

Fall 2014

American Studies

newsletter

 **RIDER**
UNIVERSITY
American Studies Department

America Across the Disciplines

by Allie Triglianos

Coming to Rider University, I thought I had my career path laid out. However, it wasn't until I took an American Studies course that I realized how wrong I was! The American Studies Program here at Rider has helped shape my college career and made college one of the best academic experiences of my life. I began Rider as a Secondary Education/French major. After 3 major changes, I landed on the American Studies program because it combined all I wanted to learn – American history, culture, film, literature, and philosophy.

When people ask me what my major is and then follow up with, “What’s that mean?” I tend to laugh because I know they’re missing out on one of the greatest programs at Rider. I explain that American Studies allows you to look at America from an array of disciplines, explaining how our culture has developed. The next question is my favorite – “What kind of classes do you take?” My answer? “Classes that are fun, educational, and mean something to me.”

I’ve taken classes such as Alfred Hitchcock in America, American Philosophy, The Social Impact of Rock & Roll, and The Films of Steven Spielberg. This program has enhanced my love for film, music, and the foundations of this country.

I cannot stress enough how amazing this program is because you don’t have to see it to believe it. Talk to your peers that are in the program. They can tell you firsthand! The professors are easy-going and love what they teach. The courses aren’t boring or difficult to understand. American Studies courses challenge you in new ways. If you have the time in your schedule, I strongly urge you to consider an American Studies course, or better yet, a major or minor in American Studies!

Meet Our Newest Faculty Member



Kelly Ross, Assistant Professor of English and American Studies

My current research focuses on the origins of detective fiction in the United States. I argue that US literary detection develops out of the real-life mutual surveillance between masters and slaves in the antebellum South. I'm excited to share and develop this research with students in my AMS 214 class this spring. I teach American literature from the beginnings to the present, with special interests in 19th-century poetry and literature and medicine.

After earning my Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I became an Assistant Professor in the English department of Grand Valley State University, in Michigan, for 2 years. I'm thrilled to join the faculty at Rider for many reasons including Rider's bright, hardworking students, my talented colleagues, and the opportunity to develop American Studies courses in addition to teaching American literature. I'm also very happy to be back on the East Coast, closer to my family in Virginia and North Carolina, and out of the great frozen north!

All About the American Studies Club

by Amanda Papa

Rider University's American Studies Club is now in its second year. The unique club offers a variety of activities and a cultural experience you won't forget! This club welcomes anyone in the Rider community and provides a board of diverse Rider students. All Rider students are invited to attend upcoming events such as our Pumpkin Painting Event, Forrest Gump 20th Anniversary Celebration, Melting Potluck Night, and an array of workshops. Not only does this club offer American Studies-based discussions, it reflects on the overall culture of America. Members are encouraged to speak out about their ideas and find an appreciation of all cultures that make up our great country. Keep an eye out for advertisements for campus events and meetings and check our Facebook page! Interests may contact President Ashley Walker-Koonce to join our email list at walkerkoona@rider.edu.

Faculty News

Dr. Richard Butsch

His book, *Meanings of Audiences: Comparative Discourses* received an "unreserved recommendation" from Julian McDougall in *Participations: Int'l Journal of Audience Research*.

Dr. Kelly Ross
Her paper, "Anti-Detectives in Melville's *Benito Cereno* and Kōbō Abe's *The Face of Another*," was accepted for the 10th International Melville Conference, to be held June 25 through June 29, 2015, at Keio University, Tokyo, Japan.

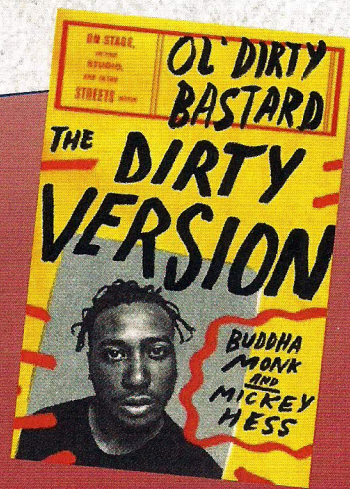
Dr. James O. Castagnera

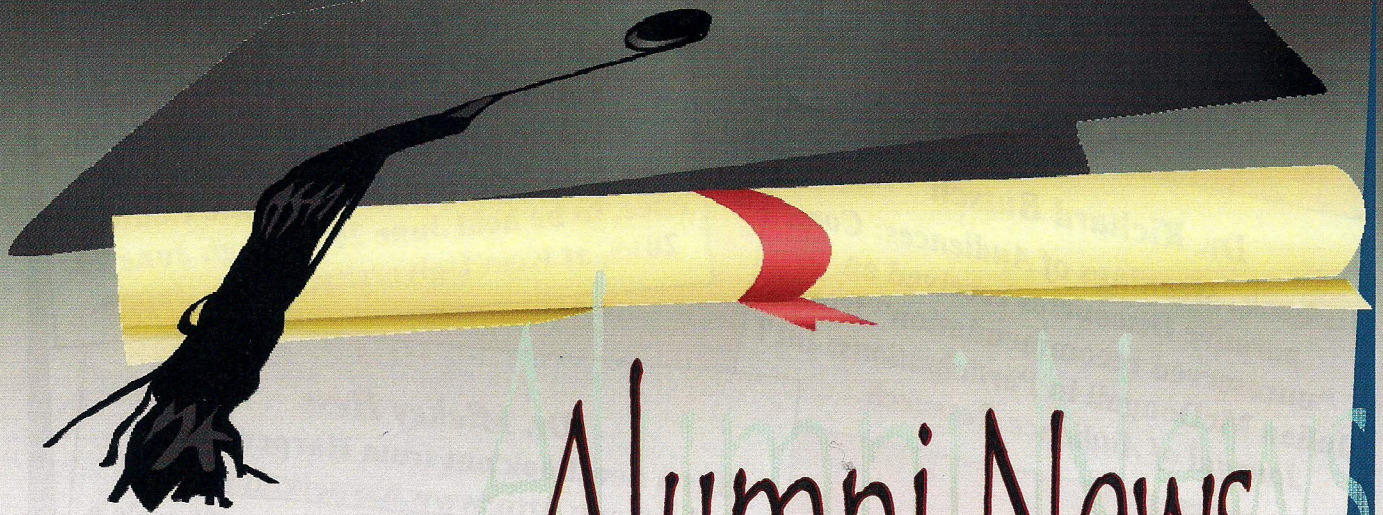
Associate Provost and University legal counsel, he has the lead chapter in *Complying with Employment Regulations: Leading Lawyers on Analyzing Legislation and Adapting to the Changing State of Employment Law* (Eagan, MN: Thomson Reuters 2014). He also presented "Can They Really Say That? Parody, Satire, Copyright Infringement and the First Amendment," to the Mercer County Bar Association at Mercer County Community College on October 29, 2014.

Dr. Mickey Hess
Has a new book out from Harper Collins Publishers: <http://www.harpercollins.com/9780062231413/the-dirty-version>. There's a NYC book release on Nov 6: <http://bestevents.us/brooklyn-buddha-monk-amp-mickey-hess-offsite/76912> and an L.A. book release on Nov 8: <http://booksoup.com/buddha-monk-2014>. He is also coordinating the Rider Hip-Hop Conference on Nov 20, all day. Hosted by Rider professors Justin Burton, Brea Heidelberg, and Mickey Hess, the 2014 Rider Hip-Hop Conference, co-sponsored by AMS, offers a full day of presentations, workshops, and panel discussions by hip-hop scholars and practitioners. We invite students and scholars from our neighboring institutions to join us for this exciting event. To be added to the conference mailing list, please contact Dr. Mickey Hess at

Dr. Jack Sullivan

Has covered Spoleto USA 2014 for the September issue of *Opera Magazine*, including new productions of *Katia Kabanova* by Leos Janacek, *Facing Goya* by Michael Nyman, and *El Nino* by John Adams. The Westminster Choir sang in the Adams and Janacek operas.





Alumni News

Brooke Erdman (14) is a graduate student at Villanova in the Liberal Studies Program, where she has a full scholarship. She says, "I miss Rider and all of you already!"

Alyssa de Carlo (12), who completed her MFA at Rosemount, is working in admissions at Villanova and teaching English Composition at Mercer County Community College. She has completed her first novel and is excited to have secured a prominent New York agent.

Russel Melville (10) received his Masters in Bio-Pharmacology from Rutgers in 2012. He is now Director of Military Veterans Affairs at Rider.

Carter Hallett (06) is Operations Manager, Promotion Platforms, at HBO.

Cara Giovinazzo (09) is teaching LSS1- Leadership and Teamwork for the Leadership Development Program at Rider. The course is the first of a three-part requirement for earning the Leadership Development Certificate. She is also in the Master's of Humanities program at Arcadia University.

Course Descriptions

Take a look at some of the terrific AMS courses offered in the Spring Semester!

Dr. Castagnera's Religion in America

Dr. Castagnera, who is legal counsel here at Rider, will present the course through the lens of the First Amendment, which begins, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...." Highlights of the course include:

Religious rights and religious discrimination from the Irish Diaspora to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the Supreme Court's 2014 *Hobby Lobby* case;

Radicalism and religion from the Know Nothings and Molly Maguires to the World Trade Center attacks and the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints;

Religious rituals running afoul of the law: hallucinogens, polygamy, animal sacrifices and the American legal System; and

Current topics in religion and public policy, including the Roman Catholic Church's sexual-abuse scandals; Israel, Islam and America's Middle Eastern policies; Christian fundamentalism and Tea Party politics.

Dr. Neelakanta's Billy Wilder in Hollywood

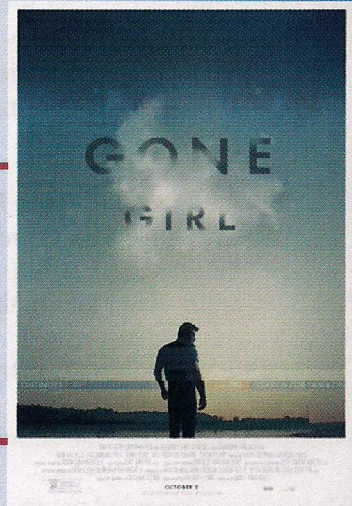
From the late 1930s to the early 1960s, Billy Wilder dominated Hollywood as a director, producer, and screenwriter,

working with stars such as Marilyn Monroe, Gloria Swanson, Marlene Dietrich, Jack Lemmon, Barbara Stanwyck, Shirley MacLaine, Humphrey Bogart, and William Holden. With over fifty films and six Academy Awards to his credit, he is celebrated as one of the titans of Hollywood's Golden Age. His films, which range from gritty noir to melodrama to farce and satiric comedy, display a unique and powerful brand of cynicism, irony and satire, often tempered with sparkling wit and a deft comic touch. This course examines the impact and enduring cinematic legacy of Billy Wilder's best loved films by critically analyzing his output in the context of American cultural politics during and after World War II. We will pay special attention to the Hollywood Studio system, the Production Code, American New Deal ideology, and sexual and gender politics from the 1940s-60s. Films examined will include *Double Indemnity*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Some Like it Hot*, *The Apartment*, *Ace in the Hole*, and *Sabrina*.



Dr. Sullivan's AMS 214: Book to Movie – Adapting for Hollywood

This course explores how plays, musicals, short stories, and novels become successful Hollywood films. What can the camera do that the written word cannot, and how do directors translate texts into images? We explore a variety of genres and travel to New York to see *Cabaret*, one of the great examples of adaptation. Adapted films include *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *Cabaret*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, and *Gone Girl*.



Dr. Ross's AMS 214, American Detective Fiction and Film

In this class we'll trace the global phenomenon of detective fiction and film back to its American roots in Poe's Dupin tales, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter." As we investigate the genre's development over the 19th and 20th centuries, we'll consider how the crimes, criminals, and punishments depicted respond to specific historical circumstances in the US. Films, TV series, and novels we study will include *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson*, *The Maltese Falcon*, and season 5 of *The Wire*.



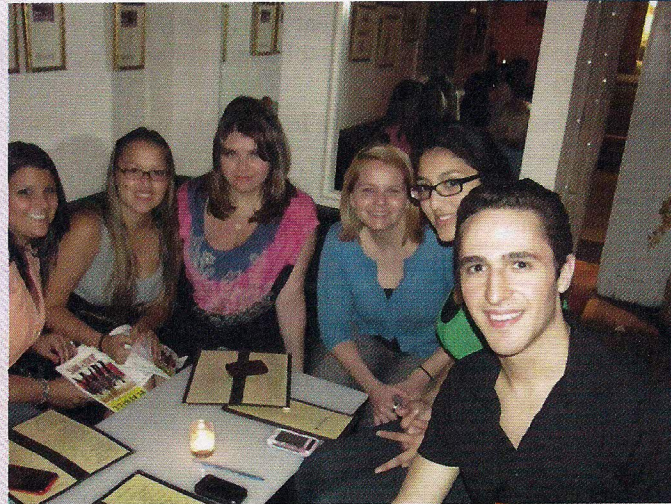
Broadway Adventures

Dr. Sullivan's Broadway course is the most fun class you can take at Rider. Going into the city seven times in one semester to see a Broadway show and eat at delicious restaurants is the best way to spend a Sunday afternoon. And it's so affordable. You'll never find tickets at these prices anywhere else. Dr. Sullivan's many connections in New York City and his perseverance in organizing the course allow us the opportunity to have talkbacks with celebrities such as Michael Cera and Zachary Levi, leaving us feeling like we're getting the star treatment. Nobody else gets to sit through the talkbacks except us! Coming from California, I wanted to take advantage of everything the East Coast has to offer and I was not going to pass up this opportunity!

So many shows that I wanted to see on my own but never would have been able to afford I now had the chance to experience at an affordable cost AND I was getting academic credits to see them! How does it get any better? From modern shows such as *First Date* and *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (which won the Tony for Best Musical), to classics including Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, I know I am expanding my horizons exponentially and becoming a more cultured adult.

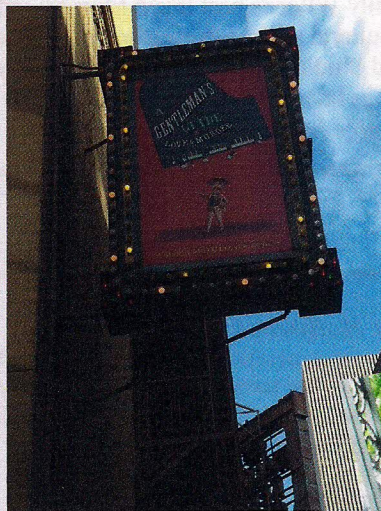
Aside from having a blast with Dr. Sullivan and my peers, I have also gained independence and confidence traveling into big cities by myself. After taking this class for two Fall semesters in a row, I now feel comfortable going into NYC by myself to see other shows or concerts. I've learned how to take the subway and how to walk to get to my destination. These adventures have led me to take advantage of all the city has to offer and I love it. Growing as a student and as an adult has been one of the most enriching experiences of my time at Rider. Do yourself a favor: take Dr. Sullivan's Broadway class next fall. I'll definitely be there.

by Anna Wostenberg



Above: Russell Fischer backstage with the Summer II Broadway course. Fischer plays Joe Pesci in *Jersey Boys* and is a Westminster Choir College graduate!

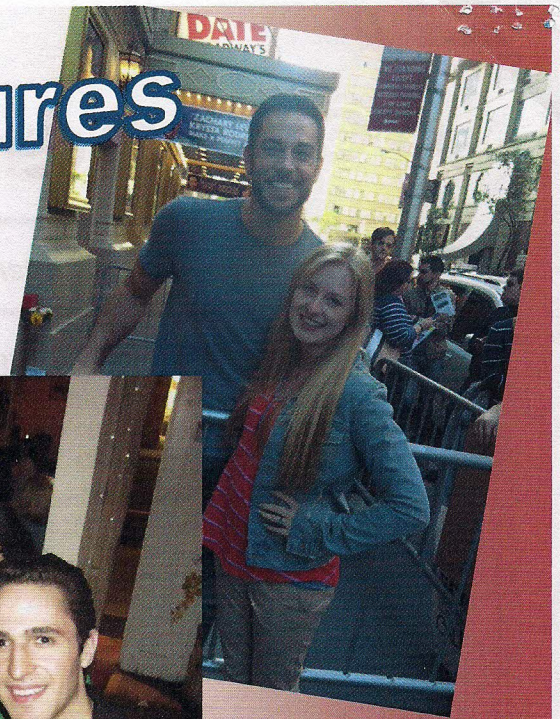
Right: The Broadway class dines at Marseilles in NYC after a show.



The Broadway class saw Tony Award winner for Best Musical, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*.



The 2014 New Orleans class stops for a group photo on the balcony of Antoine's, America's oldest restaurant.



Above: Anna Wostenberg meeting Zachary Levi after seeing him perform in *First Date* on Broadway.

