Home is Where you Park It!
MAST Students Hit the Road this Summer

This summer, MAST students Heather Harris and Capers Huff had the opportunity to travel the United States for ten weeks. They drove 13,000 miles and visited twenty-five states and eight national parks, spending most nights in their converted camper van. In addition to being a wonderful experience for them personally, they used the trip as an opportunity to do research and work on their academic and creative projects.

Heather’s capstone project, tentatively titled “Home Is Where You Park It: Van Life in the United States” is a documentary project on full-time travelers who live in their vehicles and often identify themselves as rubber tramps and vandwellers. Heather became aware of this subculture through her own travels and on travel blogs and online communities that organize around the hashtags #vanlife, #homeiswhereyouparkit, and #vandwelling. She has found that many full-timers see their lifestyle as a rejection of normative society and its values that champion home ownership, careerism, and materialism, and have instead built new communities based in movement, nature, and simple living. This is particularly interesting to Heather as an individual who is both personally and academically interested in resistance strategies and alternative living. Her documentary seeks to uncover the motivations of vandwellers, whether they choose the lifestyle for economic or political reasons, and how the lifestyle may relate to such concepts as resistance, public space, and the policing of mobility. Her ten weeks traveling this summer was an opportunity to observe, meet, and speak with those living this lifestyle.

Capers and Heather also spent the the summer developing and promoting their blog, Waffles Goes West, a travel blog and community based on their 3 year old corgi, Waffles. Their site features pictures of Waffles at recognizable landmarks, tourist attractions, and National Parks. As Waffles’ online following grows, Capers and Heather have begun creating a children's book (series) based on his travels. The series will promote the positive benefits of travel and adventure for children. The first book, Waffles Goes to the Grand Canyon, is currently being illustrated and they hope it will be ready to print by the end of the year.

Ariel Eisenberg joined Kennesaw State University in the fall of 2015 as an assistant professor of Interdisciplinary Studies and History. She is currently teaching GWST 3070: Gender and Social Justice and HIST 2112: The U.S. since 1877, and is developing courses on U.S. women's history, women in the civil rights movement, and theories of the body.

In the fall of 2017, Dr. Eisenberg will offer a graduate seminar in Disability Studies through the American Studies program. The seminar will use interdisciplinary methods to explore this emerging field, analyzing feminist, queer, and body theory, scientific and medical literature, memoirs, and representations of disability in art and the media. It will also consider the role of social activism in shaping disability scholarship.

Dr. Eisenberg's research explores categories of identity and social problems in the United States. She is currently working on a book manuscript entitled “Save Our Streets and Shelter Our Homeless”: The Homeless Crisis in Urban America in the 1980s. In it, she explores how the homeless crisis took shape as impoverished people – previously separated in the public consciousness and the social welfare system by factors including age, gender, race, parental status, and health status – began to be thought of as a single group: “the homeless.” As gentrification and economic stratification increase in the 21st Century, and as the presence of homeless people and the organizations that serve them continue to be a central focus of politicians, planners, business owners, and residents in cities across the country, Dr. Eisenberg's work explores the origins of homelessness as a social problem, and its relationship to the contemporary neoliberal city.
Congratulations to the 2015 Spring and Summer MAST Graduates!

Christine Debord
“Cause I’m Young and I’m Black and My Hat’s Real Low: Race, Hip-Hop, and the Transformations in the NBA During the Late 1990’s and Early 2000’s”

Nilufer Gokmen
“A Journey of Tears: What They Don’t Tell you About America”

Nykia Hannah
“I’m Rich Bitch: Black Class Performance and teh New Nouveau Riche”

Yen Rodriguez
“The Triple Double: Racially Ambiguous Afro-Latino Identities in America”

Rob Hadaway
“Dramaturgy: Kurt Weill’s Street Scene: An American Opera and the American Immigrant’s Experience”

Ashley McFarland,
“Cooking and Eating the Other: Contemporary Representations of Domestic Workers in Popular Media”

Nikkesha Wilson
“The Marriage of Charles and Rose Tutty: Racial Identity and Intermarriage in Turn of the Century America”

Emmie Trull
“There is No I in Team: A Look at Gender and Equality in Collegiate Athletic Attendance”

What Are You Up To?
Student Spotlight
Kristen Walker

This summer I presented my paper “Intimacy in the Fabric of African American Women’s Lives: The weaving of relationship and personal storytelling in Lynn Nottage’s Intimate Apparel” at the 2015 Association for Theatre in Higher Education conference in Montreal. My work was selected by the Black Theatre Association to be part of “Curtains Up: A Debut Panel of the American Theatre and Drama Society and Black Theatre Association”. In the ATHE program, the panel was described as “An emerging scholars’ panel introducing new scholarship in American and Black theater and performance selected by juries of scholars from ATDS and BTA.”

My capstone’s focus is on women in the Black Panther Party. At the end of capstone II, my research will culminate in an original theater piece examining labor, identity and community based on the experiences of the leaders and the underrepresented. Stemming from the idea: “What if women from various chapters across the US united and took over the BPP in 1971?”, I will utilize theater, music and film, to craft a narrative that explores the internal struggles, actuality and resilience of the women.

The American Studies Student Organization (AMSTO) welcomes its new co-presidents, Stephanie Craven and Tanya Brinkley.

Join AMSTO for the first meeting of the 2015-2016 school year on Wednesday, September 16th at 5pm in SO 2017.

Mark your calendars for AMSTO’s annual Board Game Night, happening October 22nd. Details to come!