



IFUSS Newsletter

International Forum for U.S. Studies

International Programs, The University of Iowa

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Welcome!

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With this issue, we inaugurate our IFUSS Newsletter for Advisory Board Members, Fellows, and friends. Don't worry, we will not be inundating your mailbox with lots of paper! But we will send you this once-a-year update on IFUSS activities, opportunities, and news. Our goal is to keep our growing community of past and present Fellows and Board Members connected with one another and with IFUSS so that the conversations that developed at Iowa can continue long past your time here.

This issue focuses on 1999-2000, and looks ahead to 2001-2002. We include a report on our very dynamic Capstone Conference, the initiation of the Ford Foundation Crossing Borders program, and our new projects with colleagues in Latin America. Our very successful first phase, as a Rockefeller Humanities Site from 1995-2000, has drawn to a close, and new configurations for the next phase are detailed here. We will continue to expand with new initiatives over the next few years.

Our thanks to all of you for your work with heart, heads, and hands during our first five years. We are grateful to our Board Members for their continuing support, advice and enthusiasm, and to our dynamic Fellows, our colleagues at Iowa, and the support of Iowa administrators who have helped make our plans a reality. We are especially grateful to the Rockefeller Foundation, without which we could not have begun, and to them and to the Ford Foundation for our support for new initiatives with India, southern Africa, Cuba, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil, as detailed below. Thanks too to our graduate assistants have provided indispensable aid in all arenas large and small, from helping new Fellows settle in to working on grant reports and publishing projects.

This issue of the newsletter is mainly about IFUSS activities and opportunities, but in future issues we hope to include information on Fellows' activities (a new book? A new research project?) So, please send us updates, and we will try to include all we can. While we cannot publish time-sensitive announcements here, we can do so on our new Website (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~ifuss>), so please let us know if we can help you distribute information of interest to IFUSS colleagues around the world. Just send a note to our office, as the website will be updated monthly.

Finally, we hope that you will not hesitate to contact other IFUSS fellows whom you may not have met, but who share your intellectual interests. Short biographical sketches are included for all past and present Fellows on our website. Contact our office for address information if you want to "meet" another Fellow from a different year than your own. As IFUSS grows, we hope to help form an intellectual network around the world so that the scholarly work developed here, and the issues, debates, arguments, and conversations started in Iowa can continue to develop long after you have returned home.

We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions, or just a plain old letter telling us how you are.

Our best wishes to each of you!

Virginia and Jane

Recapping activities in 1999

The Capstone Conference

The Capstone Conference was the undisputed highlight of 1999 for IFUSS. During four days in late April, engaging debates and connections and re-connections across national and disciplinary boundaries were made. In addition to the five Fellows in residence, nine of the ten Fellows from the two previous years were able to attend, as did the majority of our International Advisory Board. Several invited guests, including Gonul Pultar, editor of the Turkish Journal of American Studies, Paul Lauter, past president of the U.S. American Studies Association, and Donald Pease (Dartmouth) and Amy Kaplan (Mount Holyoke), also joined us, as did University of Iowa faculty who had been involved in previous faculty seminars and several advanced graduate students from various departments.

Despite the challenges of fostering meaningful, engaged debate across national boundaries and disciplinary divides, not to mention the variable conventions of research in different countries, the level of discussion over the four days was extremely high. By circulating all papers in advance and carefully constructing a series of cross-disciplinary and cross-national commentaries and moderators for discussion, the debates were lively and meaningful. There was a sustained, sophisticated, always engaged, and at times very spirited level of debate about what "American Studies" can and does mean from a variety of global sites. This formed a "meta-discussion" that exceeded the detailed content of individual conference papers and flowed throughout the several days of the conference - a shared touchstone for all participants to relate to from their own perspectives.

Fellows in 99

In the final year of the Rockefeller Humanities Residency Site grant, the Forum again featured three-month research residencies for five fellows running from February 1 - May 1, 1999. The five fellows selected by the International Advisory Board for 1999 were:

Dr. Kousar Azam, political scientist from the American Studies Research Center (now: The Indo-American Centre for International Studies) in Hyderabad, India. Dr. Azam's term with the centre is now over and she is back as a Professor of Political Science at Osmania University, Hyderabad. Her research project while at the University of Iowa: "Internationalizing American Studies: the Search for a New Paradigm."

Dr. Tatiana Venediktova, American Studies/literature specialist from Moscow University, Russia. Her project: "Conversation in America."

Dr. Kolawole Owolabi, philosophy department, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His project: "Cultural Identity, National Integration and the Globalization Project: American Experience and the African Prospect."

Dr. Maureen Montgomery, American Studies Department, University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Her project: "Whiteness and Politeness: An Investigation of the Racialization in the United States at the Turn of the Century."

Dr. Liam Kennedy, Department of American and Canadian Studies, University of Birmingham, England. His project: "Mapping Chicago: Urban Space and Representation."

Please visit our website for more detailed biographies of these fellows: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~ifuss/bios.html>

As in the past, each fellow pursued her/his own research, gave a public lecture on their project, and participated in other events inside and outside the university. For instance most fellows visited classes as guest speakers, and some spoke outside the University, at sites like the Foreign Relations Council of Iowa City.

Also, several of the Fellows took advantage of the summer teaching opportunity offered by the University of Iowa to extend the stay beyond the fellowship period. In the summer of 1999, Dr. Owolabi taught the course "African Philosophy" sponsored by the Philosophy Department, the African Studies Program, and the African American World Studies Department; Dr. Montgomery taught the course "Cultures of American Women: Gender and Ethnicity" co-sponsored by the American Studies and Women's Studies Departments, and Dr. Azam taught the course "Problems in Comparative Politics: Federalism in Multicultural Society" for the Political Science Department.

IFUSS activities in 2000

IFUSS hosts five Fellows this spring



IFUSS has experimented this year with a variety of residency formats, hosting one long-term visitor and four short-term Fellows. Through a combination of open global competitions and direct invitations, the Forum now hosts exceptional scholars for residencies lasting from two weeks to three months. We also initiated a program of "returning fellows" to reinforce ongoing linkages. This year IFUSS was proud to host the following scholars:

In January and February IFUSS was delighted to bring back returning IFUSS Fellow, DR. Enikő Bollobás, Associate Professor and Chair of the American Studies Department at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, Hungary. During her six-week stay, Dr. Bollobás, who spent the spring semester of 1998 at the University of Iowa as an IFUSS Fellow, taught the class "U.S. Literary in Canons in International Perspective," which was sponsored by IFUSS and the College of Liberal Arts, and hosted by the University of Iowa American Studies Department. The course examined writings by Eastern and Western European scholars about canonical works by U.S. authors. Key questions discussed in the class were: How does "the canon" travel? How are key literary works perceived, critiqued, and read abroad? How can such approaches enlarge and at times contest our own interpretations of these works? The class was open for graduate students and advanced undergraduates and attracted a substantial number of students from a range of different departments. In addition to a busy teaching schedule, Dr. Bollobás also conducted research and gave a public talk entitled "Representation vs. Experimentation? The example of Robert Duncan's transgendered textuality."

IFUSS also brought back another returning Fellow this spring. In May Dr. Anna Maria Martellone, Professor of American History at the University of Florence and former President of the Institute of North American Studies in Florence came to the University of Iowa for a two-week research residency. In addition to conducting research, Dr. Martellone, who was an IFUSS Fellow in 1998, re-connected with colleagues at the University of Iowa and participated in the IFUSS roundtable discussion "Comparative International American Studies."

As part of a new IFUSS initiative, which focuses on Latin America, IFUSS brought Dr. Ana Celi, Professor of North American Literature and Director of the Department of Languages at the Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto,

Córdoba, Argentina, to the University of Iowa for a two-week period. In addition to doing research on her current area of interest (U.S. ethnic literature) and meeting with UI faculty from the Spanish and Portuguese Department, Dr. Celi also consulted with the Co-Directors about establishing institutional links between universities and research facilities in Latin America and the U.S. See the section on The Rockefeller Extension Grant on page 7 in this newsletter for further details about this project.

As part of the IFUSS initiative dubbed Reciprocal American Studies, (see elsewhere in this newsletter for details about this project) which is part of the larger Ford Foundation-funded Crossing Borders project at the University of Iowa, IFUSS hosted one scholar from India and one scholar from South Africa this spring.

Dr. Nila Das, Reader of English at the University of Kalyani stayed at the University of Iowa for a month in April and May. While at the University of Iowa, Dr. Das pursued her current research interest, Native-American literature, and met frequently with professors, students and authors in this area. In addition to visiting classes, Dr. Das gave a talk on "American Studies in India" at a seminar arranged by University of Iowa's South Asian Studies Program's. The seminar focused on the similarities, differences and intersections of American Studies and South Asian Studies as these disciplines are configured in the U.S. and in India. Finally, she also participated in the roundtable discussion hosted by IFUSS entitled "Comparative International American Studies."

Dr. Christopher Saunders of the History Department at the University of Cape Town stayed at the University of Iowa for two intense and eventful weeks. Dr. Saunders's current research focuses on comparative racial policies between the United States and South Africa. While at the University of Iowa, Dr. Saunders conducted research for this project and met with several scholars in the History department, as well as scholars from the African-American World Studies Program and the African Studies Program. In addition, he participated in the roundtable discussion "International Comparative American Studies" where he did a presentation on the history of American Studies in South Africa.

Please visit our website for more detailed biographies of all these fellows: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~ifuss/bios>

New IFUSS initiative sponsored by the Ford Foundation: Reciprocal American Studies: In Dialogue with India, Mozambique, and South Africa

This new IFUSS initiative is made possible by the University of Iowa's Ford Foundation-funded Crossing Border: Revitalizing Area Studies project. This three-year project seeks new ways of conceptualizing "area studies," in response to changing geo-political relations. Reciprocal American Studies redefines American Studies as an "area study" with a global scholarly community and aims to internationalize American Studies by using a triangulation model. Our goal is to move beyond bilateral, center-periphery models by fostering links not only between institutions in the U.S. and institutions elsewhere, but also by facilitating connections among institutions outside the U.S. As with the Iowa "Crossing Borders" initiative as a whole, the focus is on the Indian Ocean area, specifically South Africa, Mozambique and India. Below are some of the highlights of the year:

As part of the Crossing Borders project, Dr. Nila Das from the University of Kalyani, India and Dr. Christopher Saunders of the University of Cape Town, South Africa visited the University of Iowa.

See page two "IFUSS activities in 2000" for details.



IFUSS Roundtable discussion "International Comparative American Studies" featured IFUSS Fellows from Argentina, India, Italy and South Africa

In conjunction with the Department of American Studies, IFUSS hosted the roundtable discussion "International Comparative American Studies" on April 27th. The roundtable featured Dr. Ana Celi, Universidad de Rio Cuarto, Argentina, Dr. Nila Das, University of Kalyani, India, Dr. Anna Maria Martellone from the University of Florence, Italy, and Dr. Christopher Saunders from the University of Cape Town, South

Africa. The well-attended discussion attracted faculty members and graduate students from a wide range of departments. Before opening the floor for questions and discussion, each participant gave a brief overview of the history and current state of the study of the U.S. in their respective countries. The lively debate at the roundtable was continued at a special dinner for the participants, UI faculty and graduate students hosted by the Co-Directors.

IFUSS delegates attend “Rediscovering America” Conference in Hyderabad, India, organized by former IFUSS Fellow and board member, Dr. Kousar Azam

In March 2000 three UI professors, Dr. Jane Desmond, Dr. Virginia Domínguez and Dr. Jael Silliman (Women's Studies and South Asian Studies) and three UI graduate students in the American Studies Program, Leslie Abadie, Sharon Romeo and Kristin Solli traveled to India to attend the international American Studies conference “Rediscovering America: American Studies in the New Millennium” at the Indo-American Centre for International Studies (formerly American Studies Research Center) at the Osmania University campus in Hyderabad, India. Dr. Christopher Saunders of the University of Cape Town, who had been specially invited by the Co-Directors to initiate an India-South-Africa connection, joined us in Mumbai en route to the conference. In Hyderabad, the UI delegation and Dr. Saunders also connected with Dr. Nila Das of the University of Kalyan.

The fifty conference participants were mainly from India, but there were also several attendees from abroad, including Singapore, Sri Lanka, Russia, and Japan. The scholars who attended from Russia, Dr. Tatiana Venediktova, and Japan, Dr. Rui Kohiyama, are both former IFUSS Fellows – a detail that speaks to the value of IFUSS as an initiator for helping connect scholarly communities in various countries.

The most prominent common point of debate both during panel discussion and in more informal gatherings was not surprisingly the serious funding-crisis American Studies in India is currently facing – a crisis that, for example, is reflected in the name-change the Centre has gone through very recently. Quite a few papers dealt explicitly with the need to search for new perspectives and new ways of doing American Studies in face of the current financial crisis. How should American Studies be reconfigured in light of new research trends that focus on globalization and transnational relations? Moreover, and just as important, how can American Studies be made more attractive to potential funding agencies and donors in India?



Former IFUSS Fellows Dr. Manju Jaidka of India (left) and Dr. Rui Kohiyama of Japan (right) enjoy a light moment at an international conference on American Studies, hosted by the Indo-American Centre for International Studies.



Participants at the “Rediscovering America” conference at IACIR at Osmania University, Hyderabad. Left to right: Dr. S. Walter Perera from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, Dr. Laxmi Parasuram, Burdwan University, Dr. Bruce W. Stuart, National University of Singapore, Dr. Manju Jaidka, Panjab University, and Dr. Vijay K. Sharma, University of Delhi.



From one of the many engaging sessions at the conference in Hyderabad. Left to right: Dr. Nila Das, University of Kalyani, Dr. Tatiana Venediktova, Moscow University, Russia, Dr. Rashmi Talwar, Ethiraj College for Women, Chennai, Dr. Virginia Domínguez, the University of Iowa, USA, and Ms. Sharon Romeo, the University of Iowa, USA.

University of Iowa faculty and graduate students travel to Chennai and Delhi to visit universities and research facilities

Following the conference in Hyderabad, the Co-Directors and the three graduate students traveled from Hyderabad to Chennai and Delhi to visit universities and research centers. Visits in Chennai included Loyola College, Women's Christian College, and Stella Maris College. At each college the UI delegation met with professors and students to exchange ideas and experiences about teaching and learning about the U.S. in their respective national contexts. In addition, the delegation met with members of the South India American Studies Network at the USEFI offices at the U.S. Consulate. This network is an association that aims to coordinate and promote the interdisciplinary study of the U.S. at undergraduate and M.A. levels in South India. At this "mini-conference" the Iowa participants and members of the Network gave short presentations on the kind of work they do. These presentations were followed by a lively debate on the differences and similarities between the ways American Studies are conceptualized in the U.S. and in India.

In Delhi the delegation visited Jawaharlal Nehru University where they visited a graduate-level class in American Literature taught by Makarand Paranjape. Here they listened to student presentations, gave brief talks on their work and answered questions from a very bright and intellectually mature group of students. After attending this class, the Co-Directors and UI graduate students also participated in a workshop arranged by Alliance for a Responsible and United World called "Alternatives for the Youth in the 21st Century" where both students and faculty from JNU and UI participated.



Informal discussion with JNU faculty and graduate students.



The IFUSS delegation meets with members at the South India American Studies Network in Chennai.



Participants in the workshop "Alternatives for the Youth in the 21st Century" arranged by Alliance for a Responsible and United World at JNU in Delhi.



JNU students and the Co-Directors in lively debate.

Future Activities

Rockefeller Extension Grant enables IFUSS to initiate a focus on Latin America

In June, 2000 IFUSS received an award from the Rockefeller Foundation to fund a new IFUSS initiative. By making available a \$165,000 three-year long grant, The Rockefeller Foundation enables an extension of IFUSS activities into Latin America. This initiative was spurred by the Forum's experiences while holding and administrating the global competition for IFUSS Fellowships. The Forum noted that there was one area from which they consistently received few applications, Latin America. IFUSS now wishes to stimulate and spearhead a new level of scholarly exchange among U.S. and Latin American specialists on U.S. culture. Particularly IFUSS will focus their efforts on Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Cuba, four

countries in which the scholarly work on the U.S. is highly developed and institutionalized through academic appointments, training programs, research institutes, national scholarly associations, and publications programs. This initiative got a head start this spring when Dr. Ana Celi, Professor of North American Literature and Director of the Department of Languages at the Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto, Córdoba, Argentina, spent two weeks at the University of Iowa, partly to consult about establishing connections between the U.S. and Latin America. Dr. Celi will return for a longer residency at the UI in the spring semester of 2001 when she will return as an IFUSS Fellow to teach a class.

News and Information

Co-Directors in Hungary for a one-year long Guest Professorship

Early this fall the Co-Directors and Co-Founders of IFUSS, Dr. Jane Desmond and Dr. Virginia Domínguez headed for Budapest, Hungary. For the 2000-2001 academic year, Dr. Desmond and Dr. Domínguez will be Otto Salgo Professors of American Studies at the School of English and American Studies at the Eötvös Lorand University, which has just begun the first Ph.D. program in American Studies in Hungary. Dr. Desmond will be the holder of this title this Fall, while Dr. Domínguez will be holding this position in the Spring of 2001. The Co-Directors will continue to run IFUSS from Hungary in close co-operation with their staff, which will still be located at the University of Iowa.

International Congress of American Studies, 2001 organized by IFUSS alum Dr. Maureen Montgomery

Former IFUSS Fellow Dr. Maureen Montgomery of the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, is organizing an International Congress of American Studies from January 2-6 of 2001 at the University of Canterbury. The conference is sponsored by Fulbright New Zealand and will explore how aspects and artifacts of U.S. culture have been reworked, resisted, and responded to in other countries. A web page with a registration form and further information is available at <http://www.amst.canterbury.ac.nz>

IFUSS Staff

Program assistants will keep the wheels turning at IFUSS' UI location this academic year:

Leslie Abadie is a Ph.D. student in American Studies. Leslie has just started research for her dissertation which will focus on an African American Roman Catholic church in Mississippi. Leslie is an experienced IFUSS staff member as she assisted in the planning of the Capstone Conference in 1999.

Kristin Solli is also a Ph.D. student in American Studies. Kristin is originally from Norway, and moved to Iowa City to do graduate work two years ago. She is currently completing her coursework. Her main areas of interest are music, culture and identity, and international perspectives on the U.S.

Departing/New Advisory Board Members

The Forum would gratefully like to thank Cathy Davidson and Catherine Hall for serving on our International Advisory Board for the past several years. The Forum would also like to extend a warm welcome to Dr. Kousar Azam of Osmania University, Hyderabad, India, Dr. Enikő Bollobás of Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest, Hungary, and Dr. Heinz Ickstadt of Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany, welcome as new members of our board.

IFUSS WEB site

IFUSS now has a website! The site includes an overview of the Forum's initiatives and activities, biographies of all past IFUSS Fellows, the names and affiliations of the members of our advisory board, and finally we will upload IFUSS newsletters, so please look for updates here.

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OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~ifuss>

Brochures

IFUSS has recently produced brochures with general information about the Forum's rationale and operations. If you would like to receive brochures either for your own use or for further distribution, please let us know and we will mail them to you.