

People power. Power to the people. 2008-2009 will be another year in which these slogans will drive change in the American Studies program.

First things first.

The American Studies Graduate Student Organization has undergone a change in leadership for this year. In 2007-2008, Ph.D. candidate **Philathia Bolton** stepped forward to provide outstanding leadership to the ASGSO, which successfully organized its annual book sale and sponsored several other important events for students. This year, Ph.D. candidate **Erik C. Wade** has assumed the Presidency of ASGSO, and M.A. candidate **Michelle Carreon** the position of Treasurer. Already Erik and Michelle have helped to re-establish Recitation Hall 417 as the ASGSO Headquarters; helped to organize a very successful trip of students to the American Studies Association meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and planned a day-trip to Turkey Run State Park here in Indiana. The energy and direction has paid off in new bonds of solidarity between students and increased participation in important academic event like ASA. Get involved! Erik can be reached at ewade@purdue.edu and Michelle at mcarreon@purdue.edu

American Studies has also for the first time expanded its administrative leadership structure. **Rich Hogan**, Associate Professor of Sociology, has assumed the position of Assistant Director to the program. Rich is a longstanding affiliated member of the American Studies faculty and a tremendous advocate for the program within his home department of Sociology. Rich's research expertise is in Marxist theory, community studies, race and class relations. His most recent book is *The Failure of Planning: Permitting Sprawl in San Diego Suburbs, 1970-1999* (Ohio State University Press, 2003). Rich has a special dedication to student advising and will assist the program in several key areas this year: helping the program to develop a more regularized teaching rotation for courses; assisting with a review of program requirements, including Ph.D. examinations; helping to formalize the program's advising structure. If you don't know Rich, please look him up. Rich can be reached at hoganr@purdue.edu

Finally, in an important change, American Studies has designated Assistant Professor of English **Christopher Lukasik** as interim Director of Undergraduate Studies. Chris has been designated by the program to assume leadership in the exploration and creation of a new (and revived) undergraduate degree program in American Studies. Last year, with the support of the College of Liberal Arts Dean and Associate Dean, and at the recommendation of an external review team, the American Studies students and faculty decided to consider reviving its long-dormant Bachelor's Degree program to complement its outstanding M.A. and Ph.D. programs.

Chris brings exceptional experience and enthusiasm to these tasks. He is the former Director of Undergraduate Studies for the American Studies program at Boston University. His own research is grounded in the interdisciplinary intersections of Early American literature and visual culture and theory. He is currently completing a book manuscript entitled, *Discerning Characters: Social Distinction and the Face in American Culture, 1775-1850*. He has published or forthcoming articles in prestigious peer-reviewed journals like *Callaloo* and has earned several distinguished research awards. He has already taught extremely successful American Studies seminars in Early American literature and visual culture. Chris is currently undertaking research into existing models of American Studies as well as current Purdue course offerings that might make suitable contributions to a new undergraduate program. This Spring

students and faculty in American Studies will have the opportunity to discuss possible models for a new B.A. program. Chris can be reached at clukasik@purdue.edu

Finally, former American Studies Director **Susan Curtis** will lead a year-long lecture and workshop schedule this year. Susan directed American Studies from 199-2003. She is Professor of History and author just recently of *Colored Memories: A Biographer's Quest for the Elusive Lester A. Walton* The Series will focus on the state of contemporary American Studies and ways of implementing new program ideas for an undergraduate major. The Series will include a visit to Purdue by **Joy and John Kasson** from University of North Carolina, Chapel-Hill. Ph.D. alum **Scott Hoffman**, currently working for PBS television in Austin, Texas, will also speak as part of the Series to talk about applying his American Studies degree to work in public media. As always, American Studies welcomes ideas by students for guest speakers and workshops. Feel free to contact Susan with your ideas at curtis@purdue.edu

In the meantime, American Studies is celebrating this year the slight expansion of its visibility within the College and across campus. For the first time ever, this Fall four American Studies affiliated faculty have moved to “joint appointment” status with the program. They are program Director **Bill Mullen** (English/American Studies); Assistant Director **Rich Hogan** (Sociology/American Studies); Professor **Harry Targ** (Political Science/American Studies); and **Chris Lukasik** (English/American Studies). The joint appointments begin to bring American Studies on parallel with other large interdisciplinary programs at Purdue like African American Studies and Women’s Studies. It is the hope of the program to begin hiring its own joint or fully-appointed faculty beginning in 2010 when the new undergraduate program in American Studies comes on line.

Finally, and last but not least, the program continues to present a strong public fact to the world: students in the program over the past year have engaged in a wide range of public services, practices and activities: these include working as newspaper reporters for the *Lafayette Journal and Courier* newspaper; serving at the YWCA of Greater Lafayette; acting as mentors to students at Jefferson High School; volunteering for the Barack Obama presidential campaign. Their example of “People Power. Power to the People” continues to inspire.

Here’s hoping that American Studies can help make 2008-2009 **your** year.