

DePaul American Studies

Winter 2014 Newsletter



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Winter 2014

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AMS Program Requirements

-3 Core Methods Courses
(AMS 211, 213 & 215)

-1 Senior Seminar

-6 Courses from One of the
Five Concentrations

-3 Electives Courses on
U.S. topics, either AMS
courses or university courses
approved of by the
American Studies program.

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A Letter From the AMS Program Director, Allison McCracken

Hello Everyone!

This is certainly the coldest quarter I can remember at DePaul, and I am so happy, as I'm sure are most of you, to be nearing the end of this long, hard Winter Quarter. As a department, we are all very much looking forward to both the advent of Spring and our next social event, our annual **Spring Luncheon**, which will take place May 13, between 12-2:00 in LPSC Room 220. All AMS students and affiliated faculty are welcome to attend. We will be officially awarding the **DeCordova Writing Award** at the Luncheon and speaking of the DeCordova Award, submissions will be due April 4. For the first time, papers or projects must be submitted online, although the evaluative criteria remains the same: all papers or projects must take an interdisciplinary approach to American topics but they may originate from any department. Please see the back page of this newsletter for more application details and don't forget to apply!

This quarter, we were fortunate to have transgender activist and writer **ellie june navdison** discuss her zine, "Spiderteeth," in both of our **AMS 276: The History of Sex in America** classes. Ellie's experience as a transwoman and her work with transgender youth in Chicago was very enlightening to students, while her zine offered theoretical complexity and gave political urgency to discussions of gender and sexuality in American culture, especially as they intersect with factors of class, nationality, and race.

We are also looking forward to having a Spring Quarter Speaker, **Dr. Christina Simmons**, who is Associate Professor of History and Women's Studies at the University of Windsor in Ontario. Dr. Simmons has been invited to speak in conjunction with two of our Spring courses, Jaime Hovey's **LSP 200 Sophomore Seminar** on "Sex in America" and our most popular course, **AMS 276: The History of Sex in America**. Dr. Simmons will be speaking on the gendered, classed and racialized politics of marriage from the 1920s-1940s. Her public lecture will take place on Thursday, May 1 – details to come. Hope to see you there!

The profiles in this issue bring together some of the Program's brightest lights. I am happy to report that our first profile subject, **Dr. Barbara Willard** of the College of Communication, has officially joined the American Studies Program Committee after many years of being a faculty affiliate. Dr. Willard has long been one of the most popular professors with American Studies students. An award-winning teacher, Dr. Willard specializes in interdisciplinary approaches in her own research as well as her courses. She is an expert in environmental rhetoric and consumer culture, and she is actively involved throughout Chicago on issues of environmental sustainability. Her course in "**The Culture of Consumption**," a favorite of AMS students, encourages them to think critically about the larger environmental and social effects of



American Studies Program Director, Allison McCracken

consumption (including their own), as well as the mass media's construction of these issues.

Our Alumni spotlight is **Hillary Lebeau** (Class of 2011), one of the AMS Program's most engaged, productive, and ambitious recent graduates. During her time at DePaul, Hillary was involved in a number of community service and university activities while completing her American Studies major (**Concentration in Politics, Institutions and Values**) and Marketing minor. Hillary also found time to be the Newsletter Editor for American Studies from 2010-2011, interviewing and reporting on some of our most accomplished professors and alumni. After DePaul, Hillary taught in Japan and has recently begun law school at prestigious Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Hillary's love of travel, genuine curiosity about and concern for the world around her, and exceptional organizational and social skills provide a great model for current AMS students.

For our student profile, we decided to try something new for this quarter. Instead of interviewing a departing senior about her/his time as an American Studies undergrad, we chose to focus on a freshman major, Honors student **Noah Barth**, who entered DePaul as an American Studies student and is currently working his way through the major's core courses. The American Studies Program faculty is always interested in what attracts new students to American Studies and how we can locate more of the kind of student who is interested in the interdisciplinary methods, individual mentorship, and build-you-own-major independence that the program offers. Noah certainly is representative of this kind of student, and his interview also suggests ways in which the program can not only attract but also continue to meet the high expectations of its students.

I hope you all begin to warm up for Spring Quarter and that we see you at our Spring events!



**First-Year Perspectives:
Noah Barth, Class of 2017**

Unlike many students who find the American Studies Program after a year or two at DePaul, first-year Honors Program Student, Noah Barth, came to DePaul as a declared AMS major. He first encountered American Studies when his sister was in college. She was an American Studies Major at University of Miami, Ohio and currently works as the co-director of Harvard's Pluralism Project. Noah is originally from West Milton, Ohio—a small town outside of Dayton. Noah was looking for a change of scenery. DePaul offered the urban learning and social environment Noah was looking for. Within the DePaul community, American Studies appealed to Noah because it incorporated many of his interests, from religion and ethics to media and sexuality, as well as government and politics. His interests in social media and sexuality in particular inform his **Popular Culture and Media Studies** AMS concentration.

"The American Studies Program allows each student to be very unique, because students can create their own individualized combination of courses. I suppose that no two American Studies students take the exact same sum total of courses, so each person is different and they each are able to bring something different to the table. I am excited to be able to choose which courses I think will be enjoyable and helpful to what I want to do."

During the fall of 2013 Noah took his first American Studies course, **AMS 200: In-**

First-Year Perspectives: Noah Barth

roduction to American Social History and Culture, with **Professor John Burton**. He found the class contrasted from his first AMS core course, **AMS 211: American Experience I: Early America to 1860**, also with **Professor Burton**. Where AMS 200 featured lecture Noah said AMS 211 focused on class discussion. The small class size of 211—just over ten students—allowed Noah to meet other American Studies majors. He appreciated the discussion, one-on-one time, and individualized research 211 offered. The class examined Jesuit and Native American relations in early America. Noah and his classmates conducted research on the Jesuits at the DePaul University Archives and Special Collections. Noah used archival materials to understand Jesuit response to Native American herbal medicines and remedies.

"I'm glad primary source research is something the American Studies Program is incorporating, because using the archives is something really interesting to me. American Studies courses have given me familiarity with primary sources—understanding their forms and biases. That's something that I didn't have a lot of prior experience with and wasn't necessarily getting in my other classes. Now my courses are using primary sources more and more and I'm able to use the sources effectively because of my experiences in AMS."

Despite the small size of the American Studies Program, Noah has found community with other American Studies majors. He attributes his AMS relationships to smaller class sizes and discussion oriented AMS core courses.

"I like the smaller class size and I like the discussion element of the AMS 211 class. Because it's conducive for conversation, it's very easy to talk to other AMS majors and share ideas. You're able to discuss things openly and you're able to run your ideas past everyone and have the professor talk about your ideas and give you immediate feedback."

Many undergraduate students become



[American Studies courses have given me familiarity with primary sources—understanding their forms and biases]



Noah Barth, *continued*

preoccupied with life, moreover employment, after graduation, but Noah isn't worried. He finds his current involvement in Chicago communities fulfilling and he believes his interests will continue to sustain him after his time at DePaul.

"I feel like I'm doing a lot of things that I enjoy. I volunteered at Chicago Women's AIDS Project. I have a general internship at the Chicago Area Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. I recently went to the Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Ally College Conference, the largest LGBT conference in the nation. I am one of two representatives from Illinois that sits on the Steering Committee. I had a chance to network with Zach Stafford, DePaul Alum, and he offered me a position at Lurie Hospital with the HIV prevention team and I accepted. I will be starting soon. I feel like if I'm already involved and have some experience, then I will keep doing things I love and will continue learning. I believe that eventually my interests will lead me somewhere and that it will be somewhere that I enjoy."

Noah was introduced to the Chicago Women's AIDS Project (CWAP) by way of the DePaul Community Service Scholarship. He was awarded the scholarship after an application and interview process. As a DePaul Community Service Scholar, Noah completes thirty hours of volunteer work a quarter. He is interested in working with the Center on Halsted—anLGBTQ community center in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood—through the scholarship program in the future. In addition to his volunteer and internship involvements, Noah is the social media coordinator for DePaul's LGBTQA activist organization, Act Out. He hopes to incorporate his interest in social media, popular culture, and safe sex practices into his American Studies courses.

*"I definitely want to look for a way to incorporate safe sex practices and HIV prevention into my passion for popular culture and social media. I definitely want to take **AMS 276: History of Sex in America II: Late Victorians to the Present**. . . I am really interested in the twentieth century AIDS epidemic in the United*

States and the ways in which it relates to the present moment and how we can use social media and popular culture to help with preventative strategies and reducing stigmas within communities. . . There are a lot of AIDS organization in Chicago and I would love to explore those, but I also want to explore AIDS organizations outside of Chicago, especially in city centers where epidemics occurred in New York and San Francisco."

Noah has already begun to take courses across different departments in the University. He is currently studying introductory American Sign Language in fulfillment of his Honors Program language requirement. Other courses he's taken such as his **HON 110: Honors Discover Chicago** course continue to expose Noah to the many extracurricular opportunities Chicago has to offer. His Discover class explored grassroots writing in Chicago. The experience pushed his own writing abilities, and brought his expository and academic passions to a more creative level. He and his classmates visited Young Chicago Authors in Wicker Park and Grace House—a poetry writing center for recently incarcerated women. Chicago's urban learning environment is one of the features that first drew Noah to DePaul, and he hopes to continue to connect within Chicago communities throughout his DePaul career.

Noah has always considered himself an independent individual, but he enjoys how welcoming the DePaul and Chicago communities have been. He encourages incoming American Studies students to explore different course options and not to get discouraged after one class. As he progresses through his first year of courses, Noah looks forward to future AMS classes, particularly those that reflect his range of popular culture and media interests.



[I believe that eventually my interests will lead me somewhere and that it will be somewhere that I enjoy]





Professor Barbara Willard:
College of Communication and the
Department of Environmental
Science and Studies

Professor Barbara Willard, Ph.D., brings together environmental, rhetorical, and critical cultural theory. Her interests merge academic inquiry with social justice and service. She plays an integral role in Chicago's urban agriculture and environmental communities, and she brings students to agricultural sites throughout the city. Her class trips include visits to the Eden Place Nature Center in the Fuller Park neighborhood, among others, and her partnership with the Gary Comer Youth Center in Greater Grand Crossing has helped DePaul students pursue careers as urban farm managers and environmental educators.

Professor Willard's fall quarter Environmental Studies classes have participated in service days and harvested foods from agricultural "hoop houses" where Chicago community members plant vegetables. As a DePaul professor, she fosters networks beyond the Lincoln Park and Loop campuses. Her extensive involvement with Chicago environmental communities like Chicago Wilderness has led to interviews with National Public Radio and the *Chicago Tribune*. In her commitment to environmental sustainability, she not only examines relationships between communities and the land they live on, but also the political rhetoric embedded in American popular culture.

Professor Willard, like many DePaul

Faculty Profile: Professor Barbara Willard

faculty members, enjoys having American Studies students in her classes. She recognizes AMS students' intellectual curiosity and ability to think outside of the box and, moreover, to understand cultural criticism in a way that is highly advanced.

"I love the way American Studies students think. I approach thinking in the same manner as American Studies students—in a very interdisciplinary fashion. AMS students are critically oriented to and interested in popular culture. They're not only interested in popular culture for the sake of something that is fun or fascinating to analyze, but also because of popular culture's implications."

This is Professor Willard's first year on the American Studies Program Committee, but she has cross-listed courses with AMS for many years and has practiced interdisciplinary methodology, really, since her time as a Ph.D. student at the University of Iowa. She sits on a range of councils and committees, including the Executive Council of the International Environmental Communication Association. At DePaul alone, she has taken initiative as a founding board member for the university's Institute for Nature and Culture, participated in the committee that founded the Environmental Studies Program and its sustainability concentration, and received the DePaul University Excellence in Teaching Award. She brings together Rhetoric and Environmental Science, teaching in three colleges: the College of Communication, the College of Science and Health, and the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

Professor Willard's **INTC 324** course, **Culture of Consumption**, is her favorite class to teach at DePaul. The course is an ideal fit for AMS students concentrating in **Popular Culture and Social Media Studies** or **Politics, Institutions, and Values**, but would appeal to anyone interested in gaining critical perspectives on



[AMS students are critically oriented to and interested in popular culture. They're not only interested in popular culture for the sake of something that is fun or fascinating to analyze, but also because of popular culture's implications]



Professor Willard with her dogs Lacey and Cody

Professor Barbara Willard, *continued*

American consumer culture—the lifestyles, images, aesthetics, and desires we fetishize as American shoppers. Cross-listed with **AMS 395: Special Topics in American Studies**, the course delves into the intersection between popular culture and environmental rhetoric, while examining the connection between environmentalism and consumerism.

“The Culture of Consumption course really allows me to make a connection with students. We explore the connection between consumption and the degradation of our planet and our souls—what we’re giving up. I see the class as an opportunity to challenge students to think about the consequences of their consumption practices, whether on the environment or themselves, as well as their connection to communities and their relationship with people in other parts of the world who are producing goods. I hope that students will go into their adult life as critical consumers.”

Professor Willard is planning to cross list another course, **INTC 323: Social Movements**, with the American Studies Program during the 2014 – 2015 academic calendar. The class examines the rhetoric of social movements. In the past, Professor Willard approached the course from a Chicago perspective, utilizing the city’s resources. Because her classes cover a range of disciplines throughout the university, she is able to reach out to different student communities that she wants to have conversations with. An interdisciplinary approach, she says, partnered with DePaul’s openness to interdisciplinary teaching, allows her to have conversations with students outside of the College of Communication. Her conversations and relationships with American Studies students, for example, exemplify rhetoric’s ability to transcend disciplinary boundaries.

“I feel that rhetoric is inherently interdisciplinary. You can take any discipline and look at the ways in which a discipline has consistent rhetorical tropes, arguments, themes, and how reality is constructed through those themes. You can find the creation of meaning in different

disciplines. The world is not cut up into disciplinary boxes and silos. When students become involved in interdisciplinary studies like American Studies they’re able to have a holistic approach to intellectual inquiry that makes ideas more robust. You can talk to a lot of people. interdisciplinary studies allows you to have conversations about your ideas with different groups of people.”

Professor Willard recalls her time in graduate school and compares the graduate school experience to learning a new language. She had to consider the multiple meanings held in order to understand their role in rhetoric.

“Take a word like ‘appropriate’ that you use in everyday language. The word has a different meaning when you place it in a critical cultural context. You have to learn the different meanings embedded in a word that you thought you previously understood.”

She finds that American Studies students are able to converse and utilize language critically in both class discussion and writing assignments. The ability to apply and effectively use theoretical language isn’t easy—you really have to understand theory, but AMS students have the intellectual curiosity to engage with cultural theory.

Because American Studies teaches interdisciplinary methodologies, Professor Willard sees American Studies as an incredibly useful undergraduate major. AMS, she says, teaches students a way of thinking that is beneficial to any career path. AMS provides skills that allow students to become good consumers of popular culture and politics, and therefore great citizens and good human beings.



[When students become involved in interdisciplinary studies like American Studies they’re able to have a holistic approach to intellectual inquiry that makes ideas more robust]



Professor Willard
standing on top of DePaul
University’s rooftop garden



Alumni, Hillary LeBeau
Class of 2011

2011 DePaul American Studies Program graduate and former AMS newsletter editor, Hillary LeBeau, is an extremely mobile individual. Since moving from North Carolina to Chicago for an undergraduate career at DePaul, Hillary has continued to seek new opportunities throughout the United States and across the globe. She currently resides in Ithaca, New York as a first-year Cornell University Law School student.

"I would really like the chance to travel more and it would be ideal if I got to travel for my job. This summer I am going to take classes in Paris. Cornell has a program, the Paris Summer Institute, where Cornell faculty members teach classes in Paris for five weeks. The program focuses on international law. For the four weeks of summer prior to the Institute I'm going to try and get an internship in Paris."

Hillary LeBeau first traveled abroad through DePaul University's Study Abroad Program. She spent a December Intercession in Morocco with Professors Sharon Nagy and Warren Schultz. While in Morocco she traveled to the cities of Rabat, Meknes, and Fez, where she stayed with a Moroccan host family. The trip included a crash course in Arabic, a tour of the ancient Roman ruins at Volubilis, and an overnight stay in the Sahara desert camping and star gazing. The short-term study abroad program allowed Hillary to continue her on-campus commitments as a DePaul residential housing Facility Assistant (FA). Hillary's experiences as an FA, however, were not limited to DePaul's Lincoln Park campus. During her junior

Alumni Profile: Hillary LeBeau

year, she participated in a service trip to Tutwiler Mississippi designed for DePaul Resident Advisors and Facility Assistants. Hillary and fellow DePaul students built Habitat for Humanity homes while enjoying southern hospitality: barbeque, sweet tea, and a canoeing excursion down the Mississippi river.

Service and community involvement were central to Hillary's DePaul experience. Fostering her volunteering interests, Hillary volunteered for the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) and participated in community outreach programs for individuals impacted by prostitution and human trafficking. David Schisgall and Nina Alvarez's 2007 documentary *Very Young Girls*, a film about young sexually exploited girls in the United States, inspired Hillary's CAASE administrative work. In addition to her time working with the CAASE community, Hillary also interned for Chicago's 42nd ward alderman, Brendan Reilly. The intern experience helped Hillary learn about the mechanics of local government. Her interest in politics and public policy reflected her American Studies major concentration—**Politics, Institutions, and Values**. American Studies gave Hillary the freedom to explore her interests, minor in Marketing, and learn Japanese, while providing her with a broad range of skillsets.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do after college, and I wanted to have a well-rounded education. I was afraid of narrowing my options as an undergraduate, because I didn't know what exactly I wanted to do. That's the reason why I liked American Studies, because the major was broad and allowed me to study many different things within American culture. I took classes in a lot of different departments and was able to fulfill undergraduate credit hours. The AMS core courses were also really nice. I felt special and I felt like my education mattered. I had individualized attention and open access to my professors and I really appreciated that."

American Studies Director **Allison McCracken's, AMS 340: American Popular Culture** course was among Hillary's



[I was doing a lot for the first time as the American Studies Newsletter Editor. I spoke one on one with professors in a context outside of the classroom and doing so was always enlightening. I learned what motivated professors]



Hillary at a Ramen festival in Japan

Hillary LeBeau, *continued*

favorite classes. The class examined early twentieth century popular culture in the United States—something Hillary had never studied before. She enjoyed being able to critically analyze topics like the World's Fairs and circuses of early 1900s. Hillary also described the class as “challenging,” a term she applied to many of her AMS courses. The rigor of Hillary's AMS classes developed her critical thinking skills and study habits—tools and practices she now draws on in law school. Hillary's time as the AMS newsletter editor also introduced her to new writing techniques and ideas.

“I had never written for a newsletter format before, nor had I previously interviewed anyone. I was doing a lot for the first time as the American Studies Newsletter Editor. I spoke one on one with professors in a context outside of the classroom and doing so was always enlightening. I learned what motivated professors. I also enjoyed speaking with AMS alumni. As I said, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. The economy had just crashed in 2009 and everyone was worried about getting jobs—it was number one on everyone's minds. So to speak with people was reassuring and they gave me advice.”

Hillary was particularly interested in sexuality, gender studies, and film. She explored the intersection of these interests in the American Studies capstone course, **AMS 301: Senior Seminar**, with **Professor Amy Tyson**. Hillary's AMS thesis discussed film censorship during the 1950s, specifically in relation to gender and sexuality. She found that film censorship changed during the time, beginning with strict censorship and lessening throughout the decade. Her analysis compared two films based on Tennessee Williams plays directed by Elia Kazan: *A Street Car Named Desire* (1951) and *Baby Doll* (1956).

“I had never taken on such a large project before. In the beginning of the course it seemed really daunting, and I had a lot of anxiety about the project throughout the quarter about what I was going to do and how I was going to write the paper. My professor, Amy Tyson, was extremely helpful. She gave me a lot of guidance and support and helped me a lot emotionally in finishing the capstone. American Studies students also become a support group for each other. You know no one else is judg-

ing you. There were five people in my capstone class, so whenever we had practice presentations it was nice just having those people there to watch you present.”

Hillary promoted her American Studies experiences in her job applications. Before graduating, she applied and was accepted to the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET). She began the program in the summer of 2011 and moved to Toyama in the Japanese countryside. Hillary taught in Japan for two years at three different elementary and middle schools. During her time in the JET program she traveled to Thailand and met teachers from other international, English-speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and England. Because the JET program focused on cultural exchange, Hillary was able to market her AMS degree and highlight her understanding of American culture and her ability to compare the United States with other cultures.

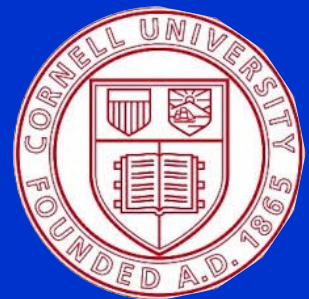
Hillary was also able to touch on her AMS experiences in her law school applications—a process she began by preparing for the LSAT. Hillary studied for the LSAT for eight months and then took the test in 2012. Her high test score helped open up new opportunities, as schools quickly began waving her application fees. She committed to Cornell because of its superb international law program. Hillary is happy to provide fellow American Studies students with advice and recommends that students take time off after graduation to have work and travel experiences.

“Having worked in the world before coming back to school was a really valuable experience...I feel like people who have worked for a few years have more perspective and are able to see the end goal. They see the bigger picture. Do something that will take you outside of your comfort zone and try to experience something that perhaps is not a part of your plan...Do as many things as you can to make yourself stand out. It's about breadth. My preference for learning is to learn more things rather than a few things.”



Hillary at a temple in Bangkok, Thailand

[Do something that will take you outside of your comfort zone and try to experience something that perhaps is not a part of your plan]



American Studies Program Announcements

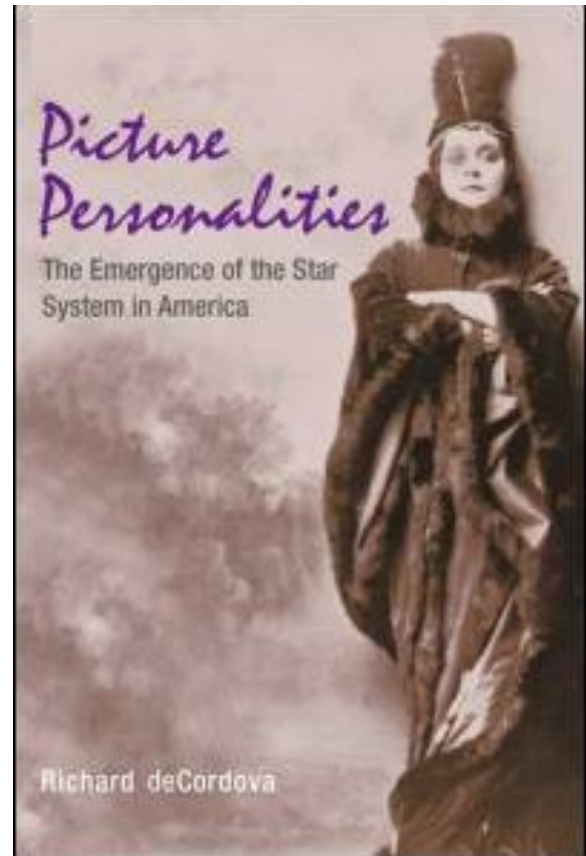
Richard deCordova Scholarship Competition

For the best Paper or Project in the area of American Studies

The American Studies Program at DePaul University sponsors the **Richard deCordova** writing competition to honor and celebrate our late, beloved colleague, a founding member of the American Studies Program, and one of the Program's most loyal supporters. In keeping with Richard deCordova's teaching and scholarly interests, and with his own standards of excellence, papers or projects in U.S. American Studies or U.S. film/media studies by currently enrolled DePaul undergraduates are eligible for the prize. Paper or project submissions will be evaluated based on originality, interdisciplinary perspective, clarity in reasoning, writing, and presentation, and adequate and correct documentation.

Papers or projects previously submitted as a part of a class requirement, as well as revisions of such papers or projects, are eligible for submission—as are papers or projects designed only for the competition. Each student may submit only one entry. If a collaborative project is submitted and wins, the prize will be split. Papers may be of any length; projects may include, but are not limited to creative works such as films and web pages.

Submissions are due online by **Friday, April 4, 2014** at <http://depaul.academicworks.com/opportunities>. A panel of American Studies faculty will decide the competition, and their judgment will be final. The panel reserves the right not to award the prize if none of the submissions in a give year meet the criteria. A certificate and a cash prize of at least \$500 will be awarded at the AMS Spring Luncheon on May 13th, 2014. Contact Allison McCracken with questions.



Richard deCordova's 1990 publication,
Picture Personalities

AMS Spring Luncheon, 2014

The AMS Spring Luncheon will take place on **Tuesday, May 13, 2014** from **12:00—2:00 p.m.** in the DePaul University Lincoln Park **Student Center Room 220**. All majors, minors, and affiliated faculty are welcome to attend!



AMS Newsletter Produced/Edited

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