

# DePaul American Studies

2320 N Kenmore Ave.  
SAC, Fifth Floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60614-4086

Phone: 773-325-7163

## Happy Spring Break from Dr. Allison McCracken

For this issue of the newsletter, I am temporarily taking over the task of Director's Notes from our current Chair, Dr. Amy Tyson. Dr. Tyson is on maternity leave, although, as of this writing, the final product of her labors has yet to see the light of day, so any birth announcement will be posted on our Facebook page (watch for it!). In Dr. Tyson's stead, Dr. Tom Foster, currently Chair of the History Department, has graciously agreed to step in as interim Chair for the Spring Quarter. Dr. Foster is a Program Committee member and long time American Studies affiliate faculty. He specializes in gender and women's studies, LGBTQ Studies, and the history of Early America. Dr. Foster is a highly productive scholar who has written and edited six books (!), including **Sex and the Founding Fathers** (2014), and, as a teacher, his classes such as **HST 275/AMS 275: The History of Sex in America: Puritans to Victorians**, and **HST 288: U.S. Women's History** have been very popular with students. He is also the former director of the LGBTQ Studies Program. We are, therefore, more than thrilled to have Dr. Foster helming the program for this quarter. Dr. Foster was the subject of one of our earliest newsletter interview, in 2008, and we have excerpted portions of that interview on the back page of this newsletter. Please do take a look to read more about Dr. Foster's background and interests! You can also follow him on Twitter: [@ThomasAFoster](#).



In other exciting news this quarter, we are pleased to announce the winner of this year's **Richard DeCordova Memorial Scholarship**, Zoe Krey (on the left), who is an Honors Student and a Political Science major. In her paper, "Cokeys, Gongs, and the Reefer Man: Cab Calloway's Use of Subversive Expressionism during the Harlem Renaissance" Krey writes about the way in which 1930s and 1940s African American "hot" jazz band leader and singer Cab Calloway used coded language and scat-style singing to make veiled references to drug use and other generally unacknowledged social realities in his music, most obviously in his famous song "Minnie the Moocher" (which, for example, refers to smoking opium in the lyric: "kicking the gong around"). In making their award, the DeCordova Committee noted that author Krey "tackled a unique and intriguing topic that she researched meticulously. In so doing, she demonstrated a clear argument, superb writing, and a thoughtful methodology, incorporating both example and historical research in subtle yet meaningful ways." Krey's paper, we should note, was written for HON 301, a class about American Popular Culture in the 1890s-1930s that was taught by American Studies Professor Allison McCracken; the course is often taught generally as AMS 340 within the program. Zoe Krey will officially be celebrated at the annual **American Studies Luncheon**, which will

take place on **May 12, from 1-3:00 pm in SC 220**. In other spring news, we are very excited to report that Dr. James Brask will be coming out of retirement to teach his course **AMS 280/394 The Politics and History of the Vietnam War**. This course has always been one of our most popular offerings over the years, and many students have found it both intellectually stimulating and tremendously emotionally engaging. We are very grateful that Dr. Brask is back with us this spring.

Turning to our current newsletter issue, we are delighted to present another wonderful trio of profiles from our brilliant editor Cynthia Marrero-Ramos. Our first interview is with English Department **Assistant Professor Bill Johnson González** a new and very welcome addition to the American Studies Program Committee this year. Dr. Johnson Gonzalez specializes in Latinx Literature and gives us insight into his scholarly development, which began as a child growing up in a two language household and continued in his formal studies in Chicanx and Latinx Literature at Yale and Harvard. In this interview, he also shares his current research interests, which include editing a forthcoming edition of the **Dialogo** (a publication of DePaul's Center for Latino Research) about the Bracero Program, an important series of labor agreements between the US and Mexico, 1940s-60s.

Our alumnus profile focuses on the illustrious career of **Megan Ashley**, one of our most accomplished students (a two time DeCordova winner) whose post-grad career has been no less impressive. After graduation, Megan was able to turn one of her many prestigious internships into a full time position with Chicago's high-profile event production company Red Frog. Megan rose through the ranks quickly at Red Frog; in her interview, she discusses how American Studies training has influenced her life and work. Our student profile for this issue is graduating senior **Luke Brunetti**, who is one of our many double majors. Luke's interests in architecture, design, and American cultural history were well served by his double major in the History of Art and Architecture and American Studies (with a concentration in Material Culture and the Built Environment). After completing his AMS 301 Senior Seminar paper on Frank Lloyd Wright's "domestic" design, Luke is excited to graduate and hoping he will be able to find a position in historical conservation and preservation.

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Produced/Edited By:

Cynthia Marrero-Ramos  
American Studies Program  
Newsletter Editor-in-Chief  
cynthiamramos05@gmail.com

With oversight from:

Allison McCracken, Ph.D.  
American Studies Program  
amccracle1@depaul.edu  
SAC, 5th Floor  
2320 N. Kenmore Ave  
Chicago, IL 60614

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American Studies Newsletter  
2008 by James Wilson

### AMS Program Requirements

- 3 Core Methods Courses (AMS 211, 213 & 215)
- 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 AMS program
- 1 Senior Seminar

## AMS Affiliated Faculty: Dr. Bill Johnson González



**Dr. Bill Johnson González**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**American Studies Program**

Dr. Bill Johnson González, Assistant Professor in the Department of English, is devoted to enlarging the scope of the American literary canon so that it more accurately represents the diversity of US history and society. His major research interests involve Latinx literature, gender and sexuality, race in American writing, and the ways in which all of these subjects are represented in film. As a Chicago native who lived in Little Village at an early age and later attended Brother Rice High School, he was proud to return to the Windy City to teach at DePaul.

Having grown up in a home where his father only spoke English, his mother was bilingual, and his grandmother only spoke Spanish, Dr. Johnson González had to negotiate both of these languages, and he quickly developed a passion for languages. He also loved literature, for which he had a particular talent. By the time he got to college he was interested in Spanish, English, and French. He attended Yale University for his undergraduate education and decided to major in Spanish; he found that the courses that most interested him focused on Mexican-American and Chicanx writing, and the Spanish Department was the only place that offered courses on Chicanx literature.

*The courses were bilingual, and it was also a really powerful thing to connect Chicanx writing to contemporary, 20<sup>th</sup> century Latin American writing. It was a perfect situation for me because I could still import things from the English Department and from the literature major.*

*My goal was to think about Latinx literature as part of the larger corpuses of US writing and Latin American writing; Latinx literature is a transnational, multilingual literature.*

After receiving his bachelor's degree, Dr. Johnson González worked at The Hopkins School, a private high school in New Haven, Connecticut, as the Assistant Director of Admissions; he also taught English, Spanish, and physical education classes. He worked at the Hopkins School for a year before moving to New York City to work as an assistant to two literary agents at a firm called Writers' House. This position allowed him to review important publishing proposals, interact with a number of publishing clients, and recruit some Latinx writers in need of agents. After a year, he was offered a fellowship to pursue a PhD at Harvard University, where he earned his degree in Comparative Literature and worked as a tutor in a Harvard program called The Literature Major; his dissertation centered on the politics of multilingualism in the works of Sandra Cisneros and Richard Rodriguez, two incredibly influential Latinx writers in the US.

While completing his dissertation, he worked as a visiting lecturer at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. Having already signed a year-long lease in Massachusetts, he had to commute about twice a week to teach at Wesleyan. He moved to Connecticut after a year, and continued to teach at Wesleyan for an two additional years, before starting his position at DePaul.

*I remember that first year very fondly. It's bizarre but, as hard as I worked that year, it was a really amazing year. Wesleyan said, "teach what you love; teach the texts you want to teach." And it was so affirming, especially because the students were appreciative and excited about the material.*

Dr. Johnson González is currently teaching **ENG 276: Introduction to Latino Literature** and **ENG 469/384: Introduction to Latino Literature**, a graduate version of the same course.

These courses focus on examining texts by Mexican Americans/Chicano/as, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban, Dominican, and Central Americans to determine the ways in which these groups have used literature to build a sense of individual and collective identities within the US.

*I encourage all of my students to take their writing very seriously. When students write essays for me I give a lot of feedback. It is crucial to help students learn how to articulate their ideas and become strong writers. This is challenging in ten weeks, but I take writing seriously as part of what I do as a teacher.*

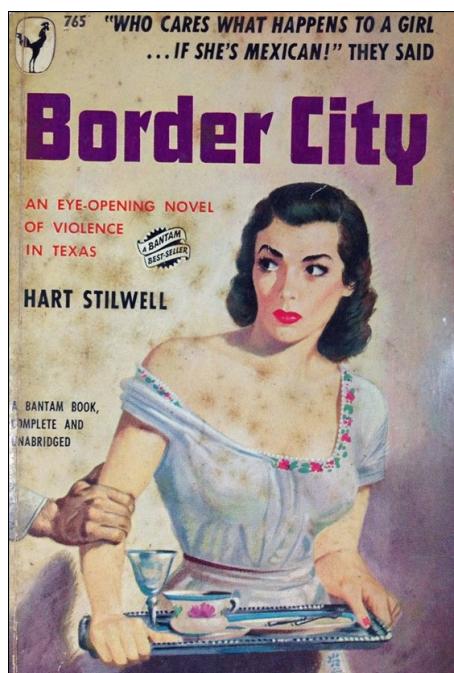
Dr. Johnson González will occasionally teach English courses that cross-list with American Studies, including courses concentrated on James Baldwin, William Faulkner, and **ENG 363: American Literature Since 1920**. Some of his favorite courses include **ENG 275: Literature and Film**, **ENG 276: Latino/a Literature**, **ENG 363: American Literature Since 1920**, and **ENG 472: Intro to Literary Theory**. Next quarter, he is teaching **ENG 387: Queer Film, Literature, and Theory** and **ENG 472: Introduction to Literary Theory**.

*I enjoy teaching all my courses - I always learn something new from the texts and the students.*

Apart from his teaching, Dr. Johnson González is participating in a number of projects. At the end of 2014, he organized a symposium titled "Opening the Archives: An Interdisciplinary Symposium Examining the Legacies of the Bracero Program," sponsored by the University Research Council and the Center for Latino Research at DePaul and meant to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the "Bracero Program." Bracero translates to "manual laborer." The Bracero Program was a series of agreements between the US and Mexico, from 1942-1964, that invited almost two million Mexican laborers to work in the US, primarily in the agricultural industry. This program led to drastic changes in Mexican-American migration dynamics and to excessive labor exploitation.

I wanted to use this anniversary as an opportunity to reflect on the historical legacies of the program, about which the general public still knows very little, and to collect young scholars together who were all doing new scholarly work on braceros. I asked **Dr. Mireya Loza** of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to be my collaborator, and we ended up inviting three additional scholars from other universities, and all of us presented our work on two panels - one on literature, and one on history.

After the symposium, he asked Dr. Loza if she would be interested in co-editing a special issue of DePaul's **Diálogo** (an interdisciplinary journal published by the Center for Latino Research) with him, and she agreed. They are now concluding work on this special issue, which will contain essays by Dr. Johnson González, Dr. Loza, and two other symposium participants - Dr. Lori Flores (from SUNY, Stonybrook) and Dr. Sarah Wald (from the University of Oregon) - as well as several articles by other scholars. The issue will also contain reviews of new scholarly books and films that examine the Bracero Program, oral histories with braceros, and an original translation (by Dr. Johnson González) of a section of a Mexican novel from the 1940s. The issue will be out in the Fall.



Dr. Johnson Gonzalez loves reading and collecting – as a bibliophile, he collects rare editions of certain books. For example, a visit to the Gallery Bookstore by the Belmont Red Line led him to a first edition, pulp novel titled *Border City* by **Hart Stilwell** (1945). *Border City* focuses on the suppression of Mexican laborers in the 1940s in Texas. It is written from the point of view of a white journalist who finds out about a young woman who was working as a maid in the home of an important white politician; the politician violated her and proceeded to cover up the story.

## Bill Johnson González, continued

After learning this, the journalist begins to dig deeper into the experiences of Mexican-American families and becomes aware of a growing labor movement among Mexican-Americans at this time, along with the violence this corrupt politician utilized to suppress their efforts.

*This book really touches on critical issues of the time like the status of women as domestic laborers in people's homes and the influx of new workers due to the Bracero Program. I started doing more research on the book and found out that one of the characters in the novel is based on a famous Mexican-American writer named **Américo Paredes**, who wrote one of the most canonical texts in Mexican-American writing (*With His Pistol in His Hand*). So I wrote an article about that, and when I went to **MLA** (the **Modern Language Association** conference), I went to Paredes' archives and found an article that Paredes co-wrote with Stilwell, which had just been buried for years and years without anyone even looking at it.*

In November of 2014, Dr. Johnson González presented the article that resulted from this research, “Capitalism, Labor Struggle, and Jim Crow in Hart Stillwell’s Border City,” at the **Newberry Seminar in Borderlands and Latino/a Studies**. He is now working on a revision of the article for publication.

Dr. Johnson González is also currently working on an anthology of essays about **Richard Rodriguez**, a controversial Mexican-American writer, who has written works like *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*, and *Brown*. He recently organized a panel at the **MLA** convention this past January about **Richard Rodriguez**’s work.

*The panel I organized was called "Richard Rodriguez: Past, Present, and Future." Rodriguez has often been reviled by Chicano literary critics, even though he is probably one of the most widely read Mexican American authors. The presenters at the panel collectively wanted to reassess the critical response to Rodriguez's work and suggest new ways of engaging with his writing. My anthology is still very much in the planning stages. The presenters at the panel have all agreed to submit their essays, and we are working on finding a publisher.*

Dr. Johnson González’s work goes hand-in-hand with the objectives of our American Studies program, which endeavors to examine the full breadth and diversity of American experiences and histories. He believes that, especially at this time in American history where the US is so powerful in a global sense, it is important for us to have an historically informed, critical relationship to American culture. Given that there are so many myths that circulate all the time, with real authority, in American public life, on television, and in political speeches, we need to have the ability to critique this information. Is it true? If so, what are the contexts under which this truth operates? If not, why is this information presented to the American people?

*I think American Studies is important because it gives students a grounding in a variety of things all at the same time. It gives people access to cultural theory, a diverse understanding of American history and of the different groups that have contributed to this history. Those are already quite powerful things, to have both sophisticated theoretical models for thinking about culture and power, and an inclusive narrative about the diversity of the United States.*

## Student Perspective: Luke Brunetti



### Student Perspective: Luke Brunetti, Class of 2016

Luke Brunetti, a senior graduating this spring from DePaul, has taken advantage of the flexibility in our American Studies Program to cultivate a deeper understanding of art history and architecture. Luke is a double major in History of Art and Architecture and American Studies, with a concentration in Material Culture and the Built Environment.

He grew up in Lansing, Illinois, a southern suburb of Chicago, where he attended Marian Catholic High School. Luke had always known he wanted to go to college in the city, and DePaul was the most logical option, especially after he visited and fell in love with the campus. He knew he wanted to study architecture, and his first year courses greatly influenced his future academic path.

He became interested in American Studies after taking **Discover Chicago: This Old Chicago House** with Dr. John Burton, which focused on architecture throughout Chicago. They visited locations across Chicago like Oak Park and the Pullman District.

*"We would talk everyday a little bit more about American Studies. It just seemed interesting and almost a no-brainer because a lot of things I wanted to do overlapped; I was able to do more to understand the cultural significance of architecture instead of just the formal aspects of it. In American Studies, you can talk about the reasons behind everything. What's the significance about a particular item or room?"*

Some of the courses Luke has taken within American Studies have altered his perception of certain concepts altogether, like the notion of the "built environment." He took **AMS 395: Sex, Gender, and Social Media** with Dr. Allison McCracken last winter. In this course, they discussed the built environment in terms of community spaces online. He learned that, if we look at online communities like Tumblr, Reddit, and Vine, the built environment can be a virtual, instead of just a physical, space.

His final paper for this course focused on analyzing certain trends on **Vine**, a video sharing service that allows users to share a six-second looping clip. He recalls signing up on the application with one of his friends Christine Sydelko shortly after it had been released in 2012. They watched the application evolve together as they participated in building the community, and Christine actually became "Vine Famous"; she has approximately 400,000 followers, 300 million hits, and is now working in California on future comedy projects. Her Vine is **Christine Sydelko** and her Twitter is **@csydelko**. Christine's story shows that, although online spaces like Vine function virtually, they can also have real, tangible effects in the world.

Luke is currently taking **GEO 333: Urban Planning** with Dr. Heather Smith. The class is focusing mainly on the migration of African Americans from the South in the 1930s-40s to the North (and then the shifts back and forth throughout the rest of the 20th century); they are analyzing how those movements were constructed and set in certain Chicago areas, specifically on the South Side. Moving forward, they are writing papers looking at different zoning issues in Chicago. Luke is planning on writing an essay about Boystown and the crime patterns in relation to the different clubs/scenes. Do the demographics of the area (which is Chicago's "gayborhood") affect these crime patterns?

*"There are always police by the center of Boystown. I am planning on looking at news articles, crime reports, and I might even talk to certain club managers to get a better sense of how [crime] dynamics function in the area. They may be able to give me some insight on the demographics of certain [gay] clubs. Who are the targets of these crimes? I'm not sure if this work has been done before, but I'm interested in seeing what I can figure out through this project."*

One of Luke's favorite American Studies classes was **AMS 340: American Popular Culture, 1880-1930** with Dr. Amy Tyson. He took this upper-level course during his first year and was initially intimidated by the amount of work needed for the course; however, this challenge prepared him for the work he did in further classes. He also enjoyed **AMS 250: In Their Own Voices: American Autobiography** with Dr. Barbara Schaffer and **AMS 213: American Experience from 1860 to 1941** with Dr. Burton. The latter course focused on the time period Luke is most interested in, in terms of Art History. He was able to fully connect his two majors during the **AMS 301: Senior Seminar** with Dr. Amy Tyson this Fall Quarter.



Luke's senior seminar project was titled "Frank Lloyd Wright: Redrafting Domestic Architecture," and it focused on Frank Lloyd Wright and his vision of domesticity and family life through modern architecture. Wright was among the first architects to implement an open, family-centered plan into the home. Luke was able to take his knowledge of Art History and apply that to his American Studies research. He specifically looked at the way Wright's **Taliesin**, a home he designed in Spring Green, Wisconsin, was influenced by his exchanges with a Swedish feminist, Socialist thinker named Ellen Key. Luke was able to engage with more recent articles about Frank Lloyd Wright that offer new frameworks for study that have yet to be fully developed by scholars. His thesis was the following:

"Profoundly influenced by his intimate relationship with his lover, self-proclaimed feminist Mamah Borthwick as well as his professional relationship with a Swedish feminist named Ellen Key, Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie style of architecture not only aimed to achieve harmony and unity between his designs and their natural surroundings, but also sought to redefine domestic spaces to achieve a similar harmony nearly 30 years before the common conception of domesticity in architecture was formed."

In addition to his academic work, Luke has participated in the **DemonTHON** at DePaul every year (a year-long fundraising organization, benefiting Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, that culminates in a Dance Marathon every spring) and he has been a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon. He is mostly occupied with working three jobs while juggling his course work, one of which is working part time at Minibar in Boystown as a bottle server, hence his interest in the Boystown neighborhood.

He has also worked at a public relations firm called Jasculca Terman for the past three years. Jasculca Terman provides a number of services to their clients, including managing public affairs, crisis communications, and event management. He is currently working on organizing an event with them called "On the Table;" this is an annual conference presented by The Chicago Community Trust that aims at fostering conversations with different organizations and nonprofits across the Chicago area regarding strategies for better serving and benefiting their communities.



## Luke Brunetti, continued

The first year Jasculca Terman helped organize this event, there were about 10,000 attendees. This year, they are aiming for 50,000 attendees. Luke has gained important communication skills and the ability to promote a single effort (like "On the Table") during his time with Jasculca Terman.

Luke recently started his third position as a gallery assistant at Restoration Hardware (RH), a luxury furniture gallery located in the Gold Coast. He works on curating, greeting, arranging appointments, and customer service. He loves working at RH because he feels that he is treated as a creative equal with the same amount of responsibility as his peers. There is no sense of a single authority figure, rather there are a group of leaders that encourage each other to treat their clients well and make RH a one of a kind place to work.



RESTORATION HARDWARE

As he makes plans for graduation, Luke is interested in historic conservation and preservation. Yet, he is excited about his new position at RH and is looking forward to building a lasting relationship with the company. He could see himself working there long-term, and possibly working as a buyer in the future. Luke believes the American Studies Program provided him with ample experience to make this career a reality.

*Much of what students do in AMS overlaps with the work they are doing in their other courses, and AMS helps you build more critical thinking and research skills. It gives you more life experience and practical knowledge than most other majors. For example, during our Senior Seminar, a representative from the Career Center came to our class to discuss options we could explore after graduation. I have not had that offered in any other of my courses. AMS is perfect as a Double Major or a Minor because it really strengthens an understanding of any liberal studies program.*

## Alumni Profile: Megan Ashley



### Alumnus, Megan Ashley, Class of 2011

Megan Ashley always felt at home in the American Studies Program and created her own, unique college experience. Megan majored in American Studies with a concentration in Popular Culture and Media Studies, and she had two minors, one in Journalism and another in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. She is originally from LaSalle-Peru, in Central Illinois, where she went to the town high school with a graduating class of 300. When she was applying for colleges, she knew she did not want a state school experience and preferred a bigger environment with more challenges. Once she visited DePaul's campus, she realized it was the perfect fit.

Megan began her journey at DePaul through the Honors Program, which provided her with wonderful networking opportunities, resources, mentors, and a safe space to ease her transition into the big city of Chicago.

*I was pretty homesick in the beginning; it was such a culture shock, but the Honors Program did a great job of helping with that. One of their directors, Nancy Grossman, was a great mother figure. I feel like Nancy actually comforted my mom just as much as she comforted me.*

Megan became an Honors Mentor for incoming students during her junior and senior years. The Honors Program gathers their first year students into groups of about 10-20. They then pair the groups with two upperclassmen. The groups do a day of orientation together and then the mentors serve as a resource to their students for the rest of Fall Quarter.

Megan also stayed busy beyond her coursework at DePaul by writing for both *The DePaulia* and *DePolitics 1011* throughout her college career. She kept herself quite occupied, but had to consider what major would best accommodate her goals and time.

Megan remained Undeclared until her second year at DePaul because she had trouble trying to pick just one major. She went to two separate advisors, including Nancy Grossman, to determine which major would be best for her. Megan started by going to the First-Year Undergraduate Advising in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and spoke with an advisor who, after having evaluated her completed coursework, suggested she look into American Studies. Soon after, Nancy Grossman recommended Megan meet with Dr. Allison McCracken.

*I met Allison and that was it for me. She is a ball of energy. I don't remember the specifics of the meeting, but I wouldn't be surprised if Gilmore Girls came up. I'm pretty sure there was that poster on her wall, and I'm obsessed with that show.*

In 2010, in the middle of her junior year, Megan went to the Athens – Greece Study Abroad Program. This trip had a tremendous impact on her college career and her growth as a person. She lived in an apartment in Kolonaki, Athens, while she studied at College Year in Athens, a college dedicated to hosting Study Abroad students. There were about 80-100 students from all over the United States in her group, with about six to seven DePaul students.

During her stay, she traveled to other nearby countries like Turkey and Egypt, as well as throughout Western Europe. Megan lived in Greece right around the time their financial crisis intensified in 2010, when the country almost fell into bankruptcy.

*There were two or three demonstrations when I was there. It was interesting to see how the media portrayed that whole situation, because it was actually incredibly peaceful, but I kept getting questions from my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and my parents about how dangerous the state of Greece looked on the news.*

Megan returned to the United States with a greater understanding of the ways in which the media distorts international news. She also returned with much stronger leg muscles since she lived two-thirds of the way up the highest mountain in Athens and had to climb several flights of stairs just to make it back home. Megan became all the more resilient, resourceful, and independent after her study abroad experience.

In addition, Megan worked on two internships while she was at DePaul. Her sophomore year, she interned with a nonprofit literacy program called Open Books. They provide reading and writing programs for students and adults across the Chicago area. When Megan worked with them, they would host about two classes a day for students to write poetry or short stories and lead some after school programs. Megan worked closely with their COO on some business development projects, and led an after school program about two days a week in Chinatown, where she read to young students.

Megan also interned at Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Physician Services Department throughout the Spring Quarter of her senior year. The Physicians Services Department focused on creating advertisements for their physicians. During her time there, Megan edited, created promotional material, and reviewed and suggested changes to their web pages. Northwestern offered her a contract position, but she chose to leave in August of 2011 and instead took a new internship with her current employer, Red Frog Events.

Red Frog Events is an event production company that organizes large entertainment and fundraising events like Firefly Music Festival, Warrior Dash, Chicago Beer Classic, and ShamrockFest. Megan initially worked as an event coordinator during her four month internship; she was a member of about six to eight teams (all of which were dedicated to different projects) and was able to travel to Missouri, Ohio, and D.C.

Her internship with Red Frog ended in January of 2012, and they offered her a full time position as an Event Director. Ever since then, she has had a number of other official positions, including Senior Manager of Communications, Director of Permitting, and her current position: Director for Staffing Strategy. She has been able to travel all over the US, and even to Australia.

Megan's career path at Red Frog has focused primarily on systems creation and organizational effectiveness. She basically determines how the company can utilize organizational software and systems to carry out their tasks as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. For example, on one occasion, she was assigned to assist the Recruitment Team. The team was receiving over two thousand resumes and applications per month in one email inbox, and there were about four people in charge of manually sifting through all these emails. Megan reviewed the specific needs of the department and helped the team switch over to an applicant tracking system that facilitated the filtering process. She carries out similar tasks for other departments throughout the company, and spends much of her time navigating through a number of projects simultaneously. Her biggest project right now involves creating a staffing plan for Firefly, a four-day music festival in Delaware held in June. This event requires the hiring of 200 people with varying degrees of leadership and about 1000 general volunteer workers.

*This whole music festival industry is such a fascinating industry to me. We're paying a tent company to set up tents and another company will set up fences. We pay them and they supply something to the festival. It is such a big ordeal that we have to provide them with all the equipment and tools they need, meals, hotel rooms, credentials, and licenses. We hire about one hundred companies. I have to know when they are coming up to the site and make sure they have everything they need.*

Megan feels that her time in the American Studies Program prepared her to tackle all of the complex projects she works through at Red Frog. American Studies taught her how to think critically, and look for larger themes in what she reads or works on.

*I think that has been the key to all this system creation. While I'm working on something, I'm hearing themes and seeing the bigger picture. I think that was a core part of my classes and studies.*

Some of her most memorable AMS courses were **HST 389: Topics in Public History: Historical Interpretation and Living History** with **Dr. Amy Tyson**, and an independent study on the television program *Gilmore Girls* with **Dr. Allison McCracken**.

Megan received a number of academic awards due to her outstanding work at DePaul and the American Studies Program. Some of these include: The DePaul Presidential Scholarship, American Studies Outstanding Senior Award, American Airlines Global Leader Scholarship, and Richard deCordova American Studies Prize. She was also a featured presenter at DePaul University Student History Conference.

## Megan Ashley, continued

She won the Richard deCordova Prize twice; the first year for honorable mention, and the second year she received the full prize for her American Studies Senior Thesis regarding Jackie Kennedy's second marriage and the media's demotion of Jackie Kennedy in 1968. For this project, she analyzed major events that occurred in 1968 to help frame the marriage and understand why the media reacted to her second marriage the way they did.

*American Studies Program was the key ingredient to my happiness at DePaul so to have received those program awards really meant a lot to me - and still does! The history conference and 2011 deCordova prize both recognized my thesis on Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, which I just loved working on with Amy Tyson. It was a new side to a subject matter I've always enjoyed and I really relish the insights you can draw from working with primary sources. Also, I'll never forget presenting at the history conference. I was nervous just to be there, as it was a bigger event than I'd fully realized. Dr. Tyson's husband and my go-to librarian, Brent Nunn, came to see my presentation and in that moment I remember being so thankful for the DePaul community. He was incredibly reassuring and jumped in to help when my PowerPoint file refused to open just before my presentation.*

Megan believes that an interdisciplinary field like American Studies gives students an opportunity to challenge themselves and their intellect in a number of ways. She could not imagine having a linear college experience and thinks that American Studies is unique insofar as it allows students to create their own paths.

*In college, you're supposed to study what you love, find something that you're challenged by, and open up your eyes. I think that American Studies is fantastic for that. It breaks my heart to see people pick a major primarily to get a job rather than because they're interested in the subject; I think that makes them miss out on a huge portion of the college experience. I'm doing something in my job that does not have any direct correlation to AMS and my company was not looking for that. I left college able to articulate my thoughts, think critically, write well, and be an adult with opinions. American Studies taught me how to connect the dots.*



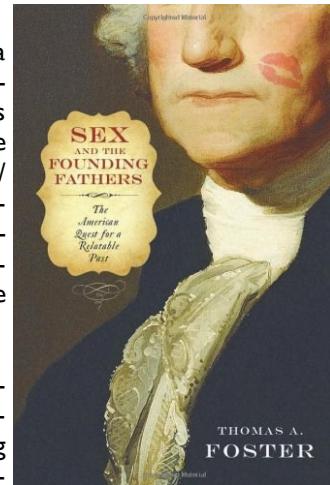
## Profile of Dr. Tom Foster by Newsletter Editor James Wilson, Fall, 2008 (excerpts)



Professor Tom Foster began his academic career by majoring in Sociology as an undergraduate at Cornell University. He was originally a Design & Architecture major, but he decided to switch to Sociology because he was interested in far too many liberal studies courses that the design major could not support. His interests mainly focused on studies of inequality in American culture and society. After several years teaching English in Japan, he enrolled in an MA program at North Carolina State University in History. He mainly focused on studying Women's History and the History of Sex and Sexuality in America. Dr. Foster then went on to enroll in a History Ph.D. program at Johns Hopkins University, focusing on colonial America and gender and sexuality. Dr. Foster said that he got a good grip on how gender was constructed for women in early America during his time at Johns Hopkins. He has always been interested in the study of inequality and how the "holy trinity" of race, class, and gender function to influence inequality in various ways.

When asked how he would define a Queer approach to History or if he preferred terming it a Lesbian/Gay approach, Dr. Foster had an interesting answer. He said that "Queer" is a useful category because it is very broad, and it encompasses various time periods in History. Dr. Foster says the terms "Lesbian" and "Gay" only apply to a time-specific period in America, from about the 1960s to the present when the terms Gay and Lesbian were socially constructed. Taking a Lesbian/Gay approach to History, therefore, is only specific to a particular moment in the History of America. Also, taking a Queer approach to History can encompass studying non-normative sexual practices that may not be same-sex, or lesbian/gay. Dr. Foster developed his interest in studying sexuality during his undergraduate years at Cornell where he focused on how sex and sexuality influence the construction of gender in America.

Dr. Foster's research interests include Early America, U.S. Women's and Gender History, American Revolution, History of Sexuality, and U.S. Social and Cultural History. Dr. Foster enjoys researching because it allows him to come up with his own questions and formulate answers using his own individual approach. An academic researcher can derive questions from his or her interests, which make the research quite fulfilling once completed. One of the biggest challenges when doing research, according to Dr. Foster, is being able to find adequate amounts of time to devote to develop a project. The intellectual challenges that come up are Dr. Foster's favorite part of doing original research. Dr. Foster says he enjoys publishing and doing research because he believes creating new knowledge is one of the best things a person can do, especially in the academic world.



Women in Early America

EDITED BY THOMAS A. FOSTER  
FOREWORD BY Carol Berkin • AFTERWORD BY Jennifer L. Morgan

Dr. Foster was asked to compare DePaul students to students at his previous schools, academically, socially, and demographically. He said that because Chicago is the biggest city he has ever taught in, the students are demographically much more urban than at other schools. They are also much more comfortable speaking up in class and admitting when they do not completely understand something. They are willing to ask for help and further assistance with a topic if it is necessary. This is also Dr. Foster's absolute favorite part of teaching at DePaul. He enjoys that students bring their individual life experience to the classroom because it actively informs their approach to the material being studied.

Dr. Foster was asked how he would distinguish himself as an educator. He responded that he always places a large emphasis on the heavy use and analysis of primary source documents in all of his courses. He believes students can learn more if they can almost "live" the experience of others through reading what was produced so long ago. He said he preferred this approach as opposed to merely giving historical context and telling students things like, "This historical event took place during this year at this time, date, etc." Studying primary documents, or what Dr. Foster refers to as, "voices from the past," helps students to learn that history is based entirely on an interpretation of various primary source documents. Dr. Foster says that studying History with the approach that all information is based on interpretation is moving away from the traditional approach to History that studied merely facts, comparable to how History is taught in public and private high schools.

We would like to note that this profile was written by our first newsletter editor, the late **James Wilson**, a brilliant student who did so much shape the appearance and content of the American Studies newsletter as it remains today.