

# American Studies at Indiana University Bloomington

**College of Arts and Sciences- Summer 2020**

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## Welcome AMST Grad Cohort!

Be sure to read about American Studies' incoming graduate cohort starting on page 6. Incoming students Lisa Doi, Jeff Moscaritolo (second from left), and Matthew Anticoli (far right) begin this fall .

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## >>Professor Sonia Lee Wins Trustees' Teaching Award

Professor Lee teaches about race and ethnicity, topics that provoke strong emotional and political responses. Yet she does so not only sensitively but also in ways that demonstrate the broad applicability of those concepts beyond narrowly-defined populations. Specifically, she presents the concepts of race and ethnicity as conceptual frameworks that can help students understand power relationships in the U.S. more generally. In so doing, she does not simply teach about the experiences of African Americans and Latinos; she also offers students a set of analytical tools developed by those who study racial inequality and oppression, tools that can help all of her students understand the complexities of human social interaction.

Many students praise Professor Lee for her inclusive and innovative teaching methods. For example, one student said: "I can tell that she is passionate about the subject matter and is dedicated to teaching it in a way that is thought provoking and empowering. I chose this class because I consider this a topic of great importance and I would like to use the knowledge of this time period to help the struggle that is still going on today."

## >> AMST Department Promotions:

Phoebe Wolfskill has been promoted to associate professor with tenure, and Lessie Jo Frazier has been promoted to full professor. Congratulations to both!

## >>Kathy Teige, Graduate Secretary and Assistant to the Chair

Our new Graduate Secretary and Assistant to the Chair, Kathy Teige, comes to American Studies after over 13 years at IU. She served as Graduate Secretary in the Department of



Communication and Culture (CMCL), Master's Recorder in the University Graduate School, and Graduate Secretary in The Media School (MSCH). All this experience brings Kathy to American Studies with broad and deep knowledge about how graduate programs work at IU. Our graduate students are in good hands.

When not at work, Kathy spends most of her time tending to six acres of gardens and woods. Although native perennials are her passion, many other plants also find a place on her property. "I think it's accurate to describe my landscape as a plant collection, rather than just as a garden," she says when asked about her design ethos. Kathy is happy to join American Studies. "Cultivating a sense of community, and helping to rebuild the graduate program sound like fun!", she says. We feel the same way.



## >>AMST Library- Open and Running in BH 543

Need a book? Perhaps a copy of Lucy Maddox's Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline or Richard M. Dorson's The Birth of American Studies? Or maybe Robin D. Kelley's Race Rebels: Culture,

Politics, and the Black Working Class or Sharon Luk's The Life of Paper: Letters and a Poetics of Living Beyond Captivity? Now you need look no further than our own Department of American Studies Library in Ballantine Hall. From American Studies Association Prize winners to Social Cultural Theory canons, this collection will allow American Studies graduate students to browse and

check out books central to their studies. The full catalog and lending procedure should be ready for the fall 2020 season. New acquisitions will be added each semester. From foundational text to novels we regularly teach, the Department of American Studies Library will be the place for students to find what they need.

## >> AMST Senior Thesis, IU 2020 Graduate Ann Lewandowski



American Studies major Ann Lewandowski wrote her senior thesis, "The Unintended Consequences of Objectivity in American Journalism History," under the guidance of Dr. Micol Seigel in spring 2020. The paper takes up the concept of objectivity in journalism as a hallmark of assumed professionalism and credibility. She underscores the conflicts underlying expectations for media objectivity, however, by exploring these

ways in which the politically and monetarily empowered are able to influence the news that gets delivered to the public. Ann looks at two key historical moments, the Rosenberg trial of the 1950s and the 2016 presidential election, and the ways in which the *New York Times* and other media reported these events. Ann argues that newspapers introduced the idea of objectivity in journalism with the goal of diversifying readership and establishing professionalism, but instead forged a clear path to systematic control of information by the wealthy.

## >>AMST Majors Luncheon

American Studies Majors Ann Lewandowski (pictured far right on top of page 4), Abigail Carmichael (pictured to the left of Ann), and Isabelle Salerno met with professors Phoebe Wolfskill, Lessie Jo Frazier, and Susan Lepselter on February 26 to discuss AMST courses, their interdisciplinary value, and much more. For more information on becoming an American Studies Major, please visit us online at <https://americanstudies.indiana.edu/undergraduate/american-studies-ba.html>

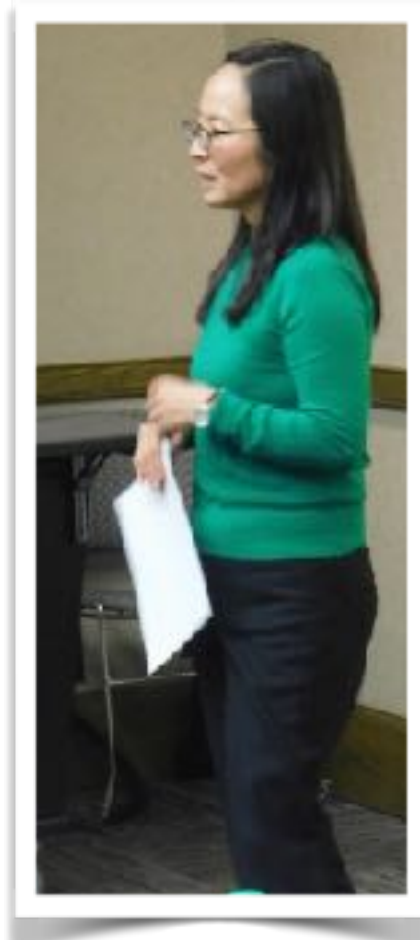




## >>American Studies/University Division Luncheon

On Tuesday, January 28, 2020 the Department of American Studies hosted a luncheon with the University Division advisors (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education unit) in the IMU Oak Room. Faculty promoted signature courses included Sex, Drugs, and Rock n Roll (taught by Dr. Lessie Frazier), The Civil Rights Movement (taught by Dr. Sonia Lee, pictured) and US Arts and Media: Race in American Art (taught by Dr. Phoebe Wolfskill).

Clockwise from upper left: Dr. Susan Lepselter, University Division Advisors, Dr. Paul Anderson, Dr. Phoebe Wolfskill, and University Division Advisors







## >>AMST Graduate Recruitment Dinner



In March, AMST held a two day recruitment event for graduate students from around the world, including Germany. Department Chair, Karen Inouye, hosted dinner at her home so that potential students could get to know faculty and staff. The recruitment days continued with plenty of



good food and conversations: Former AMST PhD student, Nzingha Kendall -- who just accepted a tenure track job at Pace University -- answered questions about the path toward a doctorate at IUB in American Studies and the job search process. Professor Phoebe Wolfskill provided a tour of the Eskenazi Art Museum. Visitors also joined the Cultural Studies Symposium. Three of the four admitted students are joining IU this fall! Read more about each student in the next three pages.

## >>New Graduate Students

### **>>Lisa Doi**



Lisa is entering the American Studies PhD program in Fall 2020. She is an active organizer within the Japanese American community in Chicago, where she is currently the President of the Japanese American Citizens League Chicago, and nationally, where she is a co-chair of Tsuru for Solidarity. Lisa's organizing is particularly focused on engaging Japanese American communities in contemporary issues of policing, state surveillance, and decarceration.

Professionally, Lisa has worked in applied social science research. Most recently, she

does policy research for Cook County, Illinois. Lisa Doi received her BA in Anthropology and Urban Studies from the University of Pennsylvania and her MA in Social Science from the University of Chicago. Her BA thesis explored museum-community relationships and received an award from the Society for Urban, National, and Transnational Anthropology. Her MA thesis tracked Japanese American settlement and assimilative efforts in Chicago. At IU, Lisa is interested in using Japanese American carceral history to explore questions of bureaucratic state violence.

## >>Jeff Moscaritolo

Jeff grew up in New Jersey and earned a BA in English and an MFA in Creative Writing from George Mason University in Virginia, where he competed on the school's forensics team and was twice ranked as a top twenty overall speaker nationally. He also took up swing dancing, joining the local and national West Coast Swing communities, and in time he would become an All- Star level dance competitor, instructor, DJ, and MC. After completing his degrees, he worked as an intern at Milkweed Editions in Minneapolis, completing editorial projects on many books, including Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass* and David Rhodes' *Jewelweed*. He then moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, where he worked as Event Coordinator at Indigo Bridge Books, participated in local racial justice activist efforts, and both wrote for and performed in locally-run interactive burlesque shows, all the while publishing fiction and nonfiction in spaces such as *Indiana Review*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Carve*, *Lincoln Journal Star*, and *Paper Darts*. Eventually, he secured a full- time teaching position at Doane University, which he held for five years. During this time, Moscaritolo began work on a novel that examines the intersection of racial identity and Civil War reenactment/memorializing, which led him to research in these areas and, ultimately, to the field of American Studies. He joins the AMST department at Indiana University with particular interest in the interplay between ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality in memory communities and institutions. He looks forward to meeting and exchanging scholarship with the amazing thinkers at IU, a place that, in his estimation, represents a special nexus of literary, cultural, anthropological, and sociological study.



## >>Matthew Anticoli

Matthew is a recent graduate from Cornell University with a B.A. in American Studies. At Cornell, much of his work in American Studies has centered around questions of race and representation throughout U.S. history, particularly but not limited to representations of African Americans in film and television. Outside of the classroom, Matt has endeavored to foster connections with the Ithaca community, involving himself in local media and local campaigns for racial justice. He hopes to find similar space in Bloomington and at IU to actively explore and engage with questions of justice both in and outside of an academic setting. In his free time, Matt enjoys reading, writing, watching tv, and even singing (when he gets the chance). He looks forward to learning with and from all in AMST as a graduate student.



## >>Captivity Narratives

The topic of Associate Professor Susan Lepselter's AMST A100 What is America? this Spring was Captivity Narratives. Little did the class guess, at the beginning of the semester, that their own experiences would resonate with the captivity stories they were studying.



Captivity narratives are a foundational American genre. From a 17th-Century English minister's wife captured during battles over Native American land to contemporary accounts of refugees held in camps at the southern border,



stories of captivity trouble the trope of freedom as the core value of our national identity. Captivity narratives make explicit the work of othering that always upholds and reproduces structures of domination and power. At the same time, when captives and captors find themselves in close proximity, there is always a potential destabilization. The power relations of ordinary life may become exaggerated into more explicit recognition, and in situations where an oppressed group captures a member of the ruling group, power relations might reverse. But always, aspects of society that have been so taken for granted that they seem natural may, in situations of captivity, grow more visible and -- as such -- also become possible to change.

In this class, students studied multiple iterations of captivity narrative -- from its institutional forms like Indian residential schools, maximum security prisons, slavery, and concentration camps for Japanese citizens during World War II, to its transspecies forms like SeaWorld and zoos, to fantastic imaginaries of captivity and conquest like UFO abduction, to the more metaphoric and felt of containments of gender, sexuality, race and class in literatures of everyday life. The enormous variety of captivity in the American experience is, in fact, the topic of Professor Lepselter's 2016 book *The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity and UFOs in the American Uncanny*.

When students in this class suddenly found themselves in lockdown, they experienced some of the same disorientations they had been reading about in class. For the remainder of the term, the class contributed to a collaborative captivity journal on Canvas, documenting their experiences under the restrictions of the pandemic. Each entry was marked with a date and a title. Here are some samples of their reflections:

## Ethan Andrews

### March 25, 2020: Too Turnt Up!

Today I was just thinking about how the quarantine has been a blessing in disguise. I have been able to read John Green, which in high school I pledged to read all his books but I have not had any time to do so in college. I have been able to blow the dust off my guitar and relearn some scales. I have been able to read many medical articles and become more acquainted with current issues in the medical field. I have been able to do puzzles with my family. I have been able to get closer to my younger sisters. I have been able to regain a sense of homeostasis that was off balance from the daily rigor of school, work and other responsibilities. Life is good! I do hope that this all ends soon though, I really miss the everyday kind of routine.

## Ellen Schrader

### April 13, 2020: Shaving My Legs

Today I found it particularly difficult to get out of bed. For some reason, the thought of getting ready for the day seemed unbearable, but after my mom came into my room (more than once) I was able to get moving. Because I felt so gloomy I decided to take a shower to wake me up, and it was then that I decided to shave my legs today. I know it may seem silly, but it felt like I had accomplished something once I did it. I feel like in quarantine it's important to take the little victories, and today my small accomplishment was smooth legs. I was then motivated to wash my bedding, which only added to the great feeling of my newly cleaned room. Homework and Netflix can only entertain me for so

long, so I've been attempting to keep my mind and body busy with small household tasks. I may not be the most productive person during quarantine, but I did shave my legs today. :)

## >>AMST 2018 PhD Graduate Jed Kuhn



After spending the first year after graduation at the University of Oregon, IU American Studies alumnus Jedediah Kuhn, Ph.D (summer 2018) accepted a position at the University of Toronto, Mississauga. Demonstrating the value of interdisciplinary studies, Dr. Kuhn teaches courses in History/Women and Gender Studies in the Department of Historical

Studies. Asked about the difference between teaching and living in Canada and doing so in the US, Dr. Kuhn says, "One of the best (though challenging) things about teaching in Toronto is that it has given me the opportunity to learn new things and grow in unexpected ways. Toronto has an entirely different racial landscape, different histories of Indigenous law and policy, and different histories of migration. One of the biggest hurdles to overcome in Canada is the pervasive idea that racism is something that only happens in the U.S. While Canada's history of settler colonialism and Indigenous genocide has become part of a broader public discourse in recent years, there seems to be much less public knowledge and conversation around other forms of racism, especially anti-blackness. I've had to do a bit of work to make my course readings relevant to students' lives." In his first year at the University of Toronto, Dr. Kuhn was awarded the Bissel-Heyd Fellowship from the Centre for the Study of the United States. With the fellowship money, he hosted a one-day symposium on



Indigeneity across the U.S.-Mexico border, bringing in some fantastic scholars to present their work, including Josie Saldaña-Portillo (NYU), Andrew Jolivette (UC San Diego), and Brian Klopotek (University of Oregon). He says, "It was wonderful getting to know and interact with these important scholars and to talk about how Indigeneity does (and does not) translate across borders." Dr. Kuhn's current research continues to build off of his dissertation work on Native American-Mexican American relations in the American West, with an article currently under review. About this article, he says, "It's about Redbone, one of the most successful Native American rock bands. They had numerous hits, including 1974's 'Come and Get Your Love.' Though the band is famous as a Native American band, its members are both Native and Chicanx, and core member Pat Vegas identifies as a "Mexican Native American" in his memoir. I use the case of Vegas and Redbone to think through the various ways people have to strategically present themselves in order to be racially legible to others. While work on Native-Chicanx relations tends to focus on the rhetoric of the Chicano Movement and assumes that people neatly fit into identity categories, my work asks us to think about just how messy everyday lived experience can be."

Teaching for both the Women and Gender Studies program and the History program at the University of Toronto, Dr. Kuhn offered courses of Indigenous Feminisms and Decolonization, Reading and Writing in Women and Gender Studies, and Gender and Sexuality in the U.S., 1945-Present. He also taught a freshman honors seminar course titled Nations Colliding that looked at contemporary Indigenous issues around the world. In academic year 2020-2021, he plans to add an Intro to Women and Gender Studies, as well as Critical Race Theory in Women and Gender Studies.

>>**Stay tuned** for the next AMST Newsletter in December 2020.  
Suggestions or Comments? Let us know at [amst@indiana.edu](mailto:amst@indiana.edu)  
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