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Watch This: UT American Studies Departmental Video Released

by Carrie Andersen

Any American Studies student or scholar has likely encountered the following question in the non-academic wild: *what is American Studies?* With the answer so difficult to tease out – there’s a reason we ask our faculty members that very question in our “5 Questions” series! – we were thrilled to see the emergence of this new departmental video, the fruits of faculty and undergraduate labor. The video not only explores what the field is, but how students encounter the field here at UT.

Here’s what Dr. Randy Lewis had to say about the project’s inception and focus:

When I arrived here in 2009, I mentioned the idea of a departmental video to Steve Hoelscher, who was very supportive. However, finding funding and time was difficult—no other department in the college had done something like this. Fortunately, we had some good luck about a year ago when we were working with Associate Dean Mark Music on a separate project, and we mentioned our desire to create a short video promo for American Studies. We sometimes feel like one of the undiscovered gems on campus, and a video seemed like one way to get out the word and attract more majors. So with the backing of the Associate Dean, Steve asked Cary Cordova and I to spearhead the creation of the video, working with some fine videographers and editors on campus. The first challenge was finding undergraduates who could convey the breadth and depth of what we do in the AMS classroom, but we were able to find a dozen stellar students who did a great job on camera. It’s very hard to make something that is institutional in nature without it seeming too bland. I guess I’m glad that I didn’t push some of my earlier, more colorful ideas beyond the brainstorming stage. I’m thinking about the dark comic vision I had of the AMS faculty in full-on Insane Clown Posse garb, sitting around talking about Melville in Juggalo lingo. I think that would have had a much more limited demographic appeal, mostly with bookish Ninjalos, of which there may not be many, but it would have been really funny.

Check the video out here to learn about the field, the American Studies community here at UT, and the usefulness of our interdisciplinary mode of inquiry beyond the classroom – all from the mouths of undergraduates in the program.

Maybe next year we’ll see the Juggalo sequel – stay tuned, y’all.

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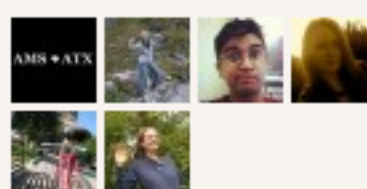
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