

AMERICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Northumbria University

Volume 10

2022-2023



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

WELCOME TO AMERICAN STUDIES AT NORTHUMBRIA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome to American Studies at Northumbria	1
News & Events	2
Northumbria Hosts First Event in “Unfolding Our Shared Future” Series	2
Northumbria Welcomes 2021-22 American Studies Early Career Visiting Scholar	3
Františka Schormová Reflects on Her Time as a Visiting Scholar	4
New American Studies Social Events	5
Dr Julie Taylor Leaves Northumbria for New Opportunities	5
Literature, History, and Culture Speakers, 2022-23	6
American Studies Staff News	6
Grant Bidding Success	9
Postgraduate News	9
Spotlight on American Studies Alumni	9
Spotlight on American Studies Staff	12
Spotlight on American Studies Modules	13
Why Study American Studies at Northumbria	13

Ten Years and Counting

Welcome to this, the tenth (count ‘em!) American Studies Newsletter from Northumbria University. As we enter our second decade, there is once again lots of activity – scholarship, teaching, and even a little socialising – to report on. There is also a little bit of shameless bragging to be done.

For the past ten years, our Americanists have delivered the sort of top-quality research, research-led teaching, and concern for student well-being that contributed to Northumbria being named “University of the Year” for 2022 by the *Times Higher Education Supplement*. The excellence of our scholarship and evidence of its public impact beyond academia was also important in helping to secure exceptional results for English and History in the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) – a periodic national audit of the quality of all the research done in all subjects in all the UK’s universities. History was ranked in the top ten for the quality of its research publications, while 90% of the publications in English Language and Literature were classified as either “World Leading” or “Internationally Excellent.” This was all part of a wider triumph for the University, which, for the second REF cycle in succession, was the fastest rising institution in terms of its “research power.” Northumbria ranks 23rd in

the country overall. The development of American Studies has happened in tandem with the emergence of Northumbria University as an internationally recognized centre for research and teaching excellence.

A decade in, we now offer three separate BA degree programmes (American Studies; English Literature and American Studies; History and American Studies). Beyond those degrees, hundreds of students across the Department of Humanities and beyond regularly take US-themed modules. We continue to attract a steady stream of excellent MA and PhD students working on US topics, as well as postdoctoral fellows and visiting scholars, one of whom, Dr. Františka Schormová, an expert on African American literature and transnational radical activism, joined us from Czechia in 2022 and was a wonderful addition to our community. You can read more about Františka's time at Northumbria, and her confectionery-related crimes, inside.

Over the past ten years, we have seen our undergraduates move onto a variety of higher degrees and into jobs in just about every conceivable employment sector, from the civil service to teaching, from law to social work, from charities to sales and marketing, and from creative writing to animal welfare. In this edition of the Newsletter, alumni Rebekah Lumsdon and James Haswell describe their careers after completing their American Studies BAs.



Brian Ward with Stephanie L. Young of "When We All Vote," November 2022.

Elsewhere, you can read about Joe Street's new module in film and history; about the research and public engagement activities of our staff; and about a major international public event linked to the US midterms in November 2022 that brought to campus representatives of the US government and Stephanie L. Young, Director of "When We All Vote," the organization set up by Michelle Obama to increase voting among young Americans.

Finally, it is always sad to say goodbye to colleagues leaving the University. This is particularly true of Julie Taylor. Julie was present at the launch of American Studies at Northumbria, served multiple times as programme lead, taught widely across a range of undergraduate American Studies and English Literature modules, and supervised several graduate students. More than just a fine teacher and scholar of transatlantic modernism and of African American and children's literature, Julie has been a great friend and tremendous ally to staff and students alike. We will miss her and wish her well as she embarks on the next phase of her life.

With all good wishes,

Brian Ward
Professor in American Studies
brian.ward@northumbria.ac.uk

NEWS & EVENTS

Northumbria Hosts First Event in "Unfolding Our Shared Future" Series

In November 2022, Northumbria hosted the first in a new series of public events co-sponsored by the American Politics Group (APG), the British Association of American Studies (BAAS), and the U.S. Embassy in London – "Unfolding Our Shared Future: Challenge Possibility and Potential in US and

UK Politics” – on the theme “Voters of the Future.”

Introduced by the American cultural attaché Christina Tribble and compered by Professor Brian Ward, the event featured a short talk from Dr Patrick Andelic on “Why Midterms Matter” and a panel discussion with Dr Richard Johnson (Senior Lecturer in U.S. Politics and Policy at Queen Mary University of London) and Stephanie L. Young (executive director of “When We All Vote,” a voter registration initiative founded by Michelle Obama, and a former advisor in the Obama White House). With the dust still settling on the 2022 midterms, the panel discussion covered new voter restriction laws, partisan polarisation along racial lines, turnout among younger voters, predictions for the 2024 elections, and the uncertain prospects for American democracy itself.



(l-r) Caron Gentry, Patrick Andelic, Richard Johnson, Stephanie L. Young, Philip Davies, Brian Ward, and Christina Tribble.

Concluding the event, Professor Philip Davies, the principal coordinator of the “Unfolding the Future” series and former director of the Eccles Centre for American Studies at the British Library, expressed a hope that the series would foster discussions across the UK on “questions of transatlantic and global significance.” The event drew a considerable public audience both in-person and online.

The series continues until June 2023 with events at the Universities of Manchester, Portsmouth, Liverpool, Glasgow, Warwick, De

Montfort, and Swansea. Further details on the series are available on the APG’s [website](#).

Northumbria Welcomes 2021-22 American Studies Early Career Visiting Scholar

In April 2022, the American Studies Research Group was delighted to welcome our 2021-22 American Studies Early Career Visiting Scholar, Dr Frankie Hines, for a two-day visit to campus. During his visit, Dr Hines gave a research paper – “Literature and/as Direct Action: Reading Contemporary U.S. Anarchism” – led a postgraduate workshop on “Using Activist Archives,” and led a teaching session for undergraduate students as part of the first-year module AM4002 *Contemporary America*, “Occupy: Making and Defending Homes in the Great Recession.” Over the course of a three-hour session, Dr Hines introduced students to radical grassroots histories of the Occupy movement.



Dr Frankie Hines leads a PGR workshop on ‘Using Activist Archives’ as part of his two-day campus visit.

Dr Hines received his PhD in English Literature from the University of Westminster in 2021 and works on contemporary U.S. anarchist literature and the literary production of political movements. His doctoral dissertation, entitled “Evading Representation: The Literature of Contemporary U.S. Anarchism,” explored U.S. anarchist movements since the 1990s as sites of literary production. He completed his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of

Sussex, earning a BA in American Studies and an MA in Modern and Contemporary Literature, Culture and Theory.

Františka Schormová Reflects on Her Time as Visiting Scholar in American Studies, 2022

Dr Františka Schormová is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Czech Literature at the Academy of Sciences and an assistant professor at the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Hradec Králové, Czechia. Her PhD dissertation was entitled “African-American Poets Abroad: Black and Red Allegiances in Early Cold War Czechoslovakia,” for which she won the Jan Palach Award for the year’s best dissertation at Charles University, Prague. Dr Schormová had previously held fellowships at CEFRES (Centre français de recherche en sciences sociales) and at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University as a Fulbright Masaryk scholar. In 2022, Northumbria was delighted to welcome her to Newcastle as a Visiting Scholar in American Studies.

Františka writes: “Meeting Brian Ward at a conference of the Czech and Slovak Association of American Studies in 2019 had a profound influence on my life in two ways: first, I have been using the performance of Lil Nas X’s “Old Town Road” on the country charts that Brian mentioned in his keynote lecture in my teaching ever since; second, he also kindly agreed to supervise my stay at Northumbria University when I got the opportunity to apply for funding via the Anglo-Czech Educational Fund, a programme that allows early-career Czech scholars to research at UK universities.

“I arrived in Newcastle in February 2022 to work on turning my recently defended Ph.D. thesis into a book entitled *Prague, Red and Black: Early Cold War Networks, Journeys, and Poems*. The project explores for the first time cultural

exchanges between the African American community and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s. The intellectual atmosphere of Northumbria’s American Studies community, which fosters transnational and interdisciplinary approaches, was a great place to do this research and writing.



Dr Františka Schormová

“During my time at Northumbria, I relied on the resources available in physical and digital forms through the University’s rich holdings in American Studies, but also on the opportunity to talk both to students and to other scholars. Visiting and contributing to undergraduate classes, it was inspiring to hear about the American Studies students’ projects and the Institute of Humanities’ weekly Research Seminar told me all I needed to know about murderous nurses, royal patronage, and animals in prayer books (and Owen Wilson). There are unique challenges and advantages to doing American Studies from the UK (and from Czechia!) as I realized thanks to opportunities such as being able to participate in a panel on Cold War culture and politics at the British Association for American Studies (BAAS) Conference at the University of Hull.

“Even before coming to Northumbria, I knew its reputation for staff who are passionate about their research and teaching, and for how generously they share that enthusiasm and expertise with students and young scholars. The company of other postdoctoral scholars,

Katherine Aske, Ashleigh Blackwood, Mindi McMann, Gareth Roddy, and Diana Volonakis, in Room 118 made me suspect there might be something in the water at the Lipman Building that fosters such a supportive community of students and scholars. If you are reading this: thank you so much for the inspiration and advice on research, career, and life. And yes, it was me who always ate through our chocolate stack.”

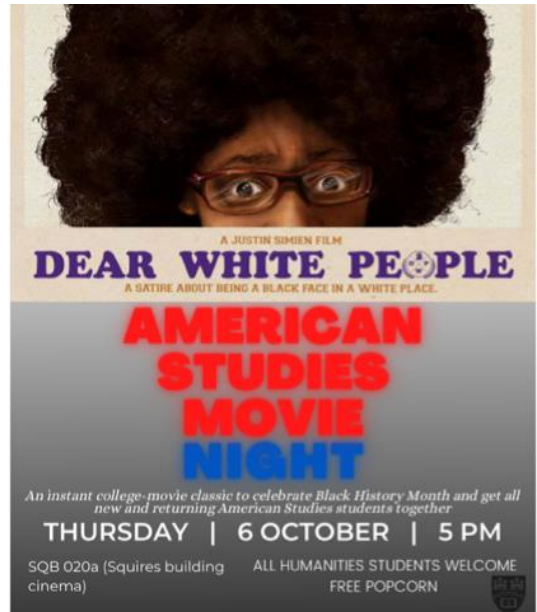


Františka Schormová (second from left) with (from left to right) Diana Volonakis, Katherine Aske, Mindi McCann, and Gareth Roddy.

New American Studies Social Events

Thanks to the organisational efforts of Dr Elsa Devienne – the programme leader for single and joint honours American Studies and the new lead of the American Studies Research Group – Northumbria began hosting regular American Studies-themed social events in 2022-23. The calendar started with an ‘American Studies Movie Night,’ a screening of the socially-conscious campus comedy *Dear White People* (dir. Justin Simien, 2014), with a Q&A/discussion involving staff, in October to coincide with the start of the new academic year and Black History Month.

Thanks to an enthusiastic response from students, further activities are planned. We also welcome all suggestions from students for potential future events.



Poster for the *Dear White People* (2014) screening, organised by the American Studies Research Group.

Dr Julie Taylor Leaves Northumbria for New Opportunities

Julie Taylor joined Northumbria in 2012 from a lectureship at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, having completed undergraduate studies at the University of York and postgraduate degrees at York and Somerville College, Oxford. She went on to hold the Randall MacIver Junior Research Fellowship at Lady Margaret Hall. A scholar of American and transatlantic modernism, Julie is the author of *Djuna Barnes and Affective Modernism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012) and an edited collection, *Modernism and Affect* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), to which she contributed an essay on race and affect in Jean Toomer’s *Cane*. Julie was instrumental in the development of the American Studies programme at Northumbria in recent years and responsible for convening the popular *Introduction to American Studies* and *Contemporary America* core modules, as well as contributing to other American Studies modules, including the American West. Julie introduced successive cohorts of (mostly) enthusiastic undergraduates to a range of American Studies topics, from the short stories of Annie Proulx to contemporary American “social horror” of Jordan Peele.



Dr Julie Taylor

Julie worked at Northumbria until January 2023 when she left to pursue an exciting new career. Julie is a valued colleague and good friend and will be missed in the department. We wish her well in her future endeavours.

LITERATURE, HISTORY, & CULTURE SPEAKERS, 2022-23

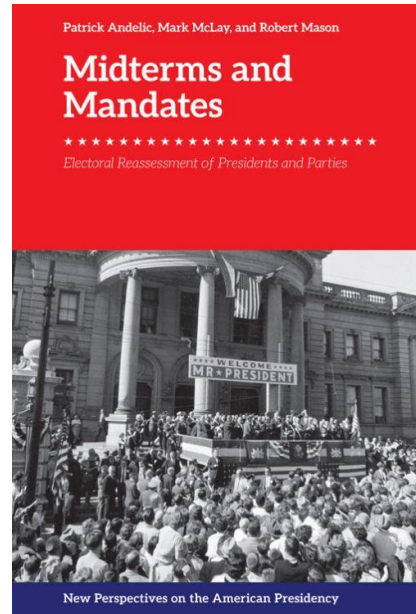
E. James West (University of York), *Building History: Race, Space, and Chicago's Black Press*, October 10, 2022.

Christopher Lloyd (University of Hertfordshire), *Towards a Queer Bestiary: Non/Humans in Contemporary U.S. Literature*, November 2, 2022.

Kate Dossett, *Black Theatre Making, Censorship and Creatorship in the Archive*, November 16, 2022.

AMERICAN STUDIES STAFF NEWS

Patrick Andelic published a new collection, co-edited with Robert Mason (University of Edinburgh) and Mark McLay (Lancaster University), *Midterms and Mandates: Electoral Reassessments of Presidents and Parties* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022). The collection forms part of EUP's "New Perspectives on the American Presidency" series.



Cover of Patrick Andelic, Mark McLay, and Robert Mason (eds.), *Midterms and Mandates: Electoral Reassessments of Presidents and Parties* (EUP, 2022)

Tony Badger published *Why White Liberals Fail: Race and Southern Politics from FDR to Trump* (Harvard University Press, 2022).

Why White Liberals Fail



Anthony J. Badger

Cover of Tony Badger's *Why White Liberals Fail* (Harvard University Press, 2022)

Brycchan Carey published a chapter, 'James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* and Naturalists' Georgic' in *Georgic Literature and the Environment: Working Land, Reworking Genre*, edited by Sue Edney and Tess Somervell (Routledge, 2022).



The cover of *Georgic Literature and the Environment: Working Land, Reworking Genre* (Routledge, 2022) featuring a chapter by Brycchan Carey.

Brycchan Carey was interviewed on BBC Radio 4 for the programme, *The Amazing Life of Olandah Equiano*, presented by Marc Wadsworth, broadcast 24 May 2022, and still available on BBC Sounds.



BBC page for *The Amazing Life of Olandah Equiano*, featuring a contribution from Brycchan Carey.

Elsa Devienne served as historical consultant and appeared in the documentary *Le Monde de Jamy* (*Jamy's World*) for an episode on shorelines and sea-level rises, which was broadcast on French national TV on 22 June 2022. Elsa and Jamy Gourmand (“the French equivalent of David Attenborough,” according to Elsa) walked on beaches of the past, observing social, cultural, and environmental changes from the eighteenth-century “strands,” when bourgeois and aristocratic bathers came in bathing machines to preserve their modesty, to

the postwar beaches and their much more revealing bathing suits.



Elsa Devienne with Jamy Gourmand on *Le Monde de Jamy*, 22 June 2022.

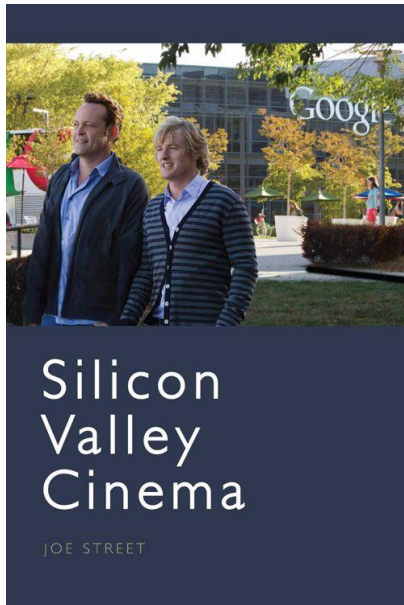
Elsa Devienne's book *La ruée vers le sable: Une histoire environnementale des plages de Los Angeles au XXe siècle* [*The Sand Rush: An Environmental History of Los Angeles Beaches in the 20th Century*] (Éditions Sorbonne, 2020) was one of three finalists for the 2021 joint Book Prize of the French association for American Studies and French Association for Anglophone Studies.

Clare Elliott submitted a book chapter, “Transatlantic Feminism and Antislavery Activism: Women’s Networks, Letter Writing, & Literature in the Long Nineteenth Century” in the *Routledge Companion to Literature and Feminism* edited by Rachel Carroll and Fiona Tolan (in production, 2023).

Clare Elliott will be speaking at the British Association of American Studies (BAAS) conference in Keele in April 2023 on the panel “Transatlantic Crosscurrents: Diasporic Communities and Intersectional Exchange in the Long Nineteenth Century.”

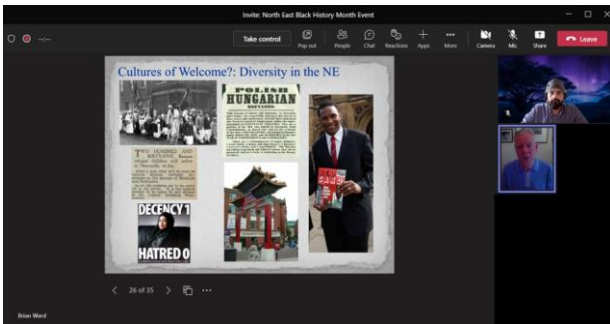
Hilary Francis published an article, “‘Point Four Does Not Exist’: US Expertise in 1950s Nicaragua,” in *Diplomatic History*, 46:1 (2022).

Joe Street submitted the final manuscript of his forthcoming monograph, *Silicon Valley Cinema*, which will be published by Edinburgh University Press (EUP) in June 2023.



Cover of Joe Street's *Silicon Valley Cinema* (EUP, 2023)

Brian Ward gave public lectures to the Historical Societies at Warkworth and Whickham, to the Alnwick branch of the University of the Third Age, and to the North East Probation Service, all related to the transnational history of race relations in the North East.



Brian Ward's online Black History Month 2022 talk to the North East Probation Service

Brian Ward spoke at the unveiling of a bronze bust of Frederick Douglass in Newcastle City Library. The bust, created by sculptor Bethany Malcolm, celebrates the life of the great African American anti-slavery campaigner, educator, and writer, who visited Newcastle and the North East on many occasions.



Brian Ward and sculptor Bethany Malcolm – clearly in agreement that bronze-coloured clothing was most appropriate for unveiling this bust of Frederick Douglass.

Brian Ward gave academic talks at the annual conference of the British Association for American Studies (BAAS) at Hull University on the Beatles and Anti-Communism in the Cold War South, and at the International Country Music Conference at Belmont University, Nashville, on Music and Medicine in Kentucky.



At the 2022 BAAS Conference, Brian Ward joined (l to r) Kate Dossett (Leeds), Jenny Woodley (Nottingham Trent), and Františka Schormová (University Hradec Králové/Northumbria) on a panel about Transatlantic Cold War Culture.

Brian Ward teamed up with Bob Stanley, author and founding member of the group Saint Etienne, as part of the Books on Tyne Festival at Newcastle City Library, this time to talk about Bob's latest book, *Let's Do It* and the

history of US and British popular music before the advent of rock and roll.



Brian Ward and Bob Stanley discussing the magic of the Boswell Sisters.

James West, who held a Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellowship at Northumbria in 2018-21, was appointed Lecturer in Interdisciplinary Societies and Cultures at University College London. His most recent book, *A House for the Struggle: The Black Press and the Built Environment in Chicago* (Illinois, 2022) also received an award from the Union League Club of Chicago for the year's "outstanding book on the history of Chicago," and an honourable mention for a biennial book prize from the Research Society for American Periodicals.

GRANT BIDDING SUCCESS

Elsa Devienne won a British Association of American Studies (BAAS) Research Assistance Grant (£1,000) for a project on American students' environmental activism.

Brycchan Carey was awarded a British Academy/Wolfson Research Professorship (£164,410) to support the project "The Parish

Revolution: Parochial Origins of Global Conservationism,' which will investigate the work of Anglican naturalists in the period 1660-1859, including clerical naturalists in North America and the Caribbean.

POSTGRADUATE NEWS

Lewis Kimberley received a grant from the Turing Scheme to support a research trip to New Orleans, Louisiana. Lewis writes, "I was in New Orleans to research the 1891 lynching of a group of Italian prisoners so visited the archives at Tulane, the New Orleans Public Library and the Historic New Orleans Collection, with time to see the sights like Jackson Square, the French Quarter, the zoo and obviously to treat myself to some incredible food. The collections of the city government at NOPL were just incredible but also incredibly fragile and every time I turned a page in the ledger I held my breath in case the pages disintegrated. I was able to stay in a mansion practically overlooking Audubon Park and next to Tulane University, right on the streetcar line - a great location! Although Northern Bridge covered the cost of flights, the support from the Turing Scheme meant I could choose my own accommodation and stay in an area I otherwise would have completely missed."



Photographs taken by Lewis Kimberley on his research trip to New Orleans, 2022

Jack Hodgson, who successfully defended his PhD in 2021, published an article, "From the Bronx to Stalingrad: Harry Eisman and the Young Pioneers of America in New York

City,” in *New York History*, 103:1 (Summer 2022).

SPOTLIGHT ON AMERICAN STUDIES ALUMNI: Rebekah Lumsdon and James Haswell

Rebekah Lumsdon

BA (Hons) American Studies



**Tell us about yourself in 3-4 sentences.
What did you study at Northumbria?
Why?**

I studied the Foundation Year in Humanities, followed by a BA in American Studies. When I first started looking at uni courses, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. American Studies was the very first course I came across and it sounded really interesting - I knew that I had to take the time to think over my course choice so I kept looking at other courses for quite a few more weeks, but I would always come back to that one and I'm really glad I stuck with it

What are you doing now?

I currently work as a Programme Delivery Coordinator for an apprenticeship company.

What was it about Northumbria that made you decide to study here?

I'm local to the North East, but Northumbria was far enough out that I could live away from home whilst still being close enough if I needed to get back (and send the washing home). I also knew people that had had a really

positive experience with the university, and it felt like a really nice atmosphere when I went to the open days.

What was it like studying at Northumbria?

I really enjoyed my time at Northumbria and the staff/lecturers were always really approachable - especially important during those late night library sessions during deadline season.

What was the best thing about your course?

I would say the size of the cohort in my year was definitely the best - there were only 6 of us so we all made friends pretty easily. It also helped in lectures and seminars since we were more comfortable sharing ideas and having debates. Lecturers usually knew the American studies students too since there were only a few of us.

How did studying at Northumbria help you achieve your career goals/ give your career an edge?

I was able to complete an employment-based module in my second year which gave me an insight into industry and the skills I would need to get into a career. It also meant I had a jump start on the steps I needed to take once I had graduated to find a job.

Which skills/ knowledge did you learn on your course that you use most now?

It is definitely the transferable skills that I use in my day-to-day life. Being able to manage my time effectively is really important in my job as I have to manage my own caseload. Writing information in a way that can be understood by different audiences is also important so that my colleagues can understand it with only the information in front of them.

What did you enjoy most about your time at Northumbria University?

Meeting loads of different people

What advice would you give somebody who is thinking of studying at Northumbria?

You can tell a lot about somewhere just by going there and seeing what the atmosphere is like. I would also say to ask around as you will get a lot more from talking to someone than reading a brochure.

How would you describe your time at Northumbria in 3 words?

Enjoyable. Informative. Memorable.

James Haswell

BA (Hons) American Studies



Tell us about yourself in 3-4 sentences.

I am a 27-year-old currently living in Newcastle, but originally from County Durham. From finishing my A-levels I went on to complete my BA at Northumbria University in American Studies, to then go on to complete my MSc in International Development. After graduating I started to work at the Labour Party in a number of different roles, before getting to my current role which is Commercial Development Coordinator.

What did you study at Northumbria? Why?

Growing up I was always fascinated by history, politics and social studies. I also love music, films, TV and sport. There are very few degree courses that combine all of these things, but the American Studies programme at Northumbria did. This was a huge pull factor for me as I was still unsure as to what I wanted to do after graduating; this variety of learning allowed me to try out new things until I found something that stuck. It also gave me the opportunity to undertake a month-long internship at an international non-profit lobbying organisation based in Washington, DC. This was all invaluable experience: it has set me on a career path that I love and would not have been possible without my experience at Northumbria University.

What are you doing now?

For the past two years I have worked as Commercial Development Coordinator for the Labour Party. I am part of a team whose core focus is to organise the Labour Party Annual Conference each year, but we also support other teams in delivering smaller conferences and events as well as supporting the organisation with their commercial opportunities.

Individually, I am responsible for organising the fringe programme that runs alongside the Annual Conference. This is usually a programme of around 500 events, featuring organisations from all sectors and all walks of life, and taking place over multiple days and venues. It's a challenging job due to its scale and scope and its unique social and political parameters. But it's a job that I love doing and take real pride in.

What was it about Northumbria that made you decide to study here?

For me studying at Northumbria was a clear choice. I remember attending open days at a number of universities across the country and nothing seemed to come close to what Northumbria had to offer. I may be slightly biased being from the area, but nothing quite

comes close to the friendly atmosphere of the city and the Geordies who live there, or the variety of bars, restaurants and cafés on your doorstep. It's a small city with a lot to offer! When attending the open day at Northumbria I remember being genuinely excited about the American Studies programme and the possibility of undertaking it. The caliber of teaching staff was amazing, seeing the sort of research they had all been involved in and the variety of specialist areas of studies they bring experience from was a big bonus for me. There was a great variety of modules on offer, and a real multi-disciplinary offering which is hugely beneficial for someone who is still trying to figure out what comes next.

SPOTLIGHT ON AMERICAN STUDIES STAFF: Dr Patrick Andelic, Assistant Professor in American History

Patrick Andelic joined Northumbria in 2017, having previously held posts at Queen Mary University of London and Ruskin College in Oxford. He completed undergraduate studies at the University of Edinburgh and postgraduate studies at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford. He is the author of *Donkey Work: Congressional Democrats in Conservative America* (University of Kansas Press, 2019).



Dr Patrick Andelic

Patrick writes: “My research explores liberalism in the Democratic Party after the

1960s, with a focus on Congress, one of the underappreciated branches of the federal government. I'm currently writing a book on Congressman Henry Waxman, a long-serving California liberal Democrat whose career put him at the forefront of many of policy areas that defined post-1960s liberalism: healthcare, environmentalism, tobacco restriction, AIDS research, and government reform. I was fortunate enough to spend summer 2022 as a fellow at the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. conducting research for this project (including an interview with the now-retired Congressman Waxman and several former members of his staff). I loved everything about that experience except the summer humidity, which at least gave me a new appreciation for the winters in Newcastle.



The name badge on Patrick Andelic's carrell at the John W. Kluge Center.

“At Northumbria, I teach across the American Studies and History programmes and I also convene two option modules: *Setting America Right: Conservatism in the United States, 1933-2016* (Level 5), which explores the rise and transformation of the American conservative movement from the New Deal to Donald Trump; and *Law and Order USA: Police, Prisons, and Protest in Modern America* (Level 6), which explores the U.S. criminal justice system, and challenges to it, covering a range of issues such as Prohibition, the War on Drugs, and Black Lives Matter.”



Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, taken by Patrick Andelic on the last day of his fellowship, September 2022

**SPOTLIGHT ON AMERICAN STUDIES
MODULES: *History/Film: Using Popular
Film as Historical Evidence (Second Year
/ Level 5).***

History/Film: Using Popular Film as Historical Evidence is a second year (Level 5) option module and is running for the first time in the second semester of 2022-3. The module invites students to consider a variety of popular film genres, with a specific view towards considering their value to the historian, both as sources about the past AND as sources from the past. It is designed to enable students to demonstrate how popular film reflects and attempts to shape popular opinion about key political issues of the time, and to develop the specific analytical skills they need to engage with cinema at a high level. It is intended to be essential preparation for those who plan to study historical film at dissertation level.

The module was designed by Americanists Joe Street and Patrick Andelic in collaboration with a number of Northumbria's European historians who also address film in their research and teaching. It emerges from their shared awareness that Northumbria's students are consistently excited and moved by cinema but often struggle to articulate their enthusiasm when writing about it as part of their studies. Part of the problem lies with the tendency of some professional historians to become overly obsessed with a film's factual

accuracy (or lack thereof), which often results in somewhat simplistic analyses that conclude, unsurprisingly, that a film is not true to the historical record.

The module instead introduces students to a variety of analytical approaches to cinema, enabling them to dissect its emotional truths and its ideological standpoints, and think deeply about the ways in which filmmakers attempt to convey and disguise political messages, and audiences' ability to absorb, reject, or transform these messages as they see fit. It also offers an ideal opportunity to watch and rewatch some fantastic films like *The Battle of Algiers*, *JFK*, and *Robocop*.



Poster for Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991)

**WHY AMERICAN STUDIES; WHY
NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY?**

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 interdisciplinary approaches to studying the American experience and its global significance.

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 is regularly recognized at the Northumbria Student Union's Student-Led Teaching Awards, when many members of the American Studies staff are 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 experience. The American Studies BA and related programmes (English Literature and American Studies; History and American Studies) at Northumbria 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 organisations, public history, and the Foreign Office.

As part of an innovative "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 Florida Atlantic University, Georgia State University, the University of Arkansas, Middle Tennessee State University, and Montclair State University (near to New York City). This exchange programme is covered within the existing tuition fee structure.

TEACHERS – WE NEED YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS!

If you or your students would like to learn more about American Studies, or to participate in events at Northumbria University that offer you and your students the latest insights into US history, literature, and politics in preparation for GCSE, A-Level or International Baccalaureate Exams, please contact:

Dr. Elsa Devienne
(patrick.andelic@northumbria.ac.uk)

or Prof. Brian Ward
(brian.ward@northumbria.ac.uk)

For more information on American Studies at Northumbria University, please visit us at: <http://northumbria.ac.uk/americanstudies>

Follow us on Twitter: @NUAmStudies.



Front page banner image credit: Cast and crew on set during the filming of *Barbed Wire* (1927) via Wikimedia Commons.