

THE AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALIST

WILLIAM AND MARY AMERICAN STUDIES GRADUATE PROGRAM NEWSLETTER VOL. 6 2015

SUMMER 2015

After a brief hiatus, on behalf of the American Studies Graduate Student Organization (ASGSO) at the College of William and Mary, I welcome you to the sixth edition of *The American Exceptionalist*. The newsletter presents student perspectives and program news to keep alumni and faculty informed, current students involved, and prospective students interested in our program.

In this issue, you will learn about some new faces in our community, the many impressive accomplishments of our grad students, the *Black Lives Matter* movement in Williamsburg, and much more! We hope you enjoy this issue and we welcome your feedback.

Thank you for reading.

JAN HUEBENTHAL
NEWSLETTER EDITOR

ACADEMIC “BRAG REEL”

Matt Anthony

Presented a paper titled, "I Got Country Roots: Race, Identity and Black Country Singers in the 1970s" at the American Studies Association Annual Meeting in Los Angeles, CA in November 2014.

Meghan Bryant

Successfully taught an AMST 470 course of her own creation, "Exceptional Empire: America's World's Fairs, Expositions & Spectacles."

Received the Provost Dissertation Fellowship for the 2015-16 academic year.

Kathryn Conner Bennett

Defended her dissertation in December 2014. Her dissertation is titled, "The Economics of Loyalty: Robert Bonner, the New York Ledger, and Sentimental Capitalism."

Jessica Cowing

Presented a paper titled, "Disruptive Bodies: Visibility, Embodiment, and Landscape in William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*," at the 112th Annual Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association Conference in Riverside, CA (November 2014).

Presented a paper titled, "Reconstructing Citizenship: Banished Bodies and the Global South," at the Southern American Studies Association Biennial Conference in Atlanta, GA (February 2015).

Passed her comprehensive exams in May 2015.

Mariaelena DiBenigno

Delivered a paper titled, "Dying and Death at the Ford's Theatre National Historic Site" at the Southern American Studies Association Biennial Conference in Atlanta, GA (February 2015).

Frank Fucile

Had a short story published in the Kenyon Review. (<http://www.kenyonreview.org/conversation/frank-fucile/>)

Had a poem published in the online journal Mobius. (<http://www.mobiusmagazine.com/>)

Will be chairing a panel on photography and decomposition at the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) biennial conference this summer.

Lindsay Garcia

Curated the art exhibition "Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World" in Millington Hall featuring fourteen artists from around the country in March 2015.

Presented a paper at the Cultural Studies Association Annual Conference in May 2015 in Riverside, CA, titled "Can Ferguson Teach Environmental Justice Advocates?"

Will present a paper titled, "Spiral Jetty as a Snapshot in Spacetime" at the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment Conference in June 2015.

Sarah Glosson

Defended her dissertation titled, "Performing Jane: A Cultural History of Jane Austen's Fans in America" in the spring.

Has a chapter on fandom in a forthcoming book tentatively called *Assemble!: The Making and Re-Making of the Marvel Cinematic Universe*. Her chapter is titled, "I See What You Did There: Intertextuality and Visual Culture in MCU Fandom."

Cathy Hellier

Presented her paper, "The Waiting Man: The Black and White Masculinities of Male Enslaved Domestic in Virginia, 1750-1799" at the SHEAR Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, in July 2014.

Jan Huebenthal

Presented his paper, "Throwing Like A Girl: Embodiment and Dis/Ability in Feminist Theory" at the Works in Progress Regional Conference on Feminist Scholarship in Norfolk, VA in March 2015.

Presented a paper titled, "When Bodies Are Weapons – The Super Bowl, Violence, and the 'Masculine Mystique'" at the Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Association 25th Annual Conference in Baltimore, MD in November 2014.

Served as Assistant Director of the 2015 William & Mary Global Film Festival.

Libby Neidenbach

Presented a paper titled, "The Life and Legacy of Marie Justine Sirmir Couvent." at the Louisiana Historical Association Annual Meeting in March 2015.

Received the Distinguished Dissertation Award in Humanities and Social Sciences from the College of William and Mary for her dissertation entitled, "The Life and Legacy of Marie Couvent: Property Ownership, Social Networks, and the Making of a Free People of Color Community in New Orleans."

Tyler Norris

Presented a paper titled, "Italy's American West: Representations of Native American Cultures in *Tex*" at the Northeast Modern Language Association Conference in Toronto.

Passed her comprehensive exams in May 2015.

James Padilioni, Jr.

Presented "'Embracing What has Always Been ours to Begin With': Banjos, Bluegrass, and Southern Blackness" at the 1619: The Making of America Conference at Norfolk State University, September 2014.

Presented "The Black Body Mortified but Incorruptible: The Radical Mysticism of St. Martín de Porres" at the Ways of Knowing Graduate Conference on Religion at Harvard Divinity School, October 2014.

Presented "Three Faces, Three Diasporic Places: Locating Refractions of Africa and the Americas in Atlanta's Cult of Saint Martin De Porres" at the Locating and Connecting Latin America and the African Diaspora Conference at the University of North Carolina Charlotte, May 2015.

Kate Previti

Served as chair and commentator for the panel, "The Invention of Authenticity: Troubling Narratives of the 'Real' Southern Foodways" at the 2014 American Studies Association Annual Meeting in Los Angeles, CA.

Sarah Stanford

Received two dissertation fellowships:

- Lemelson Center Dissertation Fellowship, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- Henry Belin du Pont Dissertation Fellowship in Business, Technology, and Society, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE.

Organized a panel titled "Pleasure in the Land: Marking the Spatial Boundaries of the 'Good Life' in 20th Century America" at ASA this past fall where she presented a paper titled "From Farm to Refinery: Pulling Wealth from the Land in Twentieth-Century West Texas," Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association, November 2014 in Los Angeles, CA.

Janine Yorimoto Boldt

Presented her paper titled, "From this lonely part of the world: Materializing William Byrd II's Transatlantic Social Network" at the 2014 SECAC Annual Meeting in Sarasota, FL.

Passed her comprehensive exams in May 2015.

**CONGRATULATIONS, EVERYONE!
KEEP UP THE HARD WORK!**

NEW FACES I:
THE 2014/15 FIRST YEAR GRAD STUDENTS:
AN INTELLECTUAL SELF-PORTRAIT



from left to right:
(top) Jennifer Ross, Kate Teiken, Matt Anthony, Travis Harris;
(bottom) Barry Matthews, Khanh Vo, Lindsay Garcia

Jennifer Ross

by Khanh Vo

Jennifer Ross is a native of Flint, Michigan, earning both her Bachelor's in Honors English and History and Masters in English at the University of Michigan-Flint. Often, people talk about changing the world, but Jen will change the world. Social protest literature deriving from disasters, both natural and man-made, and economics are among her areas of interest and will form the basis of her dissertation. Her goal is to make people aware of and acknowledge that global warming is a pertinent and important issue before it is too late. Her

ideal dinner companion would be Judith Butler. Her dream vacation -- having a summer breakfast on the beach in Alpena or walking on the shoreline icebergs in the winter -- sounds like everyone's dream getaway. An avid watcher of documentaries about economics, disasters, and weather phenomena, Jen always finds time for *Downton Abbey* and *The Wire*. Without these welcome distractions, she would be spending most of her time just studying, taking care of the best cat in the world and being generally awesome. Though she would be the last one to admit it, everyone can agree that Jen is the genius in our cohort!

Lindsay Garcia*by Travis Harris*

Lindsay is a truly remarkable human. In addition to her scholarship at William and Mary, Lindsay is a video, performance, and photography artist. She has also curated several exhibitions. The most recent one was entitled "Capitalist Architecture in a Posthumanist World," which took place on the campus of William and Mary in Millington Hall and explored the empty buildings around Williamsburg and the country as seen through the eyes of thirteen up-and-coming artists. Lindsay's academic research focuses on similar subject matters, including art, activism, capitalism, animal studies, the built environment, as well as posthumanist, feminist, and queer theory. With her engaging and fun personality, Lindsay is also a cool person to be around. And make sure to look for Winslow, her cute little poodle!

Barry Matthews*by Jennifer Ross*

If you're looking for Barry Matthews, chances are you'll find him outside in the stillness of tall oaks and bushy pines, or in the quiet of a fine arts museum. Barry applied to only one American Studies program, here at William and Mary, and knew as soon as he left from Admitted Students day that this was the place for him. Of the program he says, "It is exciting to be in a community where everyone's work is so diverse, but at the same time so closely related." Life after grad school "seems so far away," but Barry reports that he would love to teach at a university art museum where he can stay connected to both the academic and artistic worlds. In the meantime, he plans to work diligently, of course, but also hopes to hike the entirety of the Appalachian Trail and ride across the country on a shiny, new

motorcycle! From mountains to bikes, and art to academia, Barry has found ways to mesh all these interests in his recent research on American tourism. With a year and a half of classes still to go, doubtless Barry will integrate hobbies and curiosities in new and exciting ways.

Khanh Vo*by Kate Teiken*

Hailing from Lancaster, the Amish capitol of Pennsylvania, Khanh Vo brings a variety of experiences to the 2014 cohort. After graduating from Millersville University with a Bachelor's in History and a BSE in Secondary Education, Khanh spent time in Japan as a teacher. When she isn't studying for class or researching for her Masters thesis on reborn dolls, she likes to draw, play video games, and watch Dr. Who. Khanh's dream job would be to run the British Museum, but she is also interested in the idea of opening a bookstore that would promote local craftsmen, artists, and food in her community. Both of these goals are fueled by Khanh's interests in material culture, foodways, and technology. She is an avid drinker of chocolate soy milk and would someday like to travel through the Southern Hemisphere, including Antarctica.

Travis Harris*by Matt Anthony*

Travis Harris comes to William & Mary from Virginia Union University, where he earned a Master's of Divinity. Prior to that, he majored in Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. Travis is particularly interested in the intersection between religion and hip-hop. He published a paper in the *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* looking at this intersection in the music of LeCrae, one of his favorite artists. Travis has also united his interest in scholarship of race with activism. He is passionately involved in the

Black Lives Matter campaign, a commitment which has led him to travel to Ferguson, MO as well as help organize conferences at William & Mary. In between all of this, Travis also wears another hat as the proud father of two girls.

Kate Teiken

by Lindsay Garcia

An American Art History scholar, Kate Teiken first came to visit Colonial Williamsburg with her family when she was seven years old. Almost two decades later, she finds herself in the position of Assistant Curator of Prints, Maps & Paintings at the same institution. She recently curated an exhibition in the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum entitled *Bugs, Birds, and Blooms*, which features 18th century natural history of the Williamsburg area. Kate decided to pursue a Masters degree in American Studies to explore differences between Northern and Southern identities as they appear in fine art portraiture. She looks at social and economic genealogies in each region's relationship to England and English politics, especially as these relations persist throughout the 19th century leading up to the Civil War. Her favorite artists are Jeremiah Theus, a Swiss-born portrait painter who spent most of his time in Charleston, South Carolina, and Enoch Seeman, a British portraitist. Kate received

a BA from Hollins College in Art History and Literature. This summer, Kate will be raising chickens and playing in her garden (in addition to finishing her thesis).

Matt Anthony

by Barry Matthews

Matt Anthony, the man of one thousand and one band t-shirts, joins us from Penn State Harrisburg where he recently completed his MA in American Studies. His work there centered on counterculture-affiliated country-rock musicians of the late '60s and early '70s. At William and Mary, Matt's focus has shifted to citizen science, and the possibilities of joining colloquial knowledge with professional scientific research. An avid birder, Matt has recorded 134 species of birds in the Williamsburg city limits since the beginning of this year! Too thoughtful a connoisseur to cut his "desert island" list down to just one selection, if marooned with Neil Young's *Harvest*, a friendly Barnacle Goose to observe, and a never-ending supply of homemade Maryland crabcakes (with extra Old Bay, naturally), he could live a comfortable existence.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thank you to all contributors and special thanks to Neeve Kelly for creating the layout.

NEW FACES II: FRANCESCA SAWAYA

JESSICA COWING



Francesca Sawaya, Associate Professor of English and American Studies, began her work at William and Mary in the fall of 2014. Recently, I had a chance to sit down with Professor Sawaya and ask about her research, including her recent publication on philanthropy and the American literary market. What follows are the highlights from our conversation.

Research interests and influences:

Professor Sawaya works “mostly in 19th and early 20th century American literature and culture” and her research is focused on philanthropy, patronage, and economics in the 19th and early 20th century. Sawaya explains that her main interests are “the intersections of economic questions with questions about race and gender” and her major influences are feminist theory, Marxist theory, and new economic criticism.

Book projects:

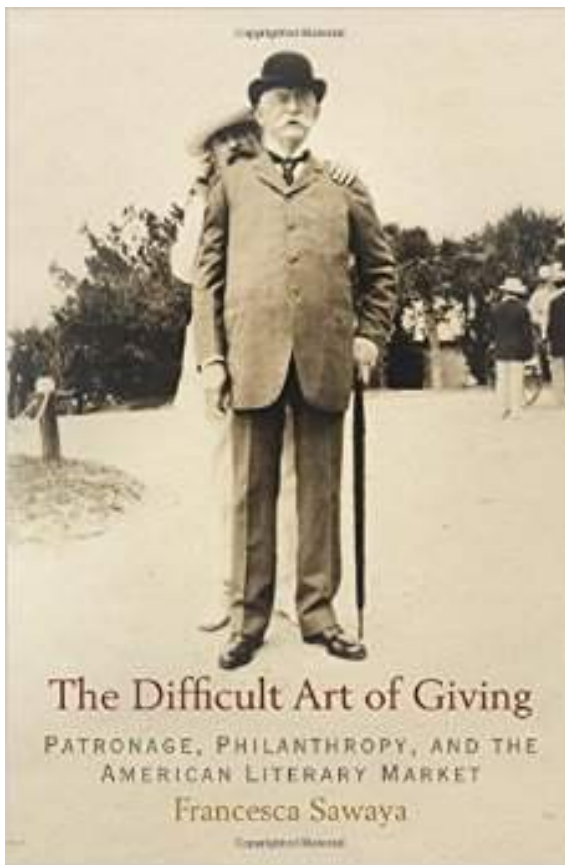
Sawaya’s first book, *Modern Women, Modern Work: Domesticity, Professionalism, and American Writing, 1890-1950* (2011), examines “how women at the turn of the twentieth century combined domestic and professional discourse to create new kinds of work for themselves.” Her second book, *The Difficult Art of Giving: Patronage, Philanthropy, and the American Literary Market* (2014), “focuses on rethinking the economic history of American literature and the ways in which American literary historians have talked about American literature.”

Sawaya explains that this book project began with thinking about critiques of the Harlem Renaissance as “a sponsored phenomenon.” Sawaya examines how “patronage, philanthropy, and different forms of sponsorship are typical of American literary production from the 19th through the early 20th century.” She argues: “We need to rethink our assumptions about what free markets are in order to talk about literature” and “the ways in which American literary history has borrowed its narrative of American literary history from liberal economics.” Sawaya is interested in continuing to explore questions about literature and liberal economics in her future work.

Teaching interests:

In the spring of 2015 Sawaya taught *The Cultural Politics of Philanthropy*, a course that came from her recent book. The course focused on “the representation of and the debates surrounding the history of philanthropy” and particularly the turn of the 20th century as a period “when foundations

begin to emerge as a huge cultural phenomenon in the United States.” Professor Sawaya’s students in



Francesca Sawaya. *The Difficult Art of Giving: Patronage, Philanthropy, and the American Literary Market* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

this course have inspired her to consider how the “repercussions [of 19th and early 20th century philanthropy] continue into the present” with current models of for-profit philanthropy, microlending, and voluntourism. Sawaya would like to continue teaching classes that explore economic questions and “the relation of the history of capitalism to American literary production.”

One question I always like to ask our American Studies professors is: As an interdisciplinary scholar, how do you balance maintaining specific research interests and discipline specific ties when you have connections to multiple fields?

Sawaya noted that it took her a while to realize how important questions of economics were for her own work in American literature and she reminded me that many disciplines such as English already require scholars to engage with questions across multiple fields and methodologies. Sawaya recommends that American Studies graduate students focus on selecting specific conferences within their research areas, but she also encourages students to be open to hearing other conversations. Reading a variety of journals and participating in writing groups are a couple of ways to hear other conversations across multiple fields that may influence your own work.



AMST COMMUNITY LIFE

TYLER NORRIS

The community of American Studies graduate students at William and Mary is wonderfully supportive and encouraging. We have all experienced those lightbulb moments when our colleagues challenge us to think in new ways. In those moments when readings seem long, exams and due dates seem too near, or caffeine powers us more than sleep, we've all found someone at College Apartments who gave us the boost we needed to keep going. This year, ASGSO arranged times for us to get together and build a supportive community off campus, as well.

K



Khanh Vo bowling a strike!

We welcomed new students in the fall with an afternoon of bowling, put our non-academic knowledge to the test at Corner Pocket trivia, got some needed R&R at the Williamsburg Winery, and continued the ASGSO traditions of Halloween and Holiday parties. Besides just having fun hanging out with those we share our academic experience with, getting to know one another at these events has allowed us to share with each other what passions drew us to American Studies. Few programs can boast such a diverse range of interests. Getting to share those with one another has made the William and Mary American

Studies program a place of innovation, collaboration, support, and, of course, fun! Here's to more opportunities to hang out and have fun with the ASGSO family!



Khanh Vo, Nicolette Gable, and Frank Fucile all smiles

BLACK LIVES MATTER COMES TO WILLIAMSBURG

JENNIFER ROSS & TRAVIS HARRIS

Every 28 hours, a Black person, female, male or transgender, is killed by a police officer or vigilante here in the United States. Often, the justice system fails to indict the perpetrators, or declares them not guilty in a court of law. When a jury found George Zimmerman not guilty of the murder of Trayvon Martin, the #BlackLivesMatter movement was born.

Since then, a local BLM movement has formed here in Williamsburg in response to the slaying of Michael Brown and the failure to indict Officer Darren Wilson. The local movement kicked off during the fall semester with a protest organized by Travis Harris and Jennifer Ross. A diverse group of more than 200 campus and community members rallied in front of the William and Mary bookstore in Merchant's Square. The rally started with several speakers who

shared testimonies, admonitions, spoken word, and songs. With the help of the City of Williamsburg, Colonial Williamsburg, and William and Mary police, the group marched from Merchant Square, down Richmond Rd. and through campus, concluding at the Wren Building. As the protestors strode through town, the bricks of Williamsburg seemed to reverberate, the echoes of the protestors' chants reverberating amongst the buildings and swelling the calls for justice.



Williamsburg Police officers and William and Mary Police officers helped with traffic control © WYDaily

The spirit of racial justice and the *Black Lives Matter* movement roused undergraduate students as well, resulting in a second protest led by Korkor Koppoe. In sharp contrast to the boisterous yells of the Merchant Square protest, Korkor's demonstration flooded the first floor of Swem with raised hands and calm recitations of "Hands Up, Don't Shoot" and "No Justice, No Peace" that spoke far louder than the hushed tones would seem to indicate. The demonstration ignited a storm of both support and protest, which would later instigate a focus study on the racial climate at the college.

The following semester, Travis, Jennifer, undergraduates Taylor Mack (now graduated!) and Michael Burrows, and

community member Beth Haw coordinated the week-long "The Beloved Community" conference in April. The conference aimed to determine ways in which the college and community could recognize and value the humanity of every individual within a community regardless of the long list of discriminatory factors. The conference brought together guest lecturers including Broderick Greer and Crystal Lewis, hosted a "Black Lives Matter because..." photo shoot, the showing of *American Denial*, a discussion with the James City County, Williamsburg, and William and Mary police forces, spoken word and video events, and a final 3-on-3 basketball tournament.

For their work, Travis and Korkor were recognized at the annual award dinner of the William and Mary chapter of the NAACP.

BLM-W will continue to work toward creating a beloved community on campus and in the Williamsburg community. They



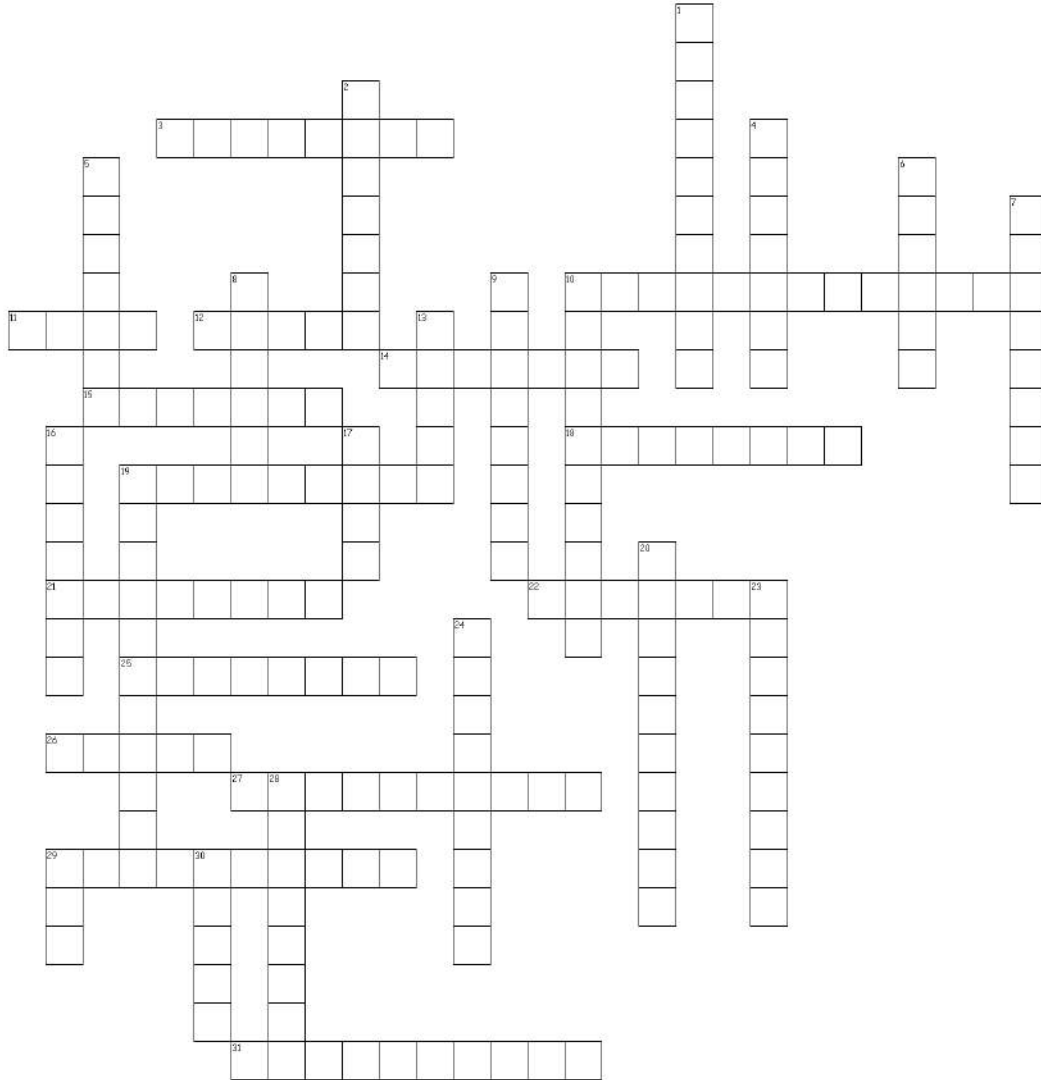
Jennifer Ross during the Beloved Community conference (© Taylor Mack)

hope to contribute solutions to the national movement and fight systemic injustice in Williamsburg and across the country. The success of these protests and the spring conference could not have been possible without the support of numerous American Studies graduate students and

professors and the enthusiastic contribution of politically engaged undergraduates. Thanks to all who participated and lent their support! We couldn't have done it without you!

CROSSWORD

JANINE YORIMOTO BOLDT



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| <p>Across</p> <p>3. DGS</p> <p>10. GSA President/Batman</p> <p>11. cross-cultural collaboration summer program</p> <p>12. career center</p> <p>14. ____ Community event organized by AMST students</p> <p>15. media political tool</p> <p>18. March workshop</p> <p>19. holds the program together</p> <p>21. popular American Studies drink</p> <p>22. 2015 ASA Annual Meeting</p> <p>25. Movement/____/Migration</p> <p>26. artist Echo-Hawk</p> | <p>27. Webster specialty</p> <p>29. dirty bar</p> <p>31. Indian School</p> <p>Down</p> <p>1. L in aslo</p> <p>2. Dean of graduate studies</p> <p>4. humanities using information technology</p> <p>5. lives in Tucker</p> <p>6. myth & ____ school</p> <p>7. grad LGBT & Allies</p> <p>8. GSWS home</p> <p>9. informal Wednesday presentation</p> <p>10. lunch spot</p> | <p>13. William & Mary Journey of Reconciliation Project</p> <p>16. wine night at Blue Talon</p> <p>17. newest faculty member</p> <p>19. latest campus eyesore</p> <p>20. worked on the W&M Hip Hop Collection</p> <p>23. Institute of Early American History and Culture</p> <p>24. bar and promenade</p> <p>28. ASA President</p> <p>29. Film & Renewal</p> <p>30. honored AMST program and students with image award.</p> |
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