

# AMERICA EXPOSED!

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## 10 REASONS TO APPLY TO THE AMERICAN CULTURE PROGRAM:

1. It's your prerogative to have a little fun.
2. It's Free!
3. Road Trip.
4. Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.
5. Real people. Real places. It's like real world...but better!
6. See some of your favorite professors behind the scenes.
7. It's not just any other class.
8. You earn 12 credits—almost a concentration in American Culture!
9. No class on Mondays and Fridays!
10. Why not?

## REAL PEOPLE. REAL PLACES. REAL EXPENSIVE?

**TRUE. BUT DON'T WORRY! WE'LL PICK UP THE TAB.**

It is a common misconception among students on campus that you have to pay in order to participate in this semester-long program. But you don't. **PARTICIPATION WON'T COST YOU A CENT MORE THAN YOUR REGULAR TUITION AND FEES!**\* R-MWC believes strongly in the way the American Culture Program educates its students, so they endorse it with the **BIG BUCKS**. How big? **REAL BIG. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THE COLLEGE SHELLS OUT ROUGHLY \$2500 PER STUDENT** so the American Culture Program can provide people like you with this incredible once-in-a-

lifetime opportunity. Why? Because we know that not just any student will apply.



We get students who are looking for **A REAL EDUCATION**—real interesting and real fun. We get **STUDENTS WHO WANT MORE FROM THEIR EDUCATION THAN JUST A DIPLOMA**—students who want

to become civic leaders and thoughtful citizens; students who want to be challenged, who want to find their own voices, who want to get out of the classroom and **MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE. WE'RE LOOKING FOR REAL STUDENTS**. That's why—if you are admitted into the American Culture Program—you deserve that \$2500. **WE LIKE TO CALL IT A SCHOLARSHIP** because we believe you're a **REAL SMART INVESTMENT**. (\*Summer programs do not apply; travel fee is required for semester and one-year only international students. Contact program coordinator for details.)

## REAL PEOPLE. REAL PLACES. REAL UNREALISTIC?

**WELL...NOT REALLY.**

Many students think that it is really unrealistic to fit the American Culture Program into their major or their academic plan. Well... **IT JUST MIGHT BE MORE REALISTIC THAN YOU THINK**. Here are some options to help you make it work:

**ENROLL IN THE PRACTICUM** (up to 3 credit hours) to provide you with hands-on experience specifically designed to apply your program experiences to your major. **FOR EXAMPLE**, a communication major might **CREATE A VIDEO DOCUMENTARY**; an education student might help **DEVELOP A WEB-BASED CURRICULUM TO BE USED IN CITY SCHOOLS**; a creative writing major may want to **WRITE CHILDREN'S STORIES** inspired by

the program; an environmental studies, history, or American culture major may want to work with the new club **DOWNTOWN to STUDY THE LYNCHBURG DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROJECT AND DEVELOP HISTORIC TOURS**.

Whatever your interests, we'll work with you and your advisor to design a practicum that will create a specific link between your American Culture Program experiences and your major.

**DECLARE A CONCENTRATION** in American Culture. This extra emphasis may add some real depth to your major. (Only three courses in addition to the program are needed.)

**GET CREDIT FOR YOUR MAJOR**. It may be possible to obtain

credit in a department, in consultation with departmental personnel, if your graded projects are relevant to the particular discipline. Just talk to your advisor!

**MAJOR IN AMERICAN CULTURE.**

The American Culture Program is one of the four tracks within the major that you can choose from.

**FULFILL GEN ED REQUIREMENTS.**

Believe it or not, in addition to traditional humanities majors we've also had seniors, students who plan to study abroad, science majors, athletes, and education students participate. With a little planning, you might just be able to make it work. Trust us—it's worth it.

## In Store for 2004: **AMERICA EXPOSED!**

The American Culture Program's spring 2004 session is dedicated to exposing America's true colors! We are getting right down to the nitty-gritty details—the scary stuff, the sketchy stuff, and yes, the sexy stuff.

**America Exposed!** is the theme for 2004. We'll take a close look at the American rebel in

our *Bad Boys* unit, American patriotism in *Who Owns the Flag?* We'll study *Crime and Punishment, Sexual Politics*, and great American foodways from retro diners and McDonalds to the fast food and organic food industries in *Guilty Pleasures*. We are getting down and dirty—and real. **Very real.**



### Why Study America? By Dr. Julio Rodriguez

American Culture?

The follow up question invariably takes on one of two tones, derision or doubt. The derisive version usually includes, "I thought we had none." The doubtful tone reflects a genuine dismay at the vastness of the topic and includes some variation of, "What is it?" The thoughtful

answer to each is what makes American Culture scholars poor cocktail party guests.

Academia in general and American Studies

in particular have done a very thorough job of teasing out distinct experiences and markers of cultural identity and studying their genesis and evolution in the United States. Gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality have all rightfully taken places as distinct areas of research. Folklore, urban and environmental studies have expanded on the individual American experience, pointing out the communal nature of American character and the permeability of cultural boundaries and physical borders.

The challenge facing the discipline now is the weaving of those distinct strands back into a tapestry that reveals their role in a larger American experience. Race informs gender. Class instructs ethnicity. Sexuality delimits gender. These couplings could all easily be reversed - the pairings interchanged. Urban sprawl continues largely unchecked even as environmental issues gain immediacy

in our cultural consciousness. All these issues shift contextually and historically. Surprisingly, they're understood implicitly by nearly all. However, the lack of dialogue surrounding that implicit understanding results in ill formed legislative, judicial, and executive decisions that speak for and represent us on the international stage.

The American Culture Program at R-MWC recovers the elided dialogue and generates students capable of articulating the complex interactions that create a distinct American identity. It uncovers the values and experiences that serve to unite and divide us. As the sense of common purpose and shared identity fostered by September 11 fades, it is crucial to understand the dynamics and ramifications of our actions and inactions domestically and internationally and produce individuals who understand the vast interplay of experiences that comprise America and Americans.

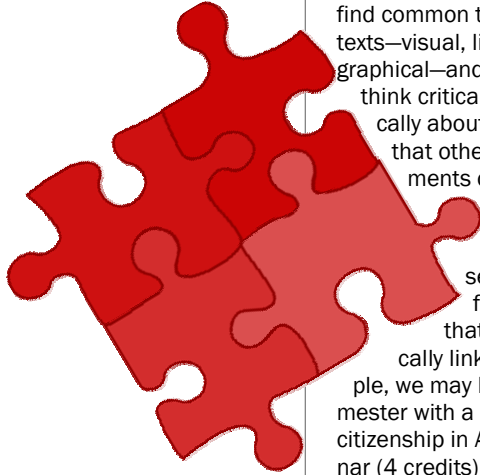
*"The American Culture Program...uncovers the values and experiences that serve to unite and divide us."*

#### APPLICATION INFORMATION

- \* Minimum sophomore standing.
- \* All majors encouraged to apply.
- \* Contact Emily Johns for application materials: x8480, Smith 103 or visit [www.rmwc.edu/AMERICANCULTURE](http://www.rmwc.edu/AMERICANCULTURE) where applications are available online.
- \* Application Deadline is October 15.
- \* Attend an open house (look for info around campus this fall).

Still not sure how the program will fit into your Macon Plan? Contact program director, Dan Stiffler, at [dstiffler@rmwc.edu](mailto:dstiffler@rmwc.edu), to set up an appointment for further advising.

## “I know there are four courses, *but how do they fit together?*”



The American Culture Program is about making connections. By this we mean that we stretch our students to find common themes in texts—visual, literal, and geographical—and analyze them, think critically and synthetically about them in ways that other class environments do not do.

The program is separated into four courses that are thematically linked. For example, we may begin the semester with a close look at citizenship in America. Seminar (4 credits) will assign Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, and Thoreau’s *Civil Disobedience*. During this same week, American Images (3 credits) might assign Hawthorne’s *Blithedale Romance*, and American Voices (3 credits)

will invite Reverend Willie Smith, local civil rights activist and leader, to share his story. Then, to make all of this studying more “real,” in Voices II (2 credits) we will all pile into our 15-passenger van and set out for Richmond, Virginia, where we will meet with city philanthropist and entrepreneur, Jim Ukrop, to discuss his views on community development, civic responsibility, and ethical leadership. On this same trip we might also interact with graffiti artists to learn more about their “rebellious” subculture, talk to developer Ron Stallings about his dream of revitalizing Historic Jackson Ward, a neighborhood once considered the “Black Wall Street” of America. We might also travel to Yogaville to learn more about alternative lifestyles.

Whatever the unit of study in

the American Culture Program, it is our goal to make your education real. By “real” we mean hands-on. If you go to Yogaville, you will do yoga and meditate with the monks who have dedicated their lives to integral yoga. If you go to Appalachia, you will volunteer in the community so you can really get to know the laboring class. If you learn about the infomercial marketing strategy of TheFirm fitness plan, you will go to TheFirm home studio, meet the instructors, and *do the workout*. We will provide you with as much literature and visual text to help you understand America’s diverse cultures, but we believe your experience will be much richer if we take you there to experience it for yourself. We help you figure out what America is all about—you’ll see it, you’ll live it, you’ll write about it, and you’ll never forget it....

“What do I enjoy most about teaching in the Program? 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.”—Dr. Rodriguez

## MEET THE FACULTY AND STAFF

**Dr. Dan Stiffler**, Director of the Program, Professor of English, B.S., Oregon College of Education; B.A., M.A., Ph.D., University of Oregon

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

**Dr. Julio Rodriguez**, Ainsworth Visiting Minority Scholar in American Culture, B.A., East Stroudsburg University; M.A., Ph.D., Bowling Green State University

**Dr. Heidi Kunz**, Associate Professor of English B.A., The College of William and Mary; M.A., Ph.D., Vanderbilt University

**Dr. Laura Katzman**, Associate Professor of Art, director of the Museum Studies program. B.A. New York University; M.A., M.Phil, Ph.D. Yale University

**Emily Johns ‘98**, Coordinator of the American Culture Program. B.A. American Studies, R-MWC

RANDOLPH-MACON WOMAN'S COLLEGE  
AMERICAN CULTURE PROGRAM

2500 Rivermont Avenue  
Lynchburg, VA 24503

Phone: 434-947-8480  
Fax: 434-947-8138  
americanculture@rmwc.edu

Visit us on the web!  
[www.rmwc.edu/  
americanculture](http://www.rmwc.edu/americanculture)

**AMERICA EXPOSED!**  
American Culture Program  
2004



## STUDENT CONFRONTS THE AMERICAN DREAM

An excerpt from the American Culture Program journal by Crystal Root, 2003

Throughout this semester we have pondered the exact definition of the American Dream—what the dream is and what it means to Americans. At no time have we settled on a proposed definition that everyone agreed encompassed all aspects of the Dream. Is the American Dream really definable? Is definable the same as proven? If the answer to the first question is no, and the answer to the second question is yes, as I would like to argue that they are, then is the American Dream actually real and solid?

Real? What is real? Anyone who has seen *The Matrix* laughs at that question. People who have studied advanced fields of science can give detailed answers to it, though these answers might confuse the typical layman. Is the American Dream real? Most people would argue that yes, it is real. It is something that beats in the heart of most Americans, something that most Americans feel, even if they can't define it.

Solid, though, is another issue, and I don't believe the American Dream is solid at all. It moves and changes, between old and young, between rich and poor,

*The Randolph-Macon Woman's College American Culture Program, the first such program of its kind in the United States, was established in 1991. The Program occurs in the spring semester of every academic year, from January to May. The purpose of the program is to analyze the United States in ways that go beyond typical approaches to American Studies. The Program is based on the idea that America is more than a geographic location; that for centuries it has also been a state of mind as well as a set of hopes. It focuses not only on American realities but on what Americans, who represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives, thing the realities are.*

*The Program is self-contained, offering 12-15 credit hours of study through course work, tutorial, travel, and practicum.*

between native-born and immigrant, between ethnic groups, even within otherwise similar families. The American Dream is anything but solid, but its changeability, its very instability, is what makes it able to withstand the tests of time.

Constitutional scholars claim that the United States has managed to make it through so much time with relatively little internal strife because the founding documents of the nation are so fluid and open to interpretation. Because they move and stretch, because they are, in a way, not solid, they are able to govern this country as well in 2003 as they did in 1793. So does the American Dream call to people now with the same tingle of anticipation that it did a hundred years ago during the Gilded Age—the reason may have changed, but the telling of the Dream remains the same. The Reverend Willie Smith said, "I confront the Dream as the Dream confronts me," at the beginning of this year. He was talking about the American Dream, and how it fits into Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream, a dream about equality. Maybe that's the right idea after all, and the only way to react to the tingle of optimism that is the American

Dream, the tingle that everyone feels differently at different stages in our lives. To confront it head on, eyes open. Always questioning, always wondering. From the laser-bright cutting edge of science to the murky, shameful corners of our forgotten national history, from the remnants of slave culture being swept to the side by a growing tide of commercialism to that same commercialism preserving grandiose treasures like national parks and the Biltmore Estate. From heated debates about mainstream religion's role in a "non-religious" government to the rising flavor of multiculturalism and religious pluralism seeping into America's heartland. All embody some form of the American Dream, if only we look hard enough. All movements are carried on the backs of people living out their own American dreams, their own versions of the shared American experience. All are trying to tell their own stories in one way or another.

All dare you to understand.

To read more from Crystal's journal visit <http://faculty.rmwc.edu/ejohns>. Go to Student Profiles and click on Crystal's name.