

# What I Did on my Summer Vacation...

**Jane Barnette** - (Theatre & Performance Studies, MAST-Affiliate) launched a new AMST course for undergraduates this summer (Staging Place & Identity in the USA), in which students used performance theory to analyze the American-ness of several contemporary plays and musicals, including the award-winning new musical *The Book of Mormon*, by (South Park creators) Trey Parker, Matt Stone, and (Avenue Q writer) Robert Lopez. She also presented at the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of America conference in Denver, where she represented the southeast as the regional vice-president. At this event, it was announced that next year's LMDA Conference will be held in Atlanta, under Barnette's leadership...stay tuned for ways that you all can attend and/or get involved with these efforts!

**Noah Echols** - I enjoyed a relatively easy summer of yard work and vacations. Erin and I visited New York City for ReadWriteWeb.com's 2Way Summit. We hung out with some awesome people like NPR's Senior Strategist, Andy Carvin, explored the city, and even got pushed (literally) into a protest against education cuts. We also spent a week exploring the tiny towns of the southern coast of Maine, eating mostly delicious food and seeing whales.

**Rebecca Hill** - (MAST Director) Many of you already know that I got married - woo hoo! But that was quick, and the readings were short. Since then, I've attended three awesome thesis defenses, witnessed some fascinating internships take shape, and signed a lot of capstone committee selection forms. My most MAST-worthy academic activity was participating once again in the Working-Class Studies Association Conference, held this year in Chicago. This conference brings together activists and scholars to discuss working-class culture and politics. It is always a lively and broadly democratic conference, and a great one for MAST students to consider. I gave a presentation on representations of police as working-class in the 1970s-1980s as part of a panel on class politics, the new left, and police in the 1970s. Otherwise, I wrote my first ever book blurb (for Bob Zecker's *Race and America's Immigrant Press*), am writing a review essay for *American Quarterly*, and am beginning work on a chapter for a book on anti-Communism between WWI and WWII.

**Joe Thomas** - (Visual Arts) spent two weeks visiting Barcelona and enjoying a cruise in the Mediterranean that visited Tunisia, Italy, and France. In November he will be presenting a paper at the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality meeting in Houston on "Evolution and Devolution in Gay Male Pornography of the Digital Era."

**Ugena Whitlock** - (Gender & Womens' Studies) is going on a cruise to visit Greece in August. But I have spent the summer preparing the manuscript of my book, *DixieQueer: Essays on Place and Sexuality*, for publication by the first of the year.

CONGRATULATIONS to August MAST Graduates: **Karen Burton's thesis: "Traumatic Family Narratives in a Cosmopolitan World: Identity in American Third Generation Holocaust Survivors"**, **Emily Fox's thesis: "Preserving Roswell: Voices of Historic Preservation in Roswell, Georgia,"** and **Kaci Schmitt's thesis: "Exploring Dress and Behavior of the Emo Culture."** Kaci has accepted a job teaching ESOL at a Cobb County middle school.

## Dates to Remember

August 15, 2011 - Potential Student Open House (4-6:00 p.m. in SO 2017)

August 17, 2011 - New Student Orientation (3-4:00 p.m. in SO 5074)

August 17, 2011 - MAST-a-PALOOZA (4-6:00 p.m. in SO 5074)

Sept. 22-24, 2011 - Imagining America Conference - Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN.

Oct. 20 -22, 2011 - American Studies Conference - Baltimore, MD.

November 1, 2011 - Application deadline for Spring 2012 admission.

# August/ Sept. 2011

## The MA in American Studies Program

### MAST is Now Part of the New Interdisciplinary Studies Department

#### Tony Grooms Named Interim Chair of the new Interdisciplinary Studies Department (ISD)

On June 15, 2011, Kennesaw State University Dean Richard Vengroff announced that Anthony Grooms has accepted the position of Interim Chair of the newly created Interdisciplinary Studies Department (ISD) in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Anthony "Tony" Grooms, a professor of creative writing in the English Department for 17 years, started his new position on July 1, 2011. Grooms is well known in Metro Atlanta for his own literary writing and his support and encouragement of other writers.

Grooms authored a collection called *Ice Poems*; a collection of stories, *Trouble No More* which won the Lillian Smith Book Award in 1996; and a novel, *Bombingham*, which won the Lillian Smith Book Award in 2002. Grooms also won a Fulbright Scholarship and spent a year teaching at Södertörn University in Stockholm, Sweden. He has also taught at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, Africa.

*"I am honored to be leading this talented faculty in what is destined to be a wonderful adventure in learning for both students and the community," said Tony Grooms, Interim Chair of the ISD Department.*



The new ISD Department will encompass the following areas of study:

- \*African & African Diaspora Studies - coordinated by: Jesse Benjamin.
- \* American Studies - both undergraduate & graduate coordinated by Susan Rouse & Rebecca Hill, respectively.
- \*Asian Studies - coordinated by May Gao.
- \*Environmental Studies - coordinated by Mark Patterson.
- \*Gender & Women's Studies - coordinated by Ugena Whitlock.
- \*Latin American/Latino Studies - coordinated by Ernesto Silva.
- \*Peace Studies - coordinated by Tom Pynn.
- \*Religious Studies - coordinated by Laura Dabundo.

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## 2011 GRA Faculty/Student Projects

### AADS Interdisciplinary Research and Event/Project Coordination - Jesse Benjamin

*GRA Student: A.J. Murphy* - This student will work collaboratively with the AADS Program Coordinator and the Student Growth and Outreach Committee on projects to support AADS in connection with other programs in the Interdisciplinary Studies Department (ISD). Also work collaboratively with the AADS faculty member.

### Borges/Poe Book Project - Emron Esplin

*GRA Student: Richie Essenburg* - This project is the refined version of the book project begun in 2009. It is a comparative analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's literary relationship in the Rio de la Plata region and in Spanish America in the latter half of the twentieth century.

### Police/Prison Guards book proposal on the Mini-Red Scare of 1938-1491 History - Rebecca Hill

*GRA Student: Nikkeshia Wilson* - The two publication projects are in different stages of completion, so the GRA working with me will gain knowledge of the different stages of academic publication. The first project is a book chapter on the history of the Smith Act and the Hatch Act as well as Communist and Socialist resistance. The second is on the history of prison guards and police unions in New York State and New York City and their connection to the representation of police, prison and crime in popular culture. The goal of this project is to decide whether or not to do a book proposal on this subject expanding on the professor's existing publications and presentations.

### Imagining America - LeeAnn Lands

*GRA Student: Annie Moye* - The Graduate Research Assistant will support Imagining America @ KSU, an organization promoting public scholarship and practice in the arts and humanities. Working with the KSU representative to Imagining America, the GRA will help build a public information campaign about engaged scholarship in general and as it is realized at KSU.

### Mayan Heritage Community Project - Alan LeBaron *GRA Student: Mandy McGrew (Fall Semester)*

The Mayan Project works with the Guatemalan Maya in Georgia and throughout the United States. Various programs of the Maya Project have included health clinics, law seminars, English classes, and the creation of a Maya Health Toolkit for medical providers and a national network of Maya interpreters.

**Metropolitan Workers: Popular Identity and Citizenship in Mexico City's Industrial Suburbs - Ken Maffitt** - *GRA Student: Yen Rodriguez* - This book length project will link Mexico City to immigrant communities in Georgia. *Metropolitan Workers* is a study of working-class political culture, identity formation, and social movements in Mexico City's three most important industrial suburbs. I plan to include stories of people from the industrial suburbs who migrated to the United States, including some in Georgia to be interviewed by our project.

**Year of Peru Project - Ernesto Silva** - *GRA Student: Juan Trejo* - This project will entail the planning, collecting, researching and selecting of the lecturers and performance groups, as well as individuals who will form part of the KSU celebration of the Year of Peru. The GRA will be looking for potential participants in the US, Peru and internationally who will introduce the campus to this part of the world. Will work closely with the Peruvian community in the region, including the offices of the Consul of Peru in Atlanta.

**South to a Queer Place - Ugena Whitlock** *GRA Student: Jessica Killcreas* - This project is interdisciplinary as scholars from across disciplines were approached to contribute to the collection. The kinds of submissions move beyond traditional 'scholarly' writing in the interest of making the work accessible to a broad audience. The intersections of gender, race, place and sexuality, along with the fluid crossing of disciplines, situates this work within American Studies.

## Howard Finster and His Paradise Gardens by Joann Trodahl, Ann Moye & Ann Burkly

We three American Studies students were honored to work with Dr. Diana McClintock and an academically diverse group of undergraduates in the ARH 4490 course, "Howard Finster's Paradise Gardens and Southern Outsider Art." Our project was a ground floor preservation endeavor to bring Paradise Gardens back to the vital and dynamic entity it once was. We worked collaboratively to fulfill the AMST 7500 requirement by dividing our project into three categories: sculpture, walkways, and signs. We then began documenting and creating a digital database for the plethora of multi-media artworks on site at Paradise Gardens. It was an exciting adventure and one that brought us both pleasure and a wealth of knowledge about the complicated field of historic site preservation. Both Ann and Annie are passionately involved in the preservation of other historic sites, but for Joann it was a first time experience. We learned about the tremendous time it takes to navigate the political and bureaucratic process to become classified as a Historical Site which is leverage for future grant and award applications and how selflessly those who are enthusiastic about the project share their energies. At the Gardens we met students from other colleges and universities, political figures, artists, and tourists who came to see the Gardens. We shared stories and sweat with those long marchers who have kept the Gardens alive. Through their eyes, we saw the glory days of the Gardens' past and a vision of its future. But, more importantly, we came to appreciate Howard Finster as a preeminent Southern "outsider," or "visionary," artist of the 1980s and 90s and as an impassioned reverend and family man. We learned that his art did not define him but that he used his art as a vehicle in his life's mission - preaching God's word. He was a true visionary in his art and in his life's passion... Paradise Gardens!

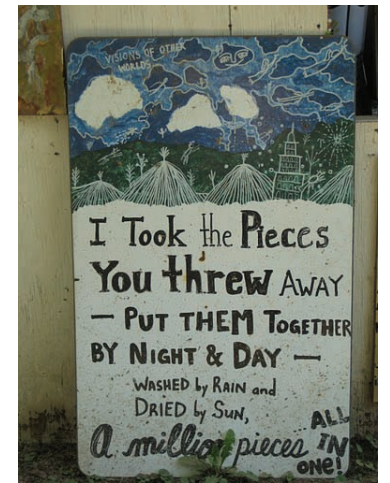
"I took the pieces you threw away and put them together by Night and Day. Washed by Rain and Dried by Sun A Million Pieces All in One." - Howard Finster



Ann Burkly



Joann Trodahl



Howard Finster