



American Culture Program

RANDOLPH-MACON *woman's* COLLEGE

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in the spotlight

For the first time ever the American Culture Program students will be in the spotlight.

A Documentary. 2005.

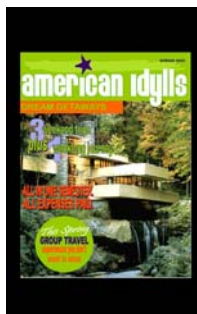
Coming This Spring to a Theatre Near You.

IDOLS, IDYLLS, IDLES



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 Fallingwater 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?

FROM THE DIRECTOR, DAN STIFFLER

I probably sneered when a colleague suggested reality TV as a theme for this year's American Culture Program. Study reality TV? I don't even want to watch it! Survivors and Joe Millionaires—who needs them? Why would *real* people want to claim fifteen minutes of fame by eating exotic bugs or seducing wealthy cowboys? But then my colleague mentioned "American Idol" and our whole approach changed.



Not that I have ever seen "American Idol," but I could think of a few historic ones—Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, Lincoln—whose busts are carved on a mountain in

South Dakota. Founding fathers: big-time *idols*. And Mount Rushmore? Well, it is a tourist destination for Americans looking to spend *idle* time. And vacationing in the Black Hills? Well, surely that could be an *idyll*.

Few things in academia are more dangerous than punning professors, but we were on a roll. Fallingwater became a primary road-trip destination. Designed by America's most idolized architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, Fallingwater was a retreat for idle times built over a waterfall along idyllic Bear Run. The owner of the house, Edgar Kaufmann, helped revolutionize the way Americans spend time shopping. Even in our day and age of big-box-

mart's paving over pastoral landscapes, Kaufmann's department store stands tall in downtown Pittsburgh.

Every spring semester, the American Culture Program offers its students new ways to study and to see America. This year, our controlling theme will be "American Idols," inspired by the current popularity of reality TV shows. Yes, we will spend a segment examining that cultural phenomenon, which in fact traces back to good old "Candid Camera." Indeed, the 2005 American Culture Program students will be producing their own reality video. You can look for its premiere this spring. In the meantime, however, please don't ask me to watch "Insect Gourmet" or "Becky Billionaire"!

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE



LAUREN BLACK
STILLWATER, OK
Major: Curricular Studies
Concentration: American Culture

Practicum: Creating web-based curriculum by directly applying her American Culture Program

experiences to the Virginia state standards of learning in a fifth grade classroom.

Lauren's project, the Ripple Effect, draws on her firsthand experiences learning about the environment in American Culture. Lauren re-

ceived credit in both the American Culture and education departments for her work on this project.

You can visit her website at <http://www4.rmwc.edu/americanreams>.



STEPHANY SMATHERS
CANTON, NC
Major: American Culture

Practicum: WWRM campus radio show dedicated to the American Culture Program

series of shows for the campus radio station, telling a story about America as she experienced it in the American Culture Program. Her show included sound bites from interviews with our American Voices, students, and more. She created an an-

thology on her show which included transcripts, trip information, and student reflections on these experiences.

Stephany created a



DARILYN PEAKE
WESTMINSTER, MD
Major: Communication and Music

Practicum: Assisting with recruitment and marketing of the American Culture Program.

Program while also gaining practical experience in the field of communication. Darilyn's projects seemed endless as she was involved in on-campus promotion and community outreach. She successfully created and implemented a historic tour of downtown Lynchburg last fall, coordinated an American Culture Program event on the

R-MWC campus, and co-founded a new campus social club to increase awareness about the American Culture Program and historic downtown Lynchburg. In addition to writing a number of articles for the *Sunday*, Darilyn also assisted with the production of the American Culture Program Media Guide.

Darilyn, American Culture Program participant in 2003, enrolled in the practicum because she wanted to "give back" to the



MARYANNA RICHARDSON
DENDRON, VA
Major: History

Practicum: Cataloguing and archiving American Culture Program history and current events. MaryAnna was a par-

ticipant in the 2003 American Culture Program. Because she felt that the American Culture Program seemed to be such a secret on campus, she made it her mission to compile a history of the program that would

be useful in promoting it in the future. MaryAnna's practicum experience also included traveling with the Program and writing synopses of her experiences for the American Culture Program website.

*"I would never have been able to incorporate so many experiences into my education here if I had not taken this course. It really showed me how I could use my liberal arts education to do almost anything."
—Stephany Smathers*

LEARNING BY DOING

Johnnetta Cole, president of Emory University, said, "An education that teaches you to understand something about the world has done only half the assignment. The other half is to teach you to do something about making the world a better place."

The American Culture Program models Cole's sentiments by emphasizing community outreach—learning by doing. We have discovered what a powerful learning experience it is to get out into different American communities to work *with* the people in an attempt to understand the many socio-economic issues that we discuss and debate in the classroom. Not only have we realized how life-changing these experiences can be for our students, but we have learned how this exchange has also inspired others.



Students from an inner-city elementary school in Atlanta, Georgia, have written us after our visit, determined to be the first in their families to attend college. "I *am going to do it*," wrote one little girl. "I *will* finish middle school, and high school, and one day, I am going to go to Randolph-Macon Woman's College!" MaryAnna Richardson, American Culture Program participant in 2003, learned that a woman in Appalachia with whom we volunteered at a food bank was inspired by our American Culture Program to attend college. She is now enrolled. "I never truly realized the power of the American Culture Program," wrote MaryAnna in her journal. "I have been so busy thinking about how all of these people were changing my life and the way I view the world that I never anticipated learning about how our encounters with them made an impact on *their* lives."

The American Culture Program leads students with an intellectual pursuit of American culture, doing so in such a way that the exploration enthralls an intensely rich personal journey, transforming students into leaders who are ready to apply their education and inspire change.

Here are some of the projects students worked on in 2004:

Blackwater Creek Project with Boonsboro Elementary School's 4th grade classes

- Students/staff volunteered to help with a local environmental field trip, each student conducted a station (organized by AMCP/ Education student Lauren Black). This project was in conjunction with our unit on environmental justice and the American landscape.
- We worked with the students on letter-writing skills by serving as pen pals, and we interviewed them about what it means to be an American and what their American Dreams are.



Fresh Youth Initiatives: FYI is an after-school community building/service program in Washington Heights,

New York. We visited the area and worked with the kids in a food pantry stocking shelves and making deliveries to elderly; we worked in the community garden; and, we worked in the neighborhood removing graffiti.

Scenic Hudson Organization: A non-profit organization dedicated to preserving this historic landscape. We worked with their big Clean Sweep project, removing debris from the nature trail that connects Val Kill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park, New York.



2500 Rivermont Avenue • Lynchburg, Virginia 24503
Tel 434-947-8480 • Fax: 434-947-8138 • ejohns@rmwc.edu

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, think the realities are.

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

AMERICAN CULTURE PROGRAM TO BERMUDA



Professors Heidi Kunz and Julio Rodriguez will lead this 6-credit American Culture Program in 2005.

As a student in this travel seminar, you will investigate texts and contexts contributing to public history. You will travel to historic sites in Virginia, Maryland, and Bermuda to study firsthand the British colonization of the Atlantic world. You will

examine the presentation of history in textual and visual media as well as in museum exhibits. In Bermuda, you will dig for artifacts with the University of Bristol (UK) Field School in Historical Archaeology.

You will have access to some of the best researchers, scholars, curators, and archaeologists in the field, making your experiences truly once-in-a-lifetime. Apply by November 12, 2004. Contact the American Culture Program for application materials.

WWW.RMWC.EDU/AMERICANCULTURE