

2025 WINTER

An American Studies Newsletter

american
studies

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

Dear AMS community,

As I begin my tenure as Chair of the American Studies Department, I am incredibly grateful for our vibrant community, for our brilliant and ambitious undergraduate and graduate students, for our accomplished and innovative faculty, and for our devoted and hardworking staff. I am happy to share that geographer Dr. Sage Ponder has joined our department, and that we are now home to the Urban Studies Undergraduate Program, an area of study that is of great interest to both our students and faculty members.

We are living through tumultuous times, but moments like these show us how vital American Studies is to understanding the many changes we are experiencing. In American Studies undergraduate and graduate courses students learn to critically analyze everything from popular music and newspaper articles to political rhetoric and federal legislation. They conduct oral history interviews, ethnographic studies, and archival research to better understand the American past and present. These skills are critical for students' future careers as well as their ability to be active and engaged community members and global citizens.

As 2025 begins, we have so much to celebrate in American Studies. The year ahead will surely bring challenges, but I look forward to facing them together and to finding new ways to grow and strengthen American Studies.

Best wishes,
Lauren Gutterman

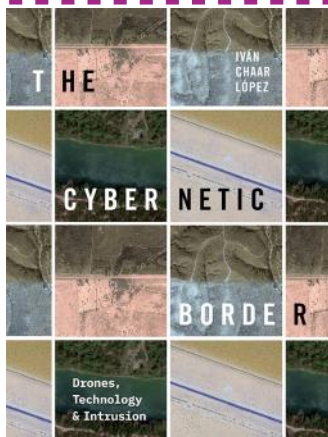
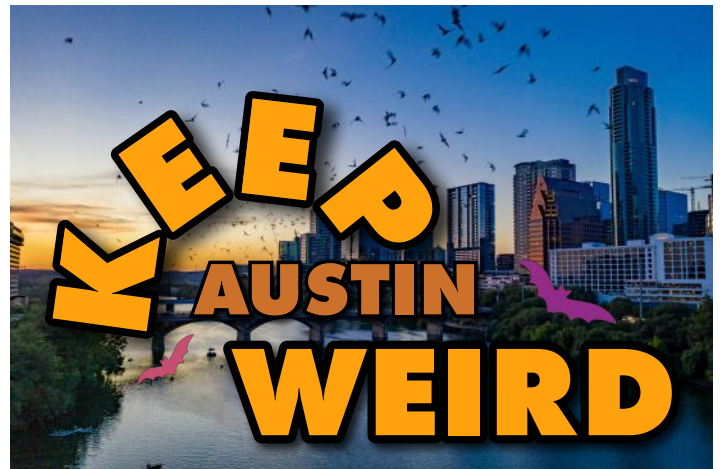


ANNOUNCEMENTS



We are thrilled to announce that Dr. Sage Ponder joined our department as Assistant Professor of American Studies this semester. Dr. Ponder's research focuses on the racialization of urban finance and the financialization of social reproduction. More specifically, Dr. Ponder has shown seemingly "color-blind" processes of urban debt and development have produced bankruptcies and financial crises in Black and brown-majority cities. Dr. Ponder's work is both interdisciplinary and transnational. Her scholarly writing has appeared in many journals including *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* and *Urban Geography*. Welcome, Dr. Ponder!

The Urban Studies Undergraduate Program is now housed in American Studies! Urban Studies is an interdisciplinary undergraduate program that combines classroom studies with real-world experience in the Austin metropolitan area. If you are curious about how cities are physically put together, the history of urbanization, the conflict and creativity that pervades urban life, the economic factors that affect urban growth and development, or the political dynamics shaping urban governance, you will find a home for your interests in Urban Studies.



FACULTY NEWS!

The Cybernetic Border: Drones, Technology, and Intrusion by Dr. Iván Char López was published by Duke University Press!



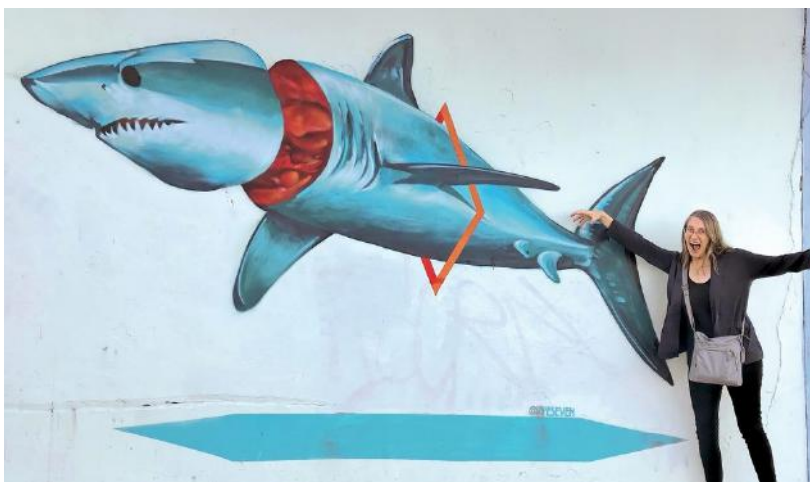
Dr. Lauren Gutterman coedited a special issue of *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* alongside Martin F. Manalansan IV and Stephen Vider titled "Queering the Domestic."

Dr. Julia Mickenberg was a featured speaker at the Harry Ransom Center's Flair Symposium on Literature and Change, held in conjunction with the Ransom Center's exhibition on PEN America. Dr. Mickenberg also compiled a series of essays (and co-wrote one) on How The Liberal Arts Works, featured in the newest *MLA Profession*.



This fall, I presented a paper, "Fitness for Service in Shark-infested Waters: U.S. Morale and Psychiatric Testing during World War II," at the History of Science Society Annual Meeting, in Mérida, Mexico, on November 10, 2024, as part of a panel on aquatic predators.

In Spring 2024, I was on a Faculty Development Leave and had a lot of fun giving talks and participating on conference panels. I also conducted archival research at the Nantucket Historical Association with the generous support of the 2023-2024 E. Geoffrey and Elizabeth Thayer Verney Fellowship in April 2024. As part of the fellowship, I gave a public lecture at the Nantucket Whaling Museum that you can watch here.



I also completed a draft of a book chapter, "Sharks: Feared, Revered, Reviled, and Mysterious," which will be published in *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Global History*, edited by Emily Wakild, Nancy Brown, and Faisal Husain. Lastly, I continue the slow process of writing my current book, *Sharkmania! An American History, 1700-Present*.

My research was recently featured in my alma mater's magazine, *The Carleton Voice*, which can be read here.

Visualizing the Environment: Ansel Adams and His Legacy at the Harry Ransom Center

This exhibition was curated by Associate Dean Dr. Steven D. Hoelscher, Faculty Curator for Photography, Harry Ransom Center, and Stiles Professor of American Studies and Geography. The exhibition displays a lifetime of photography and some of the most iconic works by Ansel Adams alongside his predecessors and those he influenced throughout time. The exhibition is available until February 2, 2025. For more information visit the HRC website [here](#).



Randy Lewis co-presented "Elon Magazine: Anthropology, Satire, and Collaborative Hallucination with Sentient Machines" with his colleagues Craig Campbell and Florian Grundmuller at New York Academy of Sciences on December 2, 2024. Earlier in the fall, their work in creating an anti-celebrity, AI-infused magazine was profiled in DesignBoom: "*Elon Magazine's Surreal Imagery & Investigative Research Uncover Musk's Media Spectacles*"). Randy also produced two documentary shorts in Mexico City since July. "*El Parque y La Ciudad*" explores the life of a single park in the city center, while *Art Against Tesla* examines Chavis Marmol's controversial, Tesla-crushing work. Finally, he was asked to write an epilogue about the election for his forthcoming book *Bummerland: Ruin and Restoration in the New America*, which is slated to appear in early 2026.

Sally Parampottil was awarded a Rapoport-King Scholarship for her senior thesis in American Studies! Her thesis examines *Sports Illustrated's* coverage of female athletes during Olympic years from 1956-1992 to track the development of social conversations of womanhood as a result of Cold War politics. Sally shows that *Sports Illustrated's* rhetoric around women enforced certain notions of American femininity, "mannish-ness," sexuality, and race, while also adapting in response to global events.



Awards:

- **Stephanie Childress**, Awarded "Foreign Languages Studies Dissertation Fellowship" for the academic year of 2024-2025.
- **Odalis Garcia Gorra**, Awarded "Crossing Ladinades Mellon Fellowship" from the University of Texas Graduate School.
- **Lillian Nagengast and Justine Frerichs**, Awarded "Reimaging Professional Development Award" from the University of Texas Graduate School. Justine and Lillian have proposed creating a series of events and resources to highlight non-corporate, non-academic career pathways for UT doctoral students.

Undergraduate Graduations:

- Desteny Briones
- Olivia Green
- Jessica Roca
- Ahitza Roque



The following students completed their oral comprehension exams:

- Odalis Garcia Gorra
- Giulia Oprea
- Justine Frerichs
- Lillian Nagengast
- Rene Arteaga

The following students completed their masters theses:

- Levina Parada
** Movement and Imagery: The Work of Humans, Honey Bees, and Advertising for California Almond Production*
** Supervisor: Dr. Lina Chhun*

The following students advanced to PhD candidacy:

- Lillian Nagengast

PhD candidate Lillian Nagengast presenting at the National Women's Studies Association conference.



AMERICAN STUDIES WORKSHOP SERIES

The American Studies Workshop series, facilitated by Dr. Iván Chaar López and Levina Parada, serves as an interdisciplinary community space that brings together faculty and graduate students to share their work, at any stage, in whichever format they see fit (e.g., talks, conference papers). We had the pleasure of hosting wonderful faculty members across the University of Texas at Austin such as Dr. Ashanté Reese, Dr. Marina Peterson, Dr. Nicole Ramsey, and graduate students Jeremy Boorum, Crys Zhao, and Holly Genovese in the fall semester of 2024. Thank you to all presented and attended.



AMERICAN STUDIES WORKSHOP

**Cloud Seeding Los Angeles:
Toward an Elemental Urbanism**

Dr. Marina Peterson

Department of Anthropology &
Co-Director, Bureau for Experimental Ethnography

NOVEMBER 1, 2024

BUR 436A | 11:30AM-1PM + 20 MIN

1118 275 CLOUD FORMATION 20 MINUTES AFTER SUBJECT CIRRUS - G-E REVIEW]. 11-20-52

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PhD student Jeremy Boorum presenting at an American Studies Workshop Series.

Students gather for an AMS Workshop organized by Holly Genovese with Dr. Karma Chávez and Dr. Lina Chhun on activism and scholarship.



UT AMS IN BALTIMORE AT THE AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING 2024



Dr. Iván Charar López & Dr. Erin McElroy discuss their recent books at ASA '24 in Baltimore, MD.



UT AMS PhD grad and Harvard professor Dr. Nicholas Bloom with AMS PhD candidate Holly Genovese.



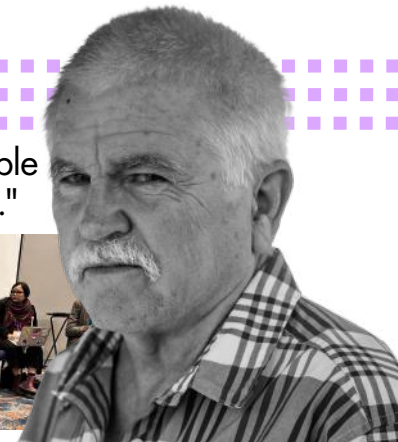
PhD student Odalis Garcia Gorra presenting at her research at ASA!

PhD candidate Amanda Tovar, chairing a panel on borders and art.



Dr. Iván Charar López signing his newly published book, *The Cybernetic Border!*

AMS students attend "Roundtable in Remembrance of Mike Davis."



UPCOMING EVENTS



Friday, 1/24 11:30am at the Harry Ransom Center: Dr. Steven Hoelscher will be presenting "Pictures on a Wall: Public Humanities and the Making of an Exhibition" for the first American Studies Workshop.



Wednesday, 2/5 12pm in Robert L. Patton 1.302D: Dr. Lauren Gutterman and PhD candidate Hartlyn Haynes will present on LGBTQ+ history at UT Austin for the LGBTQ Studies Program.



Friday, 2/28 11:30 am in Burdine 436A: American Studies Workshop Graduate Student Panel featuring René Arteaga, "Buying Comunidad: Gym Culture as Commodity and the Aesthetics of Consumption in East Austin's Lift ATX;" Lennex Cowan, "Paradoxes of Pedagogical Power: Performance, Antiracism, and the Range of Black Pedagogies;" Levina Parada, "Restoration and Return: Popular Education within Land Back Efforts on O'ahu."

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