

# MAIN CURRENTS

Department of American Studies



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2008

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

## DEAR STUDENTS, ALUMNI, AND FRIENDS OF AMERICAN STUDIES,

Welcome to the second edition of our annual newsletter, "Main Currents." As I write in April, spring is in full color here with drifts of Texas bluebonnet, paintbrush, desert primrose, and coreopsis blazing the hillsides.

Austin—as you all know—is perhaps the prettiest place in the world at this time of year.

We've had an exciting and fruitful year in the department. In conjunction with the Center for Mexican American Studies, we have successfully recruited Dr. Deborah Vargas to join our faculty in Fall 2008. An alumna of UT for her undergraduate degrees in Advertising and Ethnic Studies, Dr. Vargas has written widely on Latina cultural production, popular culture, queer theory, feminist theory, and music. She is currently preparing her book manuscript on Tejana singers for publication. We are delighted to welcome Dr. Vargas to the department. I am also happy to report that there will be additional hiring initiatives in the next academic year.

During the past year, we have expanded the scope of our departmental community on campus by creating an affiliated faculty. Comprised of interdisciplinary scholars and teachers from departments across the University, our affiliated faculty serves as a generous resource for our students. All have worked with our students as committee members and/or teachers. In conjunction with our affiliated faculty, we have launched a new "Friends of American Studies" luncheon series, in which an affiliated faculty member presents her/his work to American

Studies students and faculty in a relaxing, intimate, and conversational setting each month.

Despite a volatile economy and budget crunches of our own, our graduate students continue to do well on the academic job market. At my annual meeting with the deans in the College of Liberal Arts earlier this month, I was pleased to learn that our placement record compares very favorably with other departments around the College.

Lastly, I bid you all a fond administrative farewell. After four-and-a-half years as department chair, I will pass the baton to Steve Hoelscher at midnight on September 1, 2008. Please join me in welcoming Steve. He will be a superb leader. As for myself, I will be on leave until Spring 2010, busily making sense of my research and writing a book on the cultural and social meanings of the U.S. animal welfare movement, from 1866-1940. Thanks to everyone for all of your support over the years.



Janet M. Davis  
Associate Professor of American Studies and History  
Chair, Department of American Studies

# currents

## FEATURE STORIES

|                    |    |
|--------------------|----|
| Steven Hoelscher   | 1  |
| Shirley Thompson   | 3  |
| Carolyn de la Peña | 5  |
| Benita Heiskanen   | 7  |
| Steve Pyne         | 9  |
| Amy Ware           | 11 |
| Hilary Lane        | 13 |

## FACULTY NEWS

|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| Robert H. Abzug      | 16 |
| Janet M. Davis       | 16 |
| Elizabeth Engelhardt | 17 |
| Steven Hoelscher     | 17 |
| Nhi Lieu             | 17 |
| Jeffrey L. Meikle    | 17 |
| Stephen Marshall     | 18 |
| Julia Mickenberg     | 18 |
| Mark C. Smith        | 18 |
| Shirley Thompson     | 19 |

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS | 19 |
|-----------------------|----|

|             |    |
|-------------|----|
| IN MEMORIUM | 22 |
|-------------|----|

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| SUPPORTING AMERICAN STUDIES | 23 |
|-----------------------------|----|



## FACULTY

### Steven Hoelscher

Associate Professor of American Studies  
and Geography

A mentor of mine from graduate school once told me that second books are often harder to write than the first. Although this struck me as counterintuitive at the time, it sure makes sense to me now, more than a dozen years after I completed my Ph.D. For one thing, in a 300 page dissertation, you've got the first draft of the book already completed. Sure, it will need revisions—often substantial revisions in the form of brand new chapters and reconceptualized theories. Still, a first draft is a first draft and that helps a lot. Not so with the second book, in which you usually begin from scratch. Moreover, writing now comes at a time when you're exhausted by the tenure process and by taking on new responsibilities from which your department—if it's been kind—has protected you during those stormy pre-tenure years. But pretty soon it becomes equally exhausting to half-heartedly affirm to friends and family that, yes, THE BOOK will be completed "soon."

What a relief, then, when you can say this honestly. For me, the relief was magnified by the very long time I've been working on this project. Although I only began to write systematically after tenure, six years ago, I've been working on it piecemeal for much longer. The project has morphed dramatically since I first conceptualized it and I believe

“Entwined in remarkable and enduring ways, Indians and photography appear inseparable;”

that these changes reflect my own development as an American Studies scholar. I also believe it's a better book for having to gestate slowly as I've tried to acquire expertise in a wide range of subject matters, from visual culture studies and postcolonial theory to Native American history.

The resulting book, titled "Picturing Indians: Photographic Encounters and Tourist Fantasies in the Wisconsin Dells", will be published in summer 2008 by the University of Wisconsin Press. In it I explore the complex relationship between photographic images, tourism, and Native Americans in U.S. culture. Entwined in remarkable and enduring ways, Indians and photography appear inseparable: for many non-Native people, photographs represent what is seen to be essentially Indian; while for many Native Americans, getting over the century-old legacy of having their picture taken and used by outsiders for purposes they did not intend is an on-going struggle. Such photographic encounters came vividly alive in this rather strange place: the Dells of the Wisconsin River. Long the busiest tourist attraction in the Midwest, the Dells were also the home to generations of Native people, especially the Ho-Chunk (formerly called the Winnebago). There, from the end of the Civil War through the earliest years of the twentieth century, a small-town photographer named H.H. Bennett pictured members

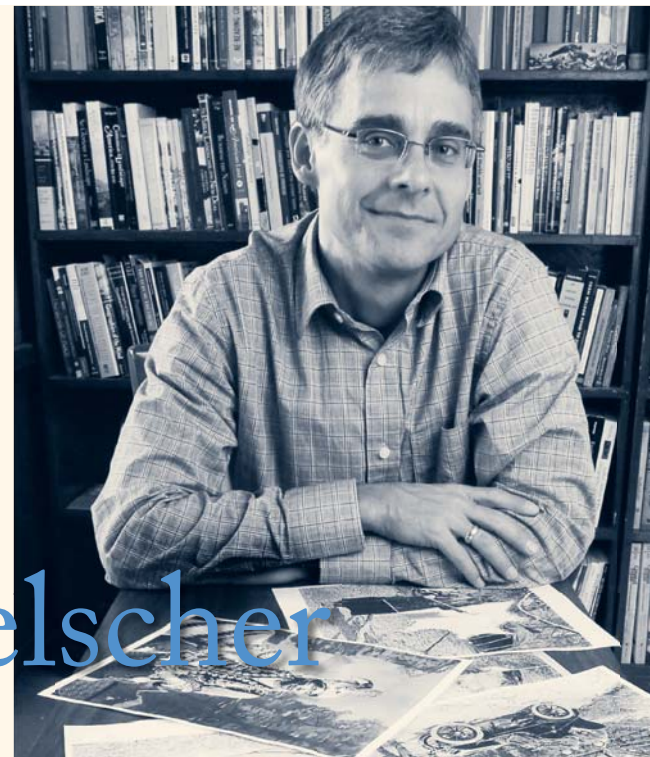
of Ho-Chunk in a range of settings. The resulting images have come to define Ho-Chunk culture for many non-Native people, most notably the hundreds of thousands of tourists who annually visit this region.

As interesting as the images are and what they say about the nineteenth-century white culture that produced them, I was even more intrigued with the circumstances surrounding their original creation, circulation, and subsequent interpretation. I wanted to know, as the visual archivist Paul Vanderbilt once wrote, about the "life of the pictures: their networks, their adventures, their careers." Such a perspective meant that I couldn't rely solely on iconography, or symbolic interpretation, as a method. Much to my good fortune, the heirs to H.H. Bennett maintained voluminous manuscript materials to supplement the more than 7,000 glass plate photographic negatives. By combing through personal correspondence, diaries, financial

records, and guidebook publications collected and preserved from the 1860s through the first decade of the twentieth century, I found a window into the production and use of these visually striking images.

That window, though incredibly useful, remained opaque. Written as they were from a non-Native photographer's point of view naturally make such print sources far from unproblematic. Acknowledging the incomplete nature of written materials thus lead me to a second critical source for my research: the readings of and responses to Bennett's photographs by contemporary Ho-Chunk elders, language experts, archaeologists, journalists, artists, and historians. Informal and semi-structured interviews conducted over a course of five years and ranging in length from an hour to all day significantly shaped my understanding of these important images, and this book. In the end, Picturing Indians is my attempt to amend the imbalance that has long

# Steven Hoelscher





characterized the photographic encounter between Native American subjects and white picture-makers. My research demonstrates that, while photography has indeed long served as a technology of domination to subdue indigenous people the world over, it has also worked to provide those very peoples a medium for their own culture's resistance, survival, and renewal.

Recently, I've expanded my interest in race formation and photography to a larger geographic, transnational sphere. This past year, I published an essay on the Guatemalan photographer and human rights activist, Daniel Hernández-Salazar and traveled to that country to study the connection between photography, urban space, and historical memory. I've also begun a study of the history of photography along the U.S.-Mexico border. For more than 160 years—from the first daguerreotypes of the Mexican-American War in 1847 to the U.S. Border Patrol's use of enhanced digital and aerial photography in 2007—the boundary between the United States and Mexico has long been one of the world's most photographed borderlands. Given the historical, cultural, and political complexity of these photographs—and the many questions that arise about how Americans have interpreted them—my guess is that a next book will be no less challenging to write. ✎

3



“How do people whose bodies and labor once composed a significant portion of the nation's property reconstitute themselves as citizens...”

#### Shirley Thompson

Assistant Professor of American Studies  
and African American Studies

This spring finds me in a particularly transitional space. I have recently completed “Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans”—a project that took root in the winter of 1993. On a road trip to San Francisco where I lived at the time, I stopped in New Orleans—a city I remembered vaguely but fondly from family trips taken during my youth. This time—perhaps because I had recently graduated from college and reached what I thought to be the “end of school”—New Orleans seemed to epitomize a feeling of limitless freedom and possibility. However, like the characters in “Easy Rider” (other expectant road-trippers to New Orleans), I soon recognized (though, for me, in a less conspicuous fashion) that this sense of freedom had real limits and costs. Well before Katrina hit in 2005, it was clear that a tourist economy and a stratified and exacerbated history of legacies of slavery and white supremacy for New Orleans and its people. New Orleans was hardly the utopia I and other outsiders made it out to be. But still: there was something...

When I returned to graduate school and searched for a suitable dissertation

topic, I found it in the richly convoluted archives and literary culture of nineteenth century New Orleans. There, I could mull over the great American themes that reached an apex in that era: America's rivalry with Europe; the quest for political and racial equality; the challenge of immigration and pluralism; the centrality of self-making; and nature's powerful role in shaping collective identity. I began to realize that New Orleans—far from being merely a “place apart”—served as a testing ground for America's highest aspirations toward justice and equality as well as a laboratory for its most pernicious experiments in injustice and inequality.

New Orleans' Creoles of color, a French-speaking people of African descent, took center stage in my study. In many respects, the shapes American law and culture would take were bound up with the responses of this group to a series of local, national, and international crises—including the French revolution of 1789 and 1803; the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804; the yellow fever epidemic of 1853; the United States Civil War; racial Reconstruction; and the emergence of de jure segregation.

By passing as white, a number of Creoles of color grasped after equality and opportunity on an individual basis. By

passing as black and insisting on their civil rights as people of African descent, they exposed themselves to the perils of white supremacist violence but discovered perhaps the least compromised path to collective freedom. Laboring under what Ralph Ellison might call the scar of invisibility, their experiences crystallize the problem of living on the “color line,” a problem that W.E.B. DuBois would later identify as the principal problem of the twentieth century.

In thinking through racial legacies of New Orleans, I found that I was drawing on sources that had a lot to do with safeguarding property under duress and maintaining ownership—a sense of belonging—across generations. Contested wills and probate court records; the particularly gothic inflections of New Orleans literature; and the (still) haunted aspects of its urban terrain conveyed a powerful sense that, in societies built on slavery, ownership practices and notions of property necessarily become quite gruesome.

In my next project, “Claiming Ownership,” I have begun to confront slavery: what I consider to be the most bone-chilling fact of United States history. I am especially interested in the

4

legacies of slavery on African American ideas about property and ownership. How do people whose bodies and labor once composed a significant portion of the nation's property reconstitute themselves as citizens whose most recognizable feature is the right to engage in property ownership? What feats of imagination and drastic action are involved in the transformation from being owned to claiming ownership? What have been the barriers to this transformation, and in what forms have these barriers persisted? How do these relationships of property and ownership manifest themselves in African-American thought and culture across time, place, and circumstance?

Because my own legacy as a descendant of slaves continues to reveal itself in various ways, I expect this new project to take on a variety of forms. I am currently writing a couple of journal articles on the African American author and activist Charles Chesnutt's imaginative response to emergent regimes of labor and leisure at dawn of the twentieth century and the founding of African-American life insurance companies which sought to secure black life in the face of widespread terrorist violence throughout the United States during this same period. I have also been working on more creative pieces that combine memoir, history, travel writing, and polemic. ½



## “My American Studies training at UT Austin prepared me to succeed within the numerous contexts of a large public university”

**Carolyn de la Peña**  
Associate Professor of American Studies  
Director, Program in American Studies  
Director, Davis Humanities Institute  
University of California Davis

I finished my PhD in 2001 and had the good fortune to be hired at UC Davis as an assistant professor of American Studies. I'm certain that my graduate training was key in securing this job. UT's AMS has a reputation for broad-based American studies inquiry deeply grounded in American history. Both areas were priorities for the committee hiring me. There was, however, quite a bit of luck in it as well. The committee was looking for an AMS scholar who worked on material culture and technology—just my area of research. It was, in fact, the only job I applied for since few that year fit my area of expertise. Instead I'd found a job working as a branding/marketing consultant in Boulder, and was looking forward to using my cultural and historical training to research product innovations and consumer behavior. The Davis interview (with three-month-old baby and husband in tow) changed my plans. After I got the CALL that changes lives, we packed up and moved to Northern California the summer of 2001.

I've been exceptionally fortunate at Davis to have found a program, colleagues, administrators, and a broader campus that have valued my academic training and scholarly priorities. My book came out in 2003; I was tenured in 2005. I worked hard, and was helped enormously by supportive senior colleagues. This year I became department chair. I was also appointed, at the same time, director of the Davis Humanities Institute. Instead of teaching I am, for the next three years, "matchmaking" between individual humanities faculty to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and advocating for the humanities on our campus and with outside funding agencies. My American Studies training at UT Austin prepared me to succeed within the numerous contexts of a large public university. I learned how to find my own scholarly voice, how to work across multiple disciplines, how to creatively take advantage of opportunities available, and how to encourage my colleagues to ask and answer the "so what" question.

It's no accident that I'm doing these jobs fairly early in my career. After all, I was trained at UT. While some humanities faculty have to learn how to collaborate, how to think across disciplinary and interdisciplinary divides, and how to pitch

their work to outside audiences, we in AMS at UT are forced to be quick on our feet. I TA'd and RA'd in three departments because I came in without funding (note: this did not please me at the time). I read 350 books in four areas for my orals (again, was not a fan at the time). Because there weren't always courses I wanted to take in AMS, I learned from historians, literary scholars, anthropologists, RTF theory heads. (Or I should say I learned by venturing out into these courses and then critiquing them with my AMS cohort.) As a result, it's been easy here at Davis to collaborate with historians of science and technology across anthropology, sociology, history and the arts. And those collaborations have frequently led me to pitch the value of a cultural approach to science and technology beyond the humanities on campus. And after pitching long enough, to enough people, I've ended up directing a major institute with not insignificant resources.

American Studies at UT has served me well thus far because of what it did and did not give me. I remember as a first year grad student in the mid 1990s lamenting that I wasn't getting more theory. I wanted

“For the next four years, my life revolved around boxing. I was either at the gym...or transcribing interviews”

UT's program to give me the reading list that would make me an American Studies scholar. Instead I got challenging courses from all different directions (historical, literary, social sciency) and a reading list that put me knee-deep in four disciplines. By failing to show me who I should be in American studies, UT's faculty presented the important, if uncomfortable, imperative that I learn to be myself. The caveat here is that I was extraordinarily lucky to land the Davis job and that not every member of my cohort has been so lucky, even the brilliant ones. But it wasn't a bad thing, in retrospect at least, that the program encouraged us to go out and find courses we wanted, that it had us reading foundational instead of trendy texts, that it left us to teach each other what we felt was missing. For me, I was fortunate to have Jeff Meikle as a mentor: he pushed me to see my dissertation in the context of the field (and the job market), he encouraged me to go to conferences, he sent me fellowship opportunities that got me to the archives that turned an intriguing idea into a grounded book that's respected across a number of disciplines. I owe much of my success to Jeff—and I know many of us from my cohort feel the same way.

But sitting from the vantage point of the Davis Humanities Institute I see now that by not telling me who I should be in American Studies the program forced me to find my own answers—and constantly keep them in conversation with others. Both are essential for humanities scholars in public universities today. Because I assumed it would be hard to find a job, and the answers wouldn't come by osmosis, I looked around at the ASA, at other disciplines, at what was out there at all sorts of conferences. I learned how to fit in multiple contexts: how to tell people why the questions we're trained to ask matter. So did others: my cohort members are today in departments as diverse as Gender Studies, Art History, English, Communication and American Studies. We've done innovative work, and we've pushed our field to take more seriously the things we care about because we know it matters. We figured it out the hard way. I couldn't be more thankful for what UT did and didn't do for me. And I couldn't have more admiration for the scholars those in my cohort have become. I'm reminded every time we close down the lobby bar at ASA, after a night of whip-smart, hilarious, soul-enriching hang time, that we all got precisely what we needed at UT. ♫

**Benita Heiskanen**  
American Studies Ph.D Alumna  
Assistant Professor  
Center for American Studies,  
University of Southern Denmark, Odense

As so many of us seem to do, I thought I stumbled upon my dissertation topic by accident. Looking back on it in hindsight, the project was anything but an accident; it was a product of consistent dialogue with faculty and other graduate students. On my Fulbright application to UT, I had proposed to write my dissertation on the late Tejano singer Selena Quintanilla Perez, but from early on, my coursework seemed to be steering toward other directions. My second semester, I took Bill Stott and J.B. Colson's "Documentary Explorations," where American Studies and Photojournalism students teamed up to do fieldwork together; that is where I was first introduced to ethnography as a research method. My side-kick Jorge Sanhueza-Lyon and I chose to do our first project on boxing after we found out that there was a boxing show coming up in town. I had not been involved with boxing for some time, but I knew the sport well from my childhood as I grew up on fight circles in Finland following my brother's amateur and profes-

sional career in the 1970s and 1980s. With a background in martial arts, I soon started working out at a local gym, still unaware that I would end up writing my dissertation on boxing. In point of fact, when I was contemplating a topic for Janet Davis's "U.S. Popular Culture and Empire," I proposed to write my paper on Muhammad Ali's racial rhetoric in the "Rumble in the Jungle" fight with George Foreman in 1974 thinking that "this could be the last time I'll get to do anything fun before the dissertation." The conference presentation that resulted from that paper prompted some encouraging signals from members of the faculty—in particular Jeff Meikle and John Park—but it was Neil Foley's remark that was the ultimate eye-opener for me: "You know so much more about boxing than you know about Tejano music!"

For the next four years, my life revolved entirely around boxing. I was either at the gym, at boxing shows or on road-trips, interviewing or transcribing interviews; or else I was in the library scanning newspaper articles or doing online searches; or working on fight fight posters would often get together to watch PPV-boxing shows on TV. The bulk of the research was based on

Benita Heiskanen



fieldwork and life-story interviews with a community of Latino boxers who grew up and began their careers in East Austin. Their life stories were situated within a theoretical framework that considered the boxing body as a site of knowledge and various locations within the sport's everyday culture—such as the barrio, boxing gyms, and fight venues—as sites of being and becoming. My point was to discuss the boxers' identity formations by bringing the research to the everyday locations where the sport is organized, while situating the ongoing Latinization of boxing within the ethnoracial history of U.S. prizefighting at large. However, conducting research within the world of professional boxing, infamous for its questionable everyday maneuverings, brought with it some unavoidable ethical challenges: how to deal with the business side of the sport; how to represent one's sources accurately and fairly; and how to operate within the social power plays? Nevertheless, despite all these challenges, the real-life interactions were key to pointing out the complexity of boxing: that it is not "just" a professional sport but also a form of racialized bodily labor, a lucrative business, an instrument politics, and an ideological tool—a starting point for my book manuscript, "Toe-to-Toe: The Bodily Labor of Boxing." Eight years after Bill Stott's class, then, I am still working on boxing. By accident? I don't think so. ㄿ

9



**Steve Pyne**  
American Studies Ph.D. Alumnus  
Regents' Professor of Life Science  
Arizona State University

The first thing to know is that I worked on a forest fire crew before I went to college. In fact, I had spent five summers with the North Rim Longshots at Grand Canyon before I showed up in Austin in January, 1972 to begin graduate school. I cycled back to the Rim every summer through graduation in 1976, and then six years beyond. Everything I've written about, and all my reasons for writing, date from those days with the Longshots. The critical insight came when, after getting my PhD, I decided to apply the training I'd received to the subject that most intrigued me, fire.

The second point may be equally informative. I didn't know what I was doing. What became "Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire" looked like a scholar's curiosity into the things that mattered to a smokechaser. Its organization was shambolic, with topics hung on the wall as though they were fire packs and pulaskis. But it

“After getting my PhD, I decided to apply the training I'd received to the subject that most intrigued me, fire”

did two things that were striking. One was the (pardon the breast-beating) Promethean task of bringing fire to history. In retrospect it's weird that no one had written at length about our species monopoly over flame, a unique power that speaks to who we are as few things can.

The other oddity was making fire an active presence. I tried to animate fire without anthropomorphizing it. I determined not to use fire as a case study for one historiographical thesis or another, but to allow it to be an organizing presence throughout the text. In effect, I would make fire as central to the long chronicle of humanity as it was to the seasonal lives of the Longshots. There was no one to tell me I couldn't do it.

If you want a third factor (fire guys like to think in terms of triangles), that may be it. I never got properly socialized. I struggled to get into grad school, and I struggled for five years after my degree to get an academic appointment. Nor was I terribly long in grad school. But if the American Studies Program didn't domesticate me, it did educate me. There was not much of what today might be termed close mentoring but there was enormous enthusiasm for

ideas and scholarship, which proved highly infectious, and there was a preference for loose herding that let me range where my interests lay, and thus kept my passion high. Paradoxically perhaps I've found that laissez faire strategy less damaging than meticulous supervision that intends to forestall failure and instead works to prevent success. I've always been grateful to William Goetzmann in particular for kindling that spark and leaving it some space in which to spread.

Still, the one real continuity through all this time was life on the Rim. By the time I was hired at the University of Iowa, I was headed to Antarctica for an austral summer on ice, and it was too late for me to be housebroken to academia. I eventually took leave and returned to Arizona to write *The Ice*, and when Arizona State University created a branch campus, I got hired as a historian in May 1986. (Actually, I was rejected, and only after the search for a sociologist failed did I get the consolation prize.) I stayed at ASU West for 10 years, then transferred to the main campus at Tempe, for three years in History, and since then in the School of Life Sciences where I teach courses on fire, exploration, environmental history, and literary nonfiction.

10



## GRADUATE STUDENT

“The Western film, Wild West shows, and non-Indian social clubs organized themselves around a generic Indianness that flattened the true diversity and modernity of Native America”

What you probably want to know, though, is how I got a MacArthur Fellowship in 1988. I don't know. I only know that a Coke bottle fell out of the sky one day, and I spent five years wandering around trying to do something with it. Basically, I took the money and ran. I conceived the idea of writing a suite of books that would survey the history of fire on Earth, what I call *Cycle of Fire*. That series now runs to seven volumes. The world became my firestick. There are a dozen other books outside the *Cycle* proper, and for the moment, I've decided I need to get off the planet (I'm on enough no-fly lists as is) and am writing about the Voyager mission through the solar system. Any advice? Counsel? Warnings? As someone feeling the early tremors of geezerhood, I'm wary about haranguing the young. I can only tell you what worked for me: Follow your heart but use your head.

For more information, check out Steve's website at: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~spsyne>, and for an self-inquiry into what he thinks he does, click the link, "Explaining Myself" under Commentaries. ☞

**Amy Ware**  
Doctoral Candidate in American Studies  
The University of Texas at Austin

Though I treasure my chosen career, I am equally thankful that the UT American Studies Department offers a reliable respite from the sometimes-awkward social encounters I experience at conferences and other academically charged events. Our department is comprised of easygoing people who waver gracefully between intriguing academic discussion and comfortable conversation, a reminder that one of our department's greatest strengths is the affability of its faculty, students, and alums.

For me, the height of this occasional professional awkwardness comes after I introduce my dissertation topic. Listeners' common response—"Who was Will Rogers?"—makes me feel, to say the least, uneasy. In fact, over time I generated a brief biography of the man who stands at the center of my current project; I issue the descriptive disclaimer during conference presentations and conversations with most people—except members of the Western Cherokee Nation, who know my subject quite well.

Here is my standard line: Will Rogers was a political pundit and comedian; he

was a major force on the vaudeville circuit; he wrote six books and four-thousand newspaper editorials; he hosted a radio show; he starred in seventy-two movies; and he was considered a possible candidate for the presidency in 1924, 1928, and 1932, a movement that was the butt of endless jokes from the entertainer. He was, without a doubt, one of the most influential people of the early twentieth century. And, most important for my purposes, he was a Cherokee. It's a mouthful, but it generally sparks interest.

My dissertation integrates Rogers' cultural contributions to the United States and Cherokee tribal history. In it, I argue that the case of Will Rogers counters scholarly assumptions that Native peoples were largely victims of a popular culture that misrepresented them during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The Western film, Wild West shows, and non-Indian social clubs (such as the Boy Scouts) organized themselves around a generic Indianness that flattened the true diversity and modernity of Native America. Rogers' Cherokee identity distinguished each of his varied and influential contributions during an era tumultuous for both Natives and Americans.

While my master's degree in American Indian studies insists that I foreground distinct tribal experiences when studying Native America, my training in American Studies teaches me to interrogate American political, cultural, and artistic trends. The confluence of these approaches molds what to me is an ideal lens through which to study a character such as Will Rogers, who carried tribal traditions into nearly all media outlets of his day. I hope that my project will offer a fresh analysis of an era as seen through the work of one of its most influential—and Native—players. The result is the study of an era articulated through both Cherokee and American experiences.

My research has taken me to various sites and archives in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Washington, D.C., and California, where I have devoured nineteenth-century tribal newspapers, presidential and congressional papers, Cherokee governmental documents, and the material belongings and cultural geography of Rogers's homes in Oklahoma and southern California. Perhaps most influential, however, have been my trips and presentations to the Cherokee Nation, where I hear priceless gossip about a man most Americans knew





only as a character. I also listen to the details of Rogers's family history, as well as the tribal controversies and distinct cultural life of the Indian Territory during the late nineteenth century, when Rogers was just another Cherokee kid in the Territory. Tribal specialists both correct and enhance my work; their input is invaluable and enforces my belief that history remains both real and essential to many Americans.

Were it not for the interdisciplinary nature of American Studies, my project would be impossible to accomplish with the academic scrutiny it deserves. The diversity of experts represented on my committee, which includes a geographer, a historian, an anthropologist, a sociologist, and an ethnic-studies scholar, demands that I answer to a variety of academic subjects. The limitless scholarly possibilities presented by American Studies will contribute to my future work. The field's multidisciplinary approach most accurately represents the varied experiences of U.S. residents of all sorts.

Amy Ware is a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies. Her dissertation is entitled "The Cherokee Kid: Will Rogers and the Tribal Genealogies of American Indian." *Celebrity.* 72



# Hilary Lane

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

“My memory of Vienna is something that I can carry around forever, it is like a secret that no one knows about”

### Hilary Lane

Undergraduate Major in American Studies  
The University of Texas at Austin

Every time I've tried to reflect and write about my journey to Vienna this past summer, I've been stumped and forced to put it off for another day. How do I even begin to describe the experience? When I first mentioned to my father the idea of traveling with Professor Hoelscher to Vienna, I never thought it would become a reality, and I never thought that the experience would be so rich and memorable that I have thought about that great city everyday since my return. Many people asked me how I could study American Studies in Vienna and before I left, I didn't really have an answer for them. Studying in Vienna not only opened my eyes to a

great culture, but it also opened my eyes to flexibility of the American Studies way of learning. American Studies is not just about learning American History; it is about looking at history through the eyes of the culture and the people involved in the history, not through historians who analyze events with the clear 20/20 vision of hindsight. In Vienna, Professor Hoelscher gave us the ability to apply the principles of American Studies, to the wonderfully diverse cultural history of Vienna. I didn't know much about Vienna or its history when I arrived, but I was eager to learn everything that I could and soak up as much of its rich culture as possible. Our course, Vienna: Memory and the City, focused on the way people of Vienna

have remembered their history and important historical events, and the way in which that memory has lived on today. Our class studied many different aspects of the Viennese culture from classical music, to architecture, to art, to politics, and to even the layout of the city. In every lecture, we asked ourselves "why?" so that maybe we could better understand how this city came to be as it is now.

Although our class met everyday, we were all encouraged to use our spare time to explore the city on our own and create our own impression and our own unique "memory of the city." The most moving and emotional experience I had was my first visit to the Vienna Philharmonic. The splendor of the venue and the amazing ability of the performers moved me to tears as I was reminded of my grandfather who used to be a violinist for the New York Philharmonic. This is a memory that will always come to mind when I think of my time in Vienna.

Other memories were not so joyous. Our trip to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp near Linz, Austria was just as emotional as my experience at the Philharmonic, but in a different way. I have studied World War II and knew all about what happened behind the walls of a Concentration Camp, but actually being there, inside the gas chamber where people were packed in to be killed, walking the infamous 186 stairs



American Studies students in Vienna, May 2007

the prisoners had to climb with a 150 pound block of stone on their backs, all made me fully realize the extent of the suffering undergone by the prisoners. The entire time I was at Mauthausen I felt like a cloud of dread was filling my head with sorrow and I felt like I would never smile again, even though the backdrop of the concentration camp was a breathtaking Austrian countryside on a sunny afternoon.

From the Vienna Philharmonic, to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp, the range of emotions I felt while in Austria reflected the emotions of the Austrians through their triumphs and tragedies during their long and extensive history.

But, what is my memory of the city of Vienna? I don't believe I will ever really have a complete answer to that question. This is what I do know: as I walk around The University of Texas campus, one of my favorite places in the world, I tend to look at everything differently. I look at the Tower, the beacon of The University, and com-

pare it to Stephansdom in the heart of Vienna as the city's icon. As I walk through the South Mall, I sometimes imagine that I am walking down Kärntnerstraße on my way to German class in the baroque palace that houses the Institut für Europäischen Studien (IES), our academic base in Vienna. Most of all, as I look at the passing students, I realize how fortunate I was to have the opportunity to study and live in Vienna. My memory of Vienna is something that I get to carry around with me forever; it is like a secret that no one knows about. Some people say that they study abroad to "find themselves." I don't think that I found myself in Vienna, but what I did discover is a culture unlike anything that I have ever experienced, one that is definitely not American. ✂

**Robert Abzug** was appointed Director of the new Schusterman Center of Jewish Studies at the University, a major research and curriculum initiative that will involve the integration of Jewish Studies courses and scholarship across the disciplines in the College of Liberal Arts and the University. Abzug envisions a major focus of the Center to be on Jewish history, life, and culture in the Americas--the United States, Canada, and Latin America--an emphasis that has already attracted national attention. On the scholarly side, he hopes to put the final touches on a biography of Rollo May, the American psychologist, within the year. He is also well into the creation of an annotated and abridged edition of William James' "The Varieties of Religious Experience", under contract to Bedford/St. Martin's Press.

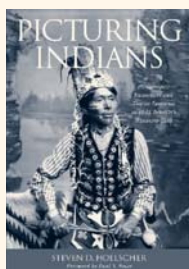
**Janet M. Davis** received a Humanities Institute Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin, Spring 2008. She published: *Circus Queen and Tinker Bell: The Memoir of Tiny Kline* (University of Illinois Press, June

2008); "Cultural Watersheds in Fin de Siècle America," in *A Companion to American Cultural History* (Blackwell Companions to American History), edited by Karen Halttunen, (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, February 2008). Outside Lectures Given: "Violence, Amusement, and Social Change in the South," Panel Comment, Southern Historical Association Annual Meeting, 2007; "The Survival of American Studies in an Era of Financialization: The View from the Lone Star State," American Studies Association Annual Meeting, 2007; "Animal Gospels: Missionaries, Radical Humanists, and the Transnational Politics of Animal Welfare Activism, 1880-1960," Clinton Institute for American Studies at University College Dublin, July 2007. Interviews: *The Economist*; *Christian Science Monitor*; *AP Wire Services*; *Dallas Morning News*. Consulting Work: Humanities Consultant--traveling circus lithograph exhibition sponsored by the Cincinnati Art Museum and John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art (2010-2012)



**Elizabeth Engelhardt**, along with graduate students Marsha Abrahams, Marvin C. Bendele, Gavin Benke, Andrew M. Busch, Eric Covey, Dave Croke, Melanie Haupt, Carly A. Kocurek, Rebecca Onion, Lisa Powell, and Remy Ramirez, completed the manuscript for *Stories Beyond the Brisket: The Life and Times of Central Texas Barbecue*, forthcoming from University of Texas Press (2009). She is currently at work on *A Mess of Greens: Gender and Food in the US South*.

**Steven Hoelscher** has completed his book, *Picturing Indians: Photographic Encounters and Tourist Fantasies* in H. H. Bennett's Wisconsin Dells (University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.) In addition, Professor Hoelscher has been swept up by the "transnational turn" in American Studies. He was a Plenary Keynote Speaker at the 2007 symposium, *Beyond the Nation: U.S. History in Transnational Perspective Conference*, sponsored by the German Historical Institute. During May and June, he led 16 students—most of whom were American Studies majors—to Vienna, Austria, where he taught a course on historical memory in that city. And in September, he presented lectures at the Museo de



Arte in San Salvador, El Salvador, and at the Centro Cultural de España, Guatemala City, Guatemala, on the theme of Historical Memory and Photography in Post-War Central America. His essay on this topic, "Photography, Urban Space, and the Historical Memory of Atrocity," was published in *So That All Shall Know/ Para que todos lo sepan: Photographs of Daniel Hernandez-Salazar* (University of Texas Press, 2007).

**Nhi Lieu** is completing her first book, "The American Dream in Vietnamese: Diasporic Desires and Pursuits of Pleasure in Cultural Production," which is

currently under review at a university press. She also published "Performing Culture in Diaspora: Assimilation and Hybridity in Paris by Night Videos and Vietnamese American Niche Media" in *Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America*, Duke University Press, 2007. Her review of *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique*



by Kandice Chuh will be published in *American Quarterly* this June.

**Jeff Meikle** served as an external doctoral examiner at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim in November 2007. Continuing in

this Nordic vein, in May 2008 he will present papers at the biannual conference of the European Association for American Studies in Oslo and at the biannual Maple Leaf & Eagle conference in Helsinki. His article "From Kerouac to Kaurismäki: Defining a Transatlantic neo-Beat Aesthetic" has just been published in an anthology by the Renvall Institute in Helsinki. He is currently writing a book on the cultural significance of American landscape view postcards published during the 1930s and 1940s.

**Stephen Marshall's** current research focuses on the role of American Jeremiad within African American political thought by exploring the creative appropriations and reformulations of this idea by African American activists, artists, and philosophers to address the legacies of slavery, segregation, and its aftermath. This project grew out of a larger study of the problem of political evil as it is formulated by writers within the canon of western political philosophy. He is presently completing the two manuscripts that correspond to these two projects. Both of these projects informed the



symposium Dr. Marshall organized in late February dealing with the cultural and political significance of the candidacy of Barack Obama.

In the past year, **Julia Mickenberg** has given talks at the annual meetings of the Organization of American Historians, the Children's Literature Association, and the American Studies Association, and also as an invited lecturer at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center and Syracuse University. She is currently writing the "Children's Literature" entry for the *Cambridge History of the American Novel*, and has just agreed to co-edit "with Lynne Vallone" the "Oxford

*Handbook of Children's Literature*", which will be published in 2010. Taking things in a very different direction, Julia is also studying the Russian language for a book project underway on the "New Woman" and the "New Russia." In conjunction with that project she will be a fellow in the Humanities Institute 2008-2009 seminar on Ethical Life in a Global Society. Her "Tales for Little Rebels: A Collection of Radical Children's Literature," which she is editing with Philip Nel, will be published this fall. Julia has also taken over the job of Graduate Advisor in the department.

**Mark Smith** has been giving lectures on drug policy and reform for One Day University, an adult education organization giving sessions in the Northeast. He is one of the few non-Ivy League professors and the only one west of Philadelphia to participate. Princeton published his article "A Tale of Two Charlies: Political Science, History, and Civic Reform, 1890-1940" in the anthology *Modern Political Science*. His essay "The Uncivilized Nature of Pain: Twilight Sleep in Childbirth and the Treatment of Addiction" given at the

## GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Fourth International Conference on History of Drugs and Alcohol should be published soon. This semester he has been teaching a new graduate seminar reflecting his shift of interest into an earlier period, "The End of American Innocence: Americans Face Modernity, 1890-1920."

**Shirley Thompson's** book "Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans" is due out this fall from Harvard University Press. She is currently working on articles on the theme of labor and leisure in Charles Chesnut's "Conjure Woman and other Tales" and on "passing" as a rubric for understanding American culture. She is also in the midst of teaching two new courses that will help her con-



ceptualize her new project on property in African American culture: a graduate course entitled "Race, Law, and U.S. Society" and an undergraduate course entitled "People, Places, and Things: Property in American Culture."

**Gavin Benke** presented a paper, "Where is Enron? - Changing Perceptions of Geographic Relationships in the Deregulation of California's Energy Market," at the 2008 Business History Conference, in Sacramento, in April.

**Andrew Busch** passed his oral exam, defended his prospectus, and was part of the barbecue project, which recently submitted a manuscript to the University of Texas Press. He will hopefully be teaching an urban history class next year and is beginning research on his dissertation, which focuses around urban growth within a global, postindustrial framework.

**Eric Covey** is currently finishing his Master's project on In-N-Out Burger.

He will present his report at the California American Studies Association Conference in Aliso Viejo, California in April 2008. In the past year he wrote entries for Greenwood Publishing Group's Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage and The Business of Food: Encyclopedia of the Food Industry and helped collect oral histories for The Southern BBQ Trail, a Southern Foodways Alliance project.

**Rebecca D'Orsogna** received one of the UT Liberal Arts Graduate Research Fellowships. This award will fund archival research at The King Center for Non-Violence in Atlanta, GA, where she hopes to find pamphlets and newsletters from various Civil Rights organizations that explain Gandhian principles of non-violence to members of the community. She will also be presenting a paper on the work of Frances Hodgson Burnet at the 2008 CEA meeting.

**Katherine Feo** has recently published an article titled "Invisibility: Men, Masks, and Masculinity in the Great War" in the Journal of Design

History and will be presenting a paper on graphical user interface design in early Mac computers at the Computers and Writing Conference in May.



**Irene Garza** presented her paper, "Por La Paz y La Justicia: La Placita, Sanctuary, and the Politics of Faith in Los Angeles, 1981-2007" at the annual National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) conference held in March 2008.



In addition to her duties on the American Studies Graduate Student Committee, Irene has been volunteering at Casa Maraniela--an Austin based non-profit that works with immigrants from Central America. This summer, she will continue her work as

a legislative consultant to the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles (CHIRLA).

**John Gronbeck-Tedesco** is a recipient of the 2007-2008 Donald D. Harrington Dissertation Fellowship. His dissertation, "Reading Revolution: Cuban Politics in the American Cultural Imagination, 1930-1970," addresses the impact of the 1933 and 1959 Cuban revolutions on U.S. culture in the fields of foreign policy, social movements, and civil rights during this period. His work draws upon both U.S. and Cuban sources, including those culled from research trips to Havana, Cuba.



**Andi Gustavson** is currently finishing her Master's project on Studs Terkel. She is a member of the American Studies Graduate Student committee and is just

beginning a oral history research project centered on the amateur photography of veterans from the Vietnam War.

**Vicky Hill** will present a paper titled "Postwar Psychology, Class, and 'Middle Classlessness'" this June at the biannual conference hosted by the Center for Study of Working Class Life. She also published three encyclopedia entries, "Conspicuous Consumption," "Contradictory Class Location," and "Lowell Millworkers" in The Historical Encyclopedia of Class in America, edited by Robert E. Weir (Greenwood Press, 2007).



**Joshua Holland** has just finished with coursework and is reading for his comprehensive examinations. At the same time, he is refining his masters work for potential publication. His MA



this thesis addressed racial construction in the Boy Scouts of America. Other non-academic projects include a new herb garden and a home archery range.



**Carly Kocurek** presented a paper on representations of early arcade gamers in the 1980s at the SW/TX PCA/ACA in February. She will also be presenting a paper on her work on the Southern Texas Bar-B-Q Trail at the Cultural Studies Association Conference in May. Additionally, she published book reviews in both Film and History and Intersections, and contributed encyclopedia entries to The Business of Food: Encyclopedia of the Food and Drink Industries and The Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice.

**Jacqueline Smith** presented a paper at the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History (ASALH) Conference in Charlotte North Carolina, and she is currently co-authoring an essay on Oprah Winfrey. She also co-facilitated the faculty roundtable discussion for the annual American

Studies Graduate Student Conference and worked to bring keynote speaker, Ruth Wilson Gilmore. Jacqueline was awarded the Liberal Arts Graduate Research Fellowship for upcoming archival work on African-American women entrepreneurs and visual documentarians. In addition to preparing for her orals exam this summer, Jacqueline plans to conduct preliminary research for her dissertation at Duke University and the University of California Berkeley's Bancroft Library.

**Rebecca Onion** received a 2007 Liberal Arts Graduate Research fellowship and plans to visit the Kautz Family YMCA Archives at the University of Minnesota this summer. Her project is titled "China and the YMCA: Technology, Environment, Public Health, and the Civilizing Imperative." She presented a paper at the Winterthur Program's Material Culture Symposium for Emerging Scholars at the University of Delaware this April. In May, she won the Best Thesis/Report Award from the Graduate School and University Coop-



erative Society for her MA Report, "Sled Dog Stories: Domestication, Masculinity, and Nationhood in Alaska, 1898-1925."

### Graduate Student Job Update

**Angie Maxwell** has accepted a position as Visiting Assistant Professor with the Diane D. Blair Center for Southern Politics and Society at the University of Arkansas.

**Jessica Swigger** has accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of History at Western Carolina University.

**Allison Perlman** has accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of History at the New Jersey Institute of Technology at Rutgers University-Newark.

**William Bush** has accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of History at Texas A&M at San Antonio.

**Matthew Hedstrom** has accepted a tenure track position as Assistant Professor of American Studies and History at Roger Williams University.

## IN MEMORIAM

On my first day of graduate school in the Fall of 2000, I walked into the classroom of Elspeth Davies Rostow. She wore a tailored suit and lectured for three hours, without the aid of notes, on the defining features of the modern American presidency. I confess that I did not know her reputation as a formidable scholar, a political insider, or an unmatched wit, nor did I know the significant role she would play in my life in the years to come. I knew only that on a request from an unknown graduate student, she had contacted the Harry S. Truman scholarship foundation and assured them that the pursuit of an academic degree in American Studies and the anticipated role of a university teacher should indeed be considered public service, a stipulation of the award. It is only because of her persuasive and generous call on my behalf that my scholarship funding was released and I was able to attend graduate school. One generous act seemed to follow another as Professor Rostow invited her students to dinner at her home where Lady Bird Johnson arrived as the surprise guest of honor, giving her students the experience of a personal conversation with a former First Lady. Her kindness, however, did not restrain her red pen, and she was known to be an uncompromising editor, deducting a full letter grade from any paper that contained a split infinitive and requiring of her students a polish rarely equaled in graduate education. And to students who submitted excessively lengthy essays, she memorably quipped: "Woodrow Wilson only proposed fourteen points to achieve world peace—why do you presume to need more?"

When fellow students asked me, on occasion, to describe Professor Rostow, I would often joke that similar to the fictional character For-



Elspeth Rostow

est Gump, she seemed to have been at the center of every significant event in American history. She crossed paths with Galbraith, Schlesinger, Lippmann, Arthur Miller—even Leadbelly (or so it is rumored). And she was pursued as a young co-ed at Barnard by an infatuated John Berryman, who composed several sonnets in her honor and with whom she attended at least one formal dance. She had personal letters from Jacqueline Kennedy that she sometimes brought to seminar; and once when I discussed the Brown v. Board decision with her, she casually revealed that Gunnar Myrdal had been staying with her and her beloved husband, Walt, when the Warren Court ruled. They read the headlines together in the morning paper.

She will be remembered for her public accomplishments: she served on the President's Advisory Committee for Trade Negotiations and the President's Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties; she chaired the United States Institute of Peace; and she lectured in thirty-four countries on behalf of the Fulbright Program and the U. S. Information Agency. In addition to her Deanship of the L. B. J. School of Public Affairs here at the University of Texas, Austin, she taught at Barnard, Sarah Lawrence, MIT, Georgetown, American University, and the University of Cambridge, and she is credited with teaching some of the earliest American Studies classes in the country in the late 1930s and early 1940s. But for all of us who had the great fortune to work under her watchful eye, she will also be remembered as the gold standard, the ultimate approval that we sought both intellectually and personally. For me specifically, she represented the kind of female role model that I never had, devoted to academics yet wholly conscious of the world around her—unlimited by gender and unrestrained by circumstance. There are those teachers whose book knowledge seems boundless, and there are those who have witnessed history and lived to tell about it. Professor Rostow was both, and I do not expect to see her likeness again.

Angie Maxwell

Your gift will support graduate studies fellowships, graduate research and conference travel, undergraduate research, student research paper awards, and faculty "

Please indicate your gift is for the American Studies Department.

☐ \$25  
 ☐ \$50  
 ☐ \$75  
 ☐ \$100  
 ☐ \$500

|         |            |
|---------|------------|
| NAME    | CLASS YEAR |
| ADDRESS |            |
| STATE   | CITY       |
| E-MAIL  | ZIP        |
|         | TELEPHONE  |

23

## Supporting American Studies

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Department of American Studies. Your gift will support graduate studies fellowships, graduate research and conference travel, undergraduate research, student research paper awards, and faculty development. Your check should be payable to the University of Texas at Austin, with Department of American Studies in the memo line. Please include the form from this page with your donation and send to:

Cynthia Frese  
 Senior Administrative Associate  
 American Studies Department  
 University of Texas at Austin  
 1 University Station B7100  
 Austin, Texas 78712-7100

You can also make your gift online. Please go to <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/nlogon/vip/ogp.WBX>. Select the College of Liberal Arts from the drop-down menu. Then select the American Studies Department.

MAIN  
 currents

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

---

MAIN

# currents

The University of Texas at Austin  
Department of American Studies  
1 University Station - B 7100  
Austin, Texas 78712-7100

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Austin, TX  
Permit No. 391