

SUMMER 2026

# The Boston Americanist

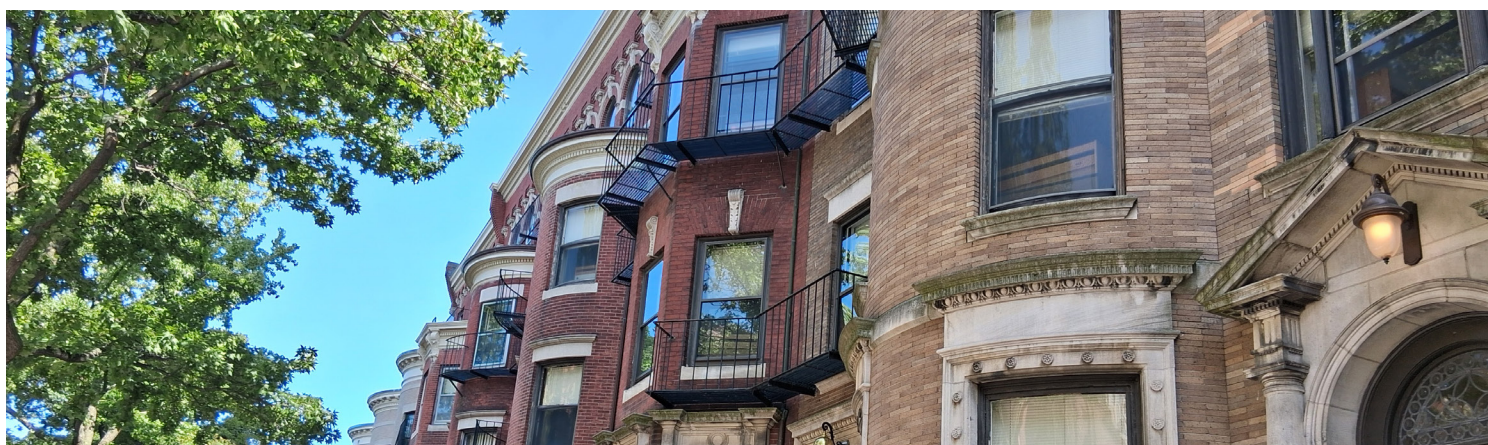
**Boston University** Arts & Sciences  
American Studies



**BOSTON  
UNIVERSITY**

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# Letter from the Program Director

*Joseph Rezek*

**The American Studies Program had a fantastic year**, and we owe it to ourselves to celebrate. Since our last newsletter, eight students received their PhD from our program. Recent alumni accepted new positions at the University of Tokyo, the Boston Public Library, Columbia, Emory, Tufts, and the Mellon Foundation. Current and former PhD students published peer-reviewed articles and shared their work at many conferences, including the ASA; and they held prestigious fellowships at institutions like the Smithsonian and Yale. Nine students graduated the Preservation Studies Program, which continues to grow under its new Director, Professor Carolyn White. Our undergraduate majors are as ambitious as ever. Even under new challenging financial constraints at Boston University, 226 Bay State Road remains a thriving and exciting place to pursue American Studies in all its vibrant interdisciplinarity.



I want to issue a special thanks to students, alumni, friends, and faculty, for making the 2026 Giving Day the best we have had in recent memory. I sent a special appeal this year, and you heard it! We had forty-three unique donors and raised more than \$2,500. This is a significant amount of money for us on Giving Day, and we will use it to support

our PhD program, special events programming, and especially to fund the Graduate Student Association. We depend upon and always welcome support from our extended community, I cannot convey my thanks adequately enough.

We were proud this year to give the first awards from the Public Humanities Fund. These awards support projects by American Studies PhD students that have a public-facing element or might plausibly have one in the future. Genna Kane and Jesse Dritz received General Awards for their dissertations. It has also been an excellent year for our Abbot Lowell Cummings Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr. Allyson LaForge, who taught two fantastic classes in our program: “Materializing Indigenous History” and “Placing Public History: Memory, Monumentalization, and the Built Environment.” We also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, which was co-founded by the first AMNESP Director, David D. Hall.

We have continued our initiative in Native American and Indigenous Studies through advocating for new faculty hires and supporting the Indigenous Studies Working Group. We are grateful to the BU Center for the Humanities for supporting ISWG again this year, as well as the American Studies for the Future Series. Both of these BUCH-supported initiatives brought many exciting scholars to campus. BUCH also supported a one-day symposium organized by Alyssa Hunziker, “Transpacific Indigenities.”

I must extend our deepest gratitude to Aimee McCarron, our Program Administrator, who holds both AMST and PSP together. I wish also to thank Anjali Carroll, the outgoing President of the Graduate Student Association, for leading an organization that is so central to our intellectual and institutional community. Special thanks as well to our Director of Graduate Studies, Deborah Jaramillo; our Director of Undergraduate Studies, Mary Battenfeld; our Director of the Preservation Studies Program, Carolyn White; and the AMST Program Committee.

I’ve said many times how much I love Directing this program – that remains truer than ever!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Rezek', with a stylized, sweeping flourish extending from the end.

Joseph Rezek

# Letter from the Director of Graduate Studies

***Deborah Jaramillo***



**I am writing this letter on a beach in Oaxaca,** and although you might think it strange to spend vacation time on something for work, I argue that it speaks volumes about the outstanding finish to the academic year.

Almost two months removed from the American Studies convocation, I remain giddy about our impressive roster of new PhDs. The list is long, and the quality of the projects reflects the tireless work of our new alums and the singular dedication of their advisors. What a joy to share both the hooding and the convocation with our graduates and their loved ones. I am delighted to stay on as Director of Graduate Studies for another two years. I appreciate the faith that Joe and Aimee have in me, and I hope the decision to keep the gang together will provide our PhD students with the stability and continuity they deserve.

As we continue to experience turbulence in higher education, the graduate program in American Studies has tried to remain nimble and responsive to the needs of our students. While many wrapped up their studies in May, many more are approaching milestones with the urgency demanded by the new status quo. Whatever happens outside 226 Bay State, inside we are fixated on the wellbeing and success of our current students.

With thanks to Joe, Aimee, our current and former students, and the many faculty members that keep the American Studies program strong and vibrant, I'll return to my vacation and keep my giddiness intact for the Fall semester.

# Letter from the Director of Undergraduate Studies

*Mary Battenfeld*



After a sabbatical spent as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, I have happily returned to serving as Director of Undergraduate Studies. Many thanks to Kim Sichel and Takeo Rivera, who generously and skillfully led the undergraduate program while I was away, and to our director, Joe Rezek, and program administrator, Aimee McCarron. This past year has reminded me how lucky I am to be part of Boston University's American Studies program, working with incredible colleagues and our amazing undergraduate students.

**“At the 2026 Convocation, that amazingness blazed bright as our graduates’ red gowns.”**

At the 2026 Convocation, that amazingness blazed bright as our graduates’ red gowns. The interdisciplinary breadth, research skills, critical thinking, and intellectual engagement central to American Studies was on full display in the work of our three ‘26 majors. Yicheng (Felix) Sun, a double major in History, worked under Ian Stevenson on his capstone “The Vertical Campus: History and Future of Warren Towers.” Grey Retz, a double major in History of Art & Architecture, conducted a capstone project on adaptive reuse potential for the historic building of *The Wilmington Journal*, the newspaper of North Carolina’s Black community. Last and far from least, HB Bielawa, a double major in History with a minor in Deaf Studies, received the College of Arts and Sciences College Prize for “members of the Class of 2026 who have made extraordinary contributions to their departments and programs.” HB’s capstone project, completed under Prof. Rezek’s Spring 2026 seminar, was “‘Big Business is Coming:’ America’s Bicentennial Celebration.”

Heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to HB, Felix, and Grey as they continue on to graduate programs and professional careers. Our undergraduates, both alums and current majors, inspire me with their intelligence, passion, and commitment to using their skills to create a better world. In 2026, we celebrate the nation’s 250th amid a precarious time for democracy, and the “unalienable Rights” proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence. But our students give me hope that that, as Joseph Warren said in his March 6, 1775 speech in commemoration of the Boston Massacre: “Our country is in danger, but not to be despaired of.”

# Preservation Studies

*Carolyn White*



Greetings from the Preservation Studies Program! The academic year 2025/2026 has been a fantastic one for the program, and as I complete my first full academic year as Program Director, I'm pleased with our many accomplishments this year and full of anticipation for those to come in the next.

The Preservation Studies Program welcomed a new cohort of students in the fall from the United States and Kazakhstan just as we saw a cohort of six students complete their degree. In spring we graduated an additional three students. Congratulations to Janessa Dennis, Siena Idoine, Lea Kolesky, Jieyu Liu, Hailey Manlowe, and Kayton Stewart (Fall 2025) and Yunyang Feng, Gianna Ortiz, and Ruizhe Yin (Spring 2026).

The Program continued its use of Greater Boston and New England as our classroom. In September, the Preservation Studies Program traveled to Lowell National Historical Park to explore the city's industrial, social, and labor history while examining its cultural and architectural landscape. Highlights of our day-long walking tour included the Pawtucket

Canal by boat tour, the Mogan Cultural Center and Boarding House Park, and the Boott Cotton Mills museum, including the Weave Room. Students were encouraged to critically evaluate how the museum interprets Lowell's industrial past and to consider the perspectives that are emphasized, omitted, or contested within the site's public history.

Our courses offer a combination of critical, theoretical, and practical engagement, and typically we bring students into the field to engage with sites and working professionals. This year our field trips included visits to the City of Boston Office of Historic Preservation (Carolyn White's "Professional Futures in Preservation"), numerous site visits in Allston (Ian Stevenson's "Boston Architectural and Community History Workshop"), the Charles River Basin (Jan Haenraet's "Landscape Design and Preservation Studio"), and the West End Museum (Sara Wermiel's "Preservation Planning"), to name just a few. Many of our courses launched collaborative projects with community partners, including Boston Landmarks and the BU Office of Planning, Design, and Construction.

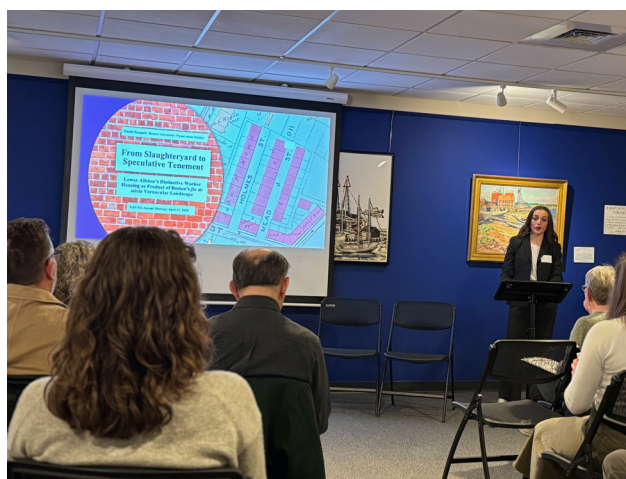


Preservation Studies students Sofia Caffo, Assel Kurmangali, Estelle Rampelt, Isabella Constantakes, Siena Idoine and Director Carolyn White enjoy a tour of the Pawtucket Canal (left) and of the cityscape in Lowell, Massachusetts.

In the spring, the Program held a Preservation Studies Internship Forum with local preservation professionals, a perennial highlight of our year. Ben Haley and Michael Steinitz (Massachusetts Historical Commission), Albert Rex (PSP '94, Ryan), Katherine Davis-Wheeler (Massachusetts Preservation Alliance), and Elizabeth Sherva (PSP '12, City of Boston) fielded an array of questions about professional pathways, internships, practice, and policy from current and future students.

Together we attended the New England Vernacular Architecture Forum conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where there was excellent representation by current and former Preservation Studies students. Current student Estelle Rampelt presented her research in Allston's worker housing and recent graduate Lea Kolesky presented a paper on Maynard's Clock Tower. Many Program alumni as well as nearly all former PSP directors were present. We enjoyed an array of field trips, including Strawberry Banke Museum, Warner House, and a Women's History walking tour.

**“The Preservation Studies Program continued its use of Greater Boston and New England as our classroom.”**



Estelle Rampelt presented a paper on research in Allston, Massachusetts, at the Vernacular Architecture Forum.



Recent alum Lea Kolesky ('25) presented a paper on her research in Maynard, Massachusetts.

Over the summer, our students held internships at the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston Landmarks, Historic New England, JL Dunn, and Ipswich Historical Society. These internships continue to play a key role in training our students for future positions in the field.

Finally, our program is most fortunate to have excellent scholars, teachers, and staff that hold up the many tent poles of our program. I extend a big thank you to Aimee McCarron, our wonderful administrator, who keeps track of all of our complex comings and goings. Sara Wermiel and Ian Stevenson continued to serve as lecturers and key long-term contributors to the program. In the fall, Jan Haenraets returned from his sabbatical leave where he completed his manuscript on Kashmir's Mughal Landscapes to be published in 2026.

Looking forward to 2026-27!



Professor Jan Haenraets, Isabella Constantakes, and Estelle Rampelt document the Lowell landscape.



Estelle Rampelt, Isabella Constantakes, and Sofia Caffo in the weaving room in Lowell, Massachusetts.

# Program Administration

**Joseph Rezek**

Associate Professor of English  
Director, American Studies Program

**Deborah Jaramillo**

Professor of Film & Television  
Director of Graduate Studies

**Carolyn White**

Professor of History of Art & Architecture, Archaeology  
Director, Preservation Studies Program

**Mary Battenfeld**

Clinical Professor of American Studies  
Director of Undergraduate Studies

**Aimee McCarron**

Program Administrator, American Studies & Preservation  
Studies Programs

# Program Committee

**Mary Battenfeld**

Clinical Professor of American Studies

**Jilene Chua**

Assistant Professor of History

**André de Quadros**

Professor of Music and Music Education

**Charlotte Howell**

Associate Professor of Film & Television

**Nazli Kibria**

Professor of Sociology

**Maurice Lee**

Professor of English

**William Moore**

Associate Professor of Material Culture



## Lecturers and Postdoctoral Fellow

**Aaron Ahlstrom**

Lecturer of Preservation Studies

**Allyson LaForge**

Abbott Lowell Cummings Postdoctoral Fellow

**C. Ian Stevenson**

Lecturer of Preservation Studies

**Sara Wermiel**

Lecturer of Preservation Studies

# Affiliated Faculty

**Daniel Abramson**

Professor of American & European  
Architecture

**Paula Austin**

Associate Professor of History and African  
American & Black Diaspora Studies

**Ross Barrett**

Professor of American Art, History of Art &  
Architecture

**Mary Battenfeld**

Clinical Professor of American Studies

**Michael Birenbaum Quintero**

Associate Professor of Musicology &  
Ethnomusicology

**Brooke Blower**

Jon Westling Professor of History

**Japonica Brown-Saracino**

Professor of Sociology

**Wade Campbell**

Assistant Professor of Archaeology and  
Anthropology

**Deborah Carr**

Professor of Sociology

**Robert Chodat**

Professor of English

**Louis Chude-Sokei**

Professor of English; George and Joyce  
Wein Chair in African American & Black  
Diaspora Studies

**Victor Coelho**

Professor of Music

**Adriana Craciun**

Emma MacLachlan Metcalf Chair and  
Professor of English

**Bradley Craig**

Assistant Professor of History

**Dan DiPiero**

Assistant Professor of Music, Musicology, &  
Ethnomusicology

**André de Quadros**

Professor of Music and Music Education

**Megan J. Elias**

Associate Professor of the Practice of  
Gastronomy

**Jonathan Foltz**

Associate Professor of English

**Margarita Guillory**

C. Allyn and Elizabeth V. Russell Professor  
of Religion and Culture

**Jan Haenraets**

Professor of the Practice of Preservation  
Studies

**Melanie Hall**

Associate Professor of Art History

**Charlotte E. Howell**

Associate Professor of Film & Television

**William Huntting Howell**

Associate Professor of English

**Alyssa Hunziker**

Assistant Professor of English

**Paul Hutchinson**

Senior Lecturer of Organizational Behavior

**Deborah L. Jaramillo**

Professor of Film & Television

**Nazli Kibria**

Professor of Sociology

**Maurice Lee**

Professor of English

**David Mayers**

Professor of Political Science and History

**Brendan McConville**

Professor of History

**Sarah Miller**

Assistant Professor of Sociology

**Koritha Mitchell**

Professor of English

**Susan Mizruchi**

William Arrowsmith Professor in the Humanities

**William D. Moore**

Associate Professor of American Material Culture

**Anita Patterson**

Professor of English

**Sarah Phillips**

Associate Professor of History

**Carrie Preston**

Professor of English and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

**Ana-María Reyes**

Associate Professor of Latin American Art

**Joseph Rezek**

Associate Professor of English

**Takeo Rivera**

Associate Professor of English

**Andrew Robichaud**

Associate Professor of History

**Jeffrey W. Rubin**

Associate Professor of History

**Heather Schoenfeld**

Associate Professor of Sociology

**Bruce Schulman**

William E. Huntington Professor of History

**Kim Sichel**

Professor of History of Art & Architecture

**Nicole Smythe-Johnson**

Assistant Professor of History of Art & Architecture

**Adam Sweeting**

Associate Professor of Humanities

**John Thornton**

Professor of African American & Black Diaspora Studies and History

**Robert Weller**

Professor of Anthropology

**Thomas Whalen**

Associate Professor of Social Sciences

**Gregory Williams**

Associate Professor of Contemporary Art

**Graham Wilson**

Professor of Political Science

**Carolyn White**

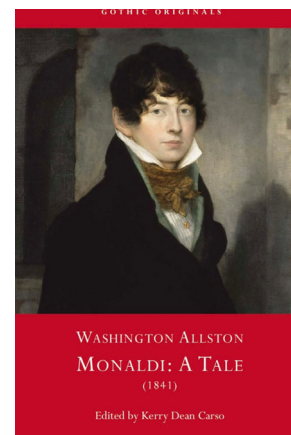
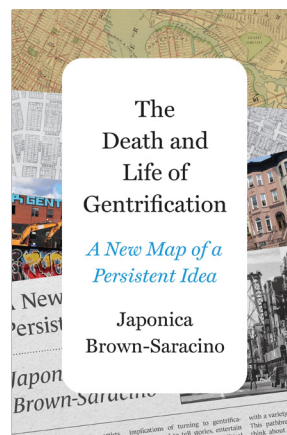
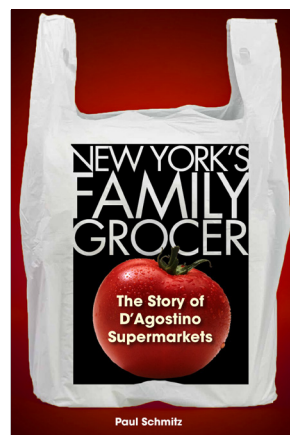
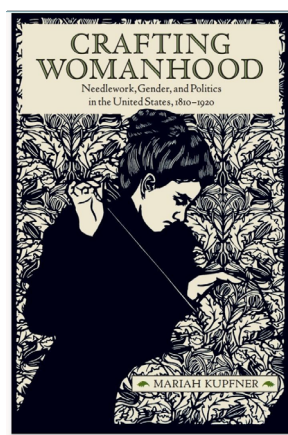
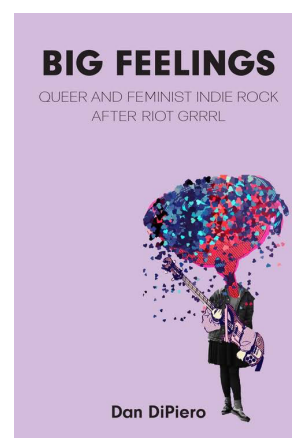
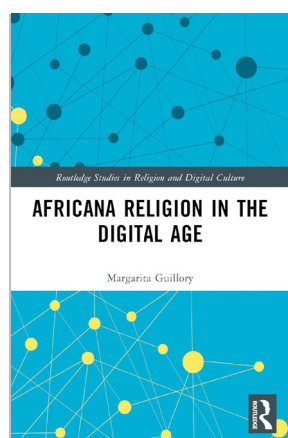
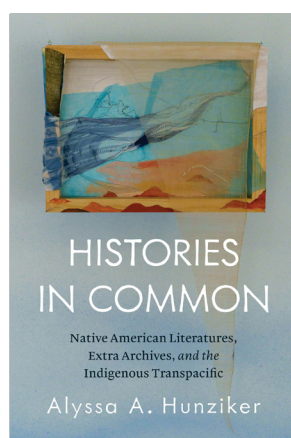
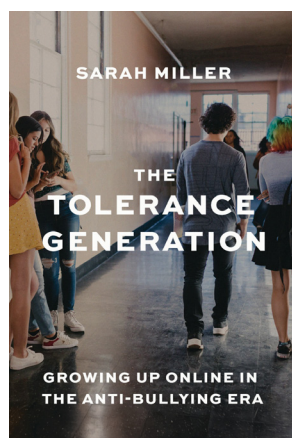
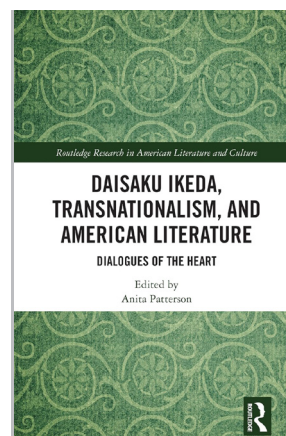
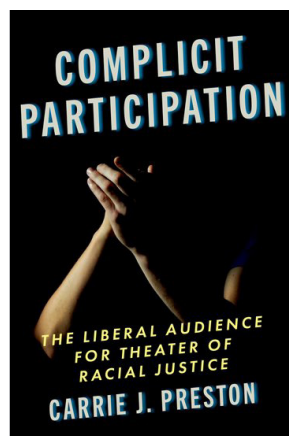
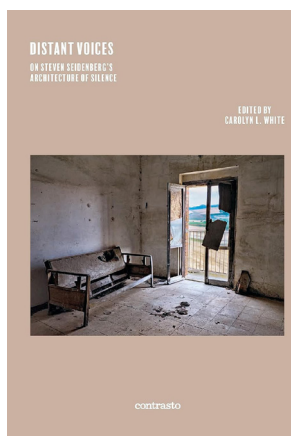
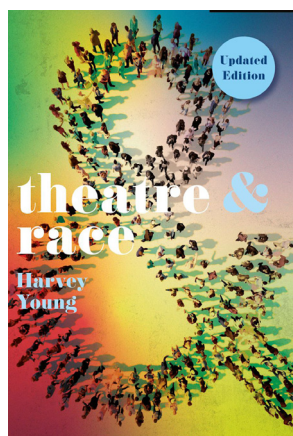
Professor of Archaeology, History of Art & Architecture, and Preservation Studies

**Harvey Young**

Professor of English

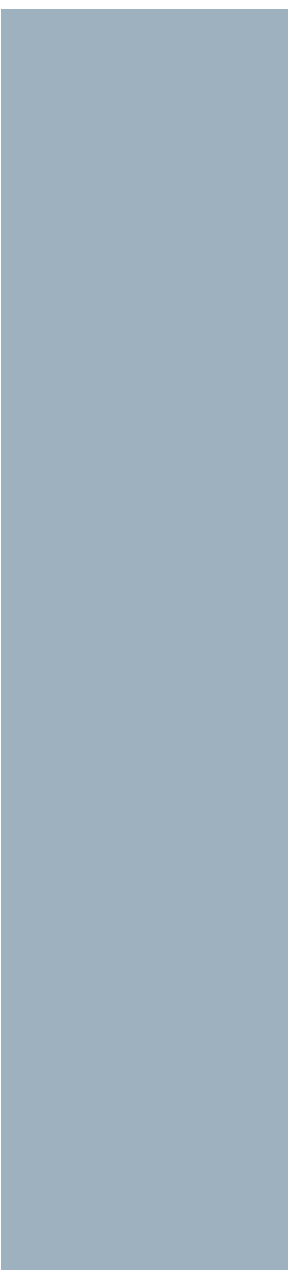
# Recent Publications

by Faculty and Alumni



# PhD Accomplishments

## Awards, Fellowships, Placements, and Publications



**C. G. Branch** published a chapter, “Bitch, Please: Submission, Spectacle, and the Affective Politics of Visibility in Sabrina Carpenter’s Man’s Best Friend” in an edited collection, and also presented at the Association of US Popular Culture annual conference, the Hollywood Conference at the University of Southern California, and additional conferences in South Korea, Spain, and at the University of Cyprus.

**Anne Callahan** published a chapter, co-written with Nina Silber, called “The Romance of Reunion in Post-Civil War U.S. Fiction,” in an edited collection. She also presented at the American Comparative Literature Association Conference.

**Max Clee** accepted a position as Lecturer-in-Discipline in the Department of English and Comparative Literature and the Undergraduate Writing Program at Columbia University.

**Jesse Dritz** received a David Hall award from the American Studies Program and a pre-doctoral fellowship at the Smithsonian Art Museum in Washington, DC. She also organized a panel at the New England American Studies Association Conference.

**Lindsay Gould** presented at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference.

**Camden Hunt** published an article in the *Journal of Bodies, Sexualities, and Masculinities* entitled “Strangled Maleness, Constructed Femaleness: A Chastity Cage.” He also presented papers at the Southern Writers / Southern Writing Conference, the New England American Studies Association Conference, the Sustainable Naturecultures and Multispecies Future Symposium, and Touching Earth: Queer Ecologies, Ecosexualities, and the Ethics of Relation Conference.

**Olivia Jacobs** presented a paper at the Appalachian Studies Association Conference and the Association for Theater in Higher Education Conference.

**Zoe Johnson** presented papers at the annual meetings for the Northeast Popular Culture Association and the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

**Genna Kane** started a position as Curator at the Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library.

**Hannah Muhlfelder** won an Outstanding Teaching Fellow Award from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. She also received a Travel Grant from the National Science Foundation and organized a panel at the American Society for Environmental History Conference.

**Fallon Murphy** received a David Hall Award and the Donald C. Gallup Fellowship in American Literature at Yale University. She also published a chapter on *Absalom, Absalom!* in an edited volume, *Faulkner's Anniversaries* (University of Mississippi Press), as well as an essay in *The Boston Art Review* entitled "Remembering Danielle Legros Georges and the History of the Dark Room Collective."

**Jack Ott** presented at the Radical Film Network Conference.

**Ena Ozaki** accepted a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Tokyo.

**Carolyn Parker-Fairbain** received a Graduate Research Abroad Fellowship, or GRAF, for work on her dissertation. The grant will take her to Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London. She also presented at the American Society for Environmental History Conference.

**MaryKate Smolenski** won a Graduate Student Award from the BU Center for Humanities and an award from the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium. She was also selected for an internship this summer at the Boston Athenaeum and gave invited talks at the Country Houses Conference and the Fairfield Museum and History Center.

**Mary Snyder** presented at the Midwestern Historical Association Annual Conference and participated in the Harvard & Legacy of Slavery Initiative Reparative Grant Program.

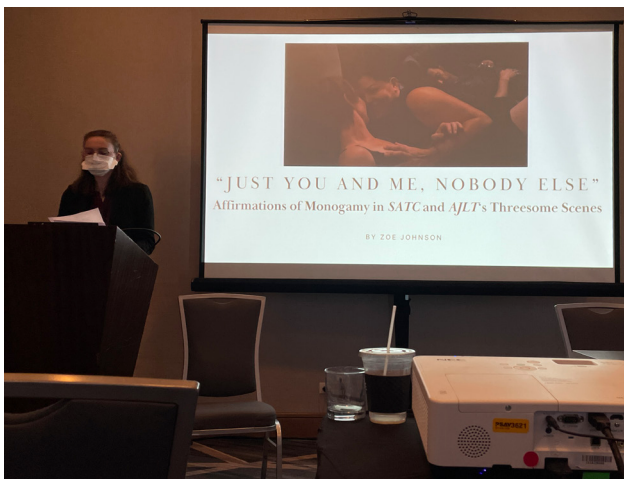
**Korie Tinch** presented at the annual American Studies Association Conference.



Camden Hunt



Jack Ott



Zoe Johnson



MaryKate Smolenski

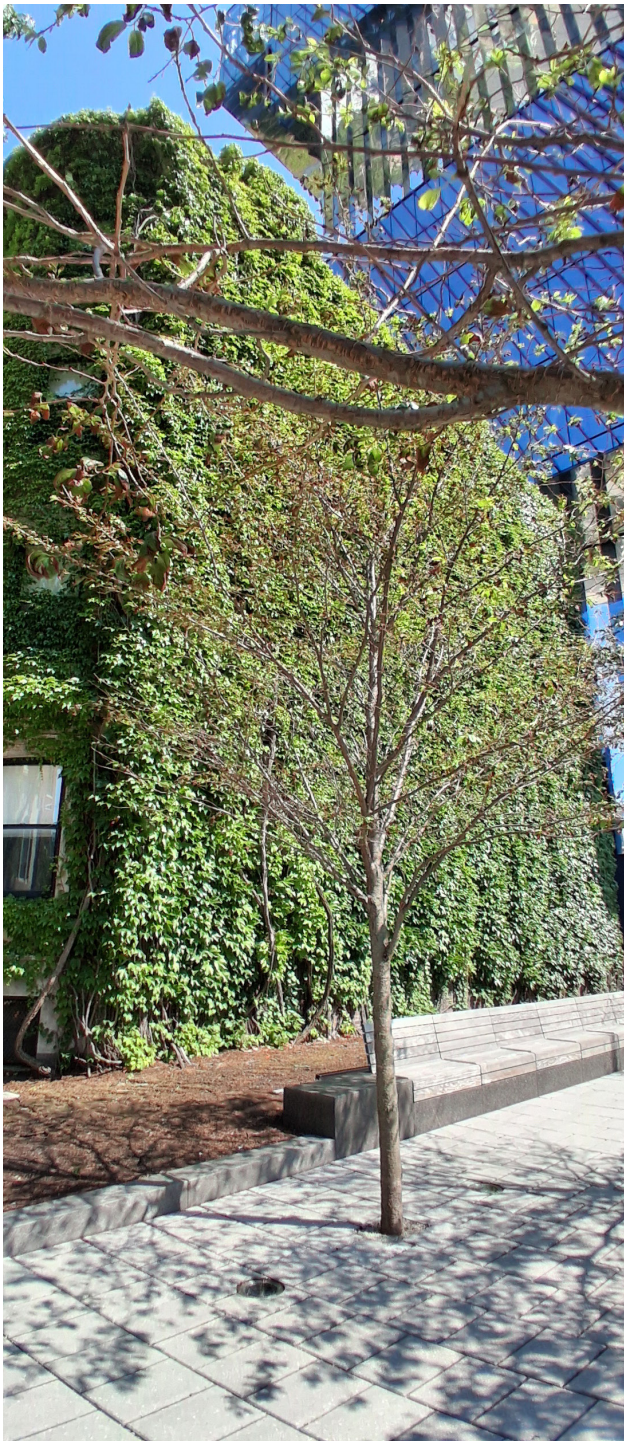


Ella Kotsen



MaryKate leads a class on tour through the Beacon Hill

# Graduate Student Association



## 2025–26 Officers

### **President**

Anjali Carroll

### **Vice President**

Hannah Muhlfelder

### **Secretary**

Mary Snyder

### **Treasurer**

Emily Craig

### **Social Chair**

Carolyn Parker-Fairbain

### **Americanist Forum Coordinators**

CG Branch & Camden Hunt

### **GSO Representative**

Jack Ott

### **Undergrad Liaison**

Zoe Johnson

### **Faculty Liaison**

Anne Callahan

### **Preservation Liaison**

Siena Idoine

### **BUGWU Representative**

Korie Tinch

**“In the 2025-26 school year, the Graduate Student Association hosted Learn the Ropes events on oral exams and prospectus writing, two incredible meetings of the Americanist Forum, and many other gatherings that enriched the social and intellectual life among PhD students. We also began to support the operations of *Ampersand*, an online graduate journal in American Studies. It was a pleasure to serve as GSA President this year, and I’m excited to see what GSA accomplishes in the coming school year!”**

**-Anjali Carroll. GSA president**

## Americanist Forum

The Americanist Forum is an annual series featuring the work of BU students in the humanities. The Fall Forum was held on November 18, 2025.

“Captive Societies: Interdisciplinary Studies of Control,” framed an interdisciplinary call for abolitionist, intersectional research committed to imagining forms of liberation amid a political climate marked by rising totalitarianism.

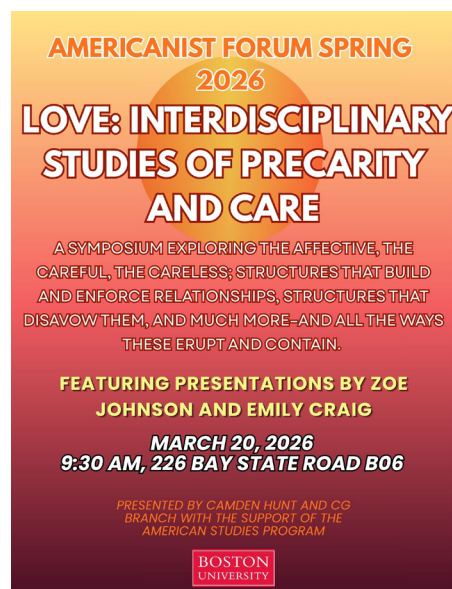
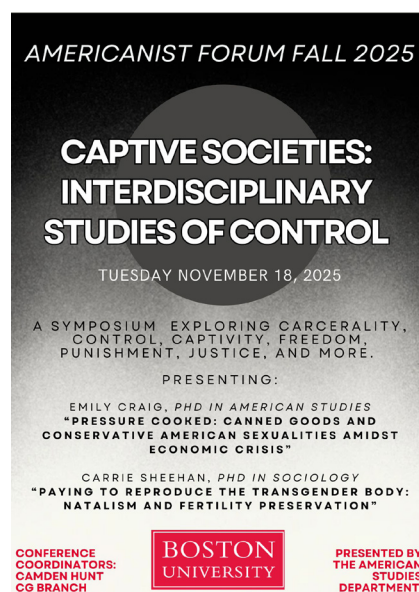
Emily Craig, (PhD student, American Studies) presented “Pressure Cooked: Canned Goods and Conservative American Sexualities Amidst Economic Crisis,” examining how material scarcity and domestic consumption recalibrate moral and sexual norms.

Carrie Sheehan (PhD student, Sociology) presented “Paying to Reproduce the Transgender Body: Natalism and Fertility Preservation,” offering a critical analysis of the economic and biopolitical forces shaping reproductive possibilities for transgender individuals.

The Spring Forum was held on March 20, 2026: “Love: Interdisciplinary Studies of Precarity and Care.” Both participants were PhD students in the American Studies program.

Emily Craig presented, “143: Mathematical Affect(s) of Boxes of Valentine’s Chocolates” while Zoe Johnson presented, “Governmentality of the Couple on ‘Love Is Blind.’”

Many thanks to CG Branch and Camden Hunt for organizing!



# Events and Initiatives

The American Studies Program remains a vibrant, exciting intellectual community, bringing scholars to campus from around the New England region and the world. We are grateful to our co-sponsoring departments and units, especially the Boston University Center for the Humanities, for continuing to support our initiatives. In recent years we have also drawn upon the new American Studies Program Endowment, established in 2024.

**American Studies for the Future.** Now in its fifth year, this series brings prominent, senior scholars to campus to respond to works-in-progress from BU faculty and to deliver public lectures. The program ends every year with Keynote Address by a senior scholar from the AMST affiliated faculty. Our first event, in October, welcomed Neferti Xina Tadiar (Barnard College) to campus to engage with the work of Jilene Chua. Prof. Tadiar gave a public talk called “This Bridge of Earth.” In April, Lisa Lowe (Yale) came to campus to respond to work from Alyssa Hunziker. Prof. Lowe’s talk was called “American Studies and Colonial Histories of the Present.” Our Keynote Speaker this year was Koritha Mitchell. She read from a book-in-progress entitled *Blissfully Childfree: A Memoir in Letters*.



Alyssa Hunziker discusses her scholarship and Lisa Lowe responds.

**Indigenous Studies Working Group.** Coordinated this year by Mary Battenfeld and Wade Campbell, ISWG hosted several meetings and lunches throughout the year. It also co-sponsored a visit from Bethany Hughes, Associate Professor and Director of the Native American Studies Program at the University of Michigan and the author of *Redface: Race, Performance, and Indigeneity*. This March event was planned in collaboration with the College of Fine Arts and included a talk and two lunches, including one with ISWG core faculty. ISWG was founded three years ago as part of a larger initiative in AMST to advocate for new faculty hires and curriculum development in NAIS.

**Transpacific Indigenities: A Symposium.** This special event in September was organized by Alyssa Hunziker. It offered an interdisciplinary discussion about the ways both Indigenous studies and transpacific studies might offer useful methodological, historical, and aesthetic models for fields of study across the humanities. Presenters included Erin Suzuki (University of California, San Diego), Quynh Nhu Le (University of South Florida), Bayley Marquez (University of Maryland), and Tiara Na’puti (University of California, Irvine). They spoke on a range of topics, including the legacies of Agent Orange and Dioxin in Vietnam and the San Carlos Apache reservation as evidence of toxic settler imperialism; how sea monsters in Indigenous Pacific Island fiction and film underscore understandings of climate change and climate disaster; Indigenous transpacific activism against military encroachment in the Ryukyu Islands and Mariana Islands; and the history of plantation education in Hawai’i and the Philippines.



The Indigenous Studies Working Group meets over lunch catered by Frybread Indigenous Fusion.



Koritha Mitchell reads from her book-in-progress.



Transpacific Indigeneities

# Convocation

**On Saturday,  
May 16, 2026, the  
American Studies  
Program and the  
Preservation Studies  
Program held  
their Convocation  
ceremony on the  
17th floor of the Data  
Sciences Building.**



## Bachelor of Arts in American Studies

### HB Bielawa

Double major in History; minor in Deaf Studies; *cum laude*; College Prize winner

### Grey Retz

Double major in History of Art & Architecture; *cum laude*

### Yichen Felix Sun

Double major in History; *cum laude*



## Master of Arts in Preservation Studies

### Janessa Dennis

Concentration in Planning

### Siena Idoine

Concentration in Museum Practice

### Lea Kolesky

Concentration in Architectural History

### Jieyu Liu

Concentration in Archaeology

### Hailey Manlowe

Concentration in Museum Practice

### Kayton Stewart

Concentration in Planning

### Yunyang Feng

Concentration in Museum Practice

### Gianna Ortiz

Concentration in Planning

### Ruizhe Yin

Concentration in Archaeology

## Doctor of Philosophy in American & New England Studies

### Gaëlle Bouaziz

"You Are Watching NASA Television:" Space, Science, and NASA's Governmental Television Model

### Anne Boyd

Nationalizing the Confederacy: Physical Representations of the Lost Cause Mythology Across the United States from World War II to Present Day

### Maximillian Clee

Out of Sight: Technologies of Mass Waste in America 1920-1970

### Arthur Kamya

Policing for Profit: Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1630-1690

### Genevieve Kane

Climate Resilient: An Environmental History of the Boston Commercial Waterfront and its Architecture since the Nineteenth Century

### Perri Meldon

Dwelling with Ditches: Conservation, Cultural Memory, and Ecological Resilience in the Great Dismal Swamp

### Ena Ozaki

Under the Umbrella of the Press: Women and the Making of Modern American Journalism, 1885-1910

### Meghan Townes

Beyond Monument Avenue: Art, Authority, and Visions of the Future in Reconstruction and New South Richmond





Preservation Studies MA graduates, faculty, and staff



American Studies BA graduates, faculty, and staff



American Studies PhD graduates, faculty, and staff



Deborah Jaramillo, Mary Battenfeld, Carolyn White, William Moore, and Ian Stevenson (left to right)



BU President Melissa Gilliam stops by during the Convocation Reception.



Joseph Rezek speaks to family and friends.

# Alumni Updates

**Rebekah Beaulieu (PhD 2017)**, President & CEO of the Taft Museum of Art, was honored with a Cincinnati Business Courier CEO of the Year Award in fall 2025 and a resolution by the City of Cincinnati in spring 2026 for her commitment to cultural advocacy. She also guest lectured in museum studies graduate courses at the George Washington University, Harvard University, and Carnegie Mellon University.

**Marty Blatt (PhD 1983)** co-authored “American Jews Have Long Questioned Zionism” in *Portside* (with Marjorie Field).

**Cheryl C. Boots (MA 1994, PhD 2000)** collaborated with a group of professionals through the Racial Justice Team and the History Committee of the Moravian Church and the Moravian Church Archives to develop two public walking tours: “Enslaved and Free in Colonial Bethlehem, PA” and “Indigenous People and Early Bethlehem.”

**Anthony Bak Buccitelli (PhD 2012)** was elected a Fellow of the American Folklore Society. Dr. Buccitelli is the Interim Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs and Associate Professor of American Studies and Communication, School of Humanities, at Penn State Harrisburg. He is also the Director of the Pennsylvania Center for Folklore.

**Kerry Dean Carso (PhD 2001)**, Professor of Art History at SUNY New Paltz, edited a new edition of the gothic novel *Monaldi: A Tale* (1841) by nineteenth-century artist Washington Allston. The book will be published in the Gothic Originals series by the University of Wales Press in 2026 (distributed in the US by the University of Chicago Press).

**Thomas Denenberg (PhD 2002)** contributed essays to the forthcoming collections *Native Voices: Indigenous Art at Shelburne Museum* and *Norman Rockwell: At Home in Vermont*.

**Janet Golden (PhD 1983)** is co-editing the *Critical Issues in Health and Medicine* book series for Rutgers University Press.

**Rachel Kirby (PhD 2022)** started a new role as Research Historian at Tryon Palace, part of the North Carolina Department of Natural

and Cultural Resources. She also presented at ASA 2025 on the panel “Developing Skills to Think Through Things: Engaging Bernard L. Herman’s Methodological Legacies.”

**Mariah Kupfner (PhD 2021)**, Assistant Professor of American Studies and Public Heritage at Penn State Harrisburg, will publish her first book, *Crafting Womanhood: Needlework, Gender, and Politics in the United States, 1810-1920* (University of Delaware Press), in November of 2026. The book was supported by a 2025 Publishing Grant from the Decorative Arts Trust.

**Ted Landmark (PhD 1999)** received the Morton R. Godine Medal from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in recognition of his long and distinguished career. He was also honored by Boston Mayor Michelle Wu in March of 2026 for his service to the city.

**Grace McGowan (PhD 2024)** published articles for *Oxford Research Encyclopedias* and a digital project about *The Colored American Magazine*. She has also been invited to contribute to *The Routledge Companion to Toni Morrison*.

**Emily Murphy (PhD 2008)**, curator for the National Park Service, has been busy working on projects related to the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War, including a set of three exhibits on privateering that are being installed on the waterfront and in the visitor center at Salem Maritime NHP, and presenting lectures at symposia in the region on the history of privateering in Essex County. She is also working on exhibits in the Salem Armory Regional Visitor Center, as well as managing the museum collections at Salem Maritime and Saugus Iron Works.

**Emma Newcombe (PhD 2018)** is Associate Director of PhD Programs, College of Science at Northeastern University. She is a member of the Graduate Career Consortium and the co-chair of Carpe Careers, a publication within Inside Higher Ed that provides career and professional development advice for PhDs and postdocs.

**Rebecca R. Noel (MA 1992, PhD 1999)** regularly gives talks for New Hampshire Humanities. Recent lectures include “New Hampshire Abolitionist Nathaniel Peabody Rogers” at RiverMead in Peterborough, NH, and “History of Gym Class.” She has been named Professor Emerita upon her retirement from Plymouth State University in New Hampshire.

**Timothy Orwig (MA 2001)** recently gave three invited lectures in Massachusetts: “Dodge Macknight: Building His World” (Sandwich Glass Museum and Historical Society); “How the Canal Created Cape Cod” (Caring for Creation Series at St. John’s Episcopal Church); and “Manalone: Architect Joseph Everett Chandler and a Queer History of the House of the Seven Gables” (House of the Seven Gables).

**Casey Riley (PhD 2015)**, Chair of the Department of Global Contemporary Art at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, recently organized the show “Containing Multitudes,” which was highlighted by Artnet News as one of “19 Can’t-Miss Museum Shows Across the US.”

**Colin Root (PhD 2013)**, Professor of Humanities at SNHU, has a forthcoming journal article in *Film & History* titled “Pitching Nostalgia: Field of Dreams (1989) and Reagan Conservatism” (Summer 2026).

**Jessica Roscio (PhD 2013)**, Director and Curator at the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University, curated the exhibition “Rachel Loischild: Quarantine Islands” and wrote the introductory essay for its catalogue. She spoke about the Danforth’s collection of work by the artist Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller at a symposium on the artist at the Columbia Global Paris Center in Paris.

**Paul Schmitz (PhD 2006)**, Teaching Professor at Babson College, published *New York’s Family Grocer: The Story of D’Agostino Supermarkets* (Fordham University Press), which began as his doctoral dissertation.

**George Schwartz (PhD 2015)**, Curator-at-Large for the Peabody Essex Museum, co-curated the new installation of East India Marine Hall; curated “Conjuring the Spirit World: Art, Magic, and Mediums,”

which also traveled to the John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art; and edited and wrote essays for a companion volume published by Rizzoli Electa in conjunction with the Peabody Essex Museum.

**Sam Shupe (PhD 2019)** has joined the Education Department at the Maine Correctional Center in Windham, Maine, as a teacher.

**Louise Stevenson (PhD 1981)** presented “The Thirteenth Amendment: A Wide-Ranging Document” at the Society for U.S. Intellectual History and “Making Coolie Ships Places of Freedom, The Federal Anti-Coolie Trade Law of 1862” at the Society of Civil War Historians.

**Meghan Townes (PhD 2025)** lectured in the Carolyn and Michael McNamara Young Scholars Series, sponsored by the Decorative Arts Trust, at the 78th Annual Antiques Forum at Colonial Williamsburg.

**Astrid Tvetenstrand (PhD 2023)**, Polly Thayer Starr Fellow in American Art at the Boston Athenaeum, curated the show “Exhibiting China” in the summer/fall 2025.

**Katheryn Viens (PhD 2020)** recently published “Mobs or the Martial Ideal? The Mutable Definition of Patriotism in Local Historical Narratives,” in *Remembering the American Revolution at 250*, and contributed multiple sketches in Malcolm Freiberg (et al.)’s *Sibley’s Harvard Graduates: Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College, vol. 19, classes of 1775-1777*. She also gave the Mabel Loomis Todd Lecture to the Amherst Historical Society on the topic “‘For the Interest of the Country’: Patriots, Loyalists, and the Path to Independence in Amherst.”

**Marina Wells (PhD 2024)** curated the exhibition “‘Look pleasant, please’: Early Portrait Photography in New Bedford” for the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

# Alumni Spotlights

This Spring, American Studies Director Joseph Rezek sat down with Betsy Walters (PhD, 2025), to talk about her research, her current position at Emory University, and her book project on the history of the Oscars. Towards the end, Dr. Walters reflects on her experience as a PhD student in our program and offers some advice to current students.



**Betsy Walters**

## **What position did you take after graduation, and how did the American Studies Program prepare you it?**

Last fall I started as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Film and Media at Emory University. I teach “History of American Television,” “Intro to TV and Digital Media Studies,” “The Industry of Film and Television,” and an elective on awards shows that I developed based upon my research.

The American Studies program prepared me in so many ways. The training I received as a teaching fellow working with amazing professors in the Film & TV Studies and History departments was invaluable in teaching me how to develop a curriculum and create engaging lectures and assignments. I was also able to create and teach an American Studies course on the Oscars at BU that was the basis of the seminar I created at Emory.

## **What is your favorite thing about your new position?**

I really love working with the students! They are so engaged and creative. I give them the opportunity to do a final project that is either research-based or creative: for example, my history of TV students can pitch or script an original show idea based in an earlier era of television, like their own twist on a ‘50s suburban sitcom. My awards show students could propose museum exhibits for the Academy or Grammy museums. It is really fulfilling to see them put the course themes into practice in such insightful ways and hopefully develop their own interests a bit more in the process.

## **I’d love to hear about your book project, and how it has grown out of your dissertation.**

My book project examines how the Academy Awards (or Oscars) have navigated key industrial and cultural shifts over the past two decades. It asks what role the Oscars and its presenting institution, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, still play within Hollywood and American culture. Each chapter hinges on a specific Oscar rule change and examines everything from the rise of blockbuster franchises and the Oscars’ uneasy relationship to, say, Marvel or *Barbie*; to streaming platforms like Netflix and their perceived threat to theatrical cinema; to the emergence of the #OscarsSoWhite controversy amidst these broader conversations around racial justice and equal opportunity. One expansion from my dissertation will be a new chapter on Hollywood and AI, which the Academy’s new rules addressed this year by banning AI-generated scripts and performances from Oscar eligibility.

The Oscars are fairly understudied in scholarship, and I hope this project (alongside the work of some of my fellow awards studies colleagues!) will

demonstrate why they are such a valuable site of study. The Oscars are one of the few big cultural rituals left in a landscape in which those are increasingly dwindling, so even as their influence is admittedly precarious, the show remains a prime event for Hollywood and for everyone who loves movies and celebrity culture. These moments of tension also reveal quite a bit about what broader trends and issues this major American cultural industry is negotiating and what its priorities are. Each year, the Oscars provide a really significant snapshot into how power operates in Hollywood.

### **What excites you most about your research?**

I think what really excites me about the work is how multifaceted it is. The Oscars are so many things: a television show, a prize for great artistry (ostensibly, at least), a major spectacle of fashion and celebrity, and a tool of the most powerful and influential people in Hollywood, both historically and today. There is so much to mine from each aspect of the show, and in any given time I can be watching a ton of old Oscar clips on YouTube — which is, objectively, so much fun — and combing through very dry Oscar eligibility rules, which is much less so. The gaps between how Hollywood presents itself on the show and how the Oscars work is often the most revealing, though.

### **In your opinion, what is the worst Oscar snub in history?**

One example is what I think is one of the biggest Oscar snubs: the snub of Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* in 1990, the same year that the Academy presented Best Picture to *Driving Miss Daisy*. The juxtaposition tells you quite a bit about the Academy's (and Hollywood's) blind spots, patting itself on the back for rewarding a movie about race that was, frankly, pretty regressive. The



While on campus to talk to *the Boston Americanist*, Dr. Walters sat down for a COMTalk at the College of Communication, where she received her MFA in Film & TV Studies.

Academy always presented itself as inclusive and progressive, which masked how overwhelmingly exclusive (particularly in terms of race and gender) the Academy and Hollywood's executive suites were. #OscarsSoWhite was a long time coming.

**Give us three favorite moments in the history of the Oscars – quickly, don't think too hard about it!**

My all-time favorite is still an Academy catastrophe: the infamous 1989 Oscar opening that is best known for Rob Lowe and Snow White's very strange duet. That undersells it though, because it's eleven straight minutes that keeps getting weirder. It's spectacular in every sense of the word.

One recent moment: I loved Autumn Durald Arkapaw, this year's winner for Best Cinematography (and the first woman to win) recognizing all of the women in the room, which was a great gesture and reminder of how much work remains to be done in Hollywood.

And finally, the Oscars love to experiment with the costume design category and those old clips are a riot. My personal favorite is the presentation from 1976: characters from *Barry Lyndon* stage a duel (complete with gunfire) and then start disco dancing.

**Thank you for all of these reflections on your work. Now back to our program: What did you like most about the getting a PhD here?**

The community of the American Studies program is so wonderful and vibrant. I loved working with people who had such different interests and backgrounds, both my colleagues in the PhD program and our mentors. The interdisciplinarity is such a strength, because it really fosters a spirit of curiosity and collaboration, and my work was deeply enriched by working with art historians and cultural historians as well as my wonderful mentors in film and television studies.

**What advice would you give to current or future AMST PhD Students as they choose a dissertation project?**

One piece of advice would be to test run your ideas and arguments and see how it feels to live with the material before you dive into the dissertation. For example, I wrote my major paper on the Academy's institutional membership and exclusionary practices; it ultimately became the basis of my fourth dissertation chapter. If you have an idea in mind and the opportunity to workshop it through term papers and conference presentations, it's a great way not just to start to refine the material but to get a sense of what resources are available for your research and how much you like it. The dissertation is such a huge project and it's hard to get a real sense of the scope until you're working on it. I'd say do as much as you can to bank research and ensure that you've picked a project that you'll still be excited by even as you're in the trenches of writing and researching. I feel lucky that as much time as I've spent with the Oscars, I'm still never bored by them.

Following her interview with American Studies Director, Joseph Rezek, Dr. Walters conducted two alumni interviews for *The Boston Americanist*. The first was with recent graduate Anne Boyd (PhD, 2025), now Assistant Professor of Public History at the University of Texas, Rio Grand Valley.



Anne  
Boyd

**You just finished your first year in a tenure track position. What were some of the highlights of your first year and what has been the biggest adjustment moving from a full-time grad student to a tenure track professor?**

What I loved about being a grad student was that I got to teach and I got to do my research. And the whole time I was a grad student, I kept thinking that I didn't want to give either of those things up in my career. So the great thing about a tenure track job is that your job is literally teaching and research and doing service work for both your department and the field, more generally. And I get paid to do that!

I think it's been a really productive first year on the tenure track. I've been able to create some new classes: I taught an upper level seminar on monuments and memory, and I'm teaching a new class this fall on public history. So it's been great that I've been given some creative liberty with the classes that I'm teaching.

It's also been a bit of an adjustment, not necessarily having hard deadlines for certain things, particularly when it comes to research. When I was a grad student, it was always pretty clear that I needed to probably have a chapter done of my dissertation every three or four months or so. Now working on two books simultaneously, there's not necessarily hard deadlines beyond when I need to submit things to the press. So I need to make those deadlines on my own and figure out how to balance that with also teaching about 100 students at any given time.

**Tell us about your book project, which is based upon your dissertation. But I should expand that to say: tell us about both book projects that you're working on.**

The book project that is based on my dissertation is a study on the geographical, temporal, and aesthetic expansion of the Lost Cause in the 20th century U.S. To study this, I look at a variety of different forms of memorials ranging from the kind of traditional monuments (the way that most people think of them: statues), as well as memorial highways, school-naming practices, and reenactments. I also think about the more recent push to change the monument landscape across the United States. And I look at these monuments not in the former Confederate South, but in places where most people wouldn't expect to see a monument, like in California or Boston, Massachusetts. And my main takeaway from the book is that the Lost Cause is not set in stone as most people think of it, literally and metaphorically; it's a very adaptable and malleable ideology. So the way that the Lost Cause took shape in 1940s Southern California, for instance, looks very different from how it looked in 1890s Georgia. If all goes to plan, I should have a book contract fairly soon.

I “inherited” the second book from my long-time academic mentor from undergrad at the University of Michigan. It’s an edited collection on American material culture for Routledge, and it will have around forty contributors spanning eight or nine subfields in material culture, ranging from museum studies to science, technology studies, food studies, environmental studies and more. There are a number of BU American Studies alumni who are going to be part of that book, which is very exciting. And that book will be submitted to Routledge in November of 2027.

**Your work explains why Confederate monuments are everywhere and the work that they’re doing in terms of historical memory. Talk about a little bit more about this long, strange trajectory, especially in the last ten to fifteen years, around Confederate monuments and their role in these communities. What does this current moment look like in this kind of strange journey we’ve been on over the past decade or so around these monuments?**

**“Understanding why the cultural implications of the Lost Cause took root in places beyond the South is really important because it provides a more nuanced view of what the trajectory of racism looks like in places that are not the South.”**

One of the things that’s so interesting about the kind of reckoning that we’ve had, which really started with the violence at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017, is that most people know how to think about a Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville, Virginia, for example. But they don’t necessarily know how to speak in a nuanced fashion about a monument at the state Capitol building in Phoenix, Arizona, that doesn’t depict Lee or a soldier or really any specific person. It just looks like the boundaries of the state of Arizona. And there have been plenty of activists who recognize these statues in these faraway places for what they are. That statue in Phoenix that I just mentioned, for example, was tarred and feathered multiple times. Somebody put a bunch of red paint over it to look like blood a couple times. And it was eventually removed by the Daughters of the Confederacy about five or six years ago, mostly because they didn’t want it to be vandalized anymore.

But I think understanding why the cultural implications of the Lost Cause took root in places beyond the South is really important because it provides a more nuanced view of what the trajectory of racism looks like in places that are not the South, and what the trajectory of right wing politics more generally looks like. In the present day, it’s a strange world because we’ve flip-flopped from Trump in 2016 to 2020, when he was definitely pro-monument; then we had the summer of 2020, where people were tearing statues down at rapid paces [after the murder of George Floyd and #BlackLivesMatter protest], and a president [Joe Biden] who was relatively okay with taking them down. And now we’ve swung even further back in the opposite direction, in which we are renaming — for the second time, actually — military bases to be allegedly not named after Confederate leaders, but we know that they secretly are after Confederate leaders. So I think the project is quite timely for a number of reasons.

**What future projects are you excited to take on, and what courses are you interested in developing to help share that research and knowledge?**

I am in the very early stages of pivoting towards a different direction away from monuments and memory in a kind of explicit fashion and thinking about the development of auto tourism and road trip culture in the American West throughout the 20th century. I’ve thought about that

project in terms of the various destinations that people might visit when they were on a road trip in the 1920s, 30s, 40s, 70s, etc. And it really brings in elements of material culture, which the American Studies program at BU is very strong in studying. I'm thinking about how race and conceptions of race were developed along the road, so to speak. And so that's where my brain is going: it's driving me west.

In terms of courses, the really exciting part about my job as a tenure track professor is that they hired me to be their public history expert. So I am expected to develop a number of new classes within this general field of public history. I have the class on monuments and memory, which I'm hoping will become permanent at the university. I have an intro to public history course. And beyond that, I would really like for my students to have a number of courses that allow them to work with local institutions. I want to develop a museum studies course, for instance. This is part of a larger effort to allow people to understand how history functions beyond the ivory tower.

**How does your American studies background inform your new role as a professor of public history? How did the program help prepare you for this position?**

One of the incredible strengths of the American Studies program at BU is that you are learning from people in all sorts of different fields. My primary advisor, Nina Silber, was a historian, but my second reader, Ross Barrett, is an art historian. Thinking about the same topic through completely different lenses has really allowed me to create an interdisciplinary perspective.

I think the program also emphasizes public history in a number of more subtle ways. I remember taking a class in the Preservation Studies program, actually, when I first started here with Prof. Daniel Bluestone, which got me started on public history. But the nice thing about being in Boston is that you're near so many public history institutions, so there's a number of opportunities through the program and also through the BU Center for the Humanities, where you can work with these institutions.

I think that the program really wants students to think outside the box in many ways — and that is something that is incredibly useful if you want an academic job or a job in public history, because that is what it's all about these days.

Dr. Walters also interviewed Dr. Casey Riley (Phd, 2015), who is now chair of the Department of Global Contemporary Art at the Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Casey  
Riley**

**Give us an overview of your professional journey and what that's been like since you left BU.**

I defended in 2015 and I was very fortunate in that on the day that I turned in my dissertation, I was offered a postdoc at the Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum in Boston. I was there for just over a year as a fellow, and then I transitioned to an assistant curator position at the Boston Athenaeum and worked there for two more years before I was recruited to the position of Curator and Head of Photography and New Media here in Minneapolis at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. That was in 2018, and I was in that position for about a year and a half. There was this horrible pandemic, you might remember, and in the interim, we got a new institutional Director who subsequently promoted me to the position I have been in for five years now as Chair of Global Contemporary Art (and I've retained my title as Curator of Photography and New Media). Here in Minneapolis, I am part of a cohort of chairs who manage our curatorial departments and report up to the director on all kinds of initiatives, and it's really such a joy to be at an institution that is free and open to the public always, and also has such a stellar collection, not only in photography, but really as an encyclopedic institution. So while I'm out of my beloved Northeast, I'm also really happy to be working for a big civic organization that's doing such important and good work for our communities.

I think the value of these free cultural institutions—it's so important. It's so vital. And to be in Minneapolis over the last almost-decade has been a really profoundly life-changing kind of experience, too. We've been at the epicenter of some of the most important social and cultural upheavals and events in recent times. And as an institutional leader, I feel like I've had a world-class education in how to navigate the complexity and needs of our audiences and visitors and community. So I feel really lucky to be in an institution where I can be of service. It's certainly been a very historic time. To live through that and to be part of an institution negotiating that is really fascinating.

I think with all of the tragedy and grief that we've experienced collectively here, there's also been a concurrent sense of care and sharing of burdens and responsibilities that has felt very heartening. Of course I don't want to put a positive spin on everything because we're talking about individual and very personal tragedies. But at the same time, especially this year, I've been really moved by how people have been activated to come together to support one another and to care for one another. I'm doing that from our position within a museum and continuing to show art

and artists who are thinking about the most important issues of our time, which feels like a really good space to be in and something that's useful and helpful to our region and hopefully beyond.

**In looking through some of the exhibits that you've curated, I see that idea of many visions and ideas of America and perspectives on America, which is a really interesting throughline and feels of a piece with our shared background in American Studies. I was wondering if you could speak to your "Containing Multitudes" exhibit and the inspiration process, and how that speaks to your work more broadly.**

I'm so grateful to the American Studies program at BU because it accepted me as a mid-career scholar and as someone who had a deep background in classroom teaching. The interdisciplinarity of the program and the fact that I could move into a new field that's art historically-driven but informed by literature and criticism, which was what I had been doing as an English teacher prior to BU, was really a gift.

I mention that because, of course, the title of the show comes from *Leaves of Grass*, and thinking about Whitman as this essential figure in our conception of ourselves as this unique entity, the American. What I appreciate about that particular section of Whitman's poem, which is overquoted and used and misused in all kinds of contexts, was really the sense of inclusion that it embodies and explores. It is an idea of plurality that we're always striving for as a national experiment, as an idea and an ideal, as imperfect as it is. How we work in museums is that we pitch things several years before they come to fruition. This was very much a Biden-era idea that came of age in a different administration. And it was important to me to be alive to the kinds of complexities and difficulties and disagreements that would be inherent to presenting this material, and also to leave the question open of how are we going to continue

this story? We're observing the 250th anniversary of Independence; what are the possibilities moving forward? And how do we specifically look at how photographers from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries have navigated those questions and those complexities?

The exhibit was also an opportunity to showcase the collection and some of our historic strengths, but also honestly to show the work that I've been doing over the last eight years to build a collection that really is broad in its interests and inclusive, especially of areas that have been less focused on. It's also important to me and as a student of Kim Sichel, I am cognizant of the impact that people like Robert Frank and Walker Evans and others who are featured in the show have had in this national conception, this story that we tell ourselves about the road, about America, about the anxieties and burdens of that identification. So I put works by Frank and Evans and [Lee] Friedlander and some others in direct conversation with works that we've more recently

**"I'm so grateful to the American Studies program at BU because it accepted me as a mid-career scholar and as someone who had a deep background in classroom teaching. The interdisciplinarity of the program and the fact that I could move into a new field that's art historically driven but informed by literature and criticism, which was what I had been doing as an English teacher prior to BU, was really a gift."**



acquired by Carrie Mae Weems and Dawoud Bey and Will Wilson and a whole panoply of artists who belong in the collection and have expanded our ability to tell a more nuanced story about this place. So there are several sections where I've contrasted these works of art.

There's a picture of, or it's from *The Americans*, it's actually a variant on one of the images that's in the book by Robert Frank: the Memorial Day Parade at Hoboken where the American flag is obscuring a couple of people looking out of a window. And I've placed that alongside a photograph by an Atlanta-based photographer, Sheila Pree Bright, taken in 2020 in the midst of the pandemic at Rayshard Brooks's funeral. It's got a very similar composition to Frank, but in this case, we see an older Black woman holding her prayer book. She's holding a smaller American flag and there's an American flag flying above her even as she is in observance of a terrible moment of police brutality. As a Black photojournalist based in Atlanta, Bright is thinking about Robert Frank and the visual language that he created as a German Jew who came to the United States mid-century to observe as an outsider what we are engaged within in this post-war moment.

I'm looking specifically at artists who are bringing a sense of not overt criticism, but a set of questions around who we are and who we wish to be going forward.

**What future projects are you excited to tackle, either ones that are in progress that you can speak about or just dream projects that you would love to take on?**

Well, I am working on a project that hasn't been announced yet. So stay tuned! But institutionally, we're moving toward a reimagining of our galleries and a reinstallation of all of the curatorial areas and thinking about the global relationships that exist across our holdings, which span nine thousand years of history. There are five curatorial areas and global contemporary art is the only one that's time-determined, not geographically-determined. I like to say that we're like the prow of the ship going through the waters and anticipating whatever's going to flow back to my colleagues in the continental areas. I'm really excited to collaborate with my peers; I have amazing colleagues here. Together, we are coming up with plans that really shine a bright light on the work that we've been doing with the collection, but reveal new possibilities and relationships between areas of the world that have not previously been related to one another.

**What advice do you have for PhD students who want to transition to a career in curation, and how can they translate their PhD work to that type of career successfully?**

I would say first that I think it's a real boon to come from this program specifically because we have such a strong track record in museums. I would remind alums or current students to network with one another. Don't be shy. Reach out to people. You may not always hear back; don't take it personally. It's not because people are being mean or snobby. It's usually because they're just flooded. Be polite, be persistent, and don't hesitate to take someone to coffee or to set up a Zoom and to talk about how people got to where they are.

My second bit of advice is to maintain some flexibility and that can look like a lot of different things. But in my case, I knew that as much as I wanted to stay in the Boston area, if I wanted to have the opportunity that I'm having now, I needed to be flexible about geography. We had some family rules about, you know, which regions, which not. But when I say flexibility, I'm not just talking about geography. That's just in my case. I think also be flexible in general and be curious about where your skills can be applied. I think people who have already decided that they want to work in nonprofits and not necessarily move into a teaching position have gone against the grain a little bit because the way that the system is structured is preparing you to become a professor and work in the academy. But as we know, higher education is undergoing a lot of changes, and I think redefining your goals on a yearly basis and thinking about where you want to be as an adult, and not putting one kind of job as the marker of that success, is really key to your happiness.

And that's my last bit of advice: no amount of external success is going to guarantee your individual personal happiness. So take care to maintain your relationships outside of your work. Be kind to yourself and foster strong community relationships, because those are what will sustain you in the lean times and the hard times and all the rejection that you necessarily face when you're on an ambitious path. Be of good cheer but also know that a certain amount of flexibility and resilience will help you.

# Giving Day

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