

DePaul American Studies Program

Newsletter Spring 2023



Outstanding Student Ezra Constante

Photo by Amber Stoutsborough, The DePaulia

DIRECTOR'S NOTES by Allison McCracken



Hello Everyone!

Welcome to our Newsletter for the 2022-2023 academic year. We've had a great year at AMS, with new events, classes, and instructors that we're all very excited about, in addition to our regular celebrations of outstanding students, DeCordova winners, and alumni.

Allison McCracken and Ezra Constante at DePaul Honors Convocation

This year saw the inauguration of **Dr. McCracken's new class, AMS 266, "Mental Illness in U.S. History and Culture,"** an LSP Historical Inquiry course that she cross-listed with the History Department (**HST 267**). The course proved immediately popular, with long waitlists. To celebrate the inauguration of this class and Mental Health Awareness Month, AMS welcomed scholar **La Marr Jurelle Bruce** on May 11th, whose 2021 award-winning book, *How to Go Mad Without Losing Your Mind: Madness and Black Radical Creativity*, had laid a strong foundation for the new field of Mad Studies within academia. Dr. Bruce spoke with students in **Francesca Royster's "Black Freedom Dreams" class** and gave a public lecture, which was well attended (see more below). We hope that the scholarly topics of mental health/madness/neurodivergence, so vital for our students, will be ones that AMS can help integrate more fully into the DePaul curriculum.

AMS continues to expand its cohort of excellent teaching faculty. This year, we welcomed two teaching professors: **Jacqueline Shine** (PhD History, UC Berkeley) taught our in-person **AMS 276/HST 276 History of Sex II classes** and **Megan Fariello** (PhD Cultural Studies, George Mason University) taught our **AMS 285/HST 295 History and Media classes**. Professor **David Goldberg** has continued to teach our very popular in-person **LGBTQ History courses (AMS/LGQ 277/HST 260)** and a similar class for Honors, as well as our **AMS 275/HST 275 History of Sex I** (read an extended interview with Dr. Goldberg below!). Our on-line instructor, **Bristol Cave-LaCoste**, has done double duty this year, teaching our remote classes in both **AMS 277 LGQ History** and **AMS 276 History Sex**; her classes have remained intensely popular with students across the University. We are proud in AMS to have provided a space for students both on campus and remote to engage with gender/sexual politics and histories at a time when queer and trans lives are under attack and women's reproductive rights have been rolled back around the country.

For this same reason, AMS was proud to assist our Outstanding Student, **Ezra Constante**, fulfill his vision of hosting a "Drag Teach-In Event" on the DePaul campus, which took place at the

Richardson Library on April 27th. The Teach-In was Ezra's thesis/Senior AMS capstone project, and proved to be a thrilling and affirming event that connected DePaul queer students with members of the broader Chicago Drag community. As Ezra has noted, many DePaul students either aren't old enough or don't necessarily feel comfortable in the bar spaces of much of the drag performance world, so Ezra brought drag performers to DePaul; he hoped students would learn about their lives and that their inspiration would encourage them to develop their own drag identities (as Ezra has), and find pleasure and reward in drag performance and community. Ezra himself performed at the event (see more below), and an extraordinary DePaulia photo from his performance graces our cover.



First-year (and new major!) Adeline Kehrberg was awarded the Honorable Mention; her essay focused on feminism in three generations of women in her family and will be developed as the AMS entry into the Liberal Arts College's *Creating Knowledge Journal* for fall 2024. Adeline wrote an earlier version of her paper for Nina Wilson's WGS course, "Deconstructing the Diva," which has always been a popular one with our students and we are excited to see her develop it further for publication. Both Natalie and Adeline received their awards at our annual Spring Luncheon, which took place in the 5th Floor Conference room in SAC, on May 4th.

This year, we also were proud to name two DeCordova winners. Sophomore Natalie Silfvast's essay "Menstruation and Monstrosity: Puberty, Transgressive Sexuality, and the Rise of Feminist Horror in John Fawcett's *Ginger Snaps*!" won the award. As a student of Communication and Technology in the College of Communication, we are excited to report that Natalie is the first non-LAS student to receive the award; her paper was written for Dr. Fariello's History and Media course, which attracts students from around the University.



Our three interviews in this year's newsletter represent our program's scholarly and social commitments: teaching professor **David Goldberg**, Outstanding Senior **Ezra Constante**, and two of our alumni, **Hattie Cable** (class of 2013) and **Reina Nomura** (class of 2021). Recent graduate Reina (former newsletter editor!) has stayed around DePaul, earning a graduate certificate and becoming a valued staff member. Most recently, Reina has become our alum in the Dean's Office, where she has just started her new position as Liberal Studies Program Coordinator – way to go, Reina!

Alumnus Hattie Cable is ten-years out from her graduation, and she works as Deputy Chief Counsel for Section 14 in the Indiana Department of Child Services while raising two daughters in "Mike Pence's hometown" of Columbus, Indiana. Hattie provides us with an important and inspirational testimonial of life in a red state, where, even as she is "extremely concerned" about the reactionary politics around her, she treasures the community she is part of there, where she is doing rewarding work and raising kids "who know that they are loved and affirmed."

Speaking of our luncheon, it is only one of many events and efforts by our extraordinary student assistant for this past year, History major **Olivia Zimmerman**. In addition to creating and editing this newsletter, Olivia produced beautiful, informative, timely Bulletins every week, organized our recommended class lists each quarter, and accomplished any number of other tasks while serving as History Society President and becoming an amazingly prolific and inventive staff writer for the DePaulia. She leaves us for the Emerald Isle, where she will pursue her History MA at Trinity College University of Dublin. You will be missed, Olivia!

Big thanks also goes to the supportive members of our AMS Faculty Committee, including our newest member this year, professor **Greg Scott** from Sociology. We couldn't do this without all of you!



A Message From Our AMS Student Assistant



Hello! Thank you to everyone who made this a wonderful year, including Allison McCracken, all the academic staff in the AMS program, and of course the wonderful students! I enjoyed going to different AMS events and seeing everyone there, as well as learning a lot about myself and the world I live in. It has been a true pleasure being the AMS student assistant, and I look forward to seeing how the program grows and changes in the future.

Our Awesome AMS Professor: Dr. David Goldberg

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Maryland, in a suburb between Baltimore and DC. My family was based in New Jersey and Maryland, so very much East coast.



What got you into American Studies?

I have actually spent most of my academic life working in History departments. I am a social and cultural U.S. historian, though, so American Studies has been a natural fit for the types of courses I teach. I have a Ph.D. in U.S. and African American History.

Did you always see yourself working in this area?

I identify as a civil rights historian, which gives me flexibility to pursue research and teaching opportunities in a variety of scholarly domains.

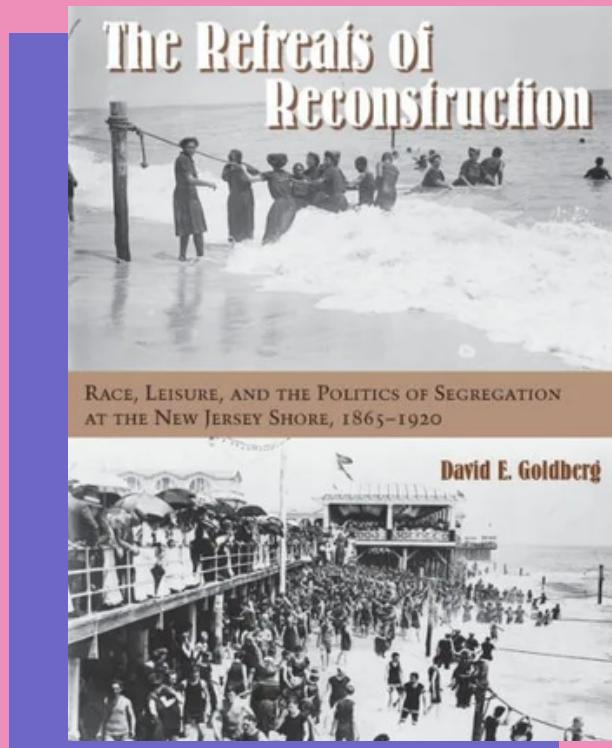
I began studying northern African-American civil rights campaigns in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and as my researching and teaching has taken me into LGBTQ+ studies, it has shifted to examining AIDS-era activism in Chicago.

Where did you study?

I got my B.A. in History from Elizabethtown College (2005) in Pennsylvania, my M.A. in History from Villanova University (2007), and a Ph.D. in History from West Virginia University (2013).

What did you write your dissertation on?

My dissertation examined the origins of Jim Crow segregation in northern beach resorts after the Civil War, as well as the consumer strategies and tactics black activists employed to resist, and sometimes defeat, segregationist laws and practices. This eventually became the subject of my first book, *The Retreats of Reconstruction: Race, Leisure, and the Politics of Segregation at the New Jersey Shore, 1865-1920*, which was published by Fordham University Press in 2016.



Dr. Goldberg's book!

What got you into that subject?

I was initially interested in how northerners had historically worked to regionalize Jim Crow segregation as a southern problem despite entrenched segregationist practices in many northern cities and communities. And so, with those ideas in mind, I began to research black civil rights protests in Philadelphia after the Civil War while I was a graduate student at Villanova University. But as I was in the midst of that project, I ran into a local New Jersey historian while I was waiting in line at a Bruce Springsteen concert, and so in this odd academic twist of fate, he revealed to me that there had been significant civil rights contests at one of its popular beach resorts in Asbury Park, New Jersey. Therefore, after researching more into those protests, I found that the Jersey Shore provided a more unique site that had not been adequately addressed by civil rights scholars. In fact, part of its unique story was that it provided black working-class activists with uncommon political leverage to resist, and sometimes defeat, Jim Crow segregation in a period typically seen as the nadir of hardening Jim Crow practices nationwide.

What did you do after your PhD?

I have taught at a variety of different institutions over the past ten years, including larger public universities like the University of Pittsburgh, as well as at smaller liberal arts colleges in St. Louis and Michigan.

What classes have you taught at DePaul?

I teach **LGBTQ+ History**, the **History of Sex in America**, and an honors course, "**Pride and Protest: LGBTQ+ Activism in America**."

Which class is your favorite to teach and why?

My LGBTQ+ history courses are my favorite to teach because they allow me to discover more about myself and my students as we read about the challenges and communities that queer people have built over time. For many students, these classes are their first or second introduction to queer scholarship, as well as an important environment to meet and mingle with other queer students and allies. One of the assignments in this class is a "Social Media Analysis" essay that asks students to analyze how present-day LGBTQ+ groups and communities are curating the queer past and using social media to build community, promote pride, and engage in a variety of political activities. Reading these essays and seeing how students are able to embed themselves in these narratives, as well contribute to how LGBTQ+ history is presented and analyzed, is always one of the highlights of the term for me.

What research are you doing currently?

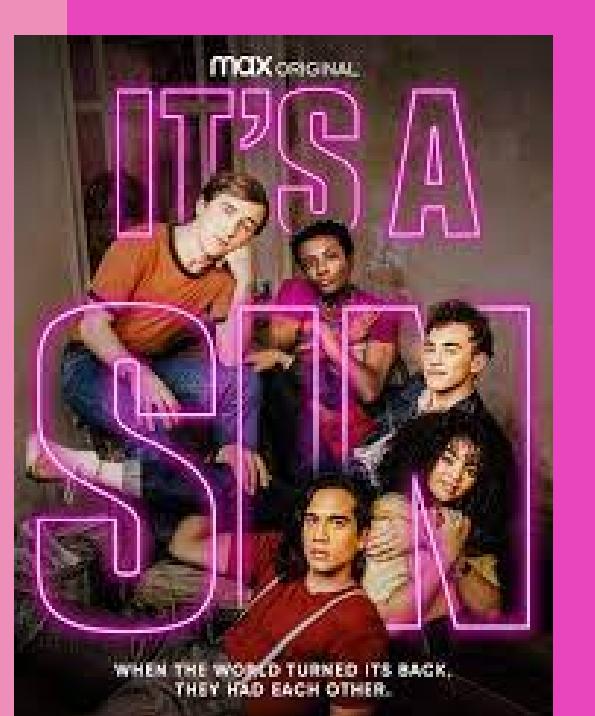
I'm undertaking, at present, a new project that explores the history of AIDS-era activism in Chicago during the 1980s and early 1990s. In particular, I am interested in the anti-poverty measures and sexual health initiatives that local LGBTQ+ activists undertook to promote sexual freedom and economic justice in the years before life-saving medication.

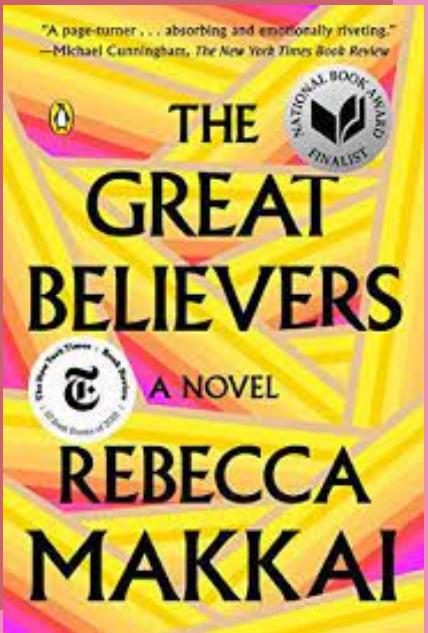
What kinds of things do you follow on social media?

I follow an AIDS memorial site on Instagram that I talk about in class. It is a place where people who lost loved ones who died of HIV-AIDS in the 80s and 90s or even those with family members they never knew are able to share remembrances and memories, and they post pictures. There is a local historian, **Owen Keehnen**, who I believe works at the Unabridged Bookstore here in Lakeview, and he is really dedicated to local Chicago queer history, so there are always a lot of posts on his Instagram from the 70s and 80s of social spaces or bars that used to be here but no longer exist.

What are some of your hobbies and interests? Any recommendations for students?

So outside of school I do a lot of outdoor activities. I do biking and running along the lakefront. I'm really big into architecture and interior design, so obviously Chicago is really great for that. Midcentury modern I'm a really big fan of so Frank Lloyd Wright stuff in the area. In terms of media, one of the shows I'm a big fan of, considering the LGBTQ+ history classes I teach, is there's a show on HBO Max called *It's a Sin*, which is about group of friends in London during the 1980s during the HIV-AIDS epidemic. It follows the trajectory a lot of gay men who were not particularly active during the beginning of the epidemic and how they become politicized as their friends are dying, and just the way in which particularly globally the HIV-AIDS epidemic affected different populations of queer men and women.





Are there any books you recommend?

One of my favorite books ever is called The Great Believers, which is somewhat similar to that show *It's a Sin* that I mentioned. It's about a group of friends in 1980s Chicago in the midst of the HIV-AIDS epidemic, and it shows how the main character and his friends are impacted by that. Particularly for students who are going to school and living in Chicago, it really centers queer nightlife in Chicago during that era. Even though it's a fictional account, the author interviewed a lot of people who survived that era of HIV-AIDS in Chicago in the 1980s and 1990s before life-saving medications, and it really personalizes the plight of people who endured that era because it draws from familiar places and, as a reader, you can situate yourself in the city.

Do you have anything to say about the state of LGBTQ politics currently?

I would say that for a lot of people it's a frightening time, particularly for drag performers and trans Americans within the LGBTQ+ community. There's a sense of urgency for the entire community because even though the community is wide and varied, an assault against any one sect of the community or anyone's rights really affects the lives and experiences of queer people generally. So even though the anti-drag and anti-trans bills and laws in states like Tennessee and Arkansas may seem sporadic, they really are a national assault and attack on the entire queer community, and they speak to the ways in which there always needs to be a sense of vigilance when it comes to queer activism. I think that sometimes there is a notion that after the 2015 marriage equality ruling that queer people had reached the summit of queer rights and queer liberation, but that has witnessed a really significant backlash, and there are also disproportional levels of privilege in the queer community. For people who had prioritized and viewed marriage equality as the summit of the mountain top, so to speak, in terms of gaining complete freedom, they have neglected others within the community who are still very much on the front lines of gaining protections, security, and trying to make inroads towards freedoms in society.

What is advice you would give to AMS students or advice you wish someone had told you as a student?

I would strongly urge students to reach out beyond the campus community for experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, study abroad trips, volunteering, etc. These are invaluable opportunities to build new social and professional networks and skills, discover new passions, and develop a variety of creative outlets outside of the classroom. I waited until I was in my final year of college to finally start seeking out these opportunities, but it is really never too early to start exploring and stockpiling these professional endeavors.

On Love & Madness with Dr. La Marr Jurelle Bruce



His talk attracted 70 in-person attendees (including students from Allison McCracken's new "Mental Illness in U.S. History and Culture" class), with others over Zoom, and audience members were happy to have the opportunity to get their book signed by Dr. Bruce, who was thrilled to do so – he noted that although his book was published in 2021, he wasn't able to do a book signing because of Covid, so this was his first opportunity! (Center for Black Diaspora student worker Miya Jefferson snapped some great photos of the signing, which are reproduced here).



against "Capital R Reason" in ways that revealed "reason" as a form of social control. Drawing from his book, Dr. Bruce focused on how the so-called "madness" of Black women artists Lauryn Hill and Nina Simone offer important social critiques of racism and misogyny in the U.S. Dr. Bruce also advised audiences, especially students, to be generous regarding our own responses to perceived "madness" in society, asking ourselves first what harm is being done (or what harm has already been done) when assessing human behavior. Students found Dr. Bruce's discussion insightful and often moving.

"In love and madness, words fail—but I keep trying." The American Studies Program and The Center for Black Diaspora were proud to welcome scholar La Marr Jurelle Bruce to DePaul on May 11th. Dr. Bruce spent the day with DePaul students, speaking to classes and eating lunch with faculty and students; his visit culminated in a public lecture in 154 SAC, where he provided an overview of his book *How to Go Mad Without Losing Your Mind: Madness and Black Radical Creativity* (which won the MLA Prize for Best First Book in 2022) and an introduction to his new work on the intersections between love and madness.

THE SWIFTLY FADING RESIDUE OF SOON-FORGOTTEN DREAMS: ON LOVE AND MADNESS

With LA MARR JURELLE BRUCE, PhD

May 11, 2023

5:00pm - 7:00 pm
Schmitt Academic Center
(SAC) Room 154

La Marr Jurelle Bruce (B.A. Columbia, Ph.D. Yale) is a philosopher, fever dreamer, interdisciplinary humanities scholar, Black/black studies devotee, first-generation college graduate, and Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. His debut book, *How to Go Mad without Losing Your Mind: Madness and Black Radical Creativity*, earned the Modern Language Association's 2022 Prize for a First Book. Now he's in the thick of a study of—and experiment in—convergences of love and madness.

Dr. Bruce's work explores the way in which the study of madness reveals, confronts and critiques social norms and inequalities, citing, for example, the way in which mental illness has been socially constructed over the centuries to explain the behavior of enslaved people who ran away ("Drapetomania," for which the cure was whipping) and Black Power protestors in the 1960s and 1970s ("paranoid schizophrenia,"

with which Malcolm X was diagnosed). He noted how, in these ways, madness was pitted

against "Capital R Reason" in ways that revealed "reason" as a form of social control. Drawing from his book, Dr. Bruce focused on how the so-called "madness" of Black women artists Lauryn Hill and Nina Simone offer important social critiques of racism and misogyny in the U.S. Dr. Bruce also advised audiences, especially students, to be generous regarding our own responses to perceived "madness" in society, asking ourselves first what harm is being done (or what harm has already been done) when assessing human behavior. Students found Dr. Bruce's discussion insightful and often moving.

We ❤️ Our AMS Senior Ezra Constante!

How long have you been at DePaul for?

I started in 2019 as a freshman.

Has your major always been American Studies?

No, I started as a history major, but then I was sad, because we weren't doing stuff that I wanted to learn about, it was all very WWII based. I didn't feel like there was any room to learn other stuff. I was always looking at Woman and Gender Studies, and I thought that that would be fun, but then I switched to American Studies. But then all the AMS classes were making me very depressed, because it's hard to talk about colonization and institutional racism and transphobia all the time. It's hard, but it's real, but here's also a lot of grief in it, and I feel like people don't take that seriously, how tiring it is, especially when it happens to so many of my friends and to me. So then I switched to elementary education for a little bit, because I was like "I love kids, I just want to like hangout with kids and draw and do cool stuff." Also, I thought that being a teacher would be cool, especially as an elementary school teacher, because you can do anything you want - you can be a scientist, you can know math, you can be any historical figure you want, you can just learn a bunch of stuff. But then I decided that I just needed to graduate. I couldn't keep switching my major and stay in school, so I switched back to American Studies. I'm glad that I went with this because I feel like I've always had an interest in history and libraries, and in queer history and trans culture, so it was really nice to see that in school. I feel that it's helped me get the job I have now, which is as a supervisor at the DePaul library. So I feel like it works really well for what I want to do and I'm in a good spot.



What is your favorite class you've taken for American studies?

Any class with Professor Nina Wilson. She's in WGS, but her classes are cross listed with AMS. She just had a big heart, and I took two of her classes. I took one called "Contested Bodies", which talked a lot about Black bodies, trans bodies, and disabled bodies, and just the theories and history within that. I also took her Feminist Frameworks class. She was very in-tune with her students and understanding of when things are hard in life. I feel like some professors are weird when they're not a person, but she was always a person, a very kind professor.

What is some advice that you would give to future AMS students?

Just do what you want. Its ok if you don't do the readings, but sometimes the readings are fun and interesting. Look for the things that are fun and happy, because it is a lot of heavy material to go through, and so give yourself the space to process all that stuff] Don't be scared to tell professors what's going on with you, if you're having issues or need a break, take care of yourself.

What do you want to do with your AMS degree?

I just want to keep working in libraries. Sometimes I think about "what if I were a school counselor?", but other times I'm like "what if I got another degree that was in like costume design". One thing I loved about American Studies is that Dr. McCracken was so flexible with everything. I came to her and said like "I want to do dance classes", and she said "ok". I'm glad that I had that flexibility, because school has been hard for me because I've had a lot of other change in my life. I really do need to take care of myself and do stuff that I like, and I think American Studies is really nice because you have a lot of open electives and a lot of room to pursue other things. I don't like to pigeonhole myself to one thing.

You recently got a job! Tell me about that.

It's a part-time position at the DePaul Richardson Library. What's really nice about it is that after I work a thousand hours (in under a year), I can get another degree or take classes from DePaul for free. This means I can get a master's degree for free or I can take costume design. I like being a student, even though it's tiring. I like being in the community.



What has been your experience at DePaul other than the classes?

DePaul is kind of frustrating, because they're an institution at the end of the day, and with institutions comes a lot of red tape that you have to cut through. Right now, I'm really pissed at DePaul because they only recently told me that I needed to have my name legally changed in order to be able to walk with my name at graduation and to have it printed in the programs. It's very frustrating because they don't really offer any resources on how to do that, and so I had to kind of figure that out all on my own. It's also very frustrating when DePaul is like "we are a social justice-oriented place" but do they even know what that means? Because they don't offer resources, really. So they want me to get my name legally changed, but it takes five months to get a court date. It's such a thing that I did not want to have to deal with. It's just annoying. But I think, I love the people I meet at DePaul, because there's a lot of really good people here that care a lot. The reason why I'm fine with not having a full-time job right now is because my boss makes it such a nice place to be in and wants everyone to feel safe and comfortable. I've never had a job like that before, so it's just nice to feel community at the library. It's just cool working with librarians, because when I was figuring out stuff for my surgery, I was like "I don't know how to do all this and go to school and get stuff done," and

my boss was like "you know, we are librarians, we do research, we can do research for you to help you figure out the process."

Why would you recommend AMS for students?

I think because its one of those programs where you can see yourself in it. A lot of it is very, very current stuff, which can be hard, because sometimes it's like "I wish I was just a business major and didn't have to think about stuff, or like a science major and know very technical things", and this is just intense. It makes you more empathetic and you get a broader view of the world. For example, I'm from Kentucky, so a lot of the stuff that I grew up with is very one note, and it's nice to know more about the world.

Where in Kentucky did you grow up?

Goshen. There's Louisville, and Goshen is near Indiana. I could see the Ohio River from my house. It's a very rural area.

What was it like growing up in a rural area as someone who identifies as trans?

It was bad. [Laughs] I talk about it more now. When I came to Chicago I was like "I'm from Kentucky," because I just get scared that everyone will know how Kentucky is and think that about me. There's a lot of messed up things about Kentucky and its policies and its racism and transphobia. It makes me sad

because I feel like people talk bad about Kentucky, but they also never grew up there either, so it's easy for you to talk and talk about how Kentucky sucks. But there are people that are living there, there are trans

people, black people, queer people living there and dealing with it. Because of that there's also very close-knit communities too, and it's a very beautiful place. Its hard, because I see my friends who are still living there having to like deal with a lot of really hard policies, like healthcare policies because they're trying to transition. I guess I have survivor's guilt or something, because I'm in Chicago, and I can go to a place called Trans Chicago, and there's people there that will help me. I can go to a trans centered clinic and get help from a doctor who will know how to talk to me, and I can get healthcare and not feel scared about it. It's hard seeing my friends have to deal with that. Seeing how hard that is hits close to home. In my original idea for my AMS senior thesis, I wanted to write about trans healthcare in Kentucky and how horrible it is, but I just didn't want to keep talking about, because I was tired. I like my Senior Thesis now because this is a celebration of queer life.



Ezra Constante's Capstone: DePaul Drag Teach-In



Our very own AMS senior, Ezra Constante, created, planned, and performed in DePaul's first-ever Drag Teach-In! Ezra planned this event for several months as his AMS Senior Capstone, and created a plan, sought funding, and executed a truly incredible event.

At the event, audience members posed questions to a panel of drag kings and queens. Participants asked wonderful questions about how the performers got into drag, their experiences, and drag in American culture.



After the panel, participants got the chance to see the costumes and makeup of drag performers and talk to them 1-on-1, asking questions and learning how they themselves could get involved. After the teach-in, participants got a giftbag with makeup and eyelashes to help audience members become performers!

For the grand finale, all the performers gave a show! Participants got to see all the drag kings and queens perform a song, and Ezra, also known under his stage name as Testostermoane, closed out with his own special performance to "Cosmic Love" by Florence + the Machine. Great job Ezra!

Alum, Grad Student, Employee...Oh My! Reina Nomura, our AMS Alum

When did you graduate AMS?

I graduated in Spring 2021, so two years ago.

What have you been doing since?

I started this position this week, so it's still very new. The fall quarter after I graduated I started my graduate certificate program at the College of Education, in Education, Culture, and Society. Since I was a graduate student, I maintained the student assistant position I had throughout 2020 and 2021. That was at the Center for Teaching and Learning, here at DePaul.

Are you still in graduate school?

Yes, I started [the certificate] in the fall of 2021, and later that fall I got hired as part time staff in the CTL. I did that until April 2023. Depending on when classes were offered, I would do more classes for the program [in a quarter]. There are only four classes required for the program, so it's really low stakes and it's a great kind of entrance into the type of grad school experience I wanted. I remembered when I was a senior in fall 2020, I was considering grad school but wasn't quite sure, so this grad program was a really nice way to get a taste of a program to see what I like. [From there] I decided to apply for the Writing, Rhetoric, and Discourse MA here at DePaul, so I started that in spring quarter 2023.



What do you hope to do with your Masters degree?

The certificate program is something I'm hoping to have as an educational complement to and context for my rhetorical and discourse studies. What's really cool about the WRD program is that they have the teaching apprenticeship program. The program is basically as a grad student you would teach WRD 103. While you're teaching it, I believe, you are in your own graduate level course to discuss what that process is like. It's a real hands-on, supportive approach to learning how to teach. I am hoping to do that in my second year of grad school, so fall 2024. I hope to get some real, tangible teaching experience.

Do you want to be a teacher eventually?

I am not fully set on "I want to be a professor in X subject," but because I'm really into higher education pedagogy, I think that having that teaching experience is really important. I have the CTL background of being support staff for instructors where I worked a lot in helping them with teaching [over] Zoom, for example. Now I'm getting to try on their shoes, be in their position a little bit, and learn some teaching skills. I think it's a great way to expand my skill set, especially having been a student for so long.

You were an AMS major. Any double majors or minors?

I was an AMS major but I flip-flopped a lot at first. I actually didn't know about the AMS major at all when I started DePaul. I came in as a film major, and I switched to the AMS major towards the end of my first year. I had always maintained my LGBTQ+ Studies Minor. There were points where I considered creative writing, psychology, and urban studies minors, but they didn't end up working out. I came in with a lot of transfer credit from community college classes in high school (dual enrollment), which helped me a lot. I realized I didn't need the extra classes to satisfy major requirements and I didn't want to spend more money. I graduated college a little more than a year early.

What was your favorite thing about AMS?

I really loved how tight-knit AMS was. Especially **AMS 201, Critical American Studies**, and **301, the Senior Seminar**. The classes were so small and discussion based, and I really liked that. I've been in classes where there were more than 20 students in the class, and I feel like I get lost in those. It is wild to think about because I have friends and family who are in classes with over 90 students. That was my favorite part about AMS, it's so small and everyone knows each other.

What was your favorite class?

My favorite class was Dr. Allison McCracken's **Framing Mental Illness in American Culture**. I thought that was really cool, because it was a topic that I've always had interest in, but I've never approached it from an academic point of view. It was super interesting to learn about and I love that it was a new class, too. I was really excited about that. It's kind of funny looking back, because I was struggling with my mental health at the time. In many ways, it worked out.

What elements of higher education pedagogy fascinate you the most and what do you want to do with that?

I am interested in learning about all the different types of ways that faculty and staff around the country are considering new and creative ways to teach their courses. I feel like the idea of a college course as this 90 minute lecture where you sit and do nothing but listen to the professor talk from a PowerPoint is still a pervasive idea of what learning in college is like. I was so lucky to not have those classes all the time; I want to see that more often. Having that background of working with Zoom and teaching on Zoom, I am really interested in how the blend of online teaching works at the higher education level, especially since students are interested in that kind of option. I am excited to see where this goes and I am really excited about all the ideas of about involving students in this process.

If you could give advice to a current AMS student, what would you tell them?

I think my biggest advice for a student is to not underestimate the connections you can make just on campus. I have held multiple student jobs at DePaul since I started in 2018. In 2018, I was working in the mail center and I got to learn all the different offices on campus, so when I started [my current] job, I already knew where this office was, I already knew what other offices around this building were, and the student job that I had in 2020 led to my previous staff position and it helped get me here. Working around the university, there's so many options for employment, skills you can learn, and ways to apply what you learned in classes. It's a super wonderful resource for students on campus.

Alumni Interview with Hattie Cable, Esq.



Some background: where did you grow up and why did you choose to attend DePaul?

I grew up in Appleton, Wisconsin. I came to DePaul because I was ready to live in a big city and also because I had heard great things about the American Studies program from a random guy I met in high school forensics. It sounded like too good to be true to be able to study exactly the subject matter that interested me!

What has your life after DePaul looked like?

After graduating from DePaul, I began law school at Michigan State University College of Law. I also got married to my spouse who is a fellow DePaul alum. I have spent the last almost six years residing in Columbus, Indiana – a small town renowned for its midcentury modern architecture.

Shortly after moving and passing the bar exam, I began my work as a Staff Attorney for the Indiana Department of Child Services. After struggling for many years with infertility, I was so happy to welcome my daughters Holiday and Cedar who are now four and one. We feel really pleased with the life and community we have built here in Columbus.

What made you want to go into law?

I wanted a profession where I could use my speaking skills and writing skills in order to advocate and make a difference in the world.

How did you get your current job at the Indiana Department of Child Services?

My current position is Deputy Chief Counsel of Region 14 for Indiana DCS. What that means is that I am second in command of the legal division in our particular five-county region in Southern Indiana. I got this promotion after five years as Staff Attorney in Jennings County.

Describe your job: what do you do, what does a typical day look like?

In my new job, I manage and supervise four attorneys and two legal assistants. Management is a whole new skillset because my career previously has been focused on litigation. I still get some time in the courtroom covering hearings and/or training new attorneys. Our cases begin when a family is identified as needing services due to child abuse or neglect taking place. Those cases range from significant struggles with substance use and/or mental illness (the largest percentage of cases) to sexual abuse to domestic violence to infants with inflicted injuries. I represent the government agency that intervenes to assist these families who are struggling and we work to get permanency for our kids as soon as possible, ideally through reunification with their families. It is emotionally taxing, yet very rewarding work. My focus right now is modeling work/life balance for my team, hiring excellent people, and supporting the great folks we have now to optimize retention in this high-turnover field. A typical day involves at least a couple virtual meetings, one-on-one supervision with my team members, meeting with our social workers to discuss case progress, and often attending court in one of my counties.



Have you used your AMS background in your legal career?

My AMS background has been so useful first and foremost in my ability to identify nuance. So much of the law is presented as black and white, but a nuanced viewpoint is so much more useful in approaching cases. It allows me to give good legal advice to my client and work as a team with opposing counsel and other stakeholders to come to agreements to help move cases forward. My AMS classes at DePaul were so excellent in training us to identify nuance and complexities in analysis and I am so grateful for that preparation. Going from a progressive institution in Chicago to working in a rural and conservative county in Indiana that struggles significantly with poverty and generational abuse was a culture shock and I think my AMS studies prepared me to grapple with such an intense cultural difference and find where I can fit in and make a positive influence. Child welfare is a complicated field that has historically often done more harm than good. Using my AMS background to identify those complexities and figure out how to advocate to improve the system has been valuable.

What was your favorite AMS class and why?

How could I choose?! I feel like the one I reference most often in my life is Vampires in Television and Film just because of its specificity. I was also thinking recently about the privilege of taking the course that was taught by two Vietnam War veterans... as that population continues to age, that opportunity will not be available forever. I must say that my favorite courses were many of the ones taught by Professor McCracken - History of Sex in America, Television Studies, and the core classes.

Those courses taught me to be a critical and engaged consumer of content and culture. Even though my job has little to do with Popular Culture and Media Studies, I consume content every day in my private life and I am so grateful to have learned the framework to be a critical recipient.

As someone who lives in Indiana, what are you seeing/experiencing in the way of anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+ laws, especially in terms of how children experience these?

Living in Indiana is rough!! I live in Mike Pence's hometown, to be exact. It feels like at every opportunity, instead of focusing on the many important issues in our state, Republican lawmakers are obsessed with proposing legislation that hurts trans kids and hurts educators and librarians just trying to do their jobs. Relating to my work, there was a controversial case ([In the Matter of A.C.](#)) recently decided by the Indiana Court of Appeals relating to parents who, in addition to failing to affirm their child's gender identity, also verbally abused the child and failed to treat the child's eating disorder. While I can't comment on the details of the case, it will be interesting to see how the precedent of the case is applied to future cases involving trans issues. As a private citizen and a parent, I can say that I'm extremely concerned. While I am seeing more and more trans kids be out and proud and slowly changing the attitudes of their loved ones, the vocal minority of hatred gets louder and louder. I have learned just how important local elections are – school board elections in particular when so much anti-trans legislation is focused on school censorship and policies that seek to marginalize and harm trans kids. I am comforted by the community of families we are building to raise kids who know they are loved and affirmed regardless of their gender identities and who will hopefully continue to fight for their trans siblings.

Why would you recommend getting an AMS degree?

Getting an AMS degree is getting a degree in how to think about the world we are entrenched in. It is such a wonderful opportunity to learn a multitude of disciplines and find out what areas make you feel on fire to learn more. Additionally, something I've learned after ten years out of undergrad (oh my god is that right?!?) is that you may never have another opportunity to devote time and study to such niche areas unless you go into academia yourself, so embrace the opportunity to get specific and become an expert on niche areas of culture and history!

What do you like to do for fun?

I love to travel. My husband just finished a sabbatical which allowed our whole family to go on a trip to Romania, Hungary, and Germany which was quite an adventure with our two young kids. I also love popular culture. I am a religious listener to the podcast "Who? Weekly- everything you need to know about the celebrities you don't." It's all about the antics of C-list and D-list celebrities and it's been a fixture of my life since 2016. A thing my husband and I have been working on since the pandemic hit in 2020 is watching every single Best Picture Academy Award nominee. We use a random number generator to select a year and then watch each Best Picture nominated film from that year. Then we each rank them and randomly select the next year. So far we have watched 181 out of 591 movies – so almost a third of the way done. It has been a blast and a great opportunity for some informal cultural analysis of so many movies we otherwise never would have watched! And we always have an answer for the age-old questions "what should we watch?"



This newsletter was written and edited by Olivia Zimmerman, with editing assistance by Allison McCracken.

American Studies Program
Schmitt Academic Center, 5th floor
Director Allison McCracken
amccrac1@depaul.edu
[@amsdepaul](#) on Instagram

