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Proposal for American Studies Program Salve Regina University

Presented to Dr. Dean de la Motte, Vice President for Academic Affairs From the Ad Hoc Committee on American Studies March 1, 2010

I. Introduction/Charge to the Committee

In October 2009, Dr. Dean de la Motte, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Salve Regina University, convened an *ad hoc* committee on American Studies at the University. Committee members included Timothy Neary (History; chairperson of the committee), Lois Eveleth (Philosophy), James Garman (CHP), Donna Harrington-Lueker (English), Sarah Littlefield (English), Laura McPhie Oliveira (VP Enrollment Management), Laura O'Toole (Dean of Undergraduate Studies), James Yarnall (Art), and Catherine Zipf (CHP).

The VPAA's charge to the committee was to first review the state of American Studies at Salve Regina University and then to develop a proposal to reinvigorate the program as a model for interdisciplinary study. Accordingly, the committee met three times during the fall semester of 2009 and twice during the spring semester of 2010. Subcommittee assignments and discussion topics included consideration of American Studies programs at comparable and aspirational institutions, review of the existing Salve Regina University catalogue and survey of department chairs to identify a range of existing courses suitable for American Studies, and efforts to identify curricular and programmatic factors that will lend distinction to an American Studies major at Salve Regina University.

This proposal serves as the committee's reply to the VPAA's charge. After reviewing the present state of American Studies, we discuss an intellectual rationale for reinvigorating the program. The focus then turns to the proposed course of study and a system of faculty governance for the curriculum. We conclude with a brief discussion of some of the budgetary implications embedded in the proposal.

II. Present State of American Studies at Salve Regina University

American Studies is over thirty years old at Salve Regina University. It was originally conceived in a spirit of collaboration among the Departments of English, History, and Philosophy. The program had success for approximately its first two decades, with an *ad hoc* advisory committee meeting periodically with the Program Coordinator to review curriculum and progress of students through the major.

Within the last five to ten years, the program has fallen on hard times. Current data indicate that there are two students enrolled as American Studies majors (both graduating in May 2010).

III. Opportunities

The consensus of the committee is that American Studies should be an important part of the curriculum at Salve Regina University. The University's situation in Newport most obviously

lends itself to an examination of issues related to the worlds of Colonial America and the Gilded Age. Yet far more opportunities exist upon further consideration. A student wishing to explore American imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century, for example, would have the formidable resources of the Naval War College Museum at her disposal. Those interested in postbellum American literature could make connections to Henry James, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Julia Ward Howe. A substantial and significant body of data related to architecture and the experience of immigrants—Irish, African American, and Portuguese/Cape Verdean—remains largely unexplored.

The committee has balanced an awareness of the rich material, intellectual, and social worlds of Newport with broader issues in American Studies outlined in section IV below. Rather than fall into a trap of replicating curriculum and experiences in History and CHP, the committee has tried to develop a program that focuses first and foremost on American culture, drawing heavily on the resources of Newport. Thus the program makes use of Newport, but is in no way "Newport Studies" or even "New England Studies"—it is American Studies, writ large, deployed in a historically-significant physical locale.

The committee has conceived of American Studies as a model for interdisciplinary collaboration among existing departments. American Studies will be a major that, because of its flexible and interdisciplinary nature, provides "hands-on" and personal direction from faculty while at the same time demands from students the taking of personal responsibility for their educations.

A survey of American Studies programs at other colleges and universities revealed important trends to note. According to their websites, the vast majority of American Studies programs do not reside within their own academic departments. Rather, they are interdepartmental programs overseen by faculty directors and faculty committees. Nearly all American Studies programs require a senior thesis or senior project. Few programs highlight their connection to their locale. History and literature are core foundational disciplines in all American Studies programs. American Studies programs are far from rare, but the majority of Salve Regina University's competitors do not have programs. The field, therefore, is not "overcrowded" in this area.

In addition, the committee discussed the possibility of the University offering a five-year program culminating in a B.A. in American Studies and M.Ed./MAT.

See **Appendix A** for data on American Studies programs at comparative, aspirational, and nationally leading colleges and universities.

Finally, American Studies presents an excellent opportunity to support the mission of the University through its focus on issues of identity, community, and justice. In universities across the country, American Studies undergraduate curricula regularly include collaborative projects with community partners, forums on social and political issues, and a particular focus on the poor, marginalized, and oppressed.

IV. Field of American Studies and Intellectual Rationale for Program at SRU

American Studies is a unique independent academic field of study nearing 100 years of age. During the 1920s, American intellectuals struggled to define the national character in the aftermath of World War I and over a half a century of unprecedented immigration to the United States. They looked to the past and such thinkers as Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Jefferson, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, along with writers like Washington Irving, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain. Moreover, they examined the lives of iconic leaders, such as Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. The developing field was a mixture of literary criticism employed in departments of English and historical research as practiced by historians.

In 1928, University of Washington English professor Vernon Louis Parrington won the Pulitzer Prize for his *Main Currents in American Thought*, often cited as the founding document of American Studies. Parrington wrote that he chose to follow a "broad path" to understand the political, social, and economic contexts of American intellectual development. Within a decade Harvard University developed an interdisciplinary doctoral program in American Civilization (1937).

Major growth occurred in the immediate post World War II period. The American Studies Association (ASA) was chartered in 1951, and by 1956 there were 95 American Studies programs in the United States: 72 offered bachelor degrees; 15 masters; and 13 doctorates. The Cold War context shaped American Studies during the 1940s and 1950s as a field searching for consensus and advancing the idea of American exceptionalism. Adherents to the "myth and symbol" school—epitomized by Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land: The American West and Symbol and Myth* (1950) and Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964)—argued that reoccurring myths and symbols could be found throughout the great works of American letters. These themes then would explain the essence of American identity.

During the 1960s and 1970s the myth-and-symbol approach came under intense criticism for its exclusion of major groups of Americans from various ethnic, racial, religious, gender, sexual orientation, political, and economic backgrounds. The "race/class/gender" approach replaced myth and symbol by the 1980s—the notion of consensus was shattered. American Studies scholars now looked also to writers like Toni Morrison and political leaders such as César Chávez to understand American culture.

In the past two decades American Studies has become increasingly internationalized. Transnational comparative studies are now common. Since the early Cold War, the U.S. government (through the Department of State, USAID, and Fulbright program) has helped fund American Studies programs in colleges and universities throughout the world.

Today more than 260 American Studies departments and programs operate in colleges and universities across the United States. The ASA counts over 5,000 individual members and 2,200 library and institutional subscribers. *American Quarterly* is the highly regarded scholarly journal of the ASA.

It is important to note that American Studies is more than simply "interdisciplinary studies." It employs Parrington's idea of the "broad path" to address the "big" questions about U.S. society and history: "What does it mean to be an American?"; "What is American culture?"; "From where did it come?" "How do we recognize it?" "What role should the United States play in the world?" The breadth of these questions, by their very nature, requires American Studies scholars to call upon art, history, literature, philosophy, the social sciences, and many other fields to follow the myriad avenues of inquiry which they elicit. American Studies, therefore, is a field of study that asks a student to explore the meaning and purpose of one's individual existence and role in society; in short, asking the great questions of the classic liberal arts curriculum.¹

V. Program of Study

The proposed program of study revolves around understanding questions embedded in the rationale described in section IV above.

The program consists of a total of 42 credits deployed through 14 three-credit courses: three coordinating seminars, five courses from constituent disciplines, five electives chosen in consultation with the advisor, and one senior thesis writing seminar. The structure of the course of study is designed to be flexible as a means of encouraging students to develop their own plans of study (a niche that SRU Admissions reports is in demand). The survey of existing catalogue courses indicated that virtually every department on campus has at least one offering that could contribute to an American Studies major's course of study.

Coordinating Seminars (9 credits)

Three coordinating seminars will provide a common experience and build cohesion among American Studies majors. These three-credit courses are AST 2xx: "Introduction to American Studies," AST 2xx: "Issues in American Studies," and AST 3xx: "Advanced Reading and Research Methods." In order to model interdisciplinarity, these seminars will be team-taught by two professors from different departments. In order to allow incoming students to connect to the program early while at the same time allowing flexibility for those students who come to the major later, "Introduction to American Studies" and "Issues in American Studies" may be taken any time during a student's first 5 semesters. Successful completion of "Introduction to American Studies," however, is a prerequisite for "Issues in American Studies."

AST 2xx: "Introduction to American Studies" (offered each fall semester) provides an overview to the discipline. Questions to be considered include those germane to the meaning of American

¹To learn more about the field of American Studies, see the following texts on reserve at the McKillop Library circulation desks (look under courses for "Ad Hoc Committee on American Studies" or under instructors for "Timothy Neary.")

[•] Lucy Maddox, ed. *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

George Lipsitz, American Studies in a Moment of Danger. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

[•] Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman, eds., *The Futures of American Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.

Studies, and the ways in which writers and thinkers have conceived both Americanism and American exceptionalism.

AST 2xx: "Issues in American Studies" (offered each spring semester) continues the work of AST 2xx guiding students through an examination of a particular topic, question, problem, or theme in American society, which will depend upon the expertise and interests of the professors teaching the seminar.

AST 3xx "Advanced Reading and Research Methods" (offered each spring for junior majors): Topics and emphases will change depending on the professors teaching this seminar. It will ensure a student's continued progress in the major while laying the groundwork for the senior thesis.

Foundational Courses (15 credits)

- 1. **Arts** (3 credits)—ART 303: American Art; ENG 297: Special Topics in Film (courses with American focus; e.g. "Hollywood Comedy" in Fall 2010); or MSC 215: American Music
- 2. **Cultural and Historic Preservation** (3 credits): CHP/APG 222: Historical Archeology or CHP 261: The American Built Environment
- 3. **History** (3 credits)—HIS 313: American Immigrant Experience or HIS 322: Urban America
- 4. **Literature** (3 credits)—ENG 213: The American Literary Renaissance or ENG 214: Realism and Naturalism in 19th-Century American Literature
- 5. **Philosophy** (3 credits)—PHL 400: Classic American Philosophy

Substitutions for required foundational courses—necessary for timely matriculation—will be made at the discretion of the Program Coordinator on a case-by-case basis.

See **Appendix B** for enrollment histories over the past five academic years for courses listed under "Required Foundational Courses" above.

Elective Courses (15 credits)

Five additional 3-credit courses will be chosen at the 200-level or above. Courses will be chosen in consultation with the advisor. Courses must follow an American Studies rationale and ideally support student's senior thesis project.

See **Appendix C** on existing Salve Regina University undergraduate courses which are supportive of American Studies and might be chosen as elective specialized courses. NB This list is not prescriptive.

Senior Thesis Writing Seminar (3 credits)

AST 4xx (fall of senior year): One professor will teach this course. In addition to the course instructor, a student may call upon members of the American Studies faculty or perhaps any university faculty member to be a resource/mentor/reader for the thesis project. A public defense

of the thesis (similar to the departments of Cultural and Historic Preservation, English, History, and Political Science) will take place in early December.

VI. Governance

The committee recommends that the VPAA designate faculty members whose teaching and research interests are congruent with American Studies as formal affiliates with the American Studies program. These faculty members should be designated based on their interest in the program and their willingness to advise students and participate in the program's activities. Affiliated faculty will serve as a reconstituted American Studies Committee having oversight over curriculum and program development.

The VPAA should entertain nominations for a Program Coordinator for American Studies from the ranks of affiliated faculty. The Program Coordinator should receive a three-credit course reduction *per annum* as compensation for directing the American Studies major, and serve for a three-year term, renewable for one term.

VII. Budget/Physical Space

Developing American Studies will undoubtedly have budgetary implications, including the following expenses: one course reduction for the Program Coordinator; three team-taught seminars; book and database acquisitions; field trips; guest speakers; etc. Since the program no longer will be housed within one specific academic department, a separate University budget line dedicated to the program will be necessary. In addition, an American Studies office space would be helpful to establish the major's identity.

VIII. Conclusions

In the opinion of this ad hoc committee, great potential for an American Studies program of distinction exists at Salve Regina University. Current faculty and courses, along with unique resources in the city of Newport, offer the foundations for a strong program. The allocation of additional resources is necessary but potential rewards in the form of student recruitment and retention, academic enhancement, and advancement of the University mission are significant. A reinvigorated American Studies Program most likely would begin with a modest number of majors. In addition to the members of the American Studies Committee, it will be imperative that the larger University faculty understand and support the program. The current perception among many members of the Salve Regina University community is that American Studies is an "easy" major or a major intended for struggling students who have nowhere else to turn. Conversely, the public perception among many high school students and their parents is that American Studies is a dynamic field of study which addresses important questions in creative ways. In this respect, a vibrant American Studies program at the University has the potential to recruit new students. With small academic departments and a student-centered teaching faculty, Salve Regina University is well positioned to develop an interdisciplinary program in American Studies.

Appendix A

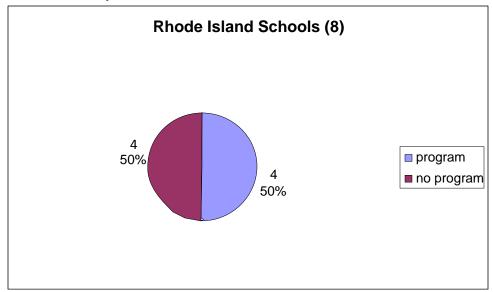
Data on American Studies programs at comparative, aspirational, and nationally leading colleges and universities

Institutional Categories

An asterisk (*) indicates a school with an American Studies program.

Rhode Island Schools

- 1. Brown University*
- 2. Bryant University*
- 3. Community College of Rhode Island
- 4. Johnson and Wales
- 5. Providence College*
- 6. Rhode Island College
- 7. Roger Williams University*
- 8. University of Rhode Island

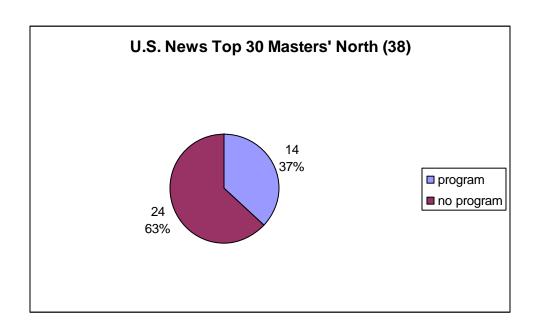


U.S. News and World Report "Top 30" in the Masters' Universities (North) category, 2009

- 1. Villanova University
- 2. Providence College*
- 3. Loyola College of Maryland
- 4. Bentley University
- 5. Fairfield University*
- 6. College of New Jersey
- 7. Ithaca College
- 8. St. Joseph's University
- 9. Rochester Institute of Tech
- 10. University of Scranton
- 11. SUNY Geneseo*
- 12. Simmons College
- 13. Marist College*
- 14. Quinnipiac University

- 15. Emerson College
- 16. Bryant University*
- 17. Alfred University
- 18. La Salle University*
- 19. Hood University
- 20. Le Moyne College
- 21. Manhattan College
- 22. Canisius College
- 23. Nazareth College*
- 24. Wagner College
- 25. Arcadia University
- 26. Mount St. Mary University
- 27. Rutgers Camden*
- 28. Rowan University*
- 29. Ramapo College of New Jersey*
- 30. Assumption College
- 31. College of Notre Dame-Maryland
- 32. Iona College
- 33. CUNY Baruch College*
- 34. Sacred Heart University
- 35. King's College
- 36. Manhattanville College*
- 37. Rider University*
- 38. Salisbury University*

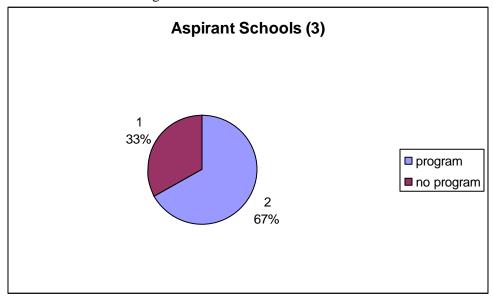
(Salve Regina University was ranked "30." Because some schools are tied for given rankings, 38 schools in addition to Salve Regina fell within the "Top 30.")



Categories as defined by the SRU Office of Institutional Research

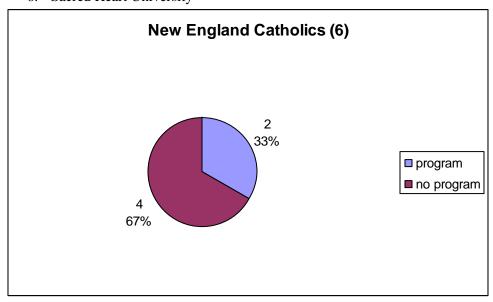
"Aspirant Schools"

- 1. College of the Holy Cross
- 2. Fairfield University*
- 3. Providence College*



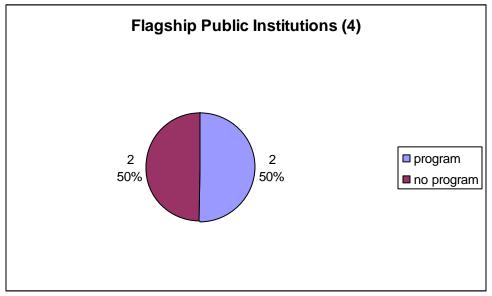
"New England Catholics"

- 1. Stonehill College*
- 2. Saint Anselm
- 3. Saint Michael's College*
- 4. Merrimack College
- 5. Assumption College
- 6. Sacred Heart University



"Flagship Public Institutions"

- 1. University of Rhode Island
- 2. University of Connecticut*
- 3. University of New Hampshire*
- 4. University of Vermont



"Programmatic Competitors"

- 1. Quinnipiac University (health programs and communications)
- 2. Northeastern University (criminal justice)

"Location Competitor"

Roger Williams University*

Nationally Recognized Leading American Studies Programs (list chosen by the Ad Hoc Committee on American Studies, Salve Regina University)

- 1. Amherst College
- 2. College of William & Mary
- 3. Georgetown University
- 4. Harvard University
- 5. University of California-Berkeley
- 6. University of Maryland
- 7. University of Minnesota
- 8. University of Texas
- 9. University of Virginia
- 10. Yale University

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Mount St. Mary University		N							
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Mount St. Mary Univers	ity								
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Rider University	Y	5	22+		N		N	Y	N

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University of Minnesota	http://o		J 20	Y		N-pro			33 credits
University of Texas	http://w		68 yrs			Y	g- 	N	24 hours
University of Virginia	http://ai		J 20	Y	N	N-pro	Y		10 courses
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Gold Standard AmStud p			100						
	Y		100+		Y-10	_	N		Y
College of William & Ma		28 but do			Y-17	23		Y	Y
Georgetown University	Y	9	55		Y-1	25	N		N
Harvard University	3 7	-	72.		37.0	1.7	NT		NT.
University of California-			73+	2010	Y-9		N	3.7	N
University of Maryland			20+ spring		Y-12	72+	N	Y	N
University of Minnesota		2			Y-3	13+	N		N
-	Y		30+ spring	g 2010	Y-13	75+	N		N
, ,	Y		25+		Y-15	15+	N		N
Yale University	Y-depends	s on conce	250+		Y-27	50+	N		N

(Data available in Excel file format from Dr. Timothy Neary.)

Appendix B

Enrollments for proposed foundational courses, Fall 2006 – Spring 2010

1. Arts

- ART 303: American Art: new course
- ENG 297: Special Topics in Film—14 in Fall 2009 for "Horror Films"
- MSC 215: American Music—not offered in the last five years

2. Cultural and Historic Preservation

- CHP/APG 222: Historical Archeology—23 in Spring 2008; 21 in Spring 2010
- CHP 261: The American Built Environment—29 in Spring 2007; 12 in Spring 2009

3. English

- ENG 213: The American Literary Renaissance: 29 in Fall 2007; 21 in Spring 2009
- ENG 214: Realism and Naturalism in 19th-Century American Literature: 31 in Spring 2007; 21 in Spring 2008; 17 in Spring 2009

4. History

- HIS 313: American Immigrant Experience—15 in Fall 2006; 35 in Fall 2007; 14 in Fall 2008; 23 in Fall 2009
- HIS 322: Urban America—34 in Spring 2008; 17 in Spring 2010

5. Philosophy

• PHL 400: Classic American Philosophy—16 in Spring 2008; 9 in Spring 2010

Appendix C

Possible American Studies elective courses

Administration of Justice

ADJ202/ POL 222: American Legal History

ADJ351: American Prisons as Depicted in Film and TV ADJ352: American Policing as Depicted in Film and TV

ADJ417: A Study of the U.S. Supreme Court

American Studies

AST200: America's Identity: Introduction to American Civilization

AST/HIST251: Sport in America AST/HIS321: American Civil War

Art

ART301: Survey of American Architecture

ART302: Survey of American Decorative Arts

ART305: Newport Through its Architecture I, 1639 to 1860 ART306: Newport Through its Architecture II, 1860 to present

Business Studies and Economics

ECN418: American Economic History

MGT240: Health Care U.S.A.

<u>Cultural and Historic Preservation</u>

CHP201: Principles of Historic Preservation

CHP202: Practices of Historic Preservation

CHP/HIS225: Introduction to Public History

CHP231: Preservation of Historical Cemeteries

CHP251/APG251: The African-American Diaspora in Southern New England

CHP270: Women in American Architecture

CHP302: Researching Historic Properties

CHP312: Preservation Planning

CHP330/APG330: Analysis and Interpretation of Archaeological Materials

Education

EDC/SCD201 Introduction to American Education

English

ENG215: Elements of Modernism in 20th-Century American Literature

ENG410: British and American Novels after 9/11

Special topic courses:

- "Behind the Mask: the Other Louisa May Alcott"
- "Henry James and Edith Wharton"
- "Nineteenth Century New England Women Writers"
- "Nineteenth Century New England Authors"

- "Nineteenth Century Women's Magazines"
- "The Gilded Age"
- "The Literary Landscape of Newport"
- "American Writers on the Riviera Post World War I"

<u>History</u>

HIS/CHP225: Introduction to Public History

HIST/AST251: Sport in America

HIS/RTS300: Religious History of Newport

HIS316: Economic America

HIS/POL324: American Political Thought

HIS336: Vietnam War

HIS/AST321: American Civil War

HIS403: Modern America

HIS/POL415: Modern American Foreign Policy

HIS/POL422: American Presidency

Special topic courses:

- "African American Experience"
- "Modern American Civil Rights Movement"
- "Revolutionary America"

Philosophy

Special topic course:

• "Emerson and American Idealism"

Political Science

POL222/ADJ202: American Legal History

POL313: American Government

POL314: State and Local Government

POL316: Political Parties and Public Opinions

POL/HIS324: American Political Thought

POL403: Constitutional Law

POL404/ADJ414: Civil Liberties

POL/HIS415: Modern American Foreign Policy

POL/HIS422 American Presidency

POL423: The American Judiciary

Religious and Theological Studies

RTS/HIS300: Religious History of Newport

RTS485: The Catholic Experience

Social Work

One-credit workshops:

SWK/AST084 The Historical, Political and Sociological Aspects of Baseball in America, 1950 – present

SWK/AST089 Historical, Political and Sociological Aspects of U.S. and R.I. Baseball up to $1950\,$

Sociology and Anthropology

APG/CHP330: Analysis and Interpretation of Archaeological Materials

SOC211: Race and Ethnic Relations

SOC 216: Sociology of the Internet

SOC 240: Science, Technology, and Society SOC 243: Gender, Sexuality, and Society

SOC 330: Social Stratification and Social Inequality

SOC 417: Sociology of Religion