

By Dean Schaffer '10

When students tell friends they're majoring in American Studies, a common response is, "Exciting! But... What can you do with that?" Well, the answer is just about anything. Eight recent alums in American Studies showcase the diversity of careers which their major allows: freelance writing, professional tennis, policy research, and more. The interdisciplinary courses taken by American Studies students help them to explore their diverse interests and prepare future graduates to pursue practically any path in academia, government, public service, or the private sector once they leave the Farm.

EMILY CADEI '02



Emily Cadei spent the year after graduation working as an intern at various general interest publications. Eventually, though, she decided to experiment with politics, so she moved to Washington, D.C., in the summer of 2003 without "a job or a place to live." She remembers that her American Studies courses first piqued her interest in politics and social justice. In Washington, she began working for *The Hotline*, the *National Journal's* online daily briefing of American politics; she called her experience "an initiation by fire," but it helped her decide to go back to graduate school for a master's in Political Science.

She is currently finishing the second year of a two-year master's program at Oxford University. She says the intensive work she did on her honors thesis—which focused on feminism and the debate over pornography and won the Gelpi Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Honors Research—helped prepare her for graduate-level work.

But before she went back to school, she volunteered in Hoedspruit, South Africa, for three months. She helped run a journalism program for "disadvantaged rural women," assisted women in a weaving cooperative with their "English and marketing skills," and wrote a few freelance articles, one of which was published in *Ms.* magazine. After earning her master's, she plans to

return to work in the field of political journalism.

JON COHEN '03

Jon Cohen has worked at an impressive collection of entertainment companies, including the Endeavor Talent Agency, Alcon Entertainment, 20th Century Fox, and Davis Entertainment. Although he started out as an employee in the mailroom at Endeavor about a week after graduating from Stanford, he's currently a story editor at Davis.

In addition to his minor in Film Studies, his major in American Studies provided him with "knowledge of American history and literature [that] has been a valuable tool in creating and developing film projects." He also started research on an honors thesis about the portrayal of marijuana in American film; though he eventually decided not to write it, the preliminary work he did helped him gain a better understanding of American cinema.

In the future, he hopes to work as a creative executive at a "studio or production company focused on making intelligent, elevated genre movies and solid, character-based dramas." Eventually, he says, he plans to work as a studio executive and later as a producer in his own company.

BROOKE HANSON '02



As a graduate student at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, Brooke Hanson is certainly utilizing the knowledge she gained from her American Studies major concentration: Visual and Material Culture. In her words, "I see the major and concentration as a lens into our own history and values... The concentration examines the creative output that our society, throughout history, produced." She wrote an honors thesis on the intersection of religion, television, and popular culture through an examination of the TV show *Touched by an Angel*.

Right after graduation, Brooke moved to Los Angeles to work in the film industry. At USC, she is working on her thesis short film, a romantic comedy/drama about an illegal immigrant in

an American college who meets the son of an anti-immigration politician at a barbeque. "It's a story about where policy meets people," she says. She got much of her inspiration and some of the film's ideas from a class she took at Stanford—"The American Dream," taught by Prof. John Manley. To Brooke, the film represents many of the crucial ideas in American Studies: looking at the "primary sources... that reveal the individual experiences behind political tides." In the future, she plans to pursue her "Hollywood Dream" by working on music videos or developing an independent feature film.

DAVID MARTIN '03



As the 2006 Rookie of the Year for World Team Tennis, David Martin has been actively playing professional tennis ever since he graduated. But that doesn't stop him from

making good use of his education in American Studies. He's competed all over the country and the world, and says his undergraduate work gave him "a great foundation to understand countries that I go to [and] why they might treat me well or poorly as an American." He says the perspective he gained on America from his classes has helped make his current international traveling even more interesting and gives him a tool to "bridge gaps or misunderstandings that people might have about me as an American and vice versa."

His plans for the future? After continuing with tennis, he plans to go to law school and eventually "be a high school teacher and coach a sport." Ultimately, though, he believes the knowledge he gained was valuable in and of itself: "American Studies has simply given me a greater understanding of what it is to be an American, the ethos of America, and how it came to be as it is today."

KELLY MCKENZIE '03

Rather than major in Political Science, Kelly McKenzie opted to major in American Studies with a concentration on politics. Today, she works in social welfare policy and policy research, and she has no regrets about her decision: "[American Studies] allowed me to understand the broad human context in which policy is created and implemented.... I felt that studying political theory in a vacuum would give me an incomplete [understanding] of the policymaking process."

Kelly currently works in Washington, D.C., at the Center for Studying Health System Change, where she studies the access of low-income individuals to health care and writes articles and briefs about welfare programs such as Medicaid. She is also a Court Appointed Special Advocate for children in the capital's family court system and volunteers for the Washington, D.C. Stanford Association as vice president. Although her honors thesis was unrelated to her professional field, she says the experience "gave me an appreciation for qualitative research."

This coming fall, she will enroll at the University of Michigan to pursue an MBA and an MSW (master's in social work); afterward, she hopes to focus on "supporting innovative community-based collaborations that promote social justice."

JENNY MILLER '03

After graduating in 2003, Jenny Miller explored Europe for a few months before returning to San Francisco in the fall. She eventually landed a job as an editorial assistant for the

Bay Area lifestyle magazine *7x7*. After moving to Austin, Texas, she began her career as a freelance writer; later, she worked for about a year and a half at *Brilliant* magazine, which focuses mainly on the luxurious lifestyle of the Texas elite. According to Jenny, the magazine's relatively small staff gave her the opportunity to learn about many facets of the industry. Since June, she

has again been working as a freelance writer for local publications, largely because she enjoys the flexible lifestyle.

In the future, she plans to continue writing, probably switching back and forth between freelancing and working on staff. She says that her education in American Studies gave her a "good foundation" from which to work. Even though her articles on fashion and lifestyle do not directly relate to her undergraduate work, she says she has no regrets: "The understanding I got of our culture helps me have a context for understanding the world, which is something that's important for a journalist."

MEGHAN O'CONNOR '02

After working for ESPN's *Sportscenter* for two years, Meghan O'Connor moved to Washington, D.C.,

where she landed a job as a Production Coordinator for National Geographic Television. She worked primarily on "Hunter and Hunted," a documentary-style show on animal attacks. After a year, she was promoted to Associate Producer; her responsibilities included developing, researching, and editing episodes; she says one of the most challenging aspects of her job is "to balance the demands between educational and entertaining content."

The flexibility of the American Studies major allowed Megan to take a variety of journalism classes, many of which have proven valuable over the years: "I find myself referencing my old journalism classes now and again." She firmly believes that American Studies provides students with a strong foundation in writing: "The most important thing I have taken away from the American studies major has been the ability to write. Researching and putting together a script for a documentary involves the same sort of process as researching and writing a college paper." In the future, she plans to continue to pursue her interest in documentaries and hopes eventually to become a producer in the Bay Area.

RAHIEL TESFAMARIAM '03

Rahiel Tesfamariam's major in American Studies included a concentration in History and Society with a specialization in Race and Ethnicity, and these areas of thematic interest have remained instrumental in her life and career. After graduating and working for various organizations and publications, she became the youngest-ever editor-in-chief of *The Washington Informer*, an African-American newspaper in the nation's capital, in 2004. She says that, throughout her career in journalism, her education in American Studies allowed her "to look at matters of today but place them in a context within the past, offering a well-rounded perspective."

When she resigned from her post at the *Informer* in 2005, she went to the Middle East, Europe, and East Africa to pursue the love of traveling she developed during her winter quarter abroad at Oxford in her senior year at Stanford.

Rahiel is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at Yale Divinity School, where she has been named the first William Sloane Coffin, Jr. Scholar for Peace and Justice. This year, she will represent Yale in China and do service work in Jamaica, India, and Bangladesh. In the future, she hopes to continue pursuing her passion for both Christian ministry and social justice.



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