Message from the Program Director

This edition of The Porchlight features a wide range of student and faculty work and interest—far-flung, from Inner Mongolia to the Napa Valley, and from film monsters to Laramie’s waitresses and waiters. We’ve welcomed guests, closed our work with graduating students, and prepare for another spring celebrating students’ accomplishments. We’ve welcomed three new BA majors, and have enjoyed our first semester with an incoming MA class of nine. Alumna Carly-Ann Anderson (MA 2012, Director of the Alliance for Historic Wyoming) generously shared reflections on her current work and her experience in the American Studies Program.

As the University embarks on a new era, welcoming incoming President Laurie Nichols, and while the world at large and campus communities struggle to understand and engage with urgent contemporary issues, American Studies continues to teach and learn from the heart of the humanities, as an active community of scholars committed to helping shape the future. The real porchlight by the Cooper House door has a new shade—a sturdy glass that both holds and shines. It’s a modest reminder of the best work we can do.

As always, we would love to hear from you!

Frieda Knobloch, Director
December 2015

Faculty News

Eric Sandeen received the College of Arts and Sciences Exemplary Faculty Award in spring 2015.

Ulrich Adelt was awarded tenure in 2015, and promoted to Associate Professor. Congratulations, Uli! In addition to this, Adelt also presented “Struggle with a Foreign Tongue: David Bowie in Berlin,” for the 25 Years of German Unification series at UW. Adelt published an obituary for B.B. King for the journal Rock Music Studies and a book review of Paige McGinley’s Staging the Blues for Modern Drama. He is in the copyediting process for his book Krautrock: German Music in the Seventies (University of Michigan Press). He also has two book chapters for edited volumes forthcoming, one about Neil Young’s soundtrack to the film Dead Man and one about the early work of the German group Kraftwerk.

Frieda Knobloch contributed a chapter, “Rocks of Ages: The Decadent Desert and Sepulchral Time,” in the recently published book, Rendering Nature: Animals, Bodies, Places, Politics (Penn, 2015). Knobloch also participated in a faculty panel—including Ron Frost (GEOL) and Harvey Hix (PHIL) with organizer Sarah Strauss (ANTH)—on the “anthropocene” for UW events in conjunction with the performance of “Smoke Screen” on the UW campus by artists and dancers from the University of Iowa, which took place October 2015.

Lilia Soto received the Caitlin Long Excellence Fund for travel, and the College of Arts and Sciences Student Council “Thumbs-up Award.” For more news, see page 6.

Beth Loffreda and poet Claudia Rankine teamed up in Jackson, WY, for a series of public gatherings in April 2015. Loffreda and Rankine edited The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race and the Life of the Mind (Fence Books, 2015), on matters of race and creative expression. Rankine’s book Citizen (Graywolf, 2014) was winner of the 2015 Forward Prize for Best Collection, the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry, the NAACP Image Award, the PEN Open Book Award, and the LA Times Book Award for poetry. Citizen was nominated for the Hurston/Wright 2015 Legacy Award, and was a finalist for the 2014 National Book Award. Public school writing workshops and an evening talk were followed by a public conversation, all sponsored by the Teton County Public Library. The library also circulated some writing prompts to library patrons and the community that they prepared in advance of their visit.
Famous Monsters of Filmland and Participatory Monster Culture
by Glen Carpenter

Initially published between 1958 and 1983, Forrest J. Ackerman’s magazine Famous Monsters of Filmland provided horror fans with a hub for discourse related to the genre’s canonical texts, amateur film production, and textual play. Informed by subcultural theory and aesthetic philosophy, this thesis utilizes materials found in the Forrest J. Ackerman papers at the University of Wyoming’s American Heritage Center to examine the structures and discourses of horror fan culture in the mid-twentieth century.

Wilderness to Civilization and Back Again: An Examination of the Discourses of Wilderness and Historic Preservation in Rocky Mountain National Park
by Kayla Sullivan

This thesis uses the McGraw Ranch Historic District of Rocky Mountain National Park to explore the discourses surrounding wilderness and historic preservation in the western national parks. The large nature-oriented national parks of the American West have a long history of obscuring human presence on the landscape in order to recreate a sense of the “frontier.” The “frontier” figures heavily in the rhetoric of “wilderness” and the concept of a landscape “untrammeled by man.” The outright removal of history from national park sites compromises their context and their standings as cultural landscapes spawned from a particular moment in environmental and historical thought. This thesis considers the actions undertaken in the conversion of the historic McGraw Ranch into the Continental Divide Research and Learning Center and the reorientation of thought the action required.

Thesis abstracts continued on next page.
In Between and on the Way: A Glimpse into Serving in Laramie, Wyoming
by Brie Fleming

The discourse of serving points toward how and when Americans began to view serving as an inferior type of work. By examining the downtown cultural scene of Laramie, Wyoming, and interviewing a small community of servers, I gain understanding of how one group of waiters and waitresses perceive themselves through the work that they do, and an examination of these interviews leads to the discovery of what these people experience. I am also interested in what they say about job satisfaction, as well as how they all feel about the challenges experienced on the job—physically or sexually, emotionally, and economically. By tracing a brief history of the occupation, along with interviewing, categorizing, and analyzing my own fieldwork, this thesis offers an intimate glimpse into the personal and work lives of Laramie servers. I demonstrate how these people live and relate to the larger social constructs that categorize table-waiting. I show how self-worth and identity are enmeshed with this kind of work, and that waiting tables is a noble, desirable, and heavily-relied-upon type of labor in the United States.

Redefining American: A New Frontier in a Racially Diverse USA
by Jennifer Blaylock

The United States has been defined as both the “melting pot” and the “salad bowl.” It is easy to see the resemblance to either description. The people of the United States today are multicultural and greatly diverse. They do resemble a tossed salad with a large variety of fruits, vegetables, and greens represented, but they also represent a well-blended soup that has been simmered and cooked for hours so that the flavors have melded together beautifully. Americans today are willing to accept their immigrant past which has created the delicious soup and salad combo of the United States today. Yet, the US government and the people of the United States are reluctant to add too many ingredients to the “soup pot” or the “salad bowl.” Immigrants arrive in the United States each day—undocumented or documented—expecting the United States represented on the Statue of Liberty. Yet, the US government and the people of the United States refuse to extend a welcoming hand to these immigrants because they are not the acceptable Anglo immigrant of the past.

Black Power Meets Flower Power: The Participation and Interaction of Stokely Carmichael and Allen Ginsberg at the Dialectics of Liberation Congress
by Robin Posniak

This thesis examines the relationship between the simultaneous hippie and Black Power movements by studying the participation of and interaction between Stokely Carmichael and Allen Ginsberg at the 1967 Dialectics of Liberation Congress. This study sought to outline the Dialectics of Liberation as an event of historical interest, articulate the ideologies of both movements by way of examining the addresses of their respective representatives at the conference, and finally, better explain, through the examination of Carmichael and Ginsberg’s interaction, the often assumed but infrequently discussed disconnect which existed between both movements. It has been found that the exemplary event holds great potential for further investigation. Ginsberg and Carmichael respectively capture the Flower Power ideology of the hippie movement as well as the Fanonian influenced cultural and revolutionary nationalist perspectives of Black Power, and, finally, disconnect was primarily based on the divergent levels of social privilege held by each group’s members.

Lived Experience: Laramie’s West Side Neighborhood
by Sarah Gange

This thesis draws connections between changes in infrastructure (streets, bridges, lights, etc.) and the experience of individuals affected by those changes. The geographical area of focus is the West Side Neighborhood (WSN) in Laramie, WY. Twenty-five WSN former and current residents will be interviewed to gather their everyday experience with a focus on movement in and around Laramie; for example, how they explain to people where they live in Laramie and how they purchase goods and services in poor weather that are not available on the WSN’s side of the railroad tracks. The resulting thesis will examine those experiences within the context of the history of Laramie with a focus on significant events that have had an impact on life in Laramie’s West Side Neighborhood, for example the construction of the Clark St. Viaduct over the UPRR tracks and the closing of the former at-grade (street-level) crossing of University Ave.
Josh Sainz hails from the sparsely populated town of Smoot, Wyoming. He obtained his BA in History with a Minor in Chicana Studies from the University of Wyoming. Previous to finishing his degree at UW, Josh attended Dickinson State University, Utah State University, and studied in Cardiff University, in Cardiff, Wales. His research interests have dealt with the Latin American Diaspora established in the British Isles, Puerto Rican Diaspora and Transnational communities within the United States, and the Latino experience in the rural Western U.S. As of now, he will focus on the rural Latino experience as the subject matter for his thesis. In his free time, Josh enjoys expanding his knowledge outside of the realm of Latin America and Southwestern U.S., traveling locally and globally, experimenting with cooking, and maintaining ample attention levels with his Welsh Corgi, Ralph.

Originally hailing from Upper Montclair, New Jersey, Josh Kronberg-Rasner’s pursuit of unlikely life stories drove him to live in such places as Orlando and Miami, Florida; Providence, Rhode Island; Boston and Provincetown, Massachusetts; and others, even spending a brief period in Rueil-Malmaison, France. After nearly six years as an Executive Chef in Casper, WY, Josh moved to Laramie and earned a BA in Anthropology with a minor in Gender Studies. Currently a graduate assistant in the Gender and Women’s Studies department, his academic interests focus upon the lives and experiences of women and men engaged in sex commerce in the U.S. and how the system of street-involvement produces those experiences. Josh is proudly approaching his fourth year of marriage to husband Reid, a prominent local Realtor. Together, they enjoy cuisine, viticulture and games of chance, and travel extensively with their dogs Rudy, Tink, and The Nibble.

Emily McMahan is originally from Front Royal, Virginia. She graduated from James Madison University in 2013 with a BA in International Affairs and minors in Humanitarian Affairs and Africana Studies. She is interested in researching the formation of cultural identities, specifically focusing on the influence of the media and political institutions. In her free time, Emily enjoys traveling, reading non-academic books, and listening to her eclectic music collection. She loves to study other languages, including French and Swahili, and hopes to one day see more of the world and practice speaking them.

Will Chadwick is from Leeds, England. He graduated in 2015 from the University of Birmingham with a BA in American & Canadian Studies and English Literature. He originally came to Wyoming for his exchange year as part of his studies in 2013-14 and he is now a proud first year graduate student in the American Studies program after receiving the Peter Boyle Fellowship Award from the British Association of American Studies. His undergraduate dissertation(s) focused on film, looking particularly at postmodern authenticity in the films of David Fincher and American cinema on the Iraq War. He hopes to continue his research in the area of popular culture but shifting focus to representations of queer identities in contemporary film and TV.

Sofi Thanhauser, from West Tisbury, MA, is a writer and artist. She majored in U.S. History at Columbia University and received her MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Wyoming.

Rhett Epler is a 5th generation Wyomingite, coming from a family of farmers, ranchers, cowboys, entrepreneurs and risk-takers. He earned his BA from the University of Wyoming, in Distributed Social Sciences. As an undergraduate, Rhett had the opportunity to work closely with Dr. Susan Dewey on a large-scale project surrounding the decriminalization of sex work. Through this work he was able to co-author an article entitled, “Ain’t No Real Pimps Out There No More: Street-Involved Women’s Characterizations of Men Who Facilitate Street-Based Sex Work.” Rhett is also currently working closely with Dr. Dewey, Dr. Catherine Connelly and Dr. Bonnie Zare on a large, multi-year project entitled “Pathways from Prison.” Rhett’s research interests are the decriminalization of sex work and prison/criminal justice reform. Outside of school, Rhett enjoys spending time with family and friends, yoga, fitness, reading and travel.

Constantin Jas was born and raised in Berlin, Germany. He also graduated there with a BA in American Studies and Political Science. His curriculum’s main fields were Culture, Politics and Sociology. During his year abroad at Montana State University he chose to focus his studies on the reproduction of American cultural values in popular culture. His bachelor’s thesis dealt with the romanticized display of capitalism in American popular culture, based on the example of Scrooge McDuck. After getting a little taste of the field of European Studies in Frankfurt (Oder), right next to Poland, he has chosen to seek the MA in American Studies in the American West, a region he has fallen in love with at first sight. His free time is split into watching and doing European and American sports, movies, TV shows and video games.

Robert Galbreath was born and raised in Wyoming. He started college many years ago, but dropped out of school, and spent the next decade working at the Walmart in Laramie (after brief stints cleaning apartments on campus and working at a shoe store). About a year ago he decided to return to the University of Wyoming and finish his degree. He graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in Social Science in spring 2015, and decided to come to graduate school to improve his future job prospects. He chose American Studies because it felt like the perfect department to continue further education due to the amazing variety of topics, themes and ideas to study with a diverse faculty. In his spare time he enjoys riding his bike (and spinning when the weather is bad) and watches lots of TV—his favorite shows include The Good Wife, Prime Suspect, Friday Night Lights, Sex and the City, and Ugly Betty.
Dr. Edward Turner Bale (right) married Maria Ygnacia Soberanes (left) and was given 18,000 acres of prime Napa Valley property from the Mexican government as a land grant in 1841. Upon Edward’s death at age 38, he bequeathed his cattle to his sons and his land to his daughters. One of Edward and Maria’s daughters, Carolina Bale, married Charles Krug, and together built a wine empire.

WyGISC and the University of Wyoming Geography Department’s Brown Bag series, “All Things Geography,” invited Assistant Professor Lilia Soto to give a lecture, entitled “What’s in the Roots? Identity and Narratives of the Napa Valley,” on Friday, February 27, 2015, at the Arts & Sciences Building. Soto presented recent research she has been conducting on the hidden narratives of the Napa Valley, particularly related to immigration and the people involved in making Napa Valley wineries a world-class tourist destination. The Porchlight was delighted to attend the presentation and follow-up with a Q&A with Soto.

Porchlight: You said you were studying a group of girls in Mexico as a comparison to female immigrants in Napa Valley, but did not mention it further in your presentation. Could you elaborate on the comparisons you are finding with these two focus groups?

Lilia Soto: Well, the difference between Mexican immigrant young women (I’m still debating whether I should refer to them as “girls” or young women) and adult Mexican immigrant women is access to resources—social capital, networks—that facilitates migration processes. In my current project, I make the argument that young Mexican immigrant women (“girls”) do not have access to networks or social capital because they are young and because they are girls. In other words, I look at the intersections of age and sex as having a bearing on girls’ migration desires.

Porchlight: You discussed how not much is known about Carolina Bale, the wife of wine baron, Charles Krug. What have you found out about Carolina that defies expectations?

Lilia Soto: There is very little information about Carolina Bale. I have looked at the archives at the Bancroft Library and at the Napa County Historical Society, and I have found very little. What defies expectations is that no one (and by this I mean those who have written about Charles Krug, her husband), have made the connection that because of her, he remains this canonical figure in the Napa Valley and the wine industry. If we re-read the archives using a different set of tools—gender, race, class, age, etc—we can present a different version that I hope more accurately captures the complex histories of a place.

PL: What I found interesting in your presentation was the confluence of the geography (or terroir) with biography; how life stories are, literally, written in the soil and can even be tasted in the wines. What do you think makes the Napa Valley such an interesting place for a cultural landscape study?

LS: You put it so beautifully!—how stories are literally written in the soil and can even be tasted in the wines! We can mark the transitions to historical periods that have made the Napa Valley what it is today. It becomes quite clear how the wine country went from a somewhat “sleepy” town to a worldwide tourist destination. When we think of the Napa Valley, we not only think of a tourist economy, but a luxurious economy. People of all social classes live in this place, but in terms of race relations, it has remained a White-Mexican town. There are so many interesting stories that need to be written and I want to be one of those people who writes some of those stories.
This past August I had the opportunity to travel to China through a program sponsored jointly by the American Folklore Society and the China Folklore Society. Funded mainly by the Ford and Henry Luce Foundations, this trip was part of an ongoing effort to promote scholarly conversation between American and Chinese folklorists. For several years now small groups of American folklorists have gone to various Chinese regions to meet with local scholars and observe traditional cultural sites and performances. This time the primary destination was the Bao Gede Mountain Festival in eastern Inner Mongolia.

Not to be confused with the country of Mongolia, an independent republic more aligned with Russia than China, Inner Mongolia is an “autonomous region” within the Republic of China. Its majority population is Han Chinese, though ethnic Mongols are the next largest ethnic group, and the Mongolian language is widely spoken. Our ultimate destination was a remote grassland area near the intersection of the Mongolian, Russian, and Chinese borders in the northeast of the province. It is especially notable historically as part of the homeland of the pastoral, horse-mounted culture that produced Chingis (Ghengis) Khan (late 12th/early 13th centuries) and, ultimately, the vast Mongolian Empire. By the late 13th century this empire encompassed much of what are now China, Russia, and Iran. Though often thought of in the West as just a ruthless conqueror, to many Mongolians Chingis Khan is a great, even semi-divine, hero. The sacred mountain we visited, Bao Gede, is closely associated with this heroic past, including in the form of a traditional narrative about how the Great Khan’s army, about to be overrun by opposing forces, was miraculously saved when it took refuge at the mountain and a divinely created fog allowed for a surprise counter-attack and defeat of the enemy.

After a couple of very hot days in Beijing, we flew to the border town of Manzhouli, a major transit point for Russian/Chinese trade, and a Las Vegas-like tourist town catering mainly to affluent Russians. Lots of fantasy architecture, flashy LED lighting, and buying opportunities. The highlight there was a visit to a Russian-style nightclub, where the acts ranged from “traditional” Mongolian throat singing to pole dancing, but that’s another story.

The next day we headed by van into the vast grasslands of the Inner Mongolian steppes. The landscape there has much in common with high plains Wyoming. Think Laramie basin minus the surrounding mountains and a bit greener, but with similar big sky and long, treeless vistas. Then, of course, there’s the relentless wind. And there are other parallels as well. Historically, the traditional culture of this region was characterized by a nomadic pastoralism focused on sheep, cattle, goats, and horses. It would be hard to exaggerate the centrality of the horse to the cultural identity of this area, and equestrian skills are highly valued still today. There is even a genre of folk music that uses the traditional stringed instrument to mimic the sound and excitement of galloping horses. As with the cattle culture of the American West in the 19th century, the “open ranges” of Mongolian nomadism have, more recently, undergone similar fencing in and, to a degree, privatization into ranch-like properties. The Chinese government currently has an active policy to move rural people out of their isolated, portable dwellings (yurts) into cinderblock houses in the small towns that dot the region, resulting in friction and some push-back. The pastoral way of life and ethos persist, if in modernized forms (e.g., like here, the motorcycle and four-wheeler are increasingly used to manage herds).

Though far from any permanent settlement, the site of the Bao Gede Mountain Festival, which happens twice a year, draws thousands of worshippers and competitors in traditional sports – horse racing, archery, and wrestling. There is little by way of accommodations, so most participants pitch tents or sleep in their vehicles. Given the rudimentary facilities (I’ll forego a description of the “rustic” loo), there are few pure tourists in attendance, and even fewer Westerners. There are some permanent yurts at the site, reserved for “dignitaries,” which hardly describes our disheveled bunch of academics, but we had use of them for eating and sleeping.
The religious foundation of the festival is a combination of Tibetan-style Buddhism and a very ancient form of shamanism, reflected in the offering of sacrifices and prayers to the sacred mountain, with Buddhist priests officiating at the formal ceremonies. Though to Wyomingites Bao Gede Mountain might only qualify as a large hill, it seems impressive as the only elevation amid miles of a mostly featureless plain; and of course as a place of divine power. The main devotional activity is to walk the mountain, a gender-segregated practice. Men and boys follow a steep path directly up to the summit, where there is a large altar (Ao Bao) to receive sacrificial tokens and prayers. Women and girls follow a separate path that circles the base of the mountain. Both paths see a steady stream of worshippers over the course of the two days of the festival, and especially through the nighttime hours (I went up at about three in the morning). It is an impressive sight.

The last of our activities before returning to Beijing was to attend an official “forum” in one of the small, grassland towns, New Barag of the Right Banner. It had already become clear that our presence at the Mountain Festival was motivated by more than just a desire for international dialogue among folklorists. For much of the time we were accompanied by a film crew that documented our activities, and the forum, attended by scholars, local government officials, representatives of the national government, public relations people, and the regional Communist Party leader, was not an academic exchange so much as an occasion for prepared speeches about the importance of preserving the Festival and protecting the ecological integrity of the region.

The Chinese government has fully embraced the goal of expanding its roster of UNESCO World Heritage Sites and displaying its concern for preserving Intangible Cultural Properties, as well as affirming its commitment to ecological stewardship. These are understood to be markers of the modern, globally engaged nation-state. Though none of the folklorists in our group were Chinese specialists, or even folk religion specialists, the very presence of Western scholars displaying interest in the Mountain Festival served as at least a minor endorsement of value of this event and the cultural importance of the mountain. Which isn’t to say there is no genuine concern, especially on the part of the local people and Mongolians in general, about the health of this event and the dangers to the environment from the rapidly growing presence of motor vehicles. The main thing I took away was how complicated are the forces, some local, some national, some global, some political, some economic, and some even folkloric, involved in this obscure, semi-annual religious event in the remote grasslands of Inner Mongolia. And I haven’t even gotten to the banquets and the drinking.
Poet Claudia Rankine Visits the Cooper House

On Tuesday, April 14, the poet and essayist Claudia Rankine visited the Cooper House for an informal discussion on matters of literature, racism, and the imaginary. Rankine’s recent book, *Citizen: An American Lyric*, was a 2014 National Book Award finalist, amongst other national and international honors. In the discussion, Rankine remarked on *Citizen’s* impact on both American culture and her own creative process. “Booksellers are telling me that *Citizen* has created renewed interest in poetry,” Rankine said. “People are buying poetry books again.” *Citizen*, already in its third printing, has been inseparable from the recent discourse on racism in America, particularly in regards to police violence on Black men. “If this book were about anything else,” Rankine said, “I’d be on to the next project by now. But I feel a responsibility.” Other topics discussed in the hour-long conversation covered the spheres of Blackness and Whiteness that Americans inhabit, the racist pathology of Ebola screening at airports, and the ways we confront suicide and depression in public and private expressions. Later that evening, Rankine read from *Citizen* in a public event at the UW Art Museum.

Jan Dizard on Hunting Culture

In April 2015, the American Studies Program had the good fortune of welcoming Jan E. Dizard for a series of lectures and discussions on the subject of sport hunting in America. Dizard is both a dedicated hunter and the Charles Hamilton Houston Professor in American Culture at Amherst College in Massachusetts, where he brings a sociological perspective to his scholarship on mass culture and environment. Dizard’s presentation before a large audience in the Classroom Building focused on the challenges posed to contemporary hunting—both within, by militarization of weapons and the monopolistic power of the gun lobby, and without, by animal rights activists and the anti-gun movement. His comments served as a launching point for debate at a later hunting symposium, hosted by faculty member John Dorst, and paneled by faculty members Frieda Knobloch and Andrea Graham, as well as graduate students Susan Clements and Maxine Vande Vaarst. Dizard was also kind enough to meet with students for sandwiches and good conversation at the Cooper House. The program would like to extend its thanks to John Dorst for his role in bringing Jan Dizard to campus.

The Art of the Hunt exhibit, co-curated by American Studies folklorist Andrea Graham and Wyoming Arts Council folklorist Annie Hatch, closed its 13-month showing at the Wyoming State Museum on September 5. Plans are in the works for a web site to make the fieldwork on Wyoming’s hunting and fishing traditions more widely available; it will include photos and biographies of the featured artists, and a series of video portraits. Meanwhile the project’s Facebook page, <www.facebook.com/artofthehuntwyoming> continues to post articles and links of interest, such as a Wyoming PBS feature on leather worker Von Ringler.

Louis Menand, Harvard history professor and New Yorker writer, delivered a lecture on Hannah Arendt and totalitarianism in fall 2015.

Dickey Landry, multi-instrumentalist and artist, performed his work, Trialogues, and gave an artist talk to accompany his gallery show at the UW Art Museum in fall 2015.
For the summer of 2015, five American Studies students were awarded paid internships with host organizations across the nation. **Lucas Anderson** (B.A. candidate) interned with the Alliance for Historic Wyoming, revamping the non-profit organization’s website and adding numerous new features, such as detailing its More Than Mortar program. **Chuck Adams** (M.A. candidate) was the field intern for HistoriCorps, assisting volunteer crews in rehabilitating historic cabins and ranches in Colorado, one of which was featured in *The New York Times* and on NBC Nightly News. **Kyle Byron** (M.A. candidate) spent the summer working with folklorist Andrea Graham, digitizing information related to hunting and fishing traditions in Wyoming, as well as assisting in preliminary research exploring the use of community halls in southeastern Wyoming. **Maxine Vande Vaarst** (M.A. candidate) interned with the Down Jersey Folklife Program in Millville, New Jersey, where she sought out folk artists from a diverse range of genres and backgrounds for participation in an upcoming Caribbean arts festival. **Evan Townsend** (M.A. candidate) turned his spring GA into a Education Supervisor and Special Projects Intern for the Wyoming Conservation Corps, a non-profit housed in the University of Wyoming focused on connecting young adults to hands-on conservation projects. During the winter break, **Madison Williams** (B.A. candidate) interned at a permaculture farm on the island of Maui, in Hawaii.

**Conference News**

AMST faculty **Eric Sandeen**, **Frieda Knobloch**, **Ulrich Adelt**, and graduate student **David Loeffler** attended the American Studies Association annual conference, held in Toronto in October 2015.


**John Dorst** attended (along with folklorist **Andrea Graham**) the American Folklore Society Meeting in Long Beach, CA, where he participated in a paper panel entitled “Sensory Ecologies: The Folklore of Tasting, Touching, Smelling, and Hearing.” Dorst’s paper title was “From Sensory Ecology to Sensory Encounter in the Material Fabric of Taxidermy,” Dorst also participated in a meeting of the folklore scholars with whom he traveled to Inner Mongolia in August.

Graduate students **Chuck Adams**, **David Loeffler**, **Kayla Sullivan**, and **Kyle Byron** presented papers at the 4th annual English Interdisciplinary Conference, held at the Laramie Hilton, in March 2015. The conference’s theme was: “The Brain is Wider than the Sky.”

Graduate student **Rhett Epler** presented a paper, “We’re Kind of on Our Own Out Here,” about social citizenship revocation for street involved women, at the American Anthropological Association meeting in Denver, in November 2015.

Graduate student **Chuck Adams** attended the 2015 PastForward conference, put on by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, in Washington, D.C., and test-piloted a new smartphone app for the National Park Service.

Graduate student **Maxine Vande Vaarst** delivered, in March, a talk on New Jersey folklore at a Rowan University event co-sponsored by the Eastern American Studies Association and the Middle Atlantic Folklore Society. In May, she visited Paris as part of an international symposium on the U.S.-Canada border, for which she presented original ethnographic research into the American enclave of Point Roberts, Washington. In October, she brought this same research with her to a Toronto-based conference on nationalism and identity, hosted by Humber College in affiliation with the International Festival of Authors.

Graduate student **Evan Townsend** presented his paper, “Thinking Through Wilderness and National Parks,” at the International OnSustainability Conference, held in Portland, Ore., in January 2016.
PL: Why did you choose the path of American Studies/ENR dual-major? What was the attraction for you?

I would say that American Studies chose me more than I chose it as an academic path. I was connected to ENR first through the Honors Program, so I guess it would be fair to say that my interest in environmental studies was the first step toward finding American Studies. ENR is a program that requires pairing with a concurrent major. My interest in art, history, and the environment, among many other diverse interests led my ENR advisor to recommend American Studies. I met with Dr. Frieda Knobloch, who is now my American Studies advisor, and she showed me how American Studies was a unique place to explore my diverse interests without the restraint of a rigid set of required courses. I was able to focus my major around the issues and ideas that interested me most, and American Studies provides a constant reminder that just because you might have specialized or diverse areas of interest, it does not mean that those interests are unrelated to broader trends and ideas. American Studies is a great place to learn and examine unique, fun areas like music and movies and see how they relate to cultural ideas. For me, the perfect mix was blending my personal obsession with art and architecture with my struggle to comprehend humans’ relationship with surrounding environments, both human and nonhuman. These are the factors that led to my American Studies/ENR dual major.

PL: How has the internship you participated in over the summer contributed to your experience/skills/success as a student?

The internship I participated in over the summer with the Alliance for Historic Wyoming primarily gave me a lens into the world of my chosen field as it exists outside the realm of the academy. The only jobs I ever had were ones that valued my physical labor, not my ideas, so I didn’t have any prior experience in the type of job market that actually deals with, facilitates, and negotiates the types of complex problems I was writing about in class. The way they are applied in “real life” so to speak are things that you can talk about and analyze in class, but you can’t really truly comprehend them if you don’t experience them firsthand. One of the most valuable things I look from my experience was a reminder that as students in a university, we don’t exist in a vacuum, and that the future of our chosen fields and our most cherished interests often lie outside the place we devote four or more whole years of our lives. We have to remember that the academy can give us incredible resources and starting places for our intellectual and applied lives, but also give incredible credence to the fact that the way ideas are applied and managed within the material economy realistically have some very strong implications for the perpetuation of our own values, and the combination of all the access points, in my case the university and a non-profit organization, help to shape forms and movements of ideas around our communities and around the globe.

American Studies has far exceeded that original desire for me. From the first time I walked into the Cooper House I felt I had found the place to study what I wanted to study in a way that would help me develop as a student and a person. The original attraction was the interdisciplinary nature and the emphasis the faculty put on using my own knowledge and experience as a starting point to my studies.

PL: What about the American Studies program is helpful to your research/academic interests?

American Studies courses have been my favorite since the start of my academic career. These courses have given me points of education and skills I haven’t been able to find in other classrooms. This sort of education, one made up of collections, people, and ideas has kept me thoroughly engaged and interested in not only what American Studies has to offer, but what I have to offer and glean from American Studies. The undergraduate degree specifically asked me to choose classes across the university and connect them to one “theme” that I would call the capstone of my degree. The very suggestion that I should actively pursue my different interests, and for part of my degree, connect seemingly disparate things together is, quite frankly, magic.

From the first time I walked into the Cooper House I felt I had found the place to study what I wanted to study in a way that would help me develop as a student and a person.

— Rebecca Goodson
Carly-Ann Anderson, 28, graduated from the American Studies graduate program in 2012. She was generous enough to reply to a few questions *The Porchlight* had for this recent alum.

**PL:** Please describe your current job, including a brief sketch of your duties.

**Carly-Ann:** I am the Executive Director for the Alliance for Historic Wyoming, a statewide historic preservation nonprofit dedicated to protecting Wyoming’s historic places and spaces. I work with a board of directors to oversee programming, as well as daily operations of the organization such as keeping our books, planning workshops, answering queries from our constituents, and fundraising. We work statewide on a variety of resources ranging from schools and historic downtowns to trails and archaeological sites, which means a lot of conference calls and travel.

**PL:** You received a biology degree from UW prior to enrolling in the American Studies MA program. Coming from a science background, what drew you to an ostensibly humanities program?

**CA:** I ended up in the Cooper House during my senior year of undergraduate. I needed an upper division credit outside of my major, and happened upon a flier for one of Mary Humstone’s field classes. The class was documenting the University Neighborhood District, the residential area directly surrounding the west and south edges of the campus. We wrote architectural descriptions, studied preservation policy, and ultimately helped to author the nomination that listed the neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places. I felt at home with the topic, enjoyed the graduate students I worked with, and got a thrill from interacting with the public and working to protect an area I enjoyed and found important. It was a major change of pace from working in a windowless lab. (I had worked for Dr. David Fay since my freshman year doing genetics research. I loved the lab work, but needed to be out and about.) But I do remember getting laughs when I plotted the building styles and graphed population data against construction trends.

**PL:** What was your master’s thesis topic about?

**CA:** Energy development in McFadden, Wyoming, and the Rock Creek Valley. I worked for a few years at the High Plains-McFadden Wind Farm site as a field biologist, and didn’t realize at first that the wind farm is built on the site of a former oil field. I started to put together that I was in the middle of a cultural landscape that blended energy extraction, agriculture, transportation history, and many other Wyoming characteristics. I used the former oil company town and the surrounding hills to discuss Wyoming’s changing energy landscape, arguing the importance of documenting natural and historic cultural resources when considering energy siting. The balance required to keep Wyoming looking like the place we know and love, and not just a group of industrial sites, benefits from an interdisciplinary view.

**PL:** How are historic preservation and the Main Street programs interdisciplinary enterprises?

**CA:** In addition to being the director for the Alliance for Historic Wyoming, I work part-time as a program coordinator with the Laramie Main Street Alliance. I’m drawn to holistic approaches to problem solving that involve community members, so the Main Street approach of doing economic development through historic preservation excites me. Much like the Alliance, Main Street empowers business owners and community members to stake a claim in their downtowns and enhance them as social and commercial cores. The interdisciplinary approach recognizes that people bring different skills, opinions, and strengths to the table and that the outcome from diverse groups tends to be positive.

**PL:** Do you have any advice for current or future AMST students preparing to enter the job market?

**CA:** I would advise students to take advantage of as many opportunities as they can, whether through field courses and internships, or with volunteering. American Studies is great at facilitating these experiences. This will allow you to find what you like, and to gain valuable job skills that you don’t get in a typical classroom. You might be surprised at the variety of skills you’ll use in a job position—verbal and written communications are critical, but there’s more to workplace success than that. Lastly, take advantage of the flexibility and mentoring that American Studies offers. Not every program will work with you to craft a program that suits your interests.
Fort Collins Field Excursion

AMST 4040/5040: Historic Preservation and Sustainability, instructed by Anthony Denzer, embarked on several field trips in spring 2015, one of which included a full day examining various projects, neighborhoods, and buildings in Fort Collins, CO. Top left: students walked the Mountain Avenue Historic District, where all development must be reviewed; top right, student dumbfounded on how this house could pass review; bottom left: tour of the Powerhouse Energy Institute, a historic preservation and sustainability success story; bottom right: students gather on the porch of the Avery House, led by a docent in full costume. Photos by Chuck Adams.

American Studies porchlight

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