AMS Program Updates
For the first time in its brief history, the AMS Program offered AMS210 “Concepts in American Studies” both in the fall and the spring semester. A total of 42 students enrolled. At the end of the year, thirty-one students have declared AMS as their Minor. Eleven of these students graduated in May. In the spring, AMS became the new home of the Philip L. Carret Thomas Jefferson Prize.

A new AMS curriculum that reflects recent national and international developments in American Studies was approved in the fall. In the spring, instead, AMS hosted novelist Mary Bucci Bush; Duke Professor and novelist Frank Lentricchia; and historian Keith Harper of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Events
Thanks to a Fund for Excellence grant, AMS brought to the Elon campus Professor Keith Harper of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; novelist and California State University Professor Mary Bush Bucci; and novelist and literary critic Frank Lentricchia. Prof. Harper coordinated an exciting round-table discussion of Professor Charles Irons’ current work-in-progress. Prof. Bucci Bush read from and discussed with students her new novel about African Americans and indentured immigrant laborers in early 20th century Arkansas. Frank Lentricchia read from and presented his new acclaimed novel titled The Accidental Pallbearer. This was Mr. Lentricchia’s first public appearance after his April induction in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Faculty Conferences, Awards, Presentations.
Dr. Samuele Pardini, Coordinator of American Studies, presented the new curriculum at the 2012 American Studies Association conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where Pardini participated to the annual meeting of the Directors and Coordinators of AMS Programs Caucus. The conference, titled “Dimensions of Empire: Past, Present, and Future,” gathered hundreds of American Studies scholars from all over the world.

What is American Studies?
American Studies (AMS) is an interdisciplinary program, engaging students interested in a variety of topics and disciplines in a unifying study of American culture. Recent modifications to the curriculum have increased its flexibility and therefore allowed for diverse student and faculty involvement; 8 disciplines, 7 departments, and 2 schools are represented.
Student Work

Students from a variety of disciplines submitted essays for the Philip L. Carret "Thomas Jefferson Essay Prize." The Prize is named after the New York investor who visited Elon in 1996 and the following year endowed an annual essay competition about our second President’s ideals and works. This year’s topic was the following, “The American value of individualism arose, in part, from Americans’ encounters with western lands, including those Jefferson acquired through the Louisiana Purchase and commissioned Lewis and Clark to explore. How have Jefferson’s philosophy and practices shaped your generation’s perspective on social and cultural life in the U.S. today—including your ideas about American individualism?

Junior Avery McGaha of Pisgah Forest, N.C., an Environmental Studies major, was awarded the $1000 first prize for his essay titled, "Storms in the West: Thomas Jefferson’s Legacy in the Fight to Preserve Earth’s Climate." He also received an all-expenses-paid visit to Thomas Jefferson’s home at Monticello, Va. The $500 second prize went to English Major and American Studies Minor Robert Shapiro, a Massachusetts native, for his creative writing essay titled, “Exploration of Self: The Dialectic American Individual." Another North Carolinian, first year student Laura Orr, received the $100 third place award for her essay titled, "A Dream for the Future: American Individualism Through Jefferson’s History of the Past.” AMS faculty members Cassie Kircher, Samuele Pardini, and Clyde Ellis evaluated this year’s submissions.

Faculty Work

Work in Progress

In May, AMS hosted a round-table discussion of Associate Professor of History and Chair of the Department of History and Geography Charles Irons’ work-in-progress. Irons’ current research focuses on the persistence of multiracial community in post emancipation churches. Professor Keith Harper of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary chaired this extremely well attended round table and led the rather dynamic discussion following Irons’ introductory remarks.