FACULTY HAPPENINGS

Gina Perez is using her sabbatical leave to advance a number of projects. In October, she and coeditors Frank Guridy and Adrian Burgos Jr. completed final revisions to their anthology, *Beyond El Barrio: Everyday Life in Latina/o America*, to be published by NYU Press next fall. Gina is also working on her book-length manuscript, tentatively titled *Creating Better Citizens: Latina/o Youth, JROTC and the American Dream*. In addition to these projects, Gina presented a paper and served as a discussant at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Philadelphia in December 2009. Finally, she visited the archives at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College to begin a new research project examining the scholarship and activism of Puerto Rican feminist ethnographers from the 1980s and 1990s.

New Perspectives

I am delighted to serve as acting director of Comparative American Studies this year while Gina Perez and Meredith Raimondo take much-deserved sabbaticals. I would like to welcome our new majors and minors, as well as new advanced students, alumni, and friends of the CAS program.

While we miss Gina and Meredith, we are very fortunate to have two visiting faculty members joining us who bring new perspectives and courses to our curriculum. Christopher Rivera comes from Rutgers University, where he completed an interdisciplinary PhD in gender studies and comparative literature. During fall semester, he taught Situated Research and a 200-level course, Latino/as in Film and Media. Kara Thompson finished her PhD in English at the University of California, Davis, last summer, with a primary focus in queer and Native American studies. Her fall classes at Oberlin were Introduction to CAS and a 200-level course, Queer Mobilities. Descriptions of their spring 2010 courses can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. Students are really excited about these classes and praise these challenging and engaging teachers.

CAS continues to have a close alliance with the Multicultural Resource Center, particularly through co-sponsoring events for Latino/a Heritage Month, the My Name is My Own Series, the Indigenous Women’s Series, and other conferences, speakers, and events that contribute to the intellectual, political, and artistic life of the campus. We are also happy to announce that CAS and Third World House have teamed up to develop the house for more CAS programming. In addition, on March 3, we will sponsor a lecture by Professor Lisa Nakamura of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, titled “Race in Virtual Worlds: the Return of Techno-Orientalism.”

We have initiated a couple of changes to the major requirements, the most important of which is the redesigned capstone seminar, CAST 400: Research Seminar: Expanding the Archive, now required of all majors. This seminar will explore a range of methods used by American studies scholars in conducting primary research. The course will guide students through the various steps of research, analysis, and writing, culminating in a final paper. Because of its focus on the research process, students will build upon their previous course of study to design a project that brings various theoretical, methodological, and historical issues together.

Amid the challenges this country faces, from economic crises and healthcare reform to the war in Afghanistan and global warming, I am ever mindful of the joys of working with wonderful colleagues and students. Thanks as ever to the CAS program committee, as well as students, staff, and alumni who help make this such a rich, collaborative environment. I would especially like to acknowledge our student major representatives: Max Beshers, Amina Hassen, Cordelia Loots-Gollin, and Yujean Park, who do a great deal of work to build and support the CAS community.

Wendy Kozol, Acting Director

New This Year…

From Equal Rights to Human Rights: Feminist Perspectives on Human Rights

In the fall of 2009, Wendy Kozol taught a new course that explores how feminist activists theorize the inequalities that underpin agendas for social change. This interdisciplinary course focuses on how liberal ideals of individual rights have enabled and constrained feminist theories of social justice. We use a historical and comparative approach to study a range of American feminist theories, including the civil rights model and challenges to the rights paradigm from queer theorists and Third World and Indigenous feminists. Readings range from primary documents by second-wave feminists to disability activists’ critiques of feminist concepts of embodiment.

Pablo Mitchell’s new book project, *West of Sex: Colonialism and Mexican America, 1900-1930*, is under review with the University of Chicago Press. In spring 2010 he will co-teach the U.S. history survey course with Shelley Lee and Clayton Koppes, as well as courses on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and the American West.

Eric Estes started his work as associate dean of academic diversity in the College of Arts and Sciences in July, focusing on curricular and faculty diversity initiatives. He also contributed to an article on the election of Barack Obama published in *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*, presented on panels at two Consortium for High Achievement and Success conferences, helped to organize this year’s GLCA Students of Color Leadership Conference hosted at Oberlin for the first time, and taught his course Bodies in Play: Athletics, Identity and Culture in America in the fall. He is also excited about supporting a new academic collaboration between Comparative American Studies and the Third World Program House in his role as faculty liaison.

Shelley Lee’s book, *Claiming the Oriental Gateway: Seattle Japanese Americans and the Pacific World*, is scheduled for publication in late 2010 by Temple University Press. She is beginning a new project, an updated synthesis of Asian American history, which is under contract with Routledge Press. In October 2009, Shelley participated in a symposium for the centennial of the 1909 Seattle world’s exposition at the University of Washington, and a version of her paper will appear in a special issue of the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*.

During fall, she taught a new seminar on America in the 1970s, and for spring has revamped her Race, Gender, and American Social Movements course as a 200-level class (it was previously an advanced seminar).

**Wendy Kozol** continues to work on a book project, *Visible Wars and the Ambivalences of Witnessing*, on U.S. militarism and visual culture. She recently gave talks on this project at international conferences in Dublin and Toronto. For the 2009-10 academic year, Wendy is acting director of CAS and teaching two new courses. She was one of six faculty members to receive a 2008-09 Oberlin Teaching Excellence Award.

**Meredith M. Gadsby** will teach with the Oberlin College Dannenberg-In-London Program in Spring 2010. She will teach one course, Improper English: Black British Literature and Anticolonial Struggle, and team-teach Sugar and Salt: Commodities and Cultures with Baron Pineda of anthropology. Meredith is excited to travel with Oberlin students to London, expecting to be energized for her duties as chair of African American studies next year.

In the fall, Christopher Rivera (visiting assistant professor) taught Close Reading in/of Everyday Life and Latin@s in Film and Media, which are rich spaces where students grapple with concepts like identity, normativity, postcolonialism, and various other social formations to better understand how representation and authenticity function in American culture. In the spring, he will teach Latinidad and Voicing Otherness and eagerly anticipates a wonderfully inquisitive group of students. He has completed his dissertation, “Admission as Submission: Richard Rodriguez’s Autobiographies as an Epistemology of Penetration,” and wishes to thank CAS and the Oberlin community for finding a place for him in their minds and hearts!

**Kara Thompson** (visiting assistant professor) recently completed her PhD at the University of California. She is revising her manuscript, *A Romance with Many Reservations: American Indian Figurations and the Globalization of Indigeneity*. Her research analyzes how the reservation—as a spatial boundary and a temporal delay—signifies American Indians as subjects that must be set aside even while they are also constitutive of U.S. national and global futures. For the spring semester, Kara will teach two new courses for the department, including an introduction to disability studies and a course titled Performing Sovereignty, which examines the tenuous relationship between tribal nations and the U.S. nation-state.

A historian by training, **Renee Romano** came to Oberlin last year after spending many years at Wesleyan University in the history department, the African American studies program, and the American studies program. Her courses include The United States in World War II, Race-ing the Environment, Historical Memory in the United States, and Race and Sexuality in American History. In 2009, Renee published “Moving Beyond ‘The Movement that Changed the World’: Bringing the History of the Cold War into Civil Rights Museums” in *The Public Historian*. She also gave keynote addresses or major talks at Yale University, the University of North Carolina, Kent State University, the University of Illinois-Chicago, and the University of New Hampshire. She is currently serving as a consultant for the May 4th Visitor’s Center at Kent State University, co-editing a book series, *Since 1970: Histo-
ries of Contemporary America, for the University of Georgia Press, co-editing an anthology on the challenges of writing contemporary history, and working on her own book project, Justice Delayed: Civil Rights Trials and America’s Racial Reckoning, to be published by Harvard University Press.

Daphne John spoke at Wells College in October 2009 on her research regarding masculinities and NASCAR (From whiskey trippin’ to wine sipping: competing masculinities in NASCAR). She presented a paper, “Drive For Diversity: Latinos, Whiteness and the Need for New NASCA R citizens” at the American Studies Association meeting in November. Daphne recently received a Curriculum Development Grant from the college for a course on the Sociology of Sport.

Meredith Raimondo and Pawan Dhingra are on leave in 2009-10.

Read much more about CAS faculty members, course offerings, and alumni at www.oberlin.edu/CAS.

**NEW SPRING COURSES**

CAST 208—The Latinidad Question: Comparative Latin@ and Latin American Literature, Christopher Rivera
This course examines “latinidad” inside and outside of the U.S. in contemporary literature, film, and documentary. The aim is to compare how these texts produce, transform, or limit the political and cultural construction of “latinidad” (inter)nationally. We will use a comparative approach to the complex past, present, and future of “latinidad in Latin@ and Latin American literature (in translation). Through close readings, we will explore concepts such as borders/boundaries, and colonialism/postcolonialism.

CAST 251—“Unstable” Bodies: An Introduction to Dis/ability Studies, Kara Thompson
This course examines how constructions of ability and disability pertain to U.S. national and global identity formations. For example, we will examine how metaphors of nationhood depend on the articulation of able-bodied subjects. Beyond the normative, however, notions of “unstable bodies” also produce the illusion of a coherent subject. Using a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, this course will explore the transnational histories of eugenics, theories and critiques of space, and heteronormative constructions of disability.

CAST 326—Performing Sovereignty: Reservations, Militarism, and the Politics of Native America, Kara Thompson
This course will investigate competing concepts of sovereignty through a study of the histories of U.S. federal incursion into American Indian tribal politics. Reservations are militarized sites of U.S. colonization that have provoked multiple strategies for tribal nations’ sovereignty claims. Central to this course is the concept of sovereignty as a performative act of empowerment and contestation. Questions include: Is sovereignty a “natural” or inherent right? What is the relationship between indigeneity and sovereignty?

CAST 368—Voicing Otherness Through Contemporary Film and Literature: Being Fat, Queer, and “Colored” in America, Christopher Rivera
Who is more Other than a fat colored queer? This course will explore the role of Otherness in American public culture by considering how non-normative bodies get represented as deviant or excessive in contemporary television, film, and literature. We will analyze how issues of visibility, excess, and deviance (played out on the surface of bodies) frame the conceptualization of what is normal and what is queer in culture.

CAST 400—Research Seminar: Expanding the Archive, Wendy Kozol
How do American Studies scholars use archives? Is this changing in the 21st century? Do archives such as the Internet require different methodological approaches? This seminar explores the distinctiveness of interdisciplinary research in Comparative American Studies as well as the range of traditional and contemporary sources of evidence available to scholars. Students will work through the steps of evidence gathering, analysis, and writing a research paper.
The Comparative American Studies Program would like to thank William Norris, professor emeritus of sociology, for his years of service to the program. Bill chaired the ad-hoc faculty committee that was instrumental in developing the proposal for the creation of the CAS program that was passed by the college faculty in 2001 and then served as the first chair of the program. Bill specialized in urban sociology, sexualities, and Latin American development with an emphasis on Brazil. In 1991, he published the first study of LGBT people at Oberlin, “Liberal Attitudes and Homophobic Acts: The Paradox of Homosexual Experience in a Liberal Institution” in the *Journal of Homosexuality*. He was also one of the inaugural recipients of the “Q” award, given by the Oberlin Lambda Alumni in 2007, in recognition of “extraordinary contributions to generations of Oberlin's Lambda students and the community that supports them.” Bill retired from Oberlin in 2008. We thank him for his service and wish him all the best.

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**SPOTLIGHT ON BILL NORRIS**

*Bill Norris (left) with his longtime partner, Professor of History Clayton Koppes.*

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**ALUMNI UPDATES**

**Amy Caes, Class of 2008**

I’m working on a master’s degree in library and information science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. I will graduate in May and plan to move to the Midwest or East Coast with my partner. I also run the LGBT Campus Center Library and am involved in the Jail Library Group, which provides library services to individuals in the Dane County jails. I’m not sure if I’ll ever be employed as a corrections librarian, but I plan to stay involved after graduation. I’m also raising a guide dog, Promise, with OccuPaws Guide Dog Association.

**Eli Conley, Class of 2008**

After Oberlin, I moved to Oakland, Calif., and began coordinating grassroots fundraising for Californians for Justice, a non-profit that organizes with young people of color for racial justice in the California public schools. I’ve been an active volunteer with the Catalyst Project, an organization that works with white social justice activists to build our vision, strategy, and commitment to racial justice movements. As of fall 2009, I’m transitioning out of full-time non-profit work to start performing around the Bay Area as a folk/country singer/songwriter and am teaching private voice lessons from my home.

**Dorothy Garretson, Class of 2008**

Since September of 2008, I have been an Americorps VISTA at the Community Mediation Center in Columbia, S.C. I recruit volunteer mediators and do community outreach. (I am now in my second year in this VISTA position.) In my free time, I am a referee for the Richland County Regulators, a local roller derby team. I also do activities with the South Carolina Progressive Network and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Columbia.

**Melissa B. Francisco, Class of 2005**

After graduation, I interned at the Independent Press Association-N.Y., a non-profit through which I supported local community and "ethnic" media and journalists in obtaining access to government agencies and in moving their stories to bigger markets. I also dabbled in freelance writing and volunteered with the GABRIELA Network, a grassroots feminist solidarity organization. For the past few years, I’ve been a legal assistant with the ACLU’s national Racial Justice Program, helping with litigation and advocacy related mostly to airline profiling and juvenile justice. What I explored academically and practically as a CAS major has been truly invaluable to my career choices and path since I graduated from Oberlin. I’m looking forward to returning to school in the next few years and to continuing a career in social justice.

**Jane E. Feustel, Class of 2006**

After graduation, I joined Colorado Progressive Coalition (CPC) as one of the lead get-out-the-vote organizers for a successful minimum wage increase campaign and as coordinator of the Women’s Voices, Women’s Vote project. Since the 2006 election, I’ve been working at Colorado Progressive Action, the lobbying arm of CPC, working on various social justice issues, including racial justice, voter education/outreach, economic justice, and ending the war in Iraq. I have also been involved as a member of the Luz Reproductive Justice Think Tank in Denver. Luz is a space where we can support one another, discuss how the intersections of oppression affect all of us, and create action to implement a reproductive justice analysis in our communities and
throughout Colorado. More on-point Obies should move to Denver! You can stay with me until you find a place of your own (or just come visit).

**Anna Hayden-Moy, Class of 2009**
I started working with an AmeriCorps program in Austin, Texas, at the beginning of September. The program is called AmeriCorps for Community Engagement and Education, or ACEE. With this program I tutor one-on-one with kindergartners in two bilingual (Spanish-English) classrooms at Andrews Elementary who are performing at a lower level in their basic literacy. It’s a great program for any majors hoping to get experience teaching or working with literacy—there are English language tutors as well!

**Rick B. Hoffman, Class of 2005**
I must admit that life after Oberlin has been hard. It’s tough to communicate how amazing and transformative CAS is to people. After graduating, I interned with a disability nonprofit. Next, I worked as a job coach for adults with developmental disabilities. After that, I worked as a campaign recruiter for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Currently, I am a student at Baruch College’s School of Public Affairs working towards a master’s of public administration degree, a perfect complement to the CAS major because it adds practical skills to our social justice toolkit. I also have two part-time jobs, one as the youth events and training administrator at the New York Road Runners Foundation and the other as an assistant for a Baruch professor in the education department. I also volunteer as a cheerleader for charity. I thank Jan Cooper and Meredith Raimondo for all their love, support, and letters of recommendation and add that CAS needs more classes like Situated Research because I have talked about that experience in so many interviews.

**Anna Graber, Class of 2007**
I am waitressing and teaching preschool at the Urban Arts Academy in Minneapolis.

**Lauren Salazar, Class of 2009**
Hello current and former CAS-ers! After graduating from Oberlin in May of 2009 I drove across the country back home to California and at the end of July 2009 moved to Lima, Peru. (I studied abroad here for six months while at Oberlin and decided to return for a while until I apply to graduate school.) I am living with my boyfriend in a lovely apartment near his family’s house and am working as an English teacher at a small school; I also teach private classes (including TOEFLs and GRE) in the evenings and weekends. It has been an adventure settling in, but nothing too hard to handle. If any Obies (or friends of Obies) need some orienting to Lima while on vacation or soul-searching travel, I’m certainly available. Best wishes to all!

**Sarah Schreiber, Class of 2005**
After graduation, I began working at Bike Out, a group offering physical health and wellness programs to LGBT youth in Los Angeles. I lost my job when we lost our funding, but then organized successfully with a group of former staff and volunteers to make sure our programs would continue. They are now happily housed at LifeWorks Mentoring, where I still volunteer to lead bike trips for baby queers. I’m currently working as a program coordinator for Youth Mentoring Connection, a group running innovative and effective mentoring programs for teens in South Central L.A. I volunteer with AWARE (awarehome.blogspot.com), a local white antiracist group, as a member of the facilitation team and the organizing workgroup. I also completed a fellowship with Public Allies (www.publicallies.org) somewhere along the way. I am grateful for all of my experiences at Oberlin and beyond, and I look forward to 1) always learning and 2) figuring out grad school: the next frontier.
CAS Faculty and Staff

Core Faculty:
Wendy Kozol, Professor and Acting Director
Shelley Lee, Assistant Professor
Christopher Rivera, Visiting Assistant Instructor
Kara Thompson, Visiting Assistant Professor
Meredith Raimondo, Associate Professor, (on leave 2009-2010)
Gina Pérez, Associate Professor, (on leave 2009-2010)

Comparative American Studies Program Committee:
Kazim Ali, Assistant Professor of Creative Writing
Jan Cooper, John Charles Reid Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Composition
Pawan Dhingra, Associate Professor of Sociology (on leave 2009-2010)
Eric Esles, Associate Dean/Director, Multicultural Resource Center, Adjunct Assistant Professor of CAS and History
Meredith Gadsby, Associate Professor of African American Studies
Daphne John, Associate Professor of Sociology
Gillian Johns, Associate Professor English
Harry Hirsch, Professor of Politics
Pablo Mitchell, Associate Professor of History
Renee Romano, Associate Professor of History

Administrative Assistant:
Judi Davidson

Student Representatives:
Max Beshers ’10, Amina Hassen ’10, Cordelia Loots-Gollin ’11, and Yujean Park ’10

Don’t Miss Out!

In an effort to curb print, postage, and environmental costs college-wide, Oberlin is moving several of its print publications online. Please make sure we have your email address, so that you don’t miss out on newsletters, invitations to alumni regional events, and more. You can update your e-mail address (and other information) via OBIEm at www.oberlin.edu/alumni. Go to the MyOBIEweb box and click on “register to access the community” (it’s free). Please direct questions to alumni@oberlin.edu or call the Alumni Association at (440) 775-8692.