

Winter-Spring 2011

# The Metro

The Newsletter of the New York Metro Regional Chapter of the American Studies Association

## ~ IT'S ELECTION SEASON! ~

According to the NYMASA Constitution, a new Executive Committee must be elected every two years, and we have exceeded that time. All positions are open. Please consider taking one of these commitments; we will hold 'elections' at the NYMASA Brunch (description follows). The positions on the committee are President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Committee Members-at-Large. The responsibilities of each position are described as follows in the NYMASA Constitution:

- It is the duty of the **President** to convene and preside at all general meetings of NYMASA and its Executive Committee. The President will receive and present all proposals for policies and activities that, if approved by the Executive Committee, will carry out the chartered purposes and obligations of NYMASA. He or she will also answer routine correspondence directed to NYMASA by the ASA or its regions as well as other professional organizations.
- The **Vice-President** shall, in the absence of the President, preside at all meetings. Should the Presidency become vacant, the Vice-President shall serve the remainder of the President's term. He or she will set each meeting agenda in consultation with other Executive Committee members and will be in charge of the NYMASA newsletter.

- The **Secretary** will be responsible for the quotidian business of NYMASA, including maintaining membership rolls and email lists, taking and making available minutes, and supervising elections.
- The **Treasurer** has custody of all funds. He or she may, on behalf of NYMASA, endorse checks and shall deposit them to the credit of the organization. He or she shall sign all receipts and vouchers and sign all checks of NYMASA. The Treasurer shall make such payments as may be necessary on behalf of the organization and will be responsible for other financial concerns, such as taxes. He or she shall keep account of all financial transactions, which will be open for inspection by members. He or she will also present a financial status report at both the general and Executive Committee meetings.
- **Members-at-Large** of the Executive Committee attend E.C. meetings and have executive decision-making powers.

---

## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual NYMASA Spring Brunch

The executive board of NYMASA would like to invite you to the annual Americanist Brunch, which this year will take place from 11-2 on Sunday, March 20th. You may not know it, but you may very well be a member of NYMASA already: if you belong to the American Studies

Association and live in the greater New York metro area, you are automatically a member (and you should be receiving our biannual newsletter, *The Metro*). We at NYMASA are proud of our vibrant community and the rich array of activities we organize: an annual interdisciplinary conference; salon talks, a monthly series in which new authors in American studies share their work in a lively forum; reading and writing groups; and a variety of cultural events at local institutions.

The brunch is an excellent opportunity to meet colleagues in your field, and to find out about NYMASA and the events planned for the coming year. It is also a chance for us to hear about what new and returning faculty are doing, and what you would like to see from us. We are always looking for new ideas, and we welcome your input and involvement. Faculty, graduate students, independent scholars, and others are invited. At this year's Brunch, we will be conducting elections to fill the Executive Committee. All positions are open!

Please let us know if you plan to attend: significant others and children are very welcome. This is an informal and relaxed event! Write to Sarah Chinn, who will be hosting the brunch at her home in Brooklyn, to RSVP and for directions at [sarah.chinn@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:sarah.chinn@hunter.cuny.edu).

---

## MEMBER NEWS

Julia Foulkes, Associate Professor of History at the New School, is happy to announce the publication of *To the City: Urban Photographs of the New Deal* (<http://tinyurl.com/4jr5srz>) as well as an edited volume on "The Arts in Place" with fabulous essays by Alison Isenberg, Mark Tebeau, Ben Looker, Sarah Schrank and others (*Journal of Social History*, Winter 2010).

---

Hayes Peter Mauro, Assistant Professor in the Department of Art & Design at Queensborough Community College, has written *The Art of Americanization at the Carlisle Indian School*.

The book is being published by the University of New Mexico Press in early 2011.

---

Themis Chronopoulos (State University of New York, Stony Brook) has published the book *Spatial Regulation in New York City: From Urban Renewal to Zero Tolerance* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

If any NYMASA members have recently published a book and would like to feature it in a salon talk in the fall, please contact Sarah Chinn at [sarah.chinn@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:sarah.chinn@hunter.cuny.edu). Questions or other book suggestions also welcome.

---

## NYMASA proudly presents

### SALON TALKS Spring 2011

Once again, we have a terrific array of scholars talking about their recently-published books. Salon Talks are an opportunity for local American Studies scholars to share their published work with an intimate audience. They tend to be small, lively, and informative; light refreshments are served. This semester all Salon Talks will be held at 7:30pm in the Faculty and Staff Lounge, on the 8th floor of the West Building, Hunter College (Lexington Avenue and 68<sup>th</sup> Street).

For directions, more information, or to rsvp, contact Sarah Chinn at [sarah.chinn@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:sarah.chinn@hunter.cuny.edu)

### Wednesday, March 16

**Ann Fabian** (Rutgers University)  
*The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (Chicago University Press)

With *The Skull Collectors*, eminent historian Ann Fabian resurrects that popular and scientific movement, telling the strange—and at times gruesome—story of Samuel George Morton, his contemporaries, and their search for a scientific

foundation for racial difference. From cranial measurements and museum shelves to heads on stakes, bloody battlefields, and the “rascally pleasure” of grave robbing, Fabian paints a lively picture of scientific inquiry in service of an agenda of racial superiority, and of a society coming to grips with both the deadly implications of manifest destiny and the mass slaughter of the Civil War. Even as she vividly recreates the past, Fabian also deftly traces the continuing implications of this history, from lingering traces of scientific racism to debates over the return of the remains of Native Americans that are held by museums to this day.

Full of anecdotes, oddities, and insights, *The Skull Collectors* takes readers on a darkly fascinating trip down a little-visited but surprisingly important byway of American history.

#### Thursday, April 14

**Tim Raphael** (Rutgers University)  
*The President Electric: Ronald Reagan and the Politics of Performance* (University of Michigan Press)

When Ronald Reagan first entered politics in 1965, his public profile as a performer in radio, film, television, and advertising and his experience in public relations proved invaluable political assets. By the time he left office in 1989, the media in which he trained had become the primary source for generating and wielding political power. *The President Electric: Ronald Reagan and the Politics of Performance* reveals how the systematic employment of the techniques and technologies of mass-media performance contributed to Reagan’s rise to power and defined his style of governance.

*The President Electric* stands out among books on Reagan as the first to bring the rich insights of the field of performance studies to an understanding of the Reagan phenomenon, connecting Reagan’s training in electronic media to the nineteenth-century notion of the “fiat of electricity”—the emerging sociopolitical power

of three entities (mechanical science, corporate capitalism, and mass culture) that electric technology made possible. The book describes how this new regime of cultural and political representation shaped the development of the electronic mass media that transformed American culture and politics and educated Ronald Reagan for his future role as president.

#### Tuesday, May 10

**David Jaffee** (Bard Graduate Center)  
*A New Nation of Goods: The Material Culture of Early America* (University of Pennsylvania Press)

*A New Nation of Goods* highlights the significant role of provincial artisans in four crafts in the northeastern United States—chairmaking, clockmaking, portrait painting, and book publishing—to explain the shift from preindustrial society to an entirely new configuration of work, commodities, and culture. As a whole, the book proposes an innovative analysis of early nineteenth-century industrialization and the development of a middle-class consumer culture. It relies on many of the objects beloved by decorative arts scholars and collectors to evoke the vitality of village craft production and culture in the decades after the War of Independence.

*A New Nation of Goods* grounds its broad narrative of cultural change in case studies of artisans, consumers, and specific artifacts. Each chapter opens with an “object lesson” and weaves an object-based analysis together with the richness of individual lives. The path that such craftspeople and consumers took was not inevitable; on the contrary, as historian David Jaffee vividly demonstrates, it was strewn with alternative outcomes, such as decentralized production with specialized makers. The richly illustrated book offers a collective biography of the post-Revolutionary generation, gathering together the case studies of producers and consumers who embraced these changes, those who opposed them, or, most significantly, those who fashioned the myriad small changes that

coalesced into a new Victorian cultural order that none of them had envisioned or entirely appreciated.

---

### **Middle Atlantic American Studies Association Conference: “Heritage and the State”**

Pre-registration is open for the conference on “Heritage and the State” at the State Capitol in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, April 8-9, 2011, sponsored by the Middle Atlantic American Studies Association in conjunction with the Middle Atlantic Folklife Association and the Pennsylvania Political Science Association. See <http://hbg.psu.edu/research/maasa/conferences.htm> or write [amstd@psu.edu](mailto:amstd@psu.edu). Lodging is available at a conference discount before March 9 at the Harrisburg Hilton hotel by asking for the Pennsylvania Political Science Association meeting at 717-233-6000 or [http://www1.hilton.com/en\\_US/hi/index.do](http://www1.hilton.com/en_US/hi/index.do).

The conference theme is intended to explore issues related to the relationship of culture, government, and communities nationally as well as regionally and transnationally. It raises questions, too, about the emergence of “heritage” as a term, rhetoric, concept, and subject for study in American discourse on culture, society, and tradition.

The conference will feature workshops, a plenary session on public heritage, concurrent sessions with research presentations, undergraduate roundtable, receptions, and tours of the Capitol and heritage institutions. A luncheon and dinner are included in the cost of registration. With support of the American Studies Association, the conference will also feature on Friday evening a performance and discussion with regional folk musicians who have participated in heritage programming in their communities. The luncheon will include awarding of the Francis Ryan Award and Simon J. Bronner Award for research in undergraduate and graduate research, respectively, in addition to announcement

of the American Studies Undergraduate honor society. After the conference, the Middle Atlantic American Studies Association will assume its new title of the Eastern American Studies Association.

---

### **Yale Symposium *The Urban Catwalk: Fashion and Street Culture***

**April 22-23**

*The Urban Catwalk: Fashion and Street Culture*, a one-day symposium at Yale University, aims to investigate and openly discuss the relationships between street style and identity. The goal of *The Urban Catwalk* is to show not only how vital fashion is to our daily lives, but to also demonstrate how it impacts the way we understand the cities and neighborhoods we live in. Skinny jeans and Cuban heels are all the rage in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, but it’s Khakis and dress shirts on the Upper East Side. In this way, *The Urban Catwalk* will contextualize and historicize street fashions within the broader realm of popular culture and the urban experience. For more information and registration details, please visit [www.theurbancatwalk.com](http://www.theurbancatwalk.com)

---

### **Columbia University American Studies Seminar Series**

The 2010-2011 Columbia University American Studies Seminar Series - co-chaired by Elizabeth Hutchinson, Department of Art History, Barnard College, and Glenn Hendler, Director of American Studies, Fordham University--is devoted to the theme of The “Greening” of American Studies. All talks will begin at 7:30 p.m., Faculty House, Columbia University. If you would like to join the speaker, chairs and rapporteur for drinks and/or dinner before the talk, please RSVP to seminar rapporteur Alexandra Elbaum by the Monday preceding the event. Attendees will gather for a glass of wine downstairs at the bar at 6 p.m., and move

upstairs for dinner at about 6:30. For more information contact Alexandra Elbaum (aee2109@columbia.edu) with any questions or comments.

- **Thursday 3/3:** Cindi Katz, Environmental Psychology Program, CUNY Graduate Center, "Trace Memory Erasure: The Geographical Imagination of Restoration in New Orleans, The Bronx and Detroit."
- **Thursday 4/7:** John Gamber, Department of English/Center for Study of Ethnicity and Race, Columbia University, "Positive Pollutions and Cultural Toxins: Waste and Contamination in Contemporary US Ethnic Literatures."

## CALLS for PAPERS

We are seeking contribution from all disciplines to an American Studies essay collection on DIRT.

Dirt is among the most material but also the most metaphorical and expressive of substances. This collection hopes to bring together essays that explore how people imagine, define, and employ the various concepts and realities of dirt. What does it mean to call something dirty? How do we understand dirt and its supposed opposite, cleanliness? How do we explain the points at which we draw the line between clean and dirty, what we embrace and what we refuse to touch? Drawing on multiple disciplines we hope to uncover and foreground the (often unconscious) centrality of the metaphors and actualities of dirt to U.S. cultures, values, and lived experiences.

Possible formulations of this keyword include (but are not limited to):

- \* Dirty words
- \* Dirty pictures and dirty minds
- \* Dirt and disorder
- \* Hygiene
- \* Trash
- \* Dirt and art

- \* Waste, human and otherwise
- \* Excess and excrescences
- \* Germophobia
- \* Fear of impurity
- \* Chthonic dirt
- \* Sanitation
- \* Urban construction and destruction
- \* Getting the dirt: gossip, revelation, exposure
- \* Filthy lucre
- \* Washing one's hands
- \* Animals and animality
- \* Dirty jokes
- \* Dirty politicians
- \* Corruption and scandal
- \* Ecology/sustainability
- \* Dirt collectors (hoarders, Collyers syndrome, cat ladies)
  - \* Getting down in the dirt (reality shows, mud wrestling, spectacle)
  - \* Landfills and parks design
  - \* Disgust, repulsion, nausea
  - \* "Dirty immigrants" and other epithets
  - \* Sustainable dirt

Please send abstracts and cvs to Patricia Yaeger at [pyaeger@umich.edu](mailto:pyaeger@umich.edu) and Hildegard Hoeller at [hilhllr@aol.com](mailto:hilhllr@aol.com) by April 30th, 2011. Essays should be 9000 words and will be due December 15, 2011.

## 2012 NeMLA Call for Papers

The 43<sup>rd</sup> annual convention for the Northeast Modern Language Association will be held March 15-18, 2012, in Rochester, New York. Compact yet diverse, Rochester also boasts important historical connections, including reformers Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass, and the inventor, George Eastman.

The deadline for session proposals is April 22, 2011; potential chairs can find guidelines for proposals on the NeMLA website. Proposals on American Literature, Cultural Studies & Film, and Women's & Gender Studies are welcome. The list of accepted panels will be published in the newsletter and online CFP in June. [www.nemla.org](http://www.nemla.org)

**NYMASA Executive Committee**

**President:** Hildegard Hoeller, [hilhllr@aim.com](mailto:hilhllr@aim.com)

**Vice President:** Jean Murley, [jean.murley@gmail.com](mailto:jean.murley@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Sarah Chinn, [sarah.chinn@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:sarah.chinn@hunter.cuny.edu)

**Secretary:**

**President Emerita:** Sophie Bell, [sophiebell@nyc.rr.com](mailto:sophiebell@nyc.rr.com)

**Member-at-Large:**

**Jean Murley**  
**417A Halsey Street**  
**Brooklyn, NY 11233**

