

RANDOLPH-MACON Woman's COLLEGE

American Culture Program



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RANDOLPH-MACON Woman's COLLEGE
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Media Guide

2005



American Culture Department and Program Faculty

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RANDOLPH-MACON WOMAN'S COLLEGE

Randolph-Macon Woman's College (R-MWC), founded in 1891 by William Waugh Smith, is one of the premier women's colleges in the country, consistently receiving top rankings in college guides including those of *U.S. News & World Report* and *The Princeton Review*. Noted for the strength of its academic programs, R-MWC was one of the first colleges in the south to receive a Phi Beta Kappa charter, and it ranks among the top 10 percent of all post-secondary institutions nationwide in the percentage of graduates who go on to earn Ph.D. degrees.

The College's emphasis on the Macon Plan is a primary reason for graduates' success. Developed individually by students with guidance from faculty, the Macon Plan combines course work, internships, study abroad, and cocurricular activities to create a rigorous, integrated educational program. The College currently enrolls 737 undergraduates from 42 states and 46 foreign countries and boasts an impressive student/faculty ratio of 9 to 1.

The American Culture Program

The American Culture Program is a unique educational option within the Department of American Culture. Students who choose to major in American Culture must take a distribution of core courses and elect one particular "track" within the department to focus their studies. These tracks are: "American Thought, Values, and Practice," "The United States and World Systems," "The American Arts," and "American Consciousness: The American Culture Program." Unlike the other tracks, the American Culture Program offers a semester-long, integrated block of courses that may be taken independently by students other than those majoring in American Culture.

The program, the only one of its kind in the country, is designed to help students explore the ways Americans see themselves—their values, history, contributions, and role in the world today. The program offers 12 to 15 hours of credit through course work, tutorials, travel, internships, and discussions with guest speakers from all walks of life.

Most of all, the program emphasizes making connections. We challenge our students to identify and analyze common themes about the United States in a variety of contexts—visual, literal, and geographical—in ways that other class environments do not.

Quick Facts

College: Randolph-Macon Woman's College, Lynchburg, VA

Enrollment: 11

Founded: 1991

Director: Dan Stiffler

Courses: Four courses (12 credits), optional practicum (1-3 credits), internship (1-3 credits)

Degree: The American Culture Program is one of four tracks offered in the Department of American Culture. *However, the program is not limited to American Culture majors.*

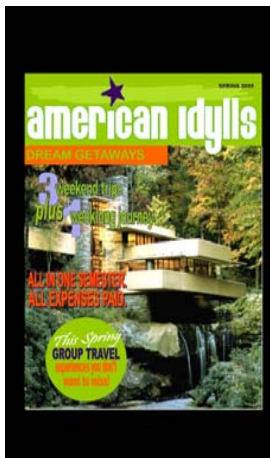
Faculty: Four faculty members

Cost: All expenses paid for full-time R-MWC students

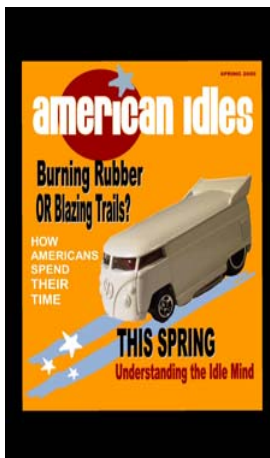
Summer Study: An early summer program is offered each year, mid-May through mid-June. The topics addressed vary and may include: "In the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark," "Americans In Paris," and "Fields of Dreams: The Advent of Sports in America." The summer program offers two courses for a total of 6 credits, including an intense week-long seminar before hitting the road for three to four weeks.



Reality TV. Glitz. Glamour. Fame. Fortune. The American Culture Program will uncover the realities of America's obsession with celebrity. We will explore who we adore—where this reality phenomenon has come from and why it insists on sticking around. From classic icons to reality stars, we will dig a little deeper to understand the impact fame has on American culture—if only for 15 minutes.



The retreat. The getaway. The charmingly simple. The unspoiled. The natural. The American Culture Program will explore the notion of the great escape—how an ideal destination like Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling-water can represent a cultural value. We will investigate the delicate balance between the natural environment and man-made havens, considering the elements that create the optimal refuge sought by Americans.



The inactive. The aimless. The futile. Without power. The American Culture Program will explore what Americans are doing with their time—if pastimes are just wasting time or if they are ways of creating and nurturing a cultural heritage. Are Americans simply wandering aimlessly when idling or are they blazing new trails for their progeny? Climb into the American Culture Program van to learn for yourself.

From the President

KATHLEEN GILL BOWMAN

Several years ago, when I was on campus to be interviewed for the Presidency of Randolph-Macon Woman's College, I picked up a colorful brochure called "The American Culture Program." Intrigued, I opened it to discover the existence of a truly unique educational experience—one in which a group of 12-15 students spends a semester taking four academic courses together and traveling around the country for firsthand study and experience of what we call "America." What a fabulous idea!

Now that I have been at the College as its President, I have seen first-hand just what an innovative and powerful experience the American Culture Program is for its students. They make connections between their classroom discussion, readings, and "real" people and places, from the Lewis and Clark Trail to the Mississippi Delta; they come to understand the perspectives of literature, art, history, science, and social science on compelling issues; they form strong bonds with faculty whose sole focus is their learning both what constitutes the "American Dream" and what that means in a 21st-century society; and they learn from their fellow students, who come from all over the United States and the world. I know of no other college or university in the country that approaches the study of America in such an innovative and effective manner.

There has perhaps not been a more crucial time for us to study America, as it works to find its identity as a global leader and wrestles with the challenges of its growing diversity. The American Culture Program is an ideal way to create responsible, committed, and well-informed citizens who are prepared to make a difference in their communities.

Kathleen Gill Bowman

Kathleen Gill Bowman became the eighth president of R-MWC in May of 1994. Prior to this appointment, she was Vice Provost for International Affairs and Associate Vice President for Research at the University of Oregon. In addition, she has served as Director of Special Programs and Graduate Studies at Reed College, where she also taught in the English and Education Departments.

As president of R-MWC, Bowman spearheaded a strategic planning process involving the entire College community. Under this plan, and with Bowman's leadership, the College has already heightened its national visibility, expanded its international programs, explored ways to ensure that its facilities promote the teaching and learning process, implemented programs to increase enrollment and diversity, and expanded integration of technology into teaching.

Bowman holds a Ph.D. in English Education from the University of Minnesota.

Students



JACKIE SAVAGE

Graduation Year: 2006
Hometown: Alexandria, VA
High School: Mount Vernon
Major: Chemistry and History

"As with every activity I participate in here at R-MWC, I am hoping this experience will expand the ways I learn and think. I hope it will allow me to better understand myself and push my learning past book reading and lecturing to the next level of self discovery. I feel this experience will help me explore the world right around me."



MEG STENSRUD

Year: 2006
Hometown: Fairfax, VA
High School: Fairfax High
Major: Philosophy, American Culture

"America is young, it is diverse, and it brings together many cultures in a small space. America has a profound influence on the rest of the world and we would be doing ourselves an injustice if we did not truly understand who we were as a people. I am looking forward to interacting and learning from my classmates, professors and guides, piecing together different opinions in order to formulate my own feelings on American."



JESSIE WARE

Graduation Year: 2006
Hometown: Gainesville, FL
High School: Eastside High School
Major: Studio Art

"I feel that my way of looking at the world influences every art piece that I produce. Because American culture influences every part of who we are and who we will become, I hope my experiences with the American Culture Program will give me a new way to examine my life. I feel like we can only portray what we know in art, and I feel that this program will help stretch my knowledge, thus stretch my art."

Semester Preview

BY DAN STIFFLER, DIRECTOR

"Writing is an act of discovery," I often tell my students. No matter how well-planned a paper might be, with a clear working thesis and a solidly constructed outline, the act of writing the paper often yields the unexpected idea, one that may be better than the original. Such is the case with planning for the American Culture Program: no matter how carefully the faculty and staff plan the syllabi and the trips, something new will emerge, often with great serendipity.

That said, what we have planned for spring 2005 is exciting. We will be exploring traditional and provocative themes in American Culture, themes such as our natural and urban landscapes, our rebellious identities, and our national dreams. We will be reading texts that range from scholarly to subversive and from canonical to bestseller. We will be traveling to sites well-known and unknown, talking with those Americans who will give voice to the themes studied in the classroom. Indeed, those American voices are why we never fully know how any semester will play out. What our speakers share with us will often spark the unexpected idea, making it possible for us to say: "Participating in the American Culture Program is an act of discovery!"

The program's greatest value is its dynamic process: as students or teachers, all of us learn from the American voices we meet.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Stiffler".



Dan Stiffler, director of the program, earned his Ph.D. at the University of Oregon and teaches American literature and culture. He has won R-MWC's Gillie A. Larew Award for Distinguished Teaching, as well as recognition by the United Methodist Church for exemplary teaching. His scholarly interests range from early American captivity narratives to post-modern works on travel and from the transcendental movement to contemporary celebrity culture. He says that his many remarkable experiences in the program have included sitting next to Walt Whitman's bed while reading aloud "The Dalliance of Eagles" and standing atop Spirit Mound in South Dakota while retracing the route of Lewis and Clark.

Faculty and Staff



"Visiting the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown on our 2002 summer trip, 'Fields of Dreams: The Advent of Sports in America,' was without question my favorite American Culture Program experience thus far. Even as a lifelong baseball lover, I had no idea I would be overcome by the Hall. I was moved to tears."

JULIO RODRIGUEZ

Ainsworth Visiting Scholar of American Culture

B.A., East Stroudsburg University

M.A., Ph.D., Bowling Green State University

Rodriguez has published essays on the intersection of masculinity, sport, documentary film, and race. His article on the documentary *When We Were Kings*, entitled "Sports Matters: Race, Recreation and Culture," was published last spring. His article on the home run race between Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire was published in the spring of 2004. Rodriguez is currently working on an article about the professional bull riding circuit.

His favorite aspect of teaching in the American Culture Program: "You never stop learning—I get to learn from my colleagues and from students! No other academic experience comes close to providing the integrative learning environment that is created in this program. I also really enjoy interacting with the students. They're active, invested, driven, and free to be themselves. They can be wonderfully wacky and incredibly insightful in a span of minutes."

HEIDI KUNZ

Associate Professor of English

B.A., The College of William and Mary

M.A., Ph.D., Vanderbilt University

Kunz specializes in U.S. intellectual history and the literature of the American south. She is the recipient of numerous research grants, including the Borker Grant, and grants from the Maria Mitchell Science Library and Archive in Nantucket, Massachusetts. She recently presented a paper, "Tendering Type," about Henry James and F. Scott Fitzgerald to the International F. Scott Fitzgerald Conference in Vevey, Switzerland. She was also recently appointed as the Board Administrator of the F. Scott Fitzgerald Society. In 2002, she was awarded R-MWC's Gillie A. Larew Award for Distinguished Teaching and was accepted to the APVA Jamestown Rediscovery Archaeological Field School (in conjunction with her goal of gaining greater expertise in reading archaeological records). She has also served an apprenticeship in history at St. Mary's City, Maryland.

Her favorite aspect of teaching in the American Culture Program is the continual learning it provides. "Because the program is always fresh and new, it challenges us all to develop new and sometimes unexpected areas of expertise—including styles of collaboration and connection," Kunz says.



"My most memorable experience with the program was the treat of a tour of Plains, Georgia, by no less of a personage than Murray Smith (the brother of Rosalyn Carter), and the privilege of hearing his personal recollections of Jimmy Carter's inauguration."

Students

NATALIYA MASLOVA

Graduation Year: 2006

Hometown: Lipetsk, Russia

Major: Education

"I am planning to become a teacher of English in Russia. The knowledge of American culture will allow me to teach my students in a more effective and interesting way. They will not only learn the language but also the cultural issues, traditions, and the way of life of the USA that will certainly help them to successfully communicate in English."



LONDON OTT

Graduation Year: 2006

Hometown: Mount Bethel, PA

Major: English, Philosophy

"I know that studying American Culture will make me a sharper student in my field because I will have a greater understanding of the works I read after I have studied the landscape from which they come."



MARIJA PETAK

Graduation Year: 2006

Hometown: Zagreb, Croatia

Major: English, Italian Language and Literature

"I want to learn about true American values and to experience America in an American way. I hope my experiences with the American Culture Program will give me first-hand experience that will help me in my future career as an interpreter and teacher of foreign languages, and in my communication with people coming from the Anglican culture."



JENNY PREWITT

Graduation Year: 2006

Hometown: Goochland, VA

High School: Goochland

Major: Philosophy

"I think the American Culture Program will open my eyes and expose me to America, and make me have a better appreciation and understanding of where I live. By knowing and learning about what was and is now I will be better prepared for my future."



Students



ARIUNAA ENKHTUR

Graduation Year: 2006
Hometown: Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
Major: British and American Studies and English

"I came to the USA to gain more knowledge about America: about American people, their history, religion, and culture. I am participating in the American Culture Program because it will offer me the opportunity to become more familiar with many aspects of American culture."



MEGAN KOCIOLEK

Graduation Year: 2005
Hometown: Howell, NJ
High School: Providence, Charlotte, NC
Major: History

"I want to study America because America is not just politics or McDonalds, but a place that is made up of immigrants, Native Americans, and minorities—people who make up the very fabric of our society and contribute to American culture."



ANNA KOZŁOWSKA

Graduation Year: 2006
Hometown: Lublin, Poland/Edison, NJ
High School: Edison
Major: Political Science

"I'm looking forward to learning things that I probably never would have learned without the program. Living in the United States for a while is not enough to prepare me for the things that I am going to learn. Though my focus within political science is on the international side of politics, I'd like to see how things are beneath the surface here and maybe see how they influence other aspects of society."



SHASTAN KUSCHKE

Graduation Year: 2006
Hometown: Lebanon Twp., NJ
High School: Voorhees, Glen Gardner NJ
Major: Studio Art

"As a citizen of South Africa, I am looking forward to learning more about America. I hope to gain a new perspective and record it through photographs. I plan to build a portfolio of these experiences—adding a dynamic element to my photography concentration."

Faculty and Staff

CONSTANCE CLARK

Assistant Professor of American Culture
B.S., State University of New York, Stony Brook
M.A., Ph.D., University of Colorado, Boulder

Clark has delivered papers at numerous conferences, including those sponsored by the Organization of American Historians, the Western Historical Association, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She recently gave a presentation at an international meeting on the history of science in Halifax, Nova Scotia, called "The Cave Man, the Strenuous Life and the Irreverent Funny Pages," and in October she presented a paper to the New England Historical Association on "Scientists and Celebrity in the Jazz Age." She has recently been offered a contract by Johns Hopkins University Press for a book on evolution in the jazz age. Clark is a recipient of the Louis Pelzer Memorial Prize for the best essay in American history by a graduate student, and a teaching award from the University of Colorado. Her areas of research include American cultural history, the history of science, the history of scientific imagery and illustration, the popularization of science, and environmental history.



"It was great fun to visit the site of the 1925 Scopes trial (Dayton, TN). I loved the tour of Lynchburg and of Jackson Ward in Richmond, Virginia. I liked singing with Viletta and her family in Appalachia."



EMILY JOHNS

Coordinator
B.A. Randolph-Macon Woman's College

An R-MWC graduate (class of 1998), Johns began coordinating the American Culture Program in 2000 after two years representing the College's Admissions Department. She retraced the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1996), and participated in the spring semester program (1998)—two experiences that shaped her independently designed major in American studies. Johns' primary responsibilities entail recruiting students, producing the program's Web site and newsletters, and most importantly, working closely with faculty to design trips and find American voices, bringing life to the curriculum. She is also the assistant volleyball coach at R-MWC.

"Traveling and experiencing America alongside the students and faculty is my favorite part of coordinating the program," says Johns. "Seeing our students become inspired by an experience that I had a hand in creating is tremendously satisfying and rewarding."

"Volunteering in Appalachia and discovering that we inspired a woman to go to college is by far one of my most memorable experiences. Other favorites include creating a buffalo stampede (in a pick-up truck) while retracing the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and getting into Detroit's old Tiger Stadium after it was closed."



2005 Student Roster

Name	Major	Year	Hometown / High School
Ariunaa Enkhtur	English/American Studies	1-year	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
Megan Kociolek	History	Sr.	Howell, NJ / Providence (NC)
Anna Kozłowska	Political Science	Jr.	Lublin, Poland * Edison, NJ / Edison
Shastan Kuschke	Studio Art	Jr.	Califon, NJ / Voorhees, Glen Gardner
Nataliya Maslova	English / Education	1-year	Lipetsk, Russia
London Ott	English / Philosophy	Jr.	Sarasota, FL /
Lyndsey Pelham*	Studio Art	Jr.	Portland, OR / Sky View
Marija Petak	English / Italian	1-year	Zagreb, Croatia
Jennifer Prewitt	Philosophy	Jr.	Goochland, VA / Goochland
Mary Anna Richardson*	History	Jr.	Dendron, VA / Surry County
Jackie Savage	Chemistry / History	Jr.	Alexandria, VA / Mount Vernon
Meg Stensrud	American Culture /Philosophy	Jr.	Fairfax, VA / Fairfax
Jessie Ware	Studio Art	Jr.	Gainesville, FL / Eastside

LYNDSEY PELHAM

Intern

Graduation Year: 2005
 Hometown: Portland, OR
 High School: Sky View High School
 Major: Studio Art

Lyndsey Pelham, American Culture Program intern and studio art major plans to use her American Culture Program experiences to inspire her in the studio this spring.

"I'm looking forward to applying my art skills to benefit the American Culture Program. Interning will allow me to build upon my experiences from last year as a student in the program, and it will complement my studio art major," says Pelham.

Pelham plans to design and paint a mural for the American Culture Program office that will highlight travel destinations, voices, and themes of this year. She will also work with other studio art majors who are enrolled in the program to put together a visual memoir of the semester.



"I am looking forward to applying my art skills to benefit the American Culture Program and myself. I am excited to have a hands-on experience that will make me a well-rounded candidate when applying for graduate school and professional opportunities. I think the opportunity to work with the program is a once in a lifetime chance because I get to design the internship. It will allow me to focus and utilize my strengths by developing and improving skills that will give me an advantage in the future."

MARY ANNA RICHARDSON

Intern

Graduation year: 2005
 Hometown: Dendron, VA
 High School: Surry County High School
 Major: History

This year, Mary Anna Richardson, a second-year intern with the American Culture Program, plans to continue archiving the program's history, and write articles about our guest speakers for the website, newsletter, and list serve.

Richardson will lead the newest and one of the biggest projects we have taken on: creating a documentary about the program that will be influenced by today's reality TV shows.

"I look forward to learning what work goes into a documentary and hope that it will be useful in teaching R-MWC students how this program makes a difference not only in the lives of the students in the program, but also in the lives of those with whom the program comes in contact. "



"The program was such an amazing experience for me that I had to stay involved! Compiling its history last year gave me an even stronger connection to its values, and a stronger commitment to promoting the program. I plan to use my knowledge of its history and my interest in documentaries to increase awareness about the American Culture Program."