Director’s Welcome
Greetings from the Comparative American Studies Program!

Wendy Kozol, Professor and Program Director

In 2013-14, Comparative American Studies celebrated its 10th anniversary. It is hard to believe that CAS is already a decade old. As part of this celebration, we hosted several events that began with a keywords panel discussion between CAS program faculty on “privilege,” the first in our now annual series. We also held two fascinating panel discussions reflecting on the present and future of CAS: “The State and Future of Asian American Studies at Oberlin and Beyond,” and “CAST-ing a Wide Net: Ten Years of Comparative American Studies at Oberlin College.” CAS faculty and students were joined by two guest speakers: Moon-Ho Jung, associate professor of history at the University of Washington, and Judy Tsu-Chun Wu, professor of history at Ohio State University. CAS was also delighted to host, along with Phi Beta Kappa, a lecture on Mt. Rushmore and nationalism by the distinguished professor of Native studies, Philip Deloria from the University of Michigan.

In 2013-14, CAS had several personnel changes, as three core faculty took administrative or research leaves. Much as we missed them, these changes created opportunities to have visiting faculty teach a range of new courses.

In 2013, Meredith Raimondo began a multi-year administrative leave to take the position of associate dean for faculty development. Meanwhile, she and Dean Eric Estes, along with dedicated students and administrators, spent several years revising the college’s sexual misconduct and Title IX compliance policies. We are extremely proud of the work this committee has done, which culminated in the General Faculty’s approval of the new policy in May 2014. In the summer of 2014, Professor Raimondo changed positions to become the special assistant to the president for equity, diversity, and inclusion. She is now working with the campus community to implement the new sexual misconduct policy and further enhance institutional planning on diversity and inclusion. Replacing Professor Raimondo was Evangeline Heiliger, who began a four-year term in CAS in fall 2013 teaching LGBTQ studies. While we miss Meredith very much, Professor Heiliger’s interests in environmental justice and ethical consumerism have brought new interests and concerns to LGBTQ studies at Oberlin.

Meanwhile, both Shelley Lee and Gina Perez were on research leaves in 2013-14. During her sabbatical, Professor Lee worked on her new book project about the development of Koreatown in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s. Replacing her, Maria Paz Esquerra, a former Obie, brought her expertise in the history of marriage to the teaching of Asian American studies. This year, she has a prestigious postdoctoral fellowship in the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Illinois.

During her research leave, Professor Perez finished her manuscript on JROTC, militarization, and Latina/o youth. Replacing her last year, Myrna Garcia taught courses in Latina feminism and Latina/o history in the Midwest, along with core courses in Latina/o studies. This year, Professor Garcia moved to Indiana University, where she is teaching in the Latina/o Studies Program.

We have also been fortunate to have two postdoctoral fellows. Last year, Steven Williams began a two-year postdoc in Native and Indigenous studies, teaching Introduction to Native Studies and Collecting Native America, a course that brings an interdisciplinary perspective to the study of collectors and collections of Native material cultures. Joining us...
FACULTY HAPPENINGS

Wendy Kozol is thrilled to announce the publication this fall of her new book, *Visible Wars and the Ambivalences of Witnessing* (Univ. of Minnesota Press). This study brings a new perspective to enduring concerns about the efficacy of conflict photography and other forms of visual advocacy. In the 21st century, visuality has been a pivotal technology in U.S. militarism as well as in critiques of the nation at war. This book analyzes both mainstream media and alternative visual projects to understand how representations of the U.S. at war navigate in, through, and around national security logics. Visual witnessing, she argues, often remains bound up in national security agendas even as it may stretch beyond those agendas into other terrains of possibility. For the past two years, Wendy has also been working with a former student, Rebecca Adelman '01, on a new project they are calling the “In-Between War.” Their first publication also appeared this fall, “Banality: Discordant Affects and the Ethics of Spectatorship,” *Theory & Event*, vol. 17, issue 3 (2014). Wendy is currently director of the program and has appreciated the opportunity to work with some wonderful visiting faculty and postdocs (see Director’s Note). She has thoroughly enjoyed teaching Introduction to CAST and is looking forward to teaching Debating Citizenship in the spring, after a hiatus of several years.

Shelley Lee published her second book in late 2013, *A New History of Asian America*. She is at work on her next project, a history of immigration and racial politics in Los Angeles during the late 20th century. She is glad to be back in the classroom after being on sabbatical and looks forward to developing several new courses in the near future, including classes that explore Asian-black connections in America and the world as well as urban and suburban history in America.

Pablo Mitchell, professor of history and comparative American studies, has published *History of Latinos: Exploring Diverse Roots* (Greenwood Press, 2014). The textbook explores the heritage and history of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, and Central and South Americans in the United States and is one of the first historical overviews of the history of Latina/os. Pablo is also the new chair of the department of history.

Afia Ofori-Mensa is a specialist in narratives and cultures of communities of color in the 20th- and 21st-century U.S. Her primary research interests are in ethnic studies, American studies, women’s and gender studies, and popular culture studies. Her current book project examines relationships among femininity, race, and U.S. national identity using beauty pageantry and princess culture as case studies. She is also a photographer; her piece “The Winner” was exhibited at Oberlin in 2012.

She came to campus as an Oberlin College-University of Michigan partnership postdoctoral fellow and is now director of the Office of Undergraduate Research.

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MEET OUR CAS MAJOR AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

**ROBERT BONFIGLIO**

I am a CAS and mathematics double major. As an incoming first-year student, I was enrolled in Introduction to Native Studies. This course only touched upon my developing interests, and the next semester I dove into a much more interdisciplinary focused course. It hooked me, and I declared my CAS major by the end of that first year. It really is the interdisciplinary nature of the courses that keeps me engaged and eager to get back to classes. I’m even seeing connections from CAS in my math major. I took Mathematics of Social Choice last semester, which incorporated discussions of what is a “fair” allocation and other topics heavily affected by whom the population was that we were trying to allocate goods “fairly” to. This year, as a junior, I’m ready to get my hands into the situated research course and try out an art history course. I’ll also be working at some athletic events, the Wilder Information Desk, and in admissions, so feel free to come search me out!

**JOCIE SOBIERAJ**

Hi! My name is Jocie Sobieraj, and I am a fourth-year student. I am majoring in CAS and have a concentration in education studies. During my first semester at Oberlin, I took Introduction to CAS. I was fascinated by all the different issues we covered and how they seemed to come up in everyday life (like the Prison Industrial Complex). I continued to explore other departments, but nothing had as much of an impact on me as CAS, and I declared my major by the beginning of my sophomore year. As a first-semester junior, I poured my heart and soul into Situated Research and my practicum, which was doing SITES. I spent the spring semester abroad in Valparaíso, Chile, which was an amazing, life-changing experience. In the past few years, I have been heavily involved in student activism on campus and in education involvement within the larger Oberlin community. This year, I spend my time outside the classroom teaching SITES, working at the admissions office, in my co-op, Pyle, and singing in the All Women’s Chorale. I am excited to be a student rep for CAS this year!
this year is Gilda Rodriguez, who has a joint appointment as a postdoctoral fellow in politics and CAS. She teaches courses on citizenship and the politics of indigeneity. Professors Williams and Rodriguez have greatly enriched our course offerings as well as our formal and informal conversations about citizenship, nation, sovereignty, and “what is CAS?” This year they participated, along with Professor Perez, in a keywords panel discussion of “citizenship.”

In spring 2013, CAS undertook a program review. Part of the review was a self-study; this turned out to be richly informative process, as it was the first time in the program’s 10-year history that we stepped back to assess our mission and curriculum as well as future possibilities. This review also brought to campus three prestigious American studies scholars: Janet Jakobsen, professor of women’s, gender, and sexuality studies and director of the Barnard Center for Research on Women at Barnard College; Karen Leong, associate professor of Asian Pacific American studies and women and gender studies at Arizona State University; and Scott Morgensen, associate professor of gender studies at Queens University. The reviewers were extremely positive about our program, especially praising the commitment, enthusiasm, and insights of the many students who participated in the review. Most importantly, they provided us with helpful suggestions for curriculum development and planning for future growth. As a first step in responding to these recommendations, we have renewed our efforts to get a faculty position in Native and Indigenous studies. In fall 2014, we also consulted with faculty and students about revising the main requirements for the major. We seek to design major requirements that develop students’ analytical and methodological skills in comparative American studies while also responding to their current needs and interests.

Finally, as many of you know, we are now on Facebook (better late than never!). If you haven’t yet done so, please friend us and, CAS alums, let us know what you are doing.

I would like to thank the CAS program faculty, majors, student representatives, alumni, and friends for all their support and enthusiasm these past 11 years. I look forward to working with you as we plan for the next decade.

RECENT BOOKS BY CAS FACULTY

**History of Latinos: Exploring Diverse Roots**
*By Pablo Mitchell (Greenwood Press, 2014)*

Latinos have lived in North America for over 400 years, arriving decades before the Pilgrims and other English settlers. Yet for many outside of Latino ethnic groups, little is known about the cultures that comprise the Latino community—surprising considering their increasing presence in the U.S. population—over 50 million individuals at the latest census. This book explores the heritage and history of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, and Central and South Americans.

Unlike similar history surveys on these communities, this book places the 500 years of Latino history into a single narrative. Each chapter discusses the collective group within a particular time period—moving chronologically from 1500 to the present—revealing the shared experiences of community building and discrimination in the United States, the central role of Latinas and Latinos in their communities, and the diversity that exists within the communities themselves.

**Distant Wars Visible: The Ambivalence of Witnessing**
*By Wendy Kozol (University of Minnesota Press, 2014)*

Kozol brings a new perspective to questions about conflict photography and visual advocacy, whether in support of U.S. military objectives or in critique of the nation at war. She reveals how factors such as gender, race, and sexuality construct competing visualizations of identity in media—and how contingencies and contradictions in visual culture shape the politics and ethics of witnessing.

“In addition to its provocative analysis across visual cultural practices, Distant Wars Visible makes an especially significant contribution at the level of theory. Wendy Kozol offers important new ways to conceptualize what she calls ambivalent witnessing in the spaces between spectacle and empathetic positions of seeing.”

—Carrie Rentschler, McGill University

**A New History of Asian America**
*By Shelley Sang-Hee Lee (Routledge, 2014)*

A New History of Asian America is a fresh and up-to-date history of Asians in the United States from the late 18th century to the present. Drawing on current scholarship, Lee brings forward the many strands of Asian American history, highlighting the distinctive nature of the Asian American experience while placing the narrative in the context of the major trajectories and turning points of U.S. history. Covering the history of Filipinos, Koreans, Asian Indians, and Southeast Indians as well as Chinese and Japanese, the book gives full attention to the diversity within Asian America.

“Shelley Lee has woven together foundational texts and newer scholarship to produce a critically engaging and elegant narrative. A New History of Asian America deserves a wide readership and will be especially helpful for instructors and students in ethnic studies, American studies, and United States history.”

—David K. Yoo, author of Contentious Spirits: Religion in Korean American History, 1903-1945
Specifically, her current book project seeks to rethink contemporary understandings of citizenship by examining the transnational forms of political membership and participation enacted by indigenous Mexicans in the United States. Prior to Oberlin, Gilda taught at the University of South Florida, Kenyon College, and UCLA. In 2014-15 she is teaching the Politics of Indigeneity and the Problem of Citizenship: From Aristotle to Arizona.

Steven Williams (Kiowa) is a Mellon postdoctoral fellow in CAS/Asian American and Indigenous studies at Oberlin College with a two-year research and teaching appointment. Steven received his PhD in American studies with a graduate certificate in American Indian and Native studies from the University of Iowa.

His research and teaching focus on Native American history, culture, and identities and an understanding/s of American Indian and American histories as intricately shared histories that have profound impacts on American Indian efforts to achieve equality and self-determined and sovereign nations.

In keeping with these interests, Steven's research mainly focuses on the intersections of United States and American Indian cultures and histories understood from the point of view of Native American studies theory and methods. His dissertation, "Smudging the Book: Cultural Authority and Revitalization in Rocky Boy Chippewa/Cree History," focuses on the complex interracial and intercultural interactions that took place between non-Indian researchers and tribal leaders in the creation of reservation histories in the 19th and 20th centuries.
**CAS Faculty and Staff**

**Core Faculty:**
- Wendy Kozol, Professor/Chair; Affiliate of GSFS
- Evangeline Heiliger, Visiting Assistant Professor
- Shelley Lee, Associate Professor
- Afi Ofori-Mensa, Visiting Assistant Professor
- Gina Pérez, Associate Professor
- Gilda Rodriguez, Visiting Assistant Professor
- Steven Williams, Visiting Assistant Professor

**Comparative American Studies Program Committee:**
- Yveline Alexis, Assistant Professor, Africana Studies
- Rick Baldoz, Assistant Professor, Comparative American Studies
- Eric Estes, Vice President and Dean of Students; Asst. Prof. of Comparative American Studies
- Janet Fiskio, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies & Comparative American Studies
- Meredith Gadsby, Associate Professor and Chair, Africana Studies
- Daphne John, Associate Professor of Sociology and Comparative American Studies
- Pablo Mitchell, Professor of History & Comparative American Studies; Affiliate of GSFS
- Meredith Raimondo, Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences; Interim Title IX Coordinator; Associate Professor of Comparative American Studies
- Renee Romano, Associate Professor of History & Comparative American Studies
- Harrod Suarez, Assistant Professor of English & Comparative American Studies

**Program Coordinator:**
- Linda Pardee, Program Coordinator, Comparative American Studies; Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies; Rhetoric & Composition; Writing Associates Program; Mediator for OC Dialogue Center

**Student Representatives:**
- Robert Bonfiglio
- Jocie Sobieraj

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**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!**

Programming and student fellowships in Comparative American Studies significantly rely on the contributions of alumni and friends. Contributions of whatever amount facilitate the growth and vitality of Comparative American Studies at Oberlin for majors and students throughout the college. We hope you can make such a contribution.

The following URL allows you to do so directly and online: [www.oberlin.edu/giving](http://www.oberlin.edu/giving). When you reach this page, click “Donate.” When asked to “choose a designation,” please choose “Other.” Under “Special Instructions” please type “Comparative American Studies,” which will direct your donations to CAS. Thank you for your support. Your generous contributions enable us to schedule and sponsor events on and off campus, benefiting both CAS majors and the entire student body at Oberlin College.