

## **Mathew John, Black Studies**

As a first-year student a number of years ago, I remember actively browsing through the course offerings for the semester as I attempted to put together the best possible schedule. Even though I was already a declared Philosophy major within an exceptional, challenging, and thought-provoking program, I was also looking for something new that would complement and expand upon what I was already being exposed to. I eventually discovered a strange discipline that I had never previously encountered during my years within the educational system entitled “Black Studies.” I thought to myself that the subject came across as something that would be beneficial to Black students, but I would never actually waste valuable time on my schedule to enroll in any of those classes. I did not believe for a second that Black Studies could be a viable option for me, or that it could actually assist me in achieving anything tangible moving forward. As I look back and reminisce about the past, I cannot believe how mistaken I once was.

When I tell people that I am a Black Studies major, I will occasionally get a response along the lines of “What is that?” or “What will you do with that?” In a nutshell, Black Studies can be defined as the study and analysis of the history, culture, and experience of people of African descent, through the utilization of the African worldview, with the purpose of altering the conditions and advancing the life chances of people of African descent. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the society we are living in, the alternate perspectives and concepts presented through the consideration of Black Studies is restricted and limited. Not only is an in-depth study of Black history, culture, psychology and arts severely restricted to higher education, but very few universities even offer such courses.

Black Studies is undeniably necessary in the world we inhabit today. Institutions of higher learning need to provide not only students of colors, but all students, an alternate view of history, social structures, and lived realities. Through the encouragement of critical thinking and analysis, students within Black Studies obtain a new way to reflect upon themselves as individuals and on the world around them. I discovered things about myself, as well as about those around me, that I am convinced would never have surfaced if I had chosen not to major in Black Studies. Furthermore, I am also surrounded by an active and supportive department which contains faculty and staff who consciously keep the best interests of their students in mind. In this way, the Black Studies Department and the Black Studies major place an emphasis on communal learning which helps nourish and empower its students by allowing them to develop to their full potentials.

All in all, I hope that my experiences as a Black Studies major will help to inspire current and future New Paltz students to consider enrolling in some of the many interesting courses offered by the department, as well as engaging with material that is both necessary and illuminating. It is appropriate and essential for all students, not solely those of African descent, to consider taking courses in Black Studies in order to create a more complete and holistic understanding of our world. The aim of Black Studies is to liberate and express the truth about a people and a culture that have been, and continue to be, both silenced and oppressed. Once the truth is set free, and all different perspectives are respectfully taken into consideration, then perhaps our world will be a much more harmonious place. And then, just maybe, Black Studies would not have been such a waste of time after all.

## **Ashley Lavery, Latin American and Caribbean Studies**

Ever since I entered the seventh grade at my small high school in upstate New York, I have consistently taken Spanish language courses. In spite of my prior experience, before entering college I never considered studying either Spanish or Latin American & Caribbean Studies as an undergraduate. However, as I continued to take courses in the interdisciplinary Latin American & Caribbean Studies program at SUNY New Paltz, I realized my true passion for the cultures of Latin America and the Spanish language. Some departments which offer Latin American & Caribbean Studies courses include History, Women’s Studies, Anthropology, Black Studies, Geography, Spanish, Sociology, and Economics among others.

## Student Accomplishments

### NCUR 2013

Professor Maureen Morrow, Director, Undergraduate Research, is proud to announce that nine New Paltz students have been accepted to present the results of their faculty mentored research projects at the **National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR)** at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. The conference will be held April 11-13, 2013. NCUR is very competitive, and New Paltz students had a 100% acceptance rate! Congratulations to all!

Below is a list of students and mentors who have been chosen to participate:

- **Lani Nelson**, Asian Studies, '13 (Oksana Laleko, Linguistics) Semantics vs. Phonology: English Loan Words in Mandarin Chinese
- **Remy LeDily**, Communication Disorders, '13 (Oksana Laleko, Linguistics) Two-Way Immersion vs. Structured English Immersion: A Synthesis of Methodology and Further Academic Implications
- **Maria Ortiz**, Biology, '15 and **Francy Hernandez**, Biochemistry, '14 (Maureen Morrow, Biology and Daniel Freedman, Chemistry) Examination of Ru-Based Compound Cytotoxicity Mechanism
- **Anastasia Psaras**, Linguistics, '13 (Oksana Laleko, Linguistics) Cracking the Code: Using L1 Skills to Unlock Non-Literal Language in the L2
- **Chen Zhou**, Linguistics, (Oksana Laleko, Linguistics) Transfer in L2 and L3 acquisition: The role of L2 in L3 acquisition
- **Kathleen Brousseau**, Art History, '13 (Kerry Dean Carso, Art History) Ralph Adams Cram and Eero Saarinen's Collegiate Architecture
- **Miriam Ward**, History & Digital Media Production/French, '15 (Michael Vargas, History) Mapping a Medieval Career: Jean Gerson, Joan of Arc and the Power of Data Visualization
- **Elizabeth Koza**, History/Medieval/Early Modern Studies, '13 (Michael Vargas, History) The Emergence of Converso Identities in Late Medieval Spain

For more information on NCUR, [click here](#).

**Jonathan Espinosa** (Black Studies, '13) won second place for the National Council of Black Studies' Student Essay Contest at the annual conference in Indianapolis, IN on Friday, March 15, 2013. The title of Espinosa's essay was "The Racial Disparities in Diagnosing and Treating Mental Health Disorders" and was originally written for Dr. Karanja Carroll's BLK357 - Psychology of the Black Child course.

Pictured from left to the right: Karanja Keita Carroll (Assistant Professor of Black Studies) and Jonathan Espinosa (Black Studies, '13)



