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The Making of American Studies in Bosnia

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Introduction

In 1939, when Margaret Mead came home from the South Seas, she had spent much of the last seventeen years studying six different cultures. She then began work on a study which, in methodology, is perhaps her most original work. The resultant publication, which appeared shortly after the United States had at last entered fully into the second World War, was a work of applied science, its object of analysis her fellow citizens. To a scholar of American Studies today, *And Keep Your Powder Dry* is an odd read, to put it mildly. Blissfully freed of theoretical predications or predicaments, it is culture writing from back in the day when anthropologists studied others, but rarely their own.[1] By 1942, however, the world had come to a pass such that, according to Mead, "[t]here was no more time to go far afield for the answers which lay crystallized in the life of distant, half-forgotten peoples" (3). She adds,

> If we were not at war, if the whole world were not at war, if every effort of each human being were not needed to ask the right questions so that we may find the right answers in time, I would not be writing this book (12).

The analysis which follows is her endeavor to apply those tools which anthropologists possess to the study of — in a phrase long fallen out of use, but certainly not forgotten — the American national character.

Mead describes the essential choice which, as she understood it, history had presented to her. She argues that,

> In wartime we have three courses — to retire into ivory towers, protect our scientific reputations […] on the chance that peace will come without our help […]; or, we can do something non-anthropological, satisfy our patriotic consciences by becoming air-raid wardens, working in an area where no colleague will review our works. Or, we can say quite simply, with such knowledge and insights as we have, we will now do what we can, as anthropologists, to win the war (14).

As readers will by now have gathered, I recall here, at some length, a mostly forgotten work by a mid-twentieth century anthropologist for a simple reason: the style and substance of these comments have been echoing as of late in chambers both political and academic, inside the borders of the United States and beyond them.

More than five years have now passed since we began to hear this sort of language again, and we have by now become only too familiar with citizens of the U.S. who preface their comments with the catch phrase "Since 9/11…." Generally these words mark a peculiarly USian sense of how the world changed that day; often, in such contexts, some definition is also given to the new, post-9/11 world.[2] When the audience is not composed entirely of "our fellow Americans" (to borrow the Nixonian phrase), such comments are meant to communicate a sense of how exceptional the 9/11 events were (and are) felt to be by the proverbial average American. Non-USians, it is implied, will have great difficulty in understanding just how profoundly that day changed our sense of what it means to be American. In other words, the phrase "Since 9/11" is a form of shorthand, a shibboleth; to paraphrase Clifford Geertz, it begins "a story we [USians] tell ourselves about ourselves." That such stories — **whether they are true or not** — have real-world consequences should be apparent to everyone.

A day or so after the eleventh of September, 2001, a reporter for our National Public Radio did an interview with Fran Lebowitz. A popular writer, best known for her witty and ironic commentaries on daily life in the U.S., it is obvious why Lebowitz was sought out: she represents, for many, the New Yorker **par excellence**, and her response to the horror of the past few days was relevant for that reason alone. In thinking back, I wonder as well whether Lebowitz's humor might also have been, on some level, what the reporter was looking for. Actually, though, I doubt it; unlike, for example, Sarajevo or Beirut, New York and D.C. were relatively slow to frame their fate in jokes. As I recall, the satirical newspaper *The Onion* was the first publication to venture into such risky terrain, some weeks later. Prescient as always, it reported that White House was urging that Al Qaeda form a country, so we could more easily attack them. "Osamastan," they suggested, might be its name.

One comment by Lebowitz was particularly striking, a chance remark I found strangely moving. The NPR reporter inquired what — as a writer, a public figure and a noted New Yorker — she herself had been doing since the attack. She responded, in effect, by refusing the basis for his question. "Writers," she replied, "are luxury items." In such moments, many people are essential for the services they alone can provide: one imagines a list including police, firemen, surgeons, construction workers, even journalists. Although help and support from everyone, on some level, may also be needed, the skills of the various professions are not equally useful. And as for writers, well, "writers are luxury items."

We could, of course, dispute this point. Few, in fact, would be better placed to argue with Lebowitz than Sarajevans, the residents of a city that resisted three and a half years of barbarism in part through its cultural institutions and creative arts.[3] What her remark brought to mind for me, however, immediately and intimately, was my own sense that literature professors are superfluous as well. In that instant I recalled a feeling that I first had in the early days of January, 1997, during my first trip to the Bosnian capital. Walking around the hillside neighborhoods of Sarajevo, I saw people everywhere cleaning up, rebuilding, putting their lives back together. At that moment, a life with books rather than bricks just didn't seem well spent.

The moral to my story is simple. For me, a brief comment by a quintessential New Yorker a few days after 9/11 served to transport me to another place on the globe. Rather than separate us from the rest of the world, 9/11 demonstrated to me just how close Sarajevo and New York actually are. In the fall of 1997, I did my first, voluntary teaching with students from the University of Sarajevo. During the academic year 1999-2000, I returned as a Fulbright Professor, the same year that my co-author traveled to the U.S. and prepared the draft curriculum presented below. Although mindful of the differences, I think it's fair to paraphrase Margaret Mead here: if it weren't for the war, we wouldn't be writing this essay. Moreover, though I can't speak for Professor Radeljković here, I for one believe, as did Mead in the midst of another global conflict, that "[w]e are caught in a situation so dangerous, so pressing, that we must use what tools we have" (12-13).

In the fall of 2003, I was contacted by Srebren Dizdar and Zvonimir Radeljković, my former colleagues in the English Department at the University of Sarajevo, and asked to apply for funding through the U.S. Department of State's Educational Partnership Program. In the period following my Fulbright, we had continued the **de facto** partnership between our two institutions without external support. Several Sarajevan students, for example, had graduated from the American Studies Diploma program at Smith College; we had also applied, unsuccessfully, for Fulbright Alumni funding to continue our exchanges at the professorial level. The more substantial support offered by the Educational Partnership Program was thus a welcome opportunity. It was also a chance to facilitate what had long been a goal of Professor Radeljković and some of his colleagues in the English Department, the launching of the first undergraduate program in American Studies in the Balkans.

Without insider knowledge of the workings of the U.S. State Department, it is difficult to say how this opportunity came about. As you will see from the brief history recounted below, the Sarajevan American Studies project was not dreamed up in Washington. In part, it seems clear, the Educational Partnership funding was occasioned by a number of efficient and energetic officers at the Office of Public Affairs (the former U.S.I.S.) in the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo. Given the times, as well as the subsequent spending patterns of the U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, it seems clear that the presence of a Muslim plurality in Bosnia-Herzegovina was also a factor.

At the annual American Studies Association conference that fall in Hartford, shortly after I had received word of this funding opportunity, I attended a panel addressing the internationalization of American Studies as a field. In the discussion which followed, someone in the audience described, with an obvious degree of horror, what she'd heard about the U.S. government's plan to expand funding for American Studies across the globe – the very cash that I was in the process of applying for. Although that professor and I probably share similar views on most political issues, my reaction to such governmental initiatives has obviously been quite different. I believe, quite simply, that we – and by the first person plural here I mean both we USians and the American Studies internationale – do need more American Studies programs across the globe. What's more, we probably need them

most in the very places where the U.S. government is most likely to fund them. To assume in advance that such programs would, and could, only serve to extend the reach of the current global hegemon strikes me, not only as wrong, but as insulting – to both the professors and the students who would potentially participate in such programs – and as, not to put too fine a point on it, provincial. The best cure for the tendency, within USian American Studies, towards just this sort of provincialism may be a program of the very sort my Sarajevan colleague outlines below.

Which is not to say, of course, that American Studies scholars in the U.S. will not have a number of questions and reservations about the curriculum we outline here. Since I myself do, I fully expect they will. In what remains of these introductory remarks, I will frame, and briefly comment upon, two sorts of potential responses.

First of all, I think most readers will be favorably impressed with the broad, varied and systematic program of studies which the curriculum portrays. There are few things that all, or even most, American Studies scholars agree on today; however, the goal, and the challenge, of interdisciplinary study is a founding principle of nearly all American Studies programs. The Sarajevan curriculum is both varied in content, with courses dedicated to music, film, theater and visual arts as well as literature, and ecumenical in discipline, with courses in geography, history, sociology, government and international relations as well as cultural studies.

On the other hand, there are also a number of ways in which interdisciplinarity in the Sarajevo curriculum seems held in check. To some extent, this may be due to the program's origins in a single department, the English Department at the Philosophy Faculty in Sarajevo, and thus to the constraints and labors inherent in this institutional form of parthenogenesis. In any case, to the external observer, a certain privilege given to literature over other forms of social or cultural expression will be apparent: rather than a film or music course **tout court**, for example, there is a course on "**American Literature** and Film" and another on "**American Literature** and Music" [my italics].

After a presentation of the curriculum to a panel of American Studies scholars in Amherst, as Professor Radeljković notes below, a question was raised about necessity of two of the three courses specifically devoted to literature, those on "The American Renaissance" and "The Twenties" are more narrow in focus than the rest of the curriculum. Over the years, I have sometimes heard scholars trained in the social sciences complain about the bias of literature professors towards representation as opposed to events; in what has come to be known as cultural studies, the tendency has been to see the world as text, rather than practice. On the other hand, any undergraduate program in American Studies abroad, as the rigorous linguistic training in the Sarajevo curriculum makes clear, must take seriously the post-Saussurian, or perhaps neo-Whorfian, notion that culture may indeed be language, all the way down. With my own training in comparative literature, and having myself taught those American literature courses in Sarajevo, I admit I find it hard to argue against a curriculum which will require students to read *Moby Dick* and *The Sound and the Fury* in their entirety.

Scholars of American Studies will likely ask a related question about the curriculum outlined below — about its methodology, or, to be precise, about its lack of explicit training in methodology. In such a program, especially in a university where interdisciplinary study is otherwise non-existent, students might understandably be puzzled about how and why they are meant to study such a bewildering array of subjects and disciplines. In the end, perhaps, such questions come down to either the credo of the mountain climber ("Because it's there") or that of the parent ("Because I said so"). Nonetheless, the history of American Studies has certainly provided a rich array of other responses; from the heyday of myth and symbol to that of the *Heath Anthology*, explanations of what we're up to have certainly not been lacking. A course early in the program which covers this history is a feature of most, or at least many, American Studies programs in the U.S.

And yet such a course may not work in similar fashion outside the U.S. After all, at least implicitly, anyone who grows up in a USian environment is its student; all that remains (just a baby step really) is for them to theorize this latent understanding, to move it from preconscious to consciousness. The context abroad could be more like the university in New Hampshire where I once attempted to teach literary modernism to students who had quite possibly never read a novel. (Just try explaining why Woolf writes against plot, or Flaubert about nothing, to students who have a general education requirement to satisfy.) My own inclination, in the case of the Sarajevo curriculum, would be to take a fifth-semester course described below ("What is American about America?") and expand it into a theory/methods course ("What does American Studies study?").

In any case, it isn't my intention here to offer such recommendations, especially given that the curriculum itself hasn't yet been presented. There is, however, one other general area of concern which should be addressed. Though these remarks may appear somewhat desultory, I have actually been preparing all along, rather carefully, the terrain for this particular query. Let me cut to the chase. It is my hunch that some American Studies scholars, particularly the USian variety, will detect in the curriculum proposed below a very canonical, vaguely 50s-ish agenda, almost as if the debates on national character were somehow today's news and not a nearly-forgotten product of WWII and the early Cold War. Certainly the proposed course on "What is American about America?" has an air of the fifties about it, as does the course on the "American Ethnic Experience." In his comments below, my co-author very diplomatically refers to the response he received at the forum in Amherst, recalling "some cautious warning that political correctness wasn't as present [in the curriculum] as it should be." As I remember it, what prompted this discussion was in fact the latter course; one professor suggested, although in much more polite and political (not to mention optimistic) language, that we USians don't tend to ghettoize our ethnics that way any more.

Having set this up with intentional bluntness, let's now take a step back. I propose we do here what we American Studies types are supposed to do, i.e., contextualize our readings. First off, I'll confess that, for the last two years, I myself have been teaching a course called "The Unexceptional U.S.," a exercise in

transnational and comparative readings of USian culture, and am thus more than a little obsessed with questions of the sort raised here. Beyond this personal preoccupation, however, there are also the national contexts, and here I'm thinking about both the Sarajevan curriculum and potential USian response. Andrew Wachtel, in an influential study on the destruction of Yugoslavia, argues that it was in effect the political abandonment of the Yugoslav ideal — a centralizing, federalizing discourse — which made room for the revitalization of so-called ethnic nationalisms (and, through them, for the destruction of the State). In the U.S., on the other hand, we have endured jeremiads from Arthur Schlesinger and others about the disuniting of America and, more recently, a neo-nativist screed from Samuel Huntington — all this in a time where there seems to be no end to patriotism in the general public. An advantage of studying another country's history, of course, is that one may find in it an antidote to one's own. In short, should we USians really worry that an American Studies curriculum in Bosnia-Herzegovina, of all places, won't sufficiently address the multicultural heritage of the United States? How could they not, given who they are?

It is mildly humorous, of course, to imagine leftist academics in the U.S. — the one country where the Popular Front wasn't — concerned about the right-wing tendencies of their former socialist colleagues. It is perhaps more understandable when Americanists from Romania, say, or the former Yugoslavia overestimate the doctrinarism of their USian counterparts. Such simplifications — and they are that, rather than misperceptions — may also be the beginnings of a productive conversation. When my colleagues in Sarajevo joke that American Studies in the U.S. should actually be called Anti-American Studies, I smile, but I also realize they might be missing the point. Marilyn Young, in a recent essay, cites Richard Poirier's observation that "most American writers critical of the United States 'are rather madly in love' with the country. 'There is perhaps no other literature quite so patriotic because none is so damning of the failure of the country to live up to its dreams and expectations'" (284).

As for the issue with which I began, a discussion of national character in a time of war, well … it is today's news, even if within the U.S. we haven't yet been discussing it as such. What we USians generally refer to as the global rise of anti-Americanism might actually be described as a new and virulent form of American Studies — and its debates are grounded in claims about national character.[4] I, for one, am doing my best to join the fray.

At the first lecture in Bosnia sponsored by the Smith/Sarajevo Educational Partnership Program, I addressed an audience at the new Turkish-funded International University of Sarajevo. As an example of American Studies scholarship in practice, I borrowed from my own research on the representation of war. More specifically, I decided to discuss the recent release of the photographs from Abu Ghraib, thus taking the beast by the horns, as it were.

The general point of my talk was to make clear that American Studies trains students to read and interpret any and all cultural texts, artifacts, and practices. I hope to have made it clear that absolutely nothing should get left off this list, not

even the most dark, disturbing, and difficult of subjects. Only if we learn to discuss and debate even things such as this, if we manage to keep open the "lively and intense disagreement about what 'America' actually is,"[5] can we ever begin to respond adequately to the central questions of American Studies. I don't know if my comments that day revealed me to be, in Poirier's phrase, "rather madly in love" with my country. I do know that a discussion of "what 'America' actually is" is unavoidable today.

The Sarajevo Curriculum

For people in Bosnia, the U.S. is a mythic country. Perhaps most Europeans perceive the United States in this fashion, and in Bosnia it is only more so. Since English — unlike French or German, Turkish or Arabic, due to political influences and occupiers — was not a generally accepted foreign language, it started to appear in primary and secondary school curricula only in the mid-twentieth century, and American customs were even more unknown than the English. Some of the culture did trickle through by way of Hollywood movies, which started to be shown at approximately the same time, just as popular music began to appear on the radio and jazz in dance halls. Nonetheless, as in the rest of Europe, American writers (mostly Poe, Whitman and social novelists such as Dreiser and Lewis) were taught at the university as part of "English" literature — and English seemed to refer to the language, rather than to a particular country. America, depending on one's ideological stance, was either a very vicious and violent country where blacks and Indians were killed **en masse**, or the richest country in the world, a land of milk and honey, the source of your aunt's CARE packages stuffed with Levi's and chewing gum.

The first academic effort to teach American history and culture, the first course in which America was studied in any form at all, came as part of the curriculum of the English department in Sarajevo in the spring semester of 1970: a year-long course called "Anglo-Saxon Civilization" which was obligatory for freshmen in English. It included an outline of political history, covering documents such as the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address, etc., and art and architectural history, featuring individual architects (e.g., Frank Lloyd Wright) and painters (e.g., Winslow Homer and Mary Cassatt) as well as a short historical survey of American popular music and jazz. The first course dedicated exclusively to American literature was started in 1974, again in the Sarajevo English department. In 1990, the first graduate course in American literature was taught, again in the same venue.

The idea of starting an academic program devoted exclusively to the United States came to the minds of several Bosnian professors somewhere in the mid-1980s. At this time the official name of the Chair of English Literature also was changed to the Chair of English and American Literatures. Of course, this was also a time of deep crisis in the former Yugoslavia, following the death of Tito, and the realization

of this program was impossible, not so much due to a lack of interest among Communist party officials as to a lack of money. At this time as well, several American schools organized summer sessions in Bosnia; in Sarajevo, groups of up to twenty students from New York's Colgate University and the Midwest's Great Lakes College Association, for example, attended lectures by Bosnian professors on the history, art and literature of Yugoslavia, stressing their local, Bosnian perspective. Based on this experience, the Bosnians envisioned a similar program in American Studies, one which would be organized in parallel with the study of English language and literature. The logic behind such a move seemed obvious: the United States was at least as important economically, politically and culturally as Great Britain, and yet the study of English was — and still is — organized along the very same lines as it was when the Empire still held sway, and its sun never set. Why couldn't one teach English garnished with American literature, American culture, and American civilization, rather than British, thus preparing young women and men for the world in which they were going to work, a world dominated by the U.S.A.?

The first practical opportunity for achieving this goal appearing in the very dark year of 1994, during the recent Bosnian war. In 1992, the Hungarian American financier and philanthropist George Soros founded the Open Society Fund for Bosnia and Herzegovina; it was first engaged exclusively in humanitarian programs, but later turned towards various other aspects of Bosnian society. A proposal for starting an American Studies program in Bosnia was filed with the central office of Open Society in New York in 1993 and, in the spring of 1994, a positive response was given. Unfortunately, by that time, the pool of Bosnian experts in American Studies had dwindled to one person, and the rest were scattered all over the world, some refugees and others exiles, so for obvious reasons the project was put on a back burner.

It remained there for quite a time. After the end of the war, in late 1995, there were other, higher-priority, considerations. The English department, with twenty-four instructors and professors in 1992, had dried up to just a couple of people, and yet the study of English was even more widespread than before the war, due to the high number of foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs), all needing translators and other personnel and all paying salaries at a much higher rate than the virtually non-existent national economy. As a result, it wasn't until 1999 that a senior professor of American literature, with the help of the Fulbright program, went to California with the specific goal of developing an up-to-date curriculum of American Studies, adjusted, of course, to the specific needs of young Bosnians and other students from the region. The draft curriculum below, produced in the spring of 2000 in response to his study of American and European models, was circulated among twenty or so Americanists in California and the rest of the United States and obtained a positive response.

This draft then became, in 2004, the basis for the current educational partnership program between the English department in Sarajevo and Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. The curriculum was then as follows:

Draft Curriculum for the Proposed Undergraduate American Studies Program in Sarajevo

First Semester (20 hrs. total):

-- **Physical Traits of America**. Physical and economic geography, the idea of regions (4 hrs. weekly)

-- **English Language I**. Lectures and readings in morphology as well as language exercises in discussion sections, covering reading comprehension, dictation, translation from and into English, composition, verbal skills (12 hrs. weekly)

-- **Survey of English Literature**. Beowulf to Virginia Woolf, periods, schools, genres, major writers, illustrative reading only (4 hrs. weekly)

Second Semester (20 hrs. total):

-- **American Cultural History**. Documents: the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the Monroe Doctrine, the Gettysburg Address, Wilson's 14 Points, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech, John F. Kennedy's Inaugural, etc. Periods: Colonial, Revolutionary War, Westward expansion, Civil War, the Brown Decades, the 20s, the 30s, etc. Terms: Frontier, Transcendentalism, Underground Railroad, Manifest Destiny, New Deal, G.I. Bill, baby boom, credibility gap. Key concepts in American Studies (4 hrs. weekly)

-- **Survey of American Literature**. Principles, themes, schools, periods, genres, major writers, basic reading (4 hrs. weekly).

-- **English Language I**. Continued from the first semester (12 hrs. weekly)

Third Semester (24 hrs. total):

-- **American Institutions I**. Political and legal systems, the military, law enforcement and intelligence (F.B.I., C.I.A., N.S.A.), religion. Team-taught by three or more instructors (6 hrs. weekly).

-- **American Renaissance**. Fiction, poetry and ideas in the 1840s and 50s (6 hrs weekly).

-- **English Language II**. Lectures and readings in morphosyntax as well as language exercises in discussion sections, covering reading comprehension, dictation, translation from and into English, composition and verbal skills (12 hrs. weekly).

Fourth Semester (24 hrs. total):

-- **American Institutions II**. Education, social security, medicine, business and work ethic, intro to political economy. Team-taught (6 hrs. weekly).

-- **The Twenties**. Fiction, poetry and ideas from 1919 to 1929 (6 hrs. weekly).

-- **English Language II**. Continued from the third semester (12 hrs. weekly).

-- **Seminar Paper I.** Based on any of the fields studied, with a mentor-approved topic (up to 15 pp.).

Fifth semester (22 hrs total):

-- **American Literature and Film**. Verbal and visual approaches, popular and high culture interpretations of American experience (4 classroom hrs. plus screenings of 6 or 7 films).

-- **What is American about America?** Reading and discussion course based on an anthology, starting with Crèvecoeur and Tocqueville, and covering all sorts of domestic and foreign views on American peculiarities, as well as major debates about the national character (6 hrs. weekly).

-- **English Language III**. Lectures and readings in sentence syntax, language history as well as exercises in discussion sections, covering reading comprehension, dictation, translation from and into English, composition and verbal skills (12 hrs. weekly).

Sixth Semester (18 hours total):

-- **American Literature and Music**. The social and intellectual influence of American music, including blues, ragtime, gospel, jazz, folk and country, as projected through American literature (4 hrs. weekly).

-- **American Theater**. History, highest achievements, influences, present forms (4 hrs. weekly).

-- **English Language III**. Continuation from the fifth semester (12 hrs. weekly).

-- **Seminar paper II**. Based on a field different from that chosen for the first paper, on a mentor-approved topic (up to 15 pp.)

Seventh Semester (22 hrs. total):

-- **American Visual Arts**. Painters, sculptors, architects, schools (4 hrs. weekly).

-- **American Ethnic Experience**. Black, Jewish, Chicano, Irish, Oriental, Slavic, etc.; minority points of view in literature and other media (6 hrs. weekly).

-- **English Language IV**. Lectures and readings in general linguistics, as well as language exercises in discussion sections, covering reading comprehension, dictation, translation from and into English, composition and reading skills (12 hrs. weekly).

Eighth Semester (20 hrs. total):

-- **America and the World**. Isolationism and interventionism in American politics and business; the American role in the "new world order," NATO and the **pax Americana** (4 hrs weekly).

-- **Contemporary Cultural Scene**. Selected current films, TV shows, comics, music, poetry, fiction and drama (4 hrs. weekly).

-- **English Language IV**. Lectures and readings in contrastive grammar and languages in contact, translation theory and techniques: literary, conference, consecutive, commercial translation (12 hrs. weekly)

-- **Diploma Paper**. A research-based, publicly-defended senior thesis with a professor as mentor, on a mentor-agreed topic, in any of the disciplines studied, (up to 30 pp.).

Such was the program's draft curriculum in the Spring of 2004, when the proposal for funding of the Educational Partnership Project between Smith College and the University of Sarajevo was first filed. Even by November of the same year, however, it had become clear that the original Fall 2006 date for launching the American Studies program was overly optimistic. As a result, the curriculum itself had eventually to be modified, in order to realign it with the general changes envisioned for all universities in Bosnia, conforming to the Bologna Declaration about higher education in Europe.

The modified curriculum draft, as presented by Professor Zvonimir Radeljković at a meeting of Five Colleges American Studies specialists, held in November of 2005 at Amherst College, was focused exclusively on American Studies and did not contain any English language courses. Other major changes included shifting the course on "What is American about America?" to the seventh semester and replacing it with the course on visual arts. The Bologna requirements clearly state that a "3 + 2" model must be adhered to; in other words, an initial six-semester course of studies leads to a B.A. degree and an additional four semesters yields an M.A. degree, and it is also assumed that all students originally enrolled will not complete the second degree.

Additional revisions in order to conform with this new degree format included several new courses. The eighth semester featured a newly conceived class on "The American Way of Life: Customs and Lifestyles." The ninth semester consisted of two new courses, one on the "Contemporary Cultural Scene," discussing current films, TV shows, comics, music, etc., and another on "Contemporary Writing and Reading." The tenth and final semester had just one course, on "The West: Wild and Otherwise," although the students also have to write their M.A. thesis (which replaces the diploma paper from the previous version of the program). All of the courses in this program were again presumed to be obligatory, since any electives, according to the current way of envisioning university organization, would have to be selected from other departments. Theoretically it would be possible to combine any two majors within the University of Sarajevo as a whole.

At the forum in Amherst, the majority of conference participants approved of the program as a whole. Criticism was constructive: there were suggestions about shifting the lifestyle course to the first semester in order to stimulate student interest, comments about dropping the literature courses on the American Renaissance and the Twenties, in the third and fourth semesters respectively, since they appeared to be conceived differently from the rest of the program; there was also some cautious warning that political correctness wasn't as present as it should be. But there were also voices of unreserved support for the — as one participant phrased it — "core curriculum which has been mostly lost" in American schools. One of the key concerns of the curriculum draft's author was to stress the necessary differences in teaching American Studies to Americans and, in the present case, teaching this subject to students from Southeastern Europe, differences which will necessarily be expressed through distinctions in content and in methodology.

At the November event, both the importance of the topic and the enthusiasm of the discussants were apparent to all present, and, as a result, it was agreed to continue the forum and to include additional American Studies specialists from Sarajevo, by means of a video teleconference the following semester. With the help of technicians from Smith College and the O.P.A. section of the American Embassy in Sarajevo, a teleconference lasting an hour and a half was held on April 21, 2006.

On the Smith side of the videolink there were seven participants, who were joined by nine in Sarajevo (including three students in their senior year at the English department). The Smith contingent brought together professors from a variety of disciplines: a political scientist, an specialist in education, a sociologist, and professors of Afro-American and comparative literature as well as specialist in film and art history. The Sarajevo group consisted of linguists and literature professors.

The conversation focused primarily on new directions in American Studies scholarship; there was discussion of new views on constitutional history, new ideas about regionalism, new histories of American education, of exceptionalism, talk about Toni Morrison's book of literary criticism, *Playing in the Dark* (1992), about Afro-German culture and much more. Sarajevan participants stressed new areas of correspondence between American and Bosnian culture, such as film, teacher-student relations, holidays like Valentine's Day or Halloween as well as the American language itself. The Sarajevan students took an active part in the discussion, stressing the growing similarities between such an unlikely pair of countries. The conference culminated in a suggestion from Lorna Peterson, the Executive Director of Five Colleges, Inc., that a common course should be developed to be taught by instructors from both Sarajevo and Smith or Amherst, via videolink, so that students would be able to communicate not only with teachers on both sides of the world, but also with their counterparts, their fellow students.

It is the view of the author of the Sarajevo draft curriculum that there are two principal reasons for introducing and developing an American Studies program in Bosnia-Herzegovina. First, it is necessary to teach the history, literature, culture and civilization of the dominant country in the world in order to make its actions and decisions, which have such broad influence, easier for students to understand. Even more important is the multinational, multicultural and multireligious structure of Bosnia-Herzegovina itself. In this respect, if not in most others, Bosnia is similar to the U.S. Through study of the United States, Bosnians may manage to avoid some of the pitfalls and also emulate many of the solutions already present in American life and art. It remains of utmost importance that such a course of studies should stress, and should continue to reiterate, the fact that having a nation constituted of different nationalities, religions and culture need not be a liability; it is, on the contrary, a great asset. Despite the assertions of many American Studies scholars, the United States is proof of that.

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Notes

[1] Note, for example, the ease and carefree language with which she dismisses, in a footnote, an entire region from her definition of U.S. culture: "The introduction in the South of the bi-racial classification of humanity means that caste is sometimes a directly formative element in developing standards of behavior. The generalizations in this book should be regarded as based primarily on the North, Middle West, and West, and should not be called in question because certain elements of Southern culture differ from them, as this is inevitable" (24). We should recall, of course, that the bi- (or more accurately, tri-) racial classification of humanity was in fact introduced in the U.S. constitution.

[2] Although such a gesture is likely to seem silly or quixotic, as of late I've been doing my best to rid my own language of that verbal equivocation ("Americans") customarily used to refer to citizens of the United States (or in its adjectival form, their products). In part, my decision to do so is a result of my employment. I direct an American Studies program in the U.S. which is unique in that all its students come from other countries. Not surprisingly, the ambiguity of the more standard lexical choice, "American," as well as the effects of its usage, frequently come up in classroom discussion. "USian" is my own coinage, meant, however awkwardly, to fill a linguistic lack (as did the invention of "Ms." not so very long ago).

[3] The 1993 FAMA Survival guide, a Michelin-style guide to war-torn Sarajevo, comments: "The beseiged city defends itself by culture and thus survives. Groups and individuals create whatever they used to create before the siege. In impossible circumstances they produce films, write books, publish newspapers, produce radio programs, design postcards, stage exhibitions, performances, make blueprints for rebuilding the city, found banks, organize fashion shows, shoot photographs, celebrate holidays, put on make-up. Sarajevo is the city of the future and of life in the post-cataclysm."

[4] Rob Kroes puts it this way in a recent lecture titled "European Anti-Americanism: What's New?": "Anti-Americanism typically proceeds from specific areas of disagreement to larger frameworks of rejection, seeing particular policies or particular events as typical of a more general image of America. Anti-Americanism in that sense is mostly reductionist, seeing only the simplicity of the cowboy and Texas provincialism in President George W. Bush's response to terrorism, or the expansionist thrust of American capitalism in Bush's Middle-East policies. And so on, and so forth. Entire repertoires of stereotyped Americas can be conjured up to account for any contemporary trans-Atlantic disagreements" (par 6).

[5] I'm citing here a recent self-study produced by the Smith College undergraduate program in American Studies, with Dan Horowitz as chair.