Welcome to American Studies at Northumbria

That’s the Joint!

New Degrees in English or History alongside American Studies

Welcome to the 2019-20 issue of the Northumbria University American Studies newsletter. It appears just as recruitment for the first intake to our new joint degree programs in English and American Studies and History and American Studies moves into top gear. For years, many Northumbria undergraduates taking BA degrees in English and History have gravitated towards our hugely popular modules on US literature and history. These exciting new programs have been planned with those kind of students in mind - students who want to combine their studies in English or History with a formal specialisation in things American, while at the same time cultivating the sort of multi- and inter-disciplinary skills employers consistently tell us they want to see in newly minted humanities graduates.

While we eagerly await our first cohort of joint degree students, as you will see from this Newsletter, there has been much to celebrate in the research, teaching and public outreach work of Northumbria’s Americanists over the past year. While we were sorry to see the departure of Henry Knight-Lozano, we were delighted to welcome to our team Elsa Devienne, an award-winning historian of the environment, gender, and California. Among
the many other achievements and contributions that you can read about in the pages that follow, special congratulations to James West on completing his first book, a pioneering study of *Ebony* magazine, the leading African American periodical of the post-World War Two era. James has also been elected to serve as the Early Career Representative on the Executive Committee of the British Association for American Studies, whose Paperback Series, published in collaboration with Edinburgh University Press, is now co-edited by our own Joe Street, who continued to publish important work on the Black Panther Party. Elsewhere, Tony Badger has not only served as President of the Historical Association, but also enjoyed international acclaim for his biography of Albert Gore, Snr, an influential Tennessee politician and father of former Vice President Al Gore, Jnr; David Gleeson has done yeoman service as Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research in the Faculty of Arts Design and Social Sciences, while continuing to publish widely on the history of the Irish in the Civil War-era US South; Patrick Andelic both put together this newsletter and, arguably more importantly, was elected chair of the Presidential History Network; Rebecca Wright published her book *Energy, Power and International Cooperation: A History of the World Energy Council*; Claire Elliott has been at the forefront of our commitment to addressing issues of equality and diversity in the Department of Humanities and the wider University, while also completing an article on Ralph Waldo Emerson in transatlantic perspective; Victoria Bazin has been central to the national growth of the Network of American Periodical Studies, bringing it to Northumbria in September 2019 for an international symposium on *Serial (Gendered) Subjects: Periodicals, Identities, Communities*; Julie Taylor continues to do tremendous work as program leader for the American Studies degrees, shouldered the major administrative burden for launching the new joint degrees, and still managed to publish a fabulous article in the *Journal of American Studies* on how children were represented in the publications of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People during the early twentieth-century. It continues to be a pleasure and a privilege to work alongside such talented and productive colleagues.

The same can be said of our students. In 2019 I was again fortunate enough to be nominated for a University Student Led Teaching Award – a nice personal recognition of the commitment to the learning experience and personal well-being of students that is shared by all the staff at Northumbria. I have certainly enjoyed and learned from working with dedicated, enthusiastic students on a variety of American Studies topics at postgraduate and undergraduate level.

Undergraduates often say that researching and writing their final-year dissertations is among the most rewarding experiences of their studies at Northumbria. This year I supervised five fascinating American-themed projects by, from left to right, Charlotte Matlock (fashion and social change in the 1960s), Charlie Henderson (Hip Hop’s debts to the Black Power...
Movement), Lydia McKeown (British responses to US political assassinations), Sarah McGlone (African American sporting protests) and Dan MacDermid (Presidential First Ladies in the 1960s).

Our postgraduate community continues to grow and thrive. Special kudos to PhD student Simon Buck, who this year published an article on folk singer Pete Seeger and representations of old age on US television in *The Sixties* journal. Simon also secured a prestigious fellowship at the Wilson Library of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, where he continued research for his dissertation into age and aging in southern popular music between the two world wars. We were also pleased to welcome back to Northumbria Adam Sharp, a graduate in American Studies in 2017, who is now studying for a PhD in Creative Writing. This year Adam published a chapter in Kit DeWaal's highly acclaimed anthology of contemporary working-class writers, *Common People*.

In different ways, all of these students, former and current, have helped to create the intellectual dynamism that makes the American Studies community at Northumbria such a rewarding and supportive place to teach, research and learn about the history, literature, politics, and popular culture of the United States.

With all good wishes,

Brian Ward
Professor in American Studies

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**NEWS & EVENTS**

**Northumbria Launches New Joint Honours American Studies Undergraduate Degrees**

For the 2020-21 academic year, Northumbria University has begun recruiting for two new joint honours BA (Hons) programmes: History and American Studies; and English Literature and American Studies. These represent an exciting new phase in the teaching of American Studies at Northumbria. The two sides of these new programmes complement and reinforce each other: the History/English Literature components offer a breadth of content to accompany the study of the literature, history, culture, and politics of North America. We look forward to welcoming our first cohort in September 2020.

Details at: BA (Hons) in History & American Studies (https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/courses/ba-hons-history-and-american-studies-newcastle-uushtr2ast/)

BA in English Literature & American Studies (https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/courses/ba-hons-english-literature-and-american-studies-newcastle-uusegl2ast/)

**Network of American Periodicals Symposium**

In September 2019, the Network of American Periodicals presented a symposium on the theme ‘Serial [Gendered] Subjects: Periodicals, Identities, Communities.’ This symposium was hosted by the Northumbria Institute of Humanities and the Gendered Subjects Research Group. It was supported by the University of Sussex Centre for American Studies, the Women’s History Network, and the British Association of American Studies (BAAS). The keynote lecture was delivered by Professor Mary Chapman (University of
British Columbia) and was entitled *Slave Girls and Underground Railways in the Periodicals Publications and Biography of Edith Eaton.*

Environmental History Network Conference

In September 2019, Northumbria University hosted the Second Annual Environmental History Workshop on the theme of flows, organized by Rebecca Wright, Jane Rowling (University of Hull) and Guillemette Crouzet (Warwick University). Supported by Northumbria’s Institute of the Humanities, the British Agricultural History Society and the British Academy, the workshop brought together an international group of early career scholars to showcase emerging work in the environmental humanities. Northumbria University’s own Elsa Devienne presented a paper on gentrification in Venice Beach, alongside a number of scholars who presented on U.S. theme throughout the day. The workshop ended with a keynote by Giacomo Parrinello, assistant professor of environmental history at the Paris Institute of Political Sciences (Sciences Po), who examined the value of the concept of flows in the environmental humanities.

Civil War Governors of Kentucky Project

In 2019, Professor David Gleeson participated in a project co-sponsored by the Kentucky Historical Society and the National Endowment for Humanities (NEH). This project involved the digitisation of all the Civil War Governors’ papers, and included Civil War scholars showing the value of these collections to publish original research. David was the only UK-based historian invited to participate. The scholars’ users group (which included among others Amy Murrell-Taylor, Crystal Feimster, Stephen Berry, Ann-Sarah Rubin and Lesley Gordon) had a symposium at the Old Capitol in Frankfort in the State House of Representatives, a space where, among other things, the Kentucky legislature had ratified the 13th Amendment prohibiting slavery in 1865.
The papers delivered were expanded into articles that were published in a special issue of the Register of the Kentucky Historical Society: https://history.ky.gov/resources/register-kentucky-historical-society/.

Subjects researched along with the Irish, included emancipation, alcohol-use, and hunger in Civil War Kentucky. The collection is a valuable one for anyone interested in undertaking Civil War research and the project has been such a success that other states, such as Mississippi, are designing similar plans for their governors’ papers.

American Studies Taster Day

As part of a range of outreach events organised by the Department of Humanities, the American Studies Research Group will be hosting its own taster day for GCSE and A-Level students on February 14, 2020. Further details of this event are below.

Location Location Location: The Importance of Place in 20th Century US History, Literature, and Politics

Focusing on the importance of place and regional differences within the United States – nuances that are highly regarded by examiners in coursework and examinations – the day will include interactive, source-based talks and a Primary Source workshop to help students locate and critically engage with a diverse range of sources related to the 20th Century United States. This taster event will provide an introduction to the American Studies, English and American Studies, and History and American Studies degree programmes at Northumbria for students who might be interested in studying the history, literature, politics and popular culture of the United States at university.

Book a place at: https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/information-for-schools-and-colleges/visit-northumbria/american-studies-taster-days/

Professor Tony Badger Reflects on His New Biography of Albert Gore, Sr.

50 years ago I first went to the American South. Segregation in public accommodations had only recently formally been abolished. It had been only four years since African-American access to the ballot in vast swathes of the South had been effectively guaranteed by federal legislation. There was only one Republican governor in the South, only two Republican southern senators and a handful of GOP congressmen. Today, Mississippi has more elected African American office holders than any state in the nation. The physical edifice of segregation has disappeared. Day to day race relations have been transformed. But politically the South is controlled by conservative lily-white Republicans.

In the past year I have had two privileged opportunities to reflect on these changes.

In the autumn of 2018, at the invitation of Henry Louis “Skip” Gates Jr I gave the Nathan I Huggins Lectures at Harvard. In the three lectures, I took the chance to look back on 50 years of watching the South, ‘Why White Liberals Fail? Southern Politicians and Race 1933-2019.’ When Harvard University Press publish the lectures they will stand as the last thing I shall ever say or write on southern white liberals. While I will treasure the memory of an engaged audience and the great generosity of Professor Gates, what stands out most was when dinner was interrupted for Skip Gates to take a phone call from Kanye West. The rapper wanted to appear in the American equivalent to Who Do You Think You Are? called Finding Your Roots which Gates presents.

The second opportunity occurred in Tennessee this past September when I was asked to discuss my recently published biography of Albert Gore Sr. with the Senator’s son, former vice-president Al Gore.
It has often been a daunting task as a British historian of the South to lecture in the presence of southern politicians that I am talking about. Nowhere more so than to talk some time ago about South Carolina Governors and desegregation in the presence of two of the governors, John C. West and Senator Ernest ‘Fritz’ Hollings. As a friend in the audience noted, when Fritz Hollings referred to me as ‘the good professor’ I was not to make the mistake of thinking that this was a term of endearment.

But none of those occasions were as daunting as the Tennessee assignment: to be asked to assess a father in the presence of his son and, as a British scholar to make that assessment in front of an audience of 1,200 Tennesseans who knew Senator Gore and were ready in a charming way to point out where I had got things wrong. I was under no illusions that the audience was not there to hear me but to hear Al Gore. He did not let them down. He was relaxed, self-deprecating and funny - not the public image of Al Gore at all. Touching in his memories of his father, he was also given the chance to be eloquent and passionate about climate change - and he urged the audience to buy my book!

I am also in my third and final year as national President of the Historical Association. By the time I finish my term, I will have lectured at 30 local branches from Glasgow to the Isle of Wight. I also have to give a presidential lecture at the Association’s annual conference.

In my first two years, I drew on work I was very familiar with. I used the relationship between Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt to explore the unprecedented influence of women in the New Deal. This year I drew on my book to look at the relationship of the Kennedys and the Gores, from Albert’s friendship with JFK, to his close working with Ted Kennedy in the Nixon years, to Ted’s endorsement of Al for the presidency in 2000.

In my final lecture next May, I am talking on ‘Alger Hiss: Friend and/or Spy.’ Hiss was convicted in 1950 of perjury having denied that as a State Department employee he had passed secrets to the Russians in the 1930s. His case was a Cold War cause célèbre. To liberals he was a victim of McCarthyism, to conservatives he confirmed their suspicions that the New Deal had been infiltrated by Communists and that Roosevelt had handed Eastern Europe over to the Russians at Yalta in 1945. I first met Alger Hiss in 1971. I was interested in the young New Dealer who started his government career drafting the contract in 1933 between the tobacco farmers and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. We were friends until his death 25 years later. My wife and I spent our honeymoon in his house.
in Long Island and his apartment in New York. Today, intelligence historians, using Soviet archives and the decrypted Venona files, are convinced that Hiss was the leading Soviet agent in the United States: the American equivalent of Kim Philby and Donald Maclean in the UK. If I was daunted by the prospect of assessing Al Gore’s father in the presence of his son, I have to confess that I am equally daunted by the task of weighing up the evidence of espionage that has been mounting up against a good friend.

Professor Badger’s Albert Gore, Sr.: A Political Life is published by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Literature, History, and Culture Speakers, 2019-2020

Semester 1

2 October
Nick Witham (UCL)
A People’s History of Howard Zinn: Radical Popular History and its Readers, 1980 to Present
4-00pm, Lipman 121 [Also part of the Institute of Humanities series]

October 9
Lesley J. Gordon (Alabama)
‘A Badge of Conspicuous Gallantry’: The 2nd Texas and Questions of Cowardice in the American Civil War
2-00pm, Lipman 121

Semester 2

March 3
Emily J. Clark (Tulane)
Simon Calpha’s Ride: Black African Soldiers in French Colonial Louisiana
4-00pm, TBC

March 11
Will Kaufman (Central Lancashire)
Woody Guthrie and ‘Old Man Trump’
6-00pm, Squires Building 020A

May 13
Urban America: Environmental Histories and Futures
5-30pm, Literary and Philosophical Society, Lecture Room, 23 Westgate Road

American Studies Staff News

Patrick Andelic became the new chair of the Presidential History Network (PHN), which exists to serve the needs of scholars interested in the U.S. presidency, individual presidents, and corollary interest in the institutional, political, or cultural history of the American polity.

Patrick also signed a contract with Edinburgh University Press for a new book of essays – co-edited with Prof. Robert Mason (Edinburgh) and Dr Mark McLay (Glasgow) – Midterms and Mandates: Electoral Reassessments of Presidents and Parties from FDR to Reagan as part of EUP’s ‘New Directions in the American Presidency’ series.

May 13

Patrick also received the author copies of his first monograph, Donkey Work: Congressional Democrats in Conservative America, 1974-1994, published with the University Press of Kansas earlier in 2019.

Elsa Devienne will be publishing her first monograph, *The Sand Rush: An Environmental History of the Los Angeles's Beaches*, in February 2020 with Sorbonne Editions. Elsa also has a forthcoming article as part of a special issue of *The European Journal of American Studies* on Spectacle and Spectatorship, ‘Spectacular Bodies: Los Angeles Beach Cultures and the Making of the “California Look” (1900s-1960s)’.

Elsa presented a paper on the gentrification of Venice, CA, at the Environmental History Network conference held at Northumbria on September 13. She also presented a paper on postwar muscularity at the Historians of the Twentieth Century United States (HOTCUS) PGR/ECR conference at the Rothermere American Institute (RAI), University of Oxford on October 18.

Elsa was also awarded the 2019 Doyce B. Nunis Jr. Award. This ‘honors the best demonstration of significant scholarship in the *Southern California Quarterly* by a rising historian.’ This was awarded for her article ‘The Life, Death, and Rebirth of Muscle Beach: Reassessing the Muscular Physique in Postwar America, 1940s-1980s’ (Fall 2018).

This is awarded every two years by the Historical Society of Southern California.


David Gleeson published an article in the Spring 2019 issue of the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, ‘“An Unfortunate Son of Erin”: The Irish in Civil War Kentucky.’ This article emerged out of his involvement with a project on the Civil War Governors of Kentucky sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Kentucky Historical Society (see item on p. 4). David also published a chapter on ‘Immigrant America and the American Civil War’ in the multivolume *Cambridge History of the American Civil War* (vol. 3).

Joe Street published an article on the importance of the Black Panther Party’s ‘Free Huey’ campaign to our understanding of the troubled year 1968 as part of a special issue of the *European Journal of American Studies*. It is open access and available at: https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/14226. His untitled monograph on the history of the...
The Black Panther Party was awarded a contract for publication with the University of Georgia Press.

Joe was also appointed co-editor of the British Association for American Studies paperbacks series at Edinburgh University Press: https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/series-baas-paperbacks.html The series publishes lively and accessible books in the American Studies field, and Joe will be focusing his energies on building up the series’ History catalogue.

Brian Ward completed his three-year term as Chair of the British Association for American Studies in April 2019 and in November 2019 concluded a four-year term on the editorial board of the Journal of Southern History. Along with co-author Patrick Huber, he won the Belmont University Award for the Best 2018 Book on Country Music, and a Certificate of Merit Award for Excellence in Historical Recorded Sound Research in Recorded Roots Music from the Association for Recorded Sound Collections for his book A&R Pioneers: Architects of American Roots Music on Record. Brian also travelled widely this year, delivering talks on a variety of topics, including Keynote Lectures at the conferences of the Transatlantic Studies Association in Lancaster (on the Beatles in Florida) and of the Czech and Slovak American Studies Association in Olomouc in Czechia (on music, race and regional identity in the music and fiction of Donald Davidson). He also spoke on the history of 19th Century Tyneside abolitionism as part of the Old Low Lights Breaking Chains exhibition in North Shields, and on Martin Luther King in Newcastle at the Berwick Literary Festival.


**Grant Bidding Success**

In August, Elsa Devienne was awarded a $2,000 Ahmanson Foundation publication grant to support the translation of her monograph *The Sand Rush* into English. The Foundation supports cultural projects 'based in and serving the greater Los Angeles community.'

**Postgraduate News**


Natasha Neary, Sophie Roberts, and Sarah Collins were among the PhD students who graduated this year having worked on US-themed topics.

Sarah Collins, Sophie Roberts, and Natasha Neary (r-l, respectively) pictured here with non-Americanists, but otherwise good people, Robert Jones and Lara Green.

**Spotlight on American Studies Students: Isabel Waterhouse, 2nd Year**

Isabel is a Second Year student in American Studies. She will be spending part of this year studying at the College of New Jersey, Ewing, New Jersey.

Q: Could you tell us a little about how you became interested in American Studies?

I: I’ve always enjoyed American history just from watching films, and American literature from school.

Q: What research and writing have you undertaken in your American Studies modules that have sparked your interest?

I: Among the first year modules, *From Sea to Shining Sea: US History from 1776 to 2008* and *Contemporary America* were really interesting. *Contemporary America* allows you to choose your own topics for assessments which I enjoyed, the same as the extended essay in second year.

Q: You will be spending part of your second year studying in the US. Where will you be studying and what are your expectations for the experience?

I: I will be studying at the College of New Jersey. One of my friends is currently over
there and he has been able to travel - New York, Boston, Washington etc. - so I am looking forward to being able to see different cities, as well as living on an American campus.

Q: Do you have any advice for someone who is considering choosing American Studies at Northumbria?

I: I'm definitely happy with my decision to choose American Studies, an interesting and usually small course so lectures and seminars are better in my opinion.

Spotlight on new American Studies Staff

Elsa Devienne joined the Humanities Department as Lecturer in U.S. History in September 2019.

Her research lies at the intersection of urban history, environmental history and the history of gender, body, and sexuality, with a focus on the 20th century. She is particularly interested in the history of Americans’ intense engagement with their coastlines, from the 19th-century beach-bathing boom until today’s climate crisis and its catastrophic consequences for coastal communities. Her first book, a social and environmental history of the Los Angeles’s beaches in the 20th century, will be published in February 2020 by Sorbonne Editions. She is also the author of several articles published in academic journals in the US and Europe, including in The Journal of Urban History, The European Journal of American Studies, California History, Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire and Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales. She is now working on a history of the Spring Break phenomenon and, as part of this new project, she is planning on developing a module on the history of US youth cultures.

She has also in mind a module on urban America entitled ‘New York- LA-Chicago’, which would take students on a virtual tour of America’s three biggest (and arguably most fascinating) cities. She is currently the convenor of the second year option module ‘Affluence and Anxiety: The US from 1920 to 1960.’

Since arriving at Northumbria, alongside teaching, Elsa has presented her research at the Environmental History Network conference held in Northumbria and at the HOTCUS conference on “the regulated body” held at the Oxford Rothermere Institute.

You can follow Elsa on Twitter: @E_Devienne.
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 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 was recognized at the Northumbria Student Union’s Student-Led Teaching Awards for 2017-18, 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 experience. 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 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!

There will be a taster day on February 14, 2020, which will be of interest to any students and teachers whose A-Level or GCSE curriculum includes material on the twentieth century United States. Further details of this event can be found on p. 5.

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. Patrick Andelic
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or Dr. Julie Taylor
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For more information on American Studies at Northumbria, please visit us at:
http://northumbria.ac.uk/americanstudies

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