

AMERICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

American Studies at Northumbria: A Supreme Endorsement	1
News & Events	3
US Ambassador Matthew W. Barzun's Visit	3
2014 US History Group: "1964 as a Watershed Year," May 8-9	3
Literature, History, and Culture Speakers	4
American Studies Staff News	5
Grant Bidding Success	7
Leverhulme Visiting Professor, Michael Davidson	8
Postgraduate News	8
Early Career Visiting Scholar: Oliver Ayers	9
Summer 2014 Conferences: The Presidential History Network and The Global English	10
North to the Future: Forthcoming American Studies Events and Symposia	10
Monographs to Text Books in the Humanities	10
The State of Religion in American History	11
BAAS & the 50 th Anniversary of Selma & the Voting Rights Act	11
Spotlight on American Studies Students	11
Marie-Liz Hayton	11
Megan Hunt	12
American Studies Outreach Events	14
Why Study American Studies at Northumbria?	15

AMERICAN STUDIES AT NORTHUMBRIA: A SUPREME ENDORSEMENT

When the first issue of this Newsletter went to press in the summer of 2013, we were eagerly awaiting our first intake of American Studies undergraduates. The England cricket team was also on the verge of retaining the Ashes against Australia and there was a good deal of optimism about the prospects of England's football team doing quite well in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. I think it's fair to say that the first cohort of American Studies students has fared a good deal better than either of those sports teams over the past year! In this Newsletter it is certainly heartening to hear from Marie-Liz Hayton, one of those trailblazing students, that they have enjoyed their first year and are looking forward to the delights and challenges of a second year when many will spend a semester in the USA. Second year students will also be looking forward to an innovative "Your Graduate Future" module designed explicitly to convert the knowledge and skills they acquire in their academic study into practical, marketable skills and workplace experience. This employability agenda is an important part of the American Studies BA, where the interdisciplinary nature of the programme encourages precisely the kind of intellectual flexibility, analytical rigour, and excellent communication abilities valued by a wide range of employers.

While it is still early days in the life of the Northumbria American Studies



initiative, we can already boast one of the UK's largest constellations of scholar-teachers working in US film, history, literature and politics. In September 2014 we will also be joined by Tony Badger, currently Paul Mellon Professor of American History and Master of Clare College at the University of Cambridge. Tony, an expert on the New Deal, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and southern politics, is widely acknowledged as one of the most important British historians of the US of the past 40 years.

Tony will join a team of researchers that is already producing research recognized internationally as among the very best in the field.

Nowhere is this prestige more obvious than in the prizes earned by Henry Knight for his wonderful book, *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929*. The excellence of Northumbria's Americanists is also reflected in the keynote lectures given, the conferences and symposia organized or attended, and the many books and articles they have published this year. Our stature is also confirmed by a number of successful bids of external research funding, most recently a prestigious Early Career Fellowship from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to Mike Cullinane for a project on President Theodore Roosevelt.

In this Newsletter, you will be able to read more about some of the exceptional research that feeds directly into our undergraduate teaching and which has sparked a rapid increase in the number of top quality postgraduate students at both MA and PhD levels. Megan Hunt, who came to Northumbria after completing a BA at Kings College, London and an MA at the University of Manchester, offers a first-hand account of what it is like to do doctoral level research in American Studies.

The buzz among fellow scholars and educators

about our American Studies programme is hard to miss. At a symposium organized by Randall Stephens on "1964: A Watershed Year in American History," eminent Durham University historian, Professor John Dumbrell, publically thanked Northumbria for assuming a leadership role in the British American Studies community. An American



Brian Ward and Mary Wilson of *The Supremes*.

literature colleague with whom I am working as part of the government's Research Excellence Framework exercise (an operation so shrouded in secrecy that I cannot reveal the scholar's name or university for fear of bloody retribution) referred in awed terms to "Northumbria's American Studies miracle."

Even the US Ambassador, Matthew Barzun, felt obliged to check out the developments in American Studies at Northumbria as part of his first trip away from London. In January 2013, Ambassador Barzun, whose grandfather Jacques Barzun was a pioneering American Studies scholar, gave a fascinating talk on the contemporary US and spent time chatting with our students, including representatives of a flourishing new American Studies Society.

While our external reputation as a leading centre for the study of the US blossoms, much of our energy over the next few years will doubtless be devoted to undergraduate recruitment in a fiercely competitive market. But we can be proud of the tremendous work we have already done putting on A level workshops, visiting schools and colleges, cultivating ties with local teachers, and supporting University-wide visit days. Many of those efforts, like the production of this Newsletter, have been spearheaded by Randall Stephens and Julie Taylor, and we will do many more of them in 2014-15. While it will take time to get American Studies-Northumbria Style onto the radar of secondary level teachers and students, we can be supremely confident that we have an exceptional staff deliver-

ing an attractive programme that will produce informed and highly employable graduates.

And talking of supreme confidence . . . My own highlight of the year was talking to former member of The Supremes vocal group and US Goodwill Ambassador Mary Wilson about American Studies at Northumbria. “You mean you have students up there studying the civil rights movement and soul music? Together?” she asked as she signed my copy of her autobiography and graciously accepted a copy of *Just My Soul Responding*, my own book about rhythm and blues music and the African-American freedom struggle. “That’s great,” she said, “after all, those aren’t just American stories; those are stories that affected and changed the world. They still have relevance for the world today.” Not a bad summary of why American Studies matters.

Enjoy the Newsletter!



Brian Ward,
Professor in American Studies

NEWS & EVENTS

US Ambassador Matthew W. Barzun’s Visit

In February 2014 U.S. Ambassador Matthew W. Barzun met American Studies students and staff during his first official UK visit outside of the capital. Ambassador Barzun was nominated by President Barack Obama to be the US Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland last year. He is an internet pioneer at CNET Networks where he launched download.com, which grew to become CNET’s biggest site. He has also led the project to build one of the first comparison shopping sites on the internet, Shopper.Com. The Ambassador has served on the boards of many non-profit organisations with a focus on education.

In a Q & A session with students and staff, Ambassador Barzun addressed the special relationship between the US and the UK, spoke of business partnerships between the two countries, described



American Studies students Josh Buckland and Jenny Molloy with Ambassador Matthew Barzun, Professor Brian Ward and Chris Sayers.

the influence his grandfather Jaques Barzun—a pioneer scholar of American Studies—had upon him, and discussed the Obama administration’s domestic and foreign policies.

Professor **Brian Ward**, who initiated the visit following talks with the US Embassy in 2013, said: “Northumbria has launched the biggest initiative in American Studies in the UK for more than a generation. A visit from the new Ambassador is a great start in our programme’s inaugural year. And, of course, it is a marvellous opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students who have a keen interest in the politics, history and culture of the country.”

2014 US History Group: “1964 as a Watershed Year,” May 8-9

The US History Group symposium in May 2014 explored America’s social, political and cultural defining moments of 50 years ago. From The Beatles’ US invasion and the flourishing of Motown Records to Lyndon Johnson’s landslide presidential victory and the passage of the Civil Rights Act, 1964 was a year of turbulence, struggle and chal-

lenging of the status quo.

Highlights of 1964: A Watershed Year in US History included a keynote lecture from Joe Crespino, Professor of History at Emory University and Ful-



The Beatles perform on the Ed Sullivan Show, New York City, 1964.

bright Distinguished Lecturer, University of Tübingen, who delivered a talk entitled, “In Your Heart You Know He’s Right: Barry Goldwater, Strom Thurmond, and the Legacy of 1964.” Kendrick J. Oliver, Professor of History at Southampton University, gave the other keynote on “The Noise of Creation: Cosmology, Communication, and Commerce in the ‘Long 1964.’”

The two-day event also included participants from the University of East Anglia, Durham University, Newcastle University, and Cambridge University.

In addition to support from Northumbria, the symposium received generous funds from the Fulbright Commission and Harvard University Press. See more at <https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/7722256/Programme-1964-Symposium.pdf>.

Literature, History, and Culture Speakers

History and American Studies sponsored visits to campus by many distinguished and up-and-coming scholars in 2013-14. Seminar papers and sessions benefitted the programme tremendously. These included:

2013

10 October: Michael Davidson (University of California San Diego), “Missing Bodies: Disappearances in the Aesthetic”

14-15 October: Bob Brown Visit & Black Panther Talk

7 November: Victoria Bazin (Northumbria University), “*The Dial Magazine* and the Material Spaces of Modernism”

13 November: Randall Stephens (Northumbria University), “The Religious Roots of Rock Music in the 1950s South”

21 November: Ian Scott (University of Manchester), “Historical Drama or Dramatic History: Oliver Stone and the Politics of Political Filmmaking”

2014

19 February: Julie Taylor (Northumbria University), “Making Contact: Affect, Queer Historiography, and ‘Our’ Djuna Barnes”

20 February: Stephen Mawdsley (University of Cambridge), “Salk Hops: American Teenage Culture and the Promotion of the Salk Vaccine, 1955-1960”

27 February: Jo Gill (University of Exeter), “Modern American Poetry and the Architectural Imagination”

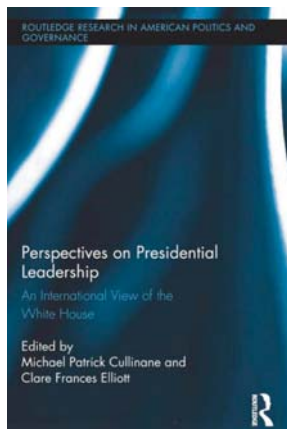
13 March: David Brown (University of Manchester), “British Reactions to the Emancipation Proclamation”

20 March: Oliver Ayers (University of Kent), “Laboured Protest: Black Civil Rights during the New Deal”

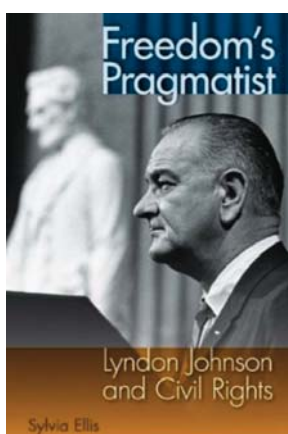
30 April: Joe Street (Northumbria University), “The Shadow of the Soul Breaker: Solitary Confinement and the Disintegration of Dr. Huey P. Newton”

American Studies Staff News

Michael Cullinane and **Clare Elliott** have published *Perspectives on Presidential Leadership: An International View of the White House* as part of Routledge's Research in American Politics and Governance series (2014). The publication includes chapters from presidential scholars from the UK, Ireland and Canada, and an introduction from Prof. Iwan Morgan who organized the first UK survey of presidential leadership in 2011. The book takes up from that survey, examining the leadership qualities and presidential ranking game from an international perspective. The book project began as a conference, hosted by Northumbria University, and supported by a generous BAAS conference grant.

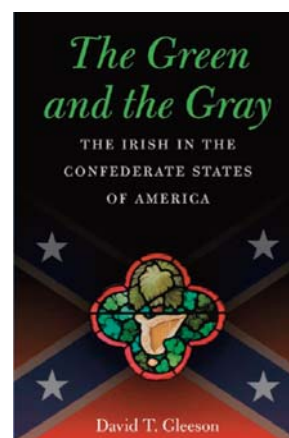


Sylvia Ellis launched her monograph, *Freedom's Pragmatist: Lyndon Johnson and Civil Rights* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), at the Institute for the Americas, University College London, on 24 October 2013 and has given several papers on this topic at schools and universities. Sylvia has also been involved in a number of commemorations of the JFK Assassination, including being an invited speaker/participant at an international conference on "JFK's Presidential Heritage" (co-organised by the Kennedy Memorial Trust, the UCL Institute of the Americas and the Eccles Centre, and the Paul Mellon Professorial Fund); attended an invitation-only lecture by The Rt. Hon. David Miliband on "Britain, America, and Europe: Lessons from Kennedy" (organised by the Kennedy Memorial

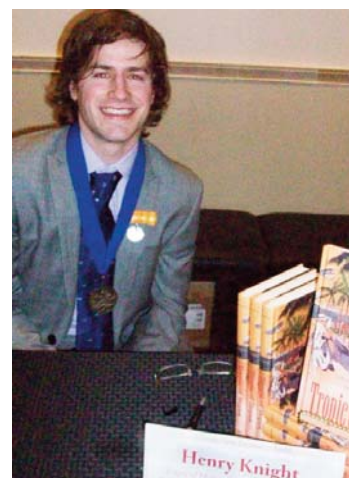


Trust at the British Library); attended a pre-screening of *Parkland* at the US Embassy London; delivered a paper on "JFK and Ireland" at a symposium on "JFK: Fifty Years On" at the University of Sussex; and wrote a piece for BBC History to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination. Sylvia has also delivered papers to schools in Newcastle and Birmingham on "Women in the Civil Rights Movements."

David T. Gleeson has delivered several lectures and informal talks in the US and the UK on his recent *The Green and the Gray: The Irish in the Confederate States of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). A Boston Globe reviewer praises it an "eye-opening account. . . . As [Gleeson's] analysis unfolds, there is much that will surprise, perhaps even unsettle, Boston readers familiar with the abolitionists, the Massachusetts 54th, and the summertime encampments of reenactors." On May 31, 2014 Gleeson spoke to the American Civil War Roundtable UK on "Irish Confederates in 1864." In June David continued his globetrotting, traveling to Athens, GA, to give plenary on "Scotch Irish Confederates" at the Ulster American Heritage Symposium.



At the 2014 British Association of American Studies (BAAS) conference at the University of Birmingham in April, **Henry Knight** was announced as the co-winner of the Arthur Miller Centre First Book Prize for his



Henry Knight at the award ceremony in Tallahassee, Florida, March 2014.

book, *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013). The book explores the promotion of California and Florida as semi-tropical states to American tourists, settlers, and investors, from the

Civil War to the 1920s. Henry was also awarded a Gold Medal in the Florida Book Awards “Florida - Non-fiction” category for his book. The event featured also the Florida Folk Heritage Awards, the Florida Historic Preservation Awards, and two new inductees into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame—including rock musician, Tom Petty.

The Florida Book Awards honour the best work written by Florida authors or about Florida culture in the previous year.

Randall Stephens received a contract for his forthcoming book *The Devil’s Music: Christianity and Rock since the 1950s* from Harvard University Press. Over the past year he has presented papers on religion, race, and popular culture at the University of Oslo, Glasgow University, Clare College Cambridge, Heidelberg University, and the University of East Anglia. At the November 2013 meeting of the Southern Historical Association in St Louis Randall gave an invited paper as part of a plenary session roundtable on the career and influence of the historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown. The forum will soon be published in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*. In addition Randall was an invited presenter at a Harvard University conference on “Comparative Secularization and Innovation in Europe and the United States.” His paper, “Popular Culture and Pentecostalism: Comparing Britain and the United States,” will appear in an edited volume. He has also authored several book reviews in the past year, one in the *Wilson Quarterly*, as well as publishing a short article: “Unbucklin’ that Ole Bible Belt: Learning about the Solid Religious South from

Freaks, Geeks, Outcasts, Losers, Wide-Eyed Prophets, Cranks, and Mountebanks,” in *Fides et Historia* (Winter/Spring 2014). Randall has been invited to lead a Masters seminar at Queen’s University, Belfast, in October 2014.



A still from opening scene of *Dirty Harry* (1971)

Joe Street has obtained a book contract from University Press of Florida for his forthcoming book, *Dirty Harry’s America: Clint Eastwood, Harry Callahan and the Conservative Backlash*. In 2014 he will see two articles published: “Subcultures and Civil Rights: The Politics of Soul Music in Britain” in Anna Gough-Yates, Bill Os-

gerby and Matt Worley (eds.), *Subcultures, Popular Music, and Social Change* (Cambridge Scholars, forthcoming); and “Stax, Subcultures and Civil Rights: Young Britain and the Politics of Soul Music in the 1960s” in Stephen Tuck and Robin D.G. Kelley (eds.), *The Other Special Relationship: Race and Rights in Britain and America* (Palgrave, forthcoming). Street has also presented papers on Dr. Martin Luther King to sixth-formers at three separate events for schools in Newcastle, Durham and Birmingham.

Julie Taylor has published “‘Grimly Sentimental’: Pleasure, Trauma, and Djuna Barnes’s *Ryder*” in *The Sentimental Mode: Essays in Literature, Film and Television*, edited by Jennifer A. Williamson, Jennifer Larson, and Ashley Reed (Jefferson NC: McFarland and Co., 2014), 56-69. Julie also has an article forthcoming: “On Holding and Being Held: Hart Crane’s Queer Intimacy,” in *Twentieth Century Literature* (Winter 2014). In the last year she has presented papers at the 15th annual Modernist Studies Association Conference at the University of Sussex and the British Association of American Studies Conference at Birmingham University.

In September 2013 **Brian Ward** was invited to speak at the German Historical Institute in Wash-

ington DC at an event to mark the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington and in April 2014 spoke at a special “1964 Anniversary” session of the Organization of American Historians conference in Atlanta, Georgia. This year he has given 10 talks on US history topics to A level students in Newcastle, Durham, London, Manchester and Huddersfield. His article “Music, Musical Theater, and the Imagined South in Inter-war Britain” appeared in the February 2014 issue of the *Journal of Southern History*.

In March 2014 **Mel Waters** gave a research paper entitled “Fashioning Suicide?: Clothes, Morbidity and Confessional Poetry” at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh.

Three Northumbria faculty members will be speaking at this year’s Transatlantic Studies Association conference in Ghent, **Victoria Bazin** (Literature), **Daniel Laqua** (History), and **Michael Cullinane** (History).

Grant Bidding Success

American Studies staff continue to put in major group and individual bids to support research, teaching, and public engagement.

Randall Stephens has received a Lynn E. May, Jr. Study Grant at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee, 2014-15. The study grant will assist him in his research for his forthcoming book, *The Devil’s Music: Christianity and Rock since the 1950s*. Randall has also received a one-month writing fellowship for the book project at the Wesleyan Center at Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego.

Henry Knight has received a one-month fellowship from the prestigious Huntington Library in Califor-

nia for his new book project *Pacific Reach: California and Hawaii through the Progressive Era*. Henry will be using the library’s extensive collections on Hawaii and California from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Michael Cullinane was awarded a Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library research grant for his



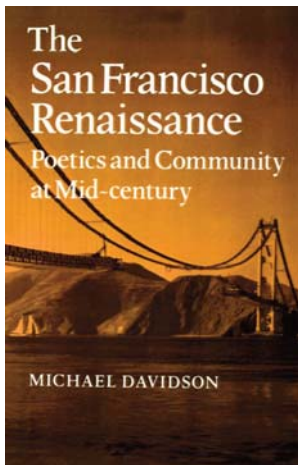
Theodore Roosevelt bust sculpture with eagle at base, early 20th century. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

work on FDR’s use of Theodore Roosevelt in politics and public memory. He has also been granted an esteemed AHRC Early Career Fellowship. Mike will be working on a project titled “Memorial Communities and Presidential Legacy: Remembering Theodore Roosevelt.” The central premise of the project is that presidential memorial communities are instrumental in shaping the public memory of U.S. presidents, and these communities do not operate in a vacuum. They rely on many partners and often reflect the historical and cultural context from which they work. To demonstrate this, the project takes up the study of the Theodore Roosevelt memorial associations and their partners including park sites,

art guilds, social clubs, universities, rotary clubs, and other non-governmental organisations. The national memorial associations mobilised state and local communities after 1919 with the goal of constructing Roosevelt’s posthumous legacy. Over nearly a century of commemorative activities they played a significant role in how a disparate community of Roosevelt admirers evolved into a well-organised and effective group of campaigners. These associations are important mechanisms for translating the past through sites of memory, political co-optioning, and popular culture. Mike’s successful bid for this competitive grant speaks very highly of his research and will be a wonderful benefit to the field as a whole as well as the History and American Studies programmes at Northumbria.

Leverhulme Visiting Professor, Michael Davidson

In the first Semester of 2013-14 staff and students in American Literature were lucky enough to gain the expertise of Leverhulme Visiting Professor



Michael Davidson, Distinguished Professor of Literature at the University of California, San Diego. Michael's visit to Northumbria was organized by his namesake, our own Professor Ian Davidson, who secured external funding from the Leverhulme Trust. Michael is well known for both his influential criticism, which

spans modern and contemporary poetry, literature of the Cold War, gender studies, and disability studies, and for his eight collections of poetry. During his time at Northumbria, he delivered three public lectures: 'Missing Bodies: Disappearances in the Aesthetic'; 'Living in the same place . . . and different places: Cosmopoetics after Modernism' (at the Literary and Philosophical Society); and 'The Rage of Caliban: Missing Bodies in Modernist Aesthetics' (at Newcastle Centre for Literary Arts). On December 9th Michael played a central role in Northumbria's Third Annual Symposium on Poetry and Poetics, 'Down the Line: American and British Poetics in the Millennium', organised by Ian Davidson and featuring presentations by Northumbria staff and postgraduates and scholars and poets from both sides of the Atlantic. The event culminated in a terrific poetry reading by Michael Davidson and renowned New York poet and recent Guggenheim recipient Eileen Myles.

Postgraduate News

US History seminar sessions and the 1964 symposium enjoyed excellent participation from our growing ranks of Americanist PhD students. At

the two-day 1964 symposium **Antony McKenna** (PhD student) presented on "'Yeah, yeah, yeah...': The 'Beatle Menace,' Americanisation, and British Communists" and **Megan Hunt** (PhD student) delivered a paper on "Remembering Segregation and Activism in 1963-4: *The Help* and Hollywood's Civil Right's Movement." The latter will be included in a collection of essays to be published by Edinburgh University Press. Hunt, McKenna and Alan Symons all presented at the Postgraduate Conference as well.

In spring 2014 **Brian Langley** (PhD student) delivered a paper at the British Association of Nineteenth Century History at Rice University (Houston, Texas) on "Southern Claims Commission: Narratives of Loyal Dissent."

Jonathan Coburn (PhD student) was awarded the John D Lees Prize for 2014 by the British Association for American Studies. The award will help finance a trip to the US to undertake archival research for his PhD on Women Strike for Peace activists. Coburn has also been appointed Postgraduate Rep and Communications Officer for the Society for the History of Women in the Americas (SHAW). SHAW is a scholarly society for historians interested in women's and gender history in the Americas, from Alaska down to the Southern Cone. Jon's roles involve representing the postgraduate community of SHAW, editing the group's monthly newsletter and maintaining its social media presence.

Stephen Bowman (PhD student) has had his D.C. Watt award-winning paper, "An Englishman Abroad and an American Lawyer in Europe: Harry Brittain, James Beck and the Pilgrims Society during the First World War," accepted for publication in the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*. This follows the publication of an earlier co-authored article with the same journal on "Interdependence Day and Magna Charta: James Hamilton's public diplomacy in the Anglo-world."

Anne Zetsche (PhD student) has had an article, "The Ford Foundation's Role in Promoting German-American Elite Networking during the Cold

War,” accepted for publication in the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*.

In spring 2014 **Peter O’Connor** successfully defended his PhD thesis: “The Inextinguishable Struggle Between North and South,’ American Sectionalism in the British Mind 1832-1865.” Peter presented a paper on “Who Has Heard of Polk, of Pierce, and of Buchanan?’ Britain and the US Presidency 1837-1861” at the “Presidential Nation: The Presidency in US History” conference held at Northumbria in June 2014. He has also recently published “John Quincy Adams: An Exceptionally Average President,” in *Perspectives on Presidential Leadership: An International View of the White House*, eds., Michael Patrick Cullinane and Clare Frances Elliott (New York: Routledge, 2014).

Early Career Visiting Scholar: Oliver Ayers

In March 2014 **Dr. Oliver Ayers** of the University of Kent visited Northumbria University as our first Early Career Visiting Research Scholar in American Studies. Oliver’s research focuses on African American, labour and urban history and the politicization of understandings of the black freedom struggle. During his time at Northumbria, Oliver taught an undergraduate seminar to history students, led a postgraduate workshop on the long civil rights movement and The Ford Strike of 1941, and delivered a paper on “Laboured Protest: Black Civil Rights during the New Deal” at the American Studies Research Seminar.

A King in Newcastle

In 2014, Professor **Brian Ward** made several appearances on television and radio to talk about his discovery of long-lost footage of a speech Martin Luther King made during his 1967 visit to Newcas-



A movie still from the 1967 film of Martin Luther King's 1967 Newcastle speech.

tle. On 1 June Brian appeared in *A King's Speech*, a moving BBC documentary based largely on his work and narrated by Lenny Henry. He also discussed King's Tyneside visit on BBC's *The One Show* on 28 May and in a programme on BBC Radio Newcastle which was subse-

quently featured as a Pick of the Week on Radio 4.

Brian discovered the lost footage in 1993 while researching the circumstances surrounding King's trip to Newcastle University to receive an honorary doctorate: “All of the correspondence before King arrived suggested that he would not be expected to speak, so the University had made no arrangements to record him. For years afterwards it was adamant that no footage existed.”

However, Brian found hints in the documentation surrounding the visit that the ceremony and King's impromptu speech may have been filmed for a local BBC news magazine show. Eventually he tracked down some footage to a can in the Newcastle University audio-visual centre, while a broadcast fragment, without audio, ended up in the BBC Regional News Archive. “King's life and speeches have been so closely scrutinized that it is really rare to come across anything genuinely new,” Brian explained. “As a historian of the civil rights movement, I knew it was probably the find of a lifetime. Of course, that I found it about 400 yards

from where I worked was an unexpected bonus!”

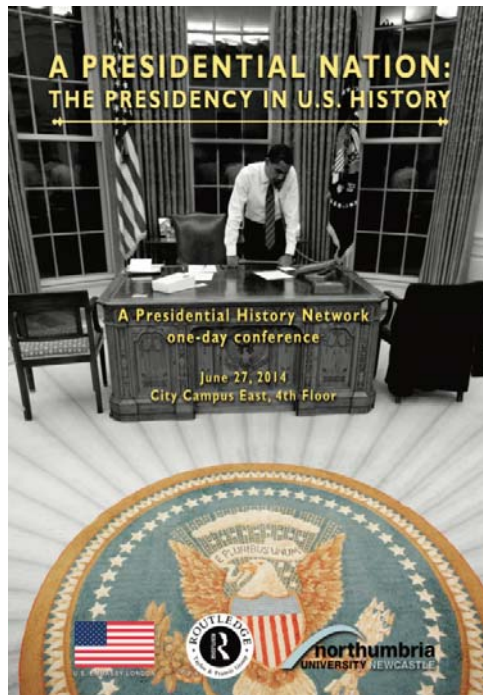
There has been an amazing international response to King’s lost words from both the public and celebrities and politicians, including Lenny Henry, David Miliband and local MP Chi Onwurah in the UK and Harry Belafonte, civil rights legend Andrew Young, and former Supreme Mary Wilson in the US. “What I like most about King’s speech in Newcastle is its timelessness and its universal appeal,” Brian explained. “In that magnificent voice, he very elegantly lays out the triple evils of racism, economic injustice and war which blighted the world in 1967 and which still blight it today.”

Summer 2014 Conferences: The Presidential History Network and The Global English

On 27 June Northumbria University welcomed the first meeting of the Presidential History Network for a conference to explore the presidency in the United States. Scholars from both sides of the Atlantic met to examine presidents from George Washington to Barack Obama and to consider how the office has inspired scholarly interest, be it in the job itself, the policies of America’s chief executives, or the personalities. The Presidential History Network has recently organized to bring together academic scholars that are interested in the presidency to disseminate their research and develop their ideas among peers. **Michael Cullinane** is a founding member, as are Professors Iwan Morgan (UCL), John Dumbrell (Durham), and Mark White (QMU).

The conference plenary included a keynote lecture from Professor Sidney M. Milkis, University of

Virginia White Burkett Miller Professor of Politics. Prof. Milkis is among the US’s leading scholars on presidential history and statecraft.



The conference was supported by the U.S. Embassy in London, which recognizes the importance the growing study of executive branch history and the perception of the presidency abroad. Routledge publishing, a subsidiary of Taylor and Francis, have also supported the conference and officially launched **Michael Cullinane** and **Clare Elliott’s** edited collection *Perspectives on Presidential Leadership* at the event.

On 17-18th July **Tanja Buelmann**, **David Gleeson**, and **Don MacRaild** hosted “The Global English: Historical

Perspectives,” the culminating conference for the AHRC-funded “Locating the Hidden Diaspora.” The conference included a free folk music session and public lecture on “English Music on the American Frontier” by Prof William Van Vugt. More information about the project can be found at <http://www.englishdiaspora.co.uk> and <http://digital-community.englishdiaspora.co.uk>.

NORTH TO THE FUTURE: FORTHCOMING AMERICAN STUDIES EVENTS AND SYMPOSIA

Monographs to Text Books in the Humanities

On October 15, 2014, Professor Nancy Hewitt and Professor Steven Lawson (both at Rutgers University) will visit campus and talk about their experiences of moving from writing scholarly monographs to writing survey textbooks. Although

geared primarily to historians it is hoped that, this talk will have special interest and appeal to colleagues in other research groups across the Humanities and Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences.

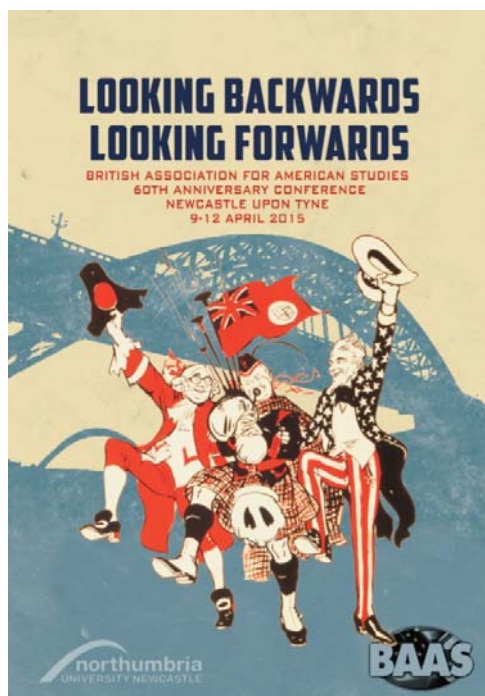
The State of Religion in American History

Randall Stephens is currently planning the next US History Group Symposium on “The State of Religion in American History,” to be held on March 26, 2015. Participants will include Stephens and two leading scholars in the field: Matthew Sutton (2014-15 Fulbright Chair in American Studies at Heidelberg University and Professor of History at Washington State University) and Paul Harvey (Professor of History at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs). The American Historical Association reported back in 2009 that religious history now tops the list of American Historical Association member specializations. That trend has continued since then. Before then it had been cultural history at the top of the list. And the numbers are skewed by generation, with younger scholars being much more likely to work on religious topics. The one-day event will examine the boom in American religious history in the last 10-15 years and will discuss how religious history has begun to change the direction of the field. The intention will also be to publish the proceedings as a roundtable in a leading journal in history, American studies, or religious studies.

BAAS & the 50th Anniversary of Selma & the Voting Rights Act

Joe Street is organizing the 2015 British Association of American Studies (BAAS) Conference (60th Anniversary) to be held at Northumbria University in April 9-12. This represents the largest gathering of American Studies scholars in the UK and will

feature a keynote address from the internationally renowned journalist Gary Younge. The BAAS conference will be immediately preceded by a two-day symposium, which will examine the history and legacy of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, perhaps the most important legislative act in American history.



SPOTLIGHT ON AMERICAN STUDIES STUDENTS

Marie-Liz Hayton, BA Student

Marie has just completed the first year of a BA in American Studies at Northumbria.

Q: Why did you decide to do American Studies, and why at Northumbria?

I actually chose to study at Northumbria because I used to work here. Seeing how much genuine passion the academic and admin staff had for giving the best possible education inspired me to come back as a student. My old colleagues at Northumbria were head and shoulders above anyone else I've ever worked with, and I knew I would be in the best possible hands here. . . .

I was intrigued by the American Studies degree, so I clicked on the description to see what it was all about. Realising that it combined everything that interested me—history, literature, politics, and America in general—I knew that I'd found the course I'd always wanted to do.

Q: What do you like best about the degree programme?

The best thing about the degree so far is how well

designed it is. All the modules dovetail well. For example, we learn about the history of slavery in “From Sea to Shining Sea,” then we get the more personal and literary elements of slave narratives in “Representing the U.S.,” which informs our broader political view of it in “Events and Icons: Lincoln,” and then this all gives us a good foundation to consider how the repercussions of slavery still exist in “Contemporary America.” Connecting the dots is essential to interdisciplinary study, and showing us how to do it through the course structure itself is brilliant. Good work, Brian and Randall!

Q: What aspects of American culture fascinate you the most?

I absolutely adore American comic books and cartoons. I think they are a fantastic resource for interpreting and illustrating a lot of the stuff we study. For example, Superman can be used as an exploration of the tension between American values and immigrant cultures. Also, I am secretly six, and superheroes are awesome.

As a side note, my biggest disappointment with the course was that I couldn’t do my semester abroad at the University of Illinois, as that’s where Carol Tilley teaches, who is a world leader in Comics Studies. Northumbria does do an exchange with them, but only for the Design students. I guess that a semester just outside of NYC will have to do instead!

Q: What parts of the course have you found most challenging?

Learning how to synthesise the interdisciplinary aspects of the course has been a challenge for me, but the tutors have all offered some great advice about this. Brian ran some fantastic sessions where we all got together as a group to talk about our essays and offer each other suggestions about areas we could expand or focus on.

Q: What advice would you give to someone considering choosing American Studies at Northumbria?

I would strongly advise them to go for it. That, and do the reading, or else risk the wrath of Dr. Joe Street!

Q: What are your future plans beyond the degree programme?

My goal is to carry on my studies after my degree and eventually teach it. Either that, or to get a job at Marvel Comics. I am currently looking into doing an internship with them next year, which would be fantastic if I can pull it off.



American Studies PhD student
Megan Hunt

Megan Hunt, PhD Student

Megan has just completed the first year of a PhD on the representation of the U.S. South in post-war cinema under the supervision of Brian Ward and Randall Stephens.

Q: Why did you choose to undertake postgraduate study at Northumbria?

After completing my MA at the University of Manchester, I knew that postgraduate study was for me. However, Northumbria’s unprecedented investment in the subject meant that key figures from the department at Manchester were making the move north, and I knew that I would need to do the same in order to get the best possible supervision team for my project.

The university’s investment in American Studies was very encouraging. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of my project, I was concerned that other universities might slot me within a history or even a film department, and I was not confident that this would be a good fit. Northumbria’s com-

mitment to a diverse American Studies community made me feel instantly at ease.

Q: Tell us about your PhD project.

My project explores the relationships between the American South as reality and as a projection, and presents religion as a key signifier within popular depictions of the region. I note the frequency with which Hollywood film uses a distinct religious culture to represent the South, and in turn promote particular understandings of that region.

I examine post-World War II films alongside southern history and culture, in an effort to understand religion's role in Hollywood's 'imagined' South. I argue that stereotypes regarding religion intersect with the racial and class-based distinctions so important to existing scholarship on the region.

I argue that Hollywood's performance of white southern religiosity bolsters an existing sectional binary of North/South, constructed by regional polarities of class, race, gender, education, violence, and religiosity. Building on various cultural myths of insularity and perversion, religious fanaticism indicates the South's disparity from the wider nation in films as varied as *Inherit the Wind* (1960) and *Cape Fear* (1991).

Q: PhD research can sometimes seem like a solitary occupation: what is the American Studies postgraduate community like at Northumbria?

While the cohort of specific American Studies postgraduates is still relatively small, the American Studies seminar series has encouraged many students to make links across the wider department and faculty. All seminars offer a great opportunity to socialize with fellow students and staff.

As members of the wider Humanities PhD community, American Studies students have great opportunities. The Glenamara Centre, our shared workspace, has fostered many friendships and shared projects. Many students use Glenamara as a permanent office space, which not only gives a

well-needed element of structure to research, but enables students to have lunch and other well-needed social breaks together! The Humanities PGR Seminar Series is a great opportunity to find out more about the broad range of research happening across the department, and American Studies has been well represented, alongside English, History, and Creative Writing. As I will be organizing the series for the upcoming academic year (2014-15) I can guarantee that American Studies will continue to forge a prominent role for itself!

Q: Has your research involved travel to the US?

This summer I will be travelling to Texas for two weeks research at the Harry Ransom Center, at the University of Texas, Austin.

My most important case study is *Cape Fear* (1991), Martin Scorsese's remake of J. Lee Thompson's 1962 movie of the same name. In Scorsese's movie, villain Max Cady, here played by Robert DeNiro, assumes a Pentecostal fervour that is absent from the same character in Thompson's film. Robert DeNiro's papers, held at the Harry Ransom Center, document the conscious ideological judgements that produced the new Max Cady on screen. Access to DeNiro's research materials, heavily annotated scripts, and correspondence will therefore fundamentally inform my research into the constructions of the malignant white religious southerner in Hollywood film.

Q: What does a typical week look like for you?

I tend to divide my week between working in Glenamara and working at home. Unless I have meetings, supervisions, or need to use the library, I do prefer to work at home surrounded by my books and films. I am lucky that my two housemates are out working all day. I tend to follow their structure, and do a full working week, Monday-Friday. However, Glenamara is a great place to work, and provides great opportunities for socializing during breaks. I usually work in Glenamara at least two days a week.

I do think it's important to maintain a schedule.

PhD work does allow flexibility, which is great, but it is definitely vital to set deadlines for yourself, or following consultation with your supervisors, to ensure that you are working consistently and conscientiously. I tend to have a couple of chapters or tasks on the go, so that I can jump between the two if I reach an impasse or need a break!

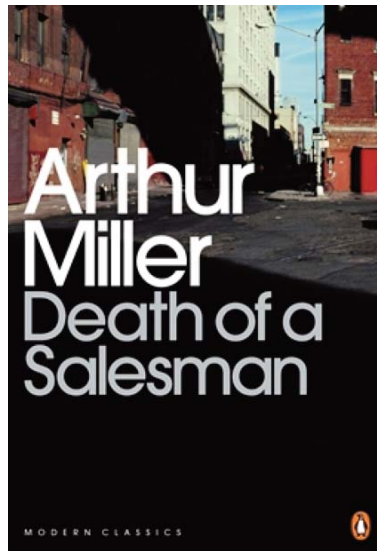
Q: What have been the highlights of your PhD study so far?

Presenting my work at conferences has proven greatly rewarding. It's great to get positive feedback so early in a project, but it is also important to hear other opinions, and factor peoples' questions into your work. Questions from other academics can make you think of things you would never normally have considered, broadening the scope and significance of your project. Conferences offer a great opportunity to meet academics whose work you respect, and it's very satisfying to see your name on the same programme!

Q: What advice would you give to someone contemplating a PhD in American Studies at Northumbria?

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first year at Northumbria. The transition to full-time, self-guided research was a little daunting at first, but if you have confidence in your project, and genuinely love it, you will settle in to a routine that works for you.

The community fostered through the Glenamara Centre is unique, and a great way to make friends. Current projects such as the Humanities Seminar Series and the Summer Speaker Series are ongoing, and provide great opportunities to engage with wider audiences, which is obviously great for your CV.



AMERICAN STUDIES OUTREACH EVENTS

This year American Studies lecturers have visited numerous schools in the north east and beyond to talk to pupils about key areas of study in their A Level History, English, and Politics courses. We have also offered insight into how sixth-formers might pursue their interests in the American experience beyond A Level through a degree in American Studies.

In November 2013, **Julie Taylor** organized an American History, Literature, and Politics Workshop for AS and A2 pupils at local schools, which featured talks and Q&A sessions on a range of topics, including the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, U.S. presidential elections, Arthur Miller, and the Civil War. In the summer of 2014, **Randall Stephens** spoke to prospective history and American Studies stu-

dents about how to use the history of advertising to explore US history and **Brian Ward** ran two workshops on the Beatles' 1966 "more popular than Jesus" controversy to show A level students the transnational dimensions of American Studies at Northumbria. Brian, **Ishan Ashutosh** and **Mike Cullinane** also ran a June event for sixth formers working on US politics and civil rights.

Planned events for 2015 include an initiative to use the US campaign for civil and voting rights to raise awareness of issues around citizenship and democracy in local schools.

If you would like more information on future outreach events, or would like to arrange for a Northumbria American Studies academic to visit your school, please contact Julie Taylor (julie.taylor@northumbria.ac.uk).



WHY STUDY AMERICAN STUDIES AT NORTHUMBRIA?

Intellectually challenging and hugely enjoyable, American Studies is an ideal subject to study at university if you want to learn more about American life and culture, wish to develop your critical, imaginative and communication skills, and have an interest in multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches to studying the American experience and its global significances. In American Studies at Northumbria University you will receive an excellent education in a friendly environment, in partnership with an exceptional collection of internationally acclaimed scholar-teachers. Through a variety of lectures, smaller group seminars and guided individual study, our staff will help you develop your skills, work towards a successful degree and prepare yourself for life beyond the university. Our commitment to teaching excellence was recognized at the Northumbria Student Union's Student-Led Teaching Awards for 2013-14, where many members of the American Studies staff were commended for their engaging teaching and overall commitment to their students' education.

Employment and Study Abroad

Many careers require self-motivated, creative and ambitious individuals with a dynamic skill set. American Studies graduates are especially valued because of their excellent communication skills and ability to think intelligently, critically and laterally as they draw on a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and skills to analyze and interpret the American experi-

ence. The American Studies programme at Northumbria University will enable you to develop into this type of graduate. American Studies graduates are attractive to employers in such fields as teaching, publishing, journalism, cultural administration, advertising, public relations, the civil service, heritage management, social research, non-governmental organizations, public history and the Foreign Office.

As part of an innovative, new "Your Graduate Future" module many of our students will hone their employability potential. Here students will build resumes, refine experience for future careers, and link their work in American Studies to the job market.

Students also have the opportunity to spend a period of time studying abroad during their second year. American Studies has established links with a large number of institutions in North America, including the University of Illinois, Georgia State University, the State University of New York, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Montclair State University (near to New York City), York University (Toronto) and Central Michigan University. This exchange programme is covered within the existing tuition fee structure, but in addition Northumbria also offers two competitive Study Abroad bursaries (currently of £1,000) for outstanding American Studies students wishing to study at a North American institution.

For more information on American Studies at Northumbria, please visit us at:

<http://northumbria.ac.uk/americanstudies>

SPEAKERS & EVENTS

AMERICAN STUDIES

NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY, 2014-15

- 2014 -

Wednesday 15 October: Nancy A. Hewitt (Rutgers University) and Steven F. Lawson (Rutgers University), "Monographs to Text Books in the Humanities"

Thursday 27 November: Will Kaufman (University of Central Lancashire), "Woody Guthrie: The Long Road to Peekskill"

- 2015 -

Thursday 12 February: Clare Elliott (Northumbria University), TBA

Thursday 12 March: Doug Haynes (University of Sussex), TBA

Thursday 26 March: "Religion in American History: A Roundtable," Paul Harvey (University of Colorado, Colorado Springs), Matthew Sutton (Heidelberg University and Washington State University), and Randall Stephens (Northumbria University)

9-12 April: British Association of American Studies Conference (60th Anniversary)

April, TBD: A Symposium on the 50th Anniversary of Selma & the Voting Rights Act

