, such as major newspapers, Hollywood studios, and high tech companies like Twitter and Instagram, we see a real gender disparity in terms of the number of female leaders. Statistically, there are more women students in Communication than men, at DePaul and nationally, so what factors are preventing women from moving up the leadership chain?

In the fall, Dr. Bronstein is teaching **MCS 353: Media and Youth**. This course looks at the media landscape for young kids, tweens, and teens. Students examine such topics as government legislation around media, media use by age, the growth of advertising and stealth advertising (like advertising on smartphone apps) that parents and kids may not be aware of. They also analyze the state of educational television today. In 1961, Newton Minow, former Chair of the Federal Communications Commission gave a speech known as "The Vast Wasteland" where he talked about how American television had a tremendous educational potential for kids, but was completely missing its opportunity to be a positive social force.

The Federal Communications Commission still mandates that broadcast networks air at least three hours a week of educational and informational television for Americans 16 and under. Yet, the quality of the offerings today is typically so poor, such as reality shows about dog trainers, and the advertising they attract so minimal, that it shows you that the networks are not invested in this programming and few children are watching. We need to confront as a society the failure to use media in more educational and socially proactive ways to support learning and to support our more vulnerable populations, especially poor children who lack access to a wide range of educational opportunities.

## Carolyn Bronstein, continued

Dr. Bronstein values experiential learning and having student learn things beyond just the books. In the Media and Youth class, she assigns a project where students must watch children's television for two hours. They're supposed to watch alone, preferably in pajamas with fuzzy slippers, sitting close to the TV, and eating a giant bowl of sugary cereal. Dr. Bronstein asks them to eat whichever cereal takes them back to their childhood, such as Frosted Flakes or Fruit Loops. They're supposed to let the experience of watching as a child does flood over them, not check phones or multitask, and just be in the moment.

In a related paper assignment, students analyze the commercials directed at children, looking at how we barrage children with advertisements for so many different types of products.

*I'm not really interested in having my students memorize a set of facts and figures that they can then dump into a blue book at the end of the quarter. I prefer to teach classes and organize experiences for students that help them become fully informed citizens in a democratic society, critical evaluators of media content, and socially responsible creators of media content.*

In addition to all her work as a professor and researcher, Dr. Bronstein has just completed her first year as the Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives and Enrollment for the College of Communication. As Associate Dean, she oversees enrollment, which involves course scheduling, making sure students have the opportunity to take the classes they need to graduate on time, and ensuring that the curriculum is timely and reflects the society and industries that students are entering. She also works on strategic initiatives, especially around external visibility of the college and making sure that we are communicating all of the great student work and student outcomes in the College of Communication to the public. At the Convocation ceremony for academic year 2016-17, she will be inducted into the Society of Vincent de Paul Professors.

Dr. Bronstein is also the Founding Faculty Director of the **OpEd Project** at DePaul. The OpEd Project is a national thought leadership project that trains faculty, primarily women and/or people of color, to translate their research expertise into popular op-eds and essays for the public. In this way, instead of sharing their expertise and research only with other academics, their knowledge enters the public sphere and enables faculty to participate actively in the important conversations and debates of our times. Whether it's climate change, workplace labor conditions, or changes in the American electorate, the OpEd project says, "Take your core ideas, link them up with a topic that's in the news, and share your ideas and opinions with the public." Dr. Bronstein founded the Project at DePaul in 2012. This year, the third cohort completed its training, and there are now 60 members of the DePaul community, primarily faculty, who are OpEd project alumni. Together, they have published more than 150 thought pieces.

Dr. Bronstein is excited to be working with the American Studies Program and would like to work on cross-listing more Communication courses with American Studies.

*It is important to have interdisciplinary majors that allow students to delve deeply into their areas of interest and passion. There are so many different points at which you can enter into the field of American Studies, and this major invites intellectual questions and explorations. Also, we have a fascinating national culture that is made up of so many different traditions, histories, people, races and religions, and American Studies provides a way to organize investigations that try to explain this strange and unique nation, and how it has come to be. Media studies are a very important component of American Studies, especially as media have become our dominant sources of entertainment and information, eclipsing interpersonal experiences to a large degree. I'm very much looking forward to becoming more involved with the American Studies Program.*



## Student Perspective: Rae-Anna Sollestre



### Student Perspective: Rae-Anna Sollestre, Class of 2016

Rae-Anna Sollestre is one of our wonderful AMS Seniors graduating this summer. She is a double major in Political Science and American Studies with a concentration in Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies. She is originally from Farmington Hills, Michigan, a suburb right off of Detroit's city limits. Throughout her time at DePaul she has focused on analyzing issues of diversity through a historical and political lens, which is important to her in part because of her experiences growing up in largely very homogenized spaces.

Rae-Anna attended Catholic primary and secondary schools until halfway through her junior year of high school when she decided she needed a change of environment. She transferred to a public high school – Farmington Hills Harrison, where she no longer felt the same level of hostility and microaggressions as a student of color that she had at Catholic schools. She is very disappointed to find out that Harrison High School is being shut down this year due to supposed low enrollments.

*It was special for me because it was the first time I actually got a glimpse of what the real world was like. You're so sheltered in the Catholic environment, and everybody is dressed the same way so there's no way to really even tell class distinctions. I found out Harrison was the most diverse of the three possible public high schools in Farmington. I didn't feel like there were any real racial cliques.*

These schooling experiences had a direct impact on her college search. She wanted to be somewhere fresh and outside of Michigan, but close enough for family visits. She loved DePaul's campus, liberal studies program, and focus on diversity.

Once she moved to Chicago, she started volunteering at PAWS (Pets are Worth Saving, a no-kill shelter). She also started her current job in accounting at the law-firm of Dykema Gossett during the summer after her freshman year.

Rae-Anna declared a Political Science major as an incoming freshman. She knew she wanted to pursue another major or minor and found exactly what she needed in American Studies. She was first exposed to American Studies when she took her freshmen focal point about JFK with Dr. Brask. She started investigating the American Studies major online and emailed Dr. McCracken for more information. She then chose to concentrate in Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies.

*I knew it had to be something I really cared about because if you don't do something that you're passionate about, what's the point?*

She immediately fell in love with the program. One of her favorite American Studies courses was **AMS 276: History of Sex in America** with **Dr. Allison McCracken**. Rae-Anna had attended Catholic schools for most of her life, where sex was simply never a topic of conversation. But in this course she was able to analyze how sex functioned as an incredibly influential subject throughout American history, even if it was considered a taboo.

Rae-Anna is currently taking **AMS 280 – The Politics and History of the Vietnam War** with **Dr. James Brask** in which they study the history of American involvement in Vietnam and the lasting effect the war has had on American politics and culture. Dr. Brask focuses the course on veteran experiences in order to better understand the ways in which the war affected people individually. He even shares his own experiences as a Vietnam Veteran with the class.

*He's also having us do an interview with a veteran because he really loves to see the things we can learn from oral histories. You never know where somebody was during a specific time until you ask.*

This past fall Rae-Anna participated in a semester-long internship with Nancy Pelosi through Georgetown University's Semester in Washington, D.C. Program.

Pelosi is the Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives and the only woman to have served as the House Speaker. The Georgetown program provides undergraduates with a unique opportunity to study political science while developing professional skills in the nation's capitol. Rae-Anna had to work through an arduous application process beginning in the Spring of 2015. She applied to fifteen different internships with nonprofits, public relations agencies, federal agencies, law firms, and news organizations.

*It was an overwhelming application process. I never got a break because I had to keep writing, rewriting, and editing. Every internship needed its own cover letter and personal statement. During the process, DePaul students were paired with a specific coordinator, and my coordinator, Tom Manatos, suggested I apply to work with Nancy Pelosi's office. I applied and they offered me a position! My mom and I went to D.C. a few days before the program started. We toured the city a bit and ate some great food.*

She worked with the Continuing Studies Program and lived in NYU dorms near the business district in D.C. It was a couple of blocks from their train system and only fifteen minutes away from the White House. All students were required to take three courses within a specific track. Rae-Anna focused on the "Public Policy and Law" track and took a public policy course, a research seminar and an internship course. She attended her courses every Monday and Friday, and worked in Nancy Pelosi's Leadership Office every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Her administrative tasks varied according to Pelosi's events and schedule. She often had to write memos for specific issue-based meetings, and she feels like American Studies really prepared her for this type of work.

*One of my main responsibilities involved going to a variety of briefings and hearings and writing memos for the staff. Memos involved both summary and analysis of the briefings and hearings. Being able to write concisely and clearly was something that I had gotten from American Studies, and I believe that it was incredibly important when writing these memos.*



(Rae-Anna with her mother [left] and her sister [right])

Throughout her time in D.C., Rae-Anna attended meetings regarding a large variety of issues within the US, such as males facing sexually assault in the military, opioid abuse, poverty in the veteran community, and demographic disparities in STEM fields. She also attended a number of important events like the Susan G. Komen Gala and After-Party, National Press Club lunches, the reception for the approval of the Iran Deal, the Bicentennial Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Women's Coalition of Common Sense Domestic Violence Awareness Summit, and Pope Francis's visit to the Capitol. Two of her most memorable experiences were Pope Francis's visit and the day she met Leader Pelosi.

*One day during what I have called "Pope Week," I was called to escort a woman at the Capitol Building to the Leader's office because she needed help with her bags. I do not remember her name or who she was affiliated with, all I know was that she had wine that was going to be given to Pope Francis. I was holding the Pope's wine! And then I was able to watch the Pope's address to Congress on the Capitol lawn, which was the only thing my grandma wanted me to do while in D.C. Of course, another memorable experience was when I was able to meet Leader Pelosi. From my experience on the Hill, I have cemented my belief that she is a remarkable woman. It was an honor and a privilege to work in her office. It was a brief meet and greet with the photo opportunity, and I was able to speak to her. She thanked me for my work, and I was so proud.*

Rae-Anna learned a tremendous amount about the structure of the US government and professional skills from her internship at the Capitol. She developed close connections with her colleagues. Most importantly, she learned that it takes a special kind of person to be involved in our bureaucratic government, and that she is not that kind of person. However, she now has a much better idea of what areas she wants to pursue professionally. After graduation, she is planning on taking the LSAT and applying to the University of Southern California to study civil rights in sports law. She also wants to take some time to visit her family in the Philippines.

*I've always been drawn to sports, so when I took a sports law class last year, I knew that it was a career that I would love to pursue. I did not know anything about it, but I have always had this feeling of injustice in terms of women's sports. Male athletes are treated as gods on campuses and across the nation, and female athletes are largely ignored. Becoming a sports lawyer with a specialty in civil rights could be incredibly beneficial to help even out this inequity.*

## Rae-Anna Sollestre, *continued*

Rae-Anna is integrating the knowledge she has gained in the American Studies Program with her passions and professional experiences in making her plans for the future. She shared her ideas about what has made her time with American Studies so crucial in this planning process:

*American Studies allows you to go beyond history to understand how it applies to daily life. That was a huge draw for me because a lot of times we're just taught "this happened twenty years ago and it's not relevant now." But that's not true. There are so many complicated intersections that make history relevant to everything else. AMS also teaches different methods of analysis. Even if you're given a data set, you have to be able to analyze the data and think about it in different ways. We have to look at it from a diagonal angle or even backwards. American Studies keeps you sharp.*



(Rae-Anna with Sydney Leroux Dwyer at Abby Wambach's NPC Luncheon)

**THE PELOSI FILES:** You learn a lot working in the Leadership Office, and these are a few tidbits about the Minority Leader Rae-Anna was able to share with us:

Nancy Pelosi is a 74-year old woman who wears stilettos and rocks them. She is a dark chocolate connoisseur; she needs it everyday. Her favorite lunch is a toasted, wheat bread sandwich with four slices of Swiss cheese and half an avocado. One time I spent \$60 on chocolate ice cream for her. All of Pelosi's meetings have sweets at them like cookies, brownies, cupcakes, and donuts.

More substantively, her attention to "the personal touch" in her contacts with her colleagues really impressed me. We had to hand-deliver all her letters to members of the house every time there was a major issue. She would handwrite notes to all of her colleagues in the house (she likes using blue felt tip pens), and I had never realized before how important that was to building and sustaining relationships. Nobody else did that.



## Alumni Profile: Stephanie Lash



**Alumnus, Stephanie Lash,  
Class of 2009**

Stephanie Lash, a “Double Demon” (she received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from DePaul) as well as an American Studies alum, has always been motivated by her love of education and public service. She graduated in 2009 with a major in American Studies (concentration in Cultural History and Literature) and an Art History Minor.

Like Rae-Anna Sollestre, our featured student in this issue, Stephanie is also from Farmington Hills, Michigan. She attended North Farmington High School and spent most of her time focusing on her academics, volunteering with her youth group, and participating in school plays like *Sweet Charity*, *Seussical the Musical*, and *The Who's Tommy*. When she arrived at DePaul she did not know which major she would pursue, but quickly found a place in American Studies.

*I already knew I had a love for history. Then I took my freshman focal point, **American Culture in World War II**, with **Dr. Allison McCracken**, and I really liked it. I felt really at home in that type of seminar classroom. I immediately thought “I want to major in this.”*

The American Studies Program fed Stephanie's passion for history. She was particularly interested in cultural movements and the ripple effect these movements had on people and US history. She focused her coursework on literature, art, history, popular media, and film. She declared her Art History minor during her junior year and feels that this combination gave her a broader background in world history and provided a much needed balance.

*Art history filled the art appreciation and high-brow historian in me. And I still have the American Studies readers; they're on my bookshelf.*

Stephanie won the Outstanding Senior Award in American Studies. She wrote her American Studies Senior Thesis on the effect Marilyn Monroe and Doris Day had on US popular culture; the essay was titled: “The 40-Inch Bust and the 40-Year-Old Virgin: The Exploration and the Dichotomy of Marilyn Monroe and Doris Day.”

*I focused on how, by being in films throughout the 1950s (the post-war and Cold War eras), they both fulfilled two roles that the country needed at the time through popular consumption of media. Doris Day was a virgin figure, and Marilyn Monroe was the sex bomb.*

Throughout her time at DePaul, Stephanie participated in University Ministry with their volunteer program. DePaul's Ministry takes groups of students to different areas across the country or abroad during winter and spring breaks to assist in different types of volunteer work. Her involvement really began after Hurricane Katrina when she went on a service trip to Mississippi, which was drastically impacted by the storm, and helped rebuild the affected areas. Her junior year she traveled to a Native American reservation in San Carlos, Arizona, and her senior year she went to volunteer in Durán, Ecuador. In addition, Stephanie was a DePaul Campus tour guide and worked at what used to be Homemade Pizza Company on Armitage and Webster until her graduation.

After graduating, Stephanie spent some time applying to graduate programs for museum studies. She also applied for, and was accepted to the National Civilian Community Corp (NCCC). The NCCC is a labor-intensive branch of AmeriCorps that engages 18-24 year olds in team-based national and community service in the United States. She decided to do a year of service with this program. Her team was based out of Perry Point, Maryland, and they traveled up the East Coast and the Gulf Region assisting different nonprofits every 2-3 months. They visited Delaware Bay to do environmental conservation and invasive species removal; New Orleans, where they helped build houses and did repair work with Catholic charities and Habitat for Humanity; and Vermont to Calvin Coolidge's Presidential Suite to help move all of his personal belongings from the attic of his birthplace.

*I thought, “Oh, I'm just unpacking Calvin Coolidge's walking cane. No big deal. It's just a president of the US and his personal belongings.”*

*I even got to hold a baseball signed by Babe Ruth. But there were a lot of other places in need, so we felt like we were being underutilized. Then the BP oil spill happened.*

After the oil spill, they went down to Alabama and worked at a food bank to help with food distribution and reformation. The affected areas were big fishing communities, and after the spill people could not fish or shrimp anymore, so their major source of food and income was completely destroyed. This was one of their last projects.

*I learned some basic skills in AmeriCorps. I know how to use power tools. It was pretty fulfilling. I met people who I'm still friends with. It definitely gave me an opportunity to think about what I wanted out of life. I realized that whatever I did, there had to be some sort of public service involved. I wasn't even around students but one day I thought, “I should be a teacher. I should be a history teacher.”*

When Stephanie finished with AmeriCorps, she went back home and spent some time saving money. She missed Chicago and decided to come back to DePaul to attend graduate school. She immediately noticed the new Arts and Letters building upon her return.

*When I was at DePaul, those were like random houses and then they demolished them to build Arts and Letters. It was a little weird to be back, but it was kind of nice and familiar too. It was like coming home but also having a new experience. I'm a double demon!*

Stephanie completed her Masters in Education and received her certification to teach middle and high school social studies. Then she started working at a summer program in Baltimore called the Civic Education Project. The Civic Education Project is part of a larger umbrella corporation called the Civic Leadership Institute. The program is run through Northwestern, John Hopkins, and Berkeley.

*This program is for more privileged high school kids, but not exclusively, and it focuses on community development and leadership, and social justice. The students do social justice and community service work in the city of Baltimore while they are learning about different topics like poverty, privilege, social justice, and power disparity in America.*



*They are encouraged to turn a critical eye on their own upbringing, privilege, where they are coming from.*

While she was working in Baltimore, she got the call from her now principal at The STEM Academy at Bartlett in Savannah, Georgia. She was on a school bus full of teenagers and asked if she could call him back. Sure enough, she nailed her phone interview, and all of her peers encouraged her to take the position as a social studies teacher. She only had four days after the summer program ended to pack up her apartment and drive down to Georgia.

The STEM Academy at Bartlett is a public middle school that aims to provide students with a rigorous curriculum focused on science, technology, and other areas of scholarship. "STEM" refers to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subject areas. Stephanie started her position teaching 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies last year. In order to do this, she had to learn a whole new content area because the 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies curriculum in Georgia centers on Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Stephanie noted that these classes took place at critical times given that Ebola was going on while they were talking about Africa. Then the Baltimore uprisings happened.

*I said, "We're gonna get real. We're going to talk about Baltimore." I had some really great conversations with them. I learned a lot at the Civic Education Project about seminar styles and talking about important things with kids. And that's really important for me to bring in. They said things that floored me.*

This school year she has been teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum focuses on Georgia Studies, or American History through the lens of Georgia. The school year ended on May 20<sup>th</sup> and Stephanie had been helping her students work through their standardized tests called the "Georgia Milestones".

## Stephanie Lash, continued

She also coordinated and arranged the first ever trip to Washington D.C. for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders that took place the last week of school. A quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders visited Colonial Williamsburg and Washington D.C. The trip was a success!

*If I had had my choice of all the schools in the Savannah-Chatham County, I would have chosen this school. I think I really lucked out. It is a very unique place. My principal is kind of a visionary. We talk about how we can change education all the time.*

Stephanie gained crucial skills during her time with the American Studies Program at DePaul that fostered her love of education and encouraged her to pursue this line of work.

*I think it made me really open minded. I met a lot of very diverse people in AMS and at DePaul in general. The American Studies Program is a little amalgam of everything DePaul has to offer. It gave me a passion for that seminar-style type of education. Learning is on you, and if you put in that work it can be so much more than just learning from a lecture. It was also great to work at such a deep level with Dr. McCracken and Dr. Burton. I was able to be the student representative on Dr. McCracken's tenure committee.*

Stephanie was recently accepted into the "Teaching Humanities through Art," a summer program run by the Smithsonian American Art Museum that teaches social studies educators how to integrate art into the classroom.

Moreover, Stephanie wants to build more lesson plans this summer by using an online service called Swivl. Swivl allows teachers to tape themselves with PowerPoint presentations so that students can watch lectures at home and be prepared for more discussions during class time. She will be teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade again next year and looks forward to staying with the STEM Academy for some time, although she would like to eventually work in a high school environment.

She shared the following about her love for American Studies:

*Its inter-curricular American history with a twist. It can be whatever you want it to be. It is not prescribed. You can study politics, government, films, or trends, and that's okay. It's freeing in that. It really gave me a way to explore different avenues of literature and history when I was not sure what I was passionate about. I would be an AMS major for the rest of my life if I could!*



(Stephanie with her colleagues on the Washington D.C. trip)

As Interim-Director of American Studies, I'm very pleased to announce our revised Major and Minor. As you will see, the new changes provide for greater flexibility for students while continuing the Program's rich tradition of drawing on interdisciplinary expertise from across the College and University. The result is an improved curricular experience that will provide excellent training and preparation for all of our students. Below you will find the details. I hope you enjoy the rest of the newsletter. Congratulations to all of our student and faculty on another terrific year – and best wishes for a wonderful summer!

**Professor Tom Foster**

### **NEW MAJOR**

AMS 200 Introduction to American Social History and Culture OR one of the following:

HST 181: United States to 1800  
 HST 182: United States, 1800-1900  
 HST 183: United States, 1900-Present  
 HST 240: History of Chicago  
 HST 246: African-American History to 1800  
 HST 247: African-American History to 1800-1900  
 HST 248: African-American History, 1900-Present  
 HST 260: Lesbian and Gay American History, Colonial to 1970  
 HST 269: Museums, Material Culture, and Memory: Introduction to Public History  
 HST 270: U.S. Historical Landscape  
 HST 275/AMS 275: Sex in America, Puritans to Victorians  
 HST 276/AMS 276: Sex in America, Late Victorians to Present  
 HST 278: History of American Religion  
 HST 279: Westward Expansion in U.S.  
 HST 283: Asian-American Immigration and History, 1840-1965  
 HST 284: History of Education in the United States  
 HST 288: Women in United States History  
 HST 295: American History on Film

AMS 201: Introduction to Critical American Studies:  
 (topics variable)

An additional course selected from among the following:  
 ABD 275/WGS 275: Black Feminist Theories in a U.S. Context  
 AMS 292: Topics in American Studies Theories and Methods  
 ANT 201: Ethnographic Research Methods  
 ANT 202: Archaeological Field Methods  
 ENG 360: American Literature to 1830  
 ENG 361: American Literature, 1830-1865  
 ENG 362: American Literature, 1865-1920  
 ENG 363: American Literature, 1920-present  
 HST 298: Introduction to Historical Sources and Methods  
 HST 391: Doing Local and Community History  
 HST 392: Oral History Project  
 LST 203: Media and Cultural Studies Across the Americas  
 MCS 271: Media and Cultural Studies [Communication]  
 PSC 330: American Political Thought  
 SOC 331: Social Theory  
 SOC 346: Urban Ethnography  
 SOC 382: Qualitative Methods  
 SOC 383: Visual Sociology  
 SOC 384: Ethnographic Documentary Film Production  
 WGS 250: Feminist Frameworks  
 WGS 388: Queer Theory: An Introduction

### **NEW MINOR**

AMS 200: Introduction to American Social History and Culture OR one of the following:

HST 181: United States to 1800  
 HST 182: United States, 1800-1900  
 HST 183: United States, 1900-Present  
 HST 240: History of Chicago  
 HST 246: African-American History to 1800  
 HST 247: African-American History to 1800-1900  
 HST 248: African-American History, 1900-Present  
 HST 260: Lesbian and Gay American History, Colonial to 1970  
 HST 269: Introduction to Public History  
 HST 270: U.S. Historical Landscape  
 HST 275/AMS 275: Sex in America, Puritans to Victorians  
 HST 276/AMS 276: Sex in America, Late Victorians to Present  
 HST 278: History of American Religion  
 HST 279: Westward Expansion in U.S.  
 HST 283: Asian-American Immigration and History, 1840-1965  
 HST 284: History of Education in the United States  
 HST 288: Women in United States History  
 HST 295: American History on Film

AMS 201: Introduction to Critical American Studies: (topics variable)

Four United States Topic Courses (American Studies Electives), one of which must have an AMS prefix

*\*additional courses may be considered pending a syllabus review by the AMS Program Committee*

Six Concentration Courses (at least two courses (8 credit hours) must carry an AMS prefix)

Three Major Electives (US Topic Courses)

AMS 301 Senior Seminar [Liberal Studies Capstone]  
 [waived for Honors students and Double Majors when AMS is a student's secondary major, and their primary major offers capstone credit; in these cases AMS 301 must be replaced with a 300 level AMS course]