Journal of American Studies of Turkey
15 (2002) :73-88

Movies, McDonald's, and Mickey Mouse:

Hong Kong Student Reflections

Stacilee Ford

There are many possible futures for American studies. New Americanists at ease with literary, postcolonial, and cultural critiques of the nation/state have challenged the notion of American exceptionalism and called for a reconfiguration (and re-naming) of the field.[1] A special double issue of *American Studies* in 2000 [2] argued for the increased recognition of the significance of globalization theory for American studies and the need to turn more frequently to social sciences scholarship in order to place the U.S. in a global and comparative frame (Yetman and Katzman, 6). Ultimately, university budget cuts may also drive curriculum decisions as many American studies departments/programs look for ways to make courses more practical and skill-based. For example, our program responded to student demands to include business courses in our American studies curriculum. Such a move is not uncommon and increasingly the field will, perhaps more fully embrace non-traditional areas such as business and tourism. In addition to these changes, greater exchange between institutions inside and outside of the U.S. is likely. Increasingly, the future of American studies is to a certain extent – both intellectually and pragmatically speaking - outside of the U.S.

Those of us who have been involved in teaching American studies at the University of Hong Kong are comfortable with this possibility.[3] We believe that our program has grown largely because we have learned from our students that the interdisciplinary foray into American culture is more interesting when it is grounded in an international perspective. Most of our courses include a strong focus on the examination of common ground and difference between Hong Kong and American culture. For over a decade, our students have been captured by the idea of looking at themselves while they are looking at the U.S. Teaching American studies – as both interdisciplinary and cross-cultural endeavor – is challenging but rewarding.[4] We find ourselves having to constantly negotiate between our individual pasts and the collective present we inhabit in the Hong Kong American studies classroom.

As we worked with our students to make see the various connections between the U.S. and Hong Kong, we have come to understand how little attention has been and continues to be paid to American influences in Asia (and vice versa) in cross-cultural studies generally. In the case of American studies, cultural flows between Europe and the U.S. are much better established than links between Asia and the U.S. One member of our teaching team (who is now teaching in the U.S.), Dr. Geetanjali Singh, was particularly important in developing courses to help rectify this lack of focus on Asia in American studies. In the 1990s, Singh pioneered courses such as "Here's Looking at You Kid: America as a Foreign Country," and "Asia on America's Screen," a film course offering Hong Kong students a chance to talk back to Hollywood representations of Asia.[5] In these courses, and others that we have added since, we have found that popular culture is central to our teaching on several levels.

First, students are more likely to speak up in class when they are reflecting on the latest Hollywood blockbuster, or talking about their weekend visit to the Golden Arches. This is significant in the Hong Kong tertiary classroom because, for the most part, students have not been conditioned to speak up in lectures in their primary and secondary education. Although we have found that stereotypes of Asian students as passive learners are exaggerated, there are students who are reluctant to speak and they overcome that reluctance more easily (particularly in the first year) when popular culture is on the agenda. Second, by reflecting on what is familiar in popular culture, students are able to place Americanization in a broader context. Third, students use assignments and class discussions of popular culture to work through issues of identity, and express anxieties about their individual futures and the future of Hong Kong. What follows is a discussion of these themes as articulated in student essays/reflections on Hollywood films, McDonald's, and Hong Kong Disneyland. The reflections were written in two separate classes during the academic year 2002-2003; a first-year course, "Consuming Culture: Decoding American Symbols," and a second/third-year course, "American Media."

Student Reactions to Hollywood

Hollywood films are very popular in Hong Kong and film reflections are always revealing. Despite our efforts to convince students of the dangers of generalizing about U.S. society from these films, many are convinced that what they see on the screen is reality. It is easier to help students see the myths Hollywood spins when Hong Kong or Asia is the focus. In the past few years, students have taken the opportunity in their essays to express pride in collaboration between Hong Kong and Hollywood and how one determines when a film is a Hong Kong film? An American film? A hybrid film? A global film?

Students are also writing about Hong Kong actors, directors, and producers who are "making it" in the US. As Jackie Chan becomes a global icon, and with the success of the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, student narratives reflect both pride and concern about Hollywood's impact on HK film industry. One such student, Carol, observes ('Carol': 2003)

> On one hand, Hollywood brings us more entertainment. On the other hand, it is also having a negative effect on our local film production. However, things also go another way. Hong Kong film productions are getting more attention from the American audience. Director John Woo is a very good example. He became one of the Hollywood directors born and raised in Hong Kong. Actors like Chow Yun-Fat, Jackie Chan and Jet Li are becoming popular in America. The film *Reservoir Dogs* directed by Quentin Tarantino is greatly affected by the Hong Kong gangster genre too. Therefore, Hollywood is not only exporting films and ideas to Hong Kong, it is also importing from Hong Kong.

Carol's discussion of the two-way flow of cultural influence takes note of power imbalances in the entertainment industry. She sees the potential opportunities and hazards involved in the transnational production of popular culture.

Other students expressed concern about the way perceived American cultural norms creep into films that are not marketed as American. Pauline notes that *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was a

popular film in HK because the actors, director, and plot are all Chinese. However, an American presence, in her view makes the film less authentic ('Pauline': 2003):

> As the story took place during the era of Qing Dynasty, it is a bit difficult to find American culture in the film. There are two scenes that make me feel American culture has diffused into this 'Chinese' film. One is a relatively sexual interaction between Jen (Zhang Ziyi) and Chang Chen (Lo). The other is, at the very end of the film, when Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun-Fat) on the edge of death, who never openly acknowledged his affection towards Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh) told Shu Lien he loves her so much and kissed her deeply. These public expressions of love and sex are not supposed to be happening in a traditional Chinese martial arts film.

Pauline was one of several students who claim there is too much sex in the film to allow it to qualify as a "real" Chinese martial arts saga.

Perceived inaccuracies about the portrayal of Chinese culture are not limited to films with an Asian cultural theme or plot. In the American Media course, students felt that Disney's *Mulan* was inaccurate not merely because of the distortion of Chinese history and mythology but because the cartoon character of Mulan was "too American." When I asked my students what made Mulan seem American to them, they could not answer right away. As the discussion continued, what surfaced was that students felt Mulan's attitude toward her parents was more typical of a contemporary teenager in the U.S. than a young Chinese girl, especially a young Chinese girl who lived several centuries ago. We discussed the way the present enters films about the past and students were a bit more willing to see similarities between contemporary American and Chinese girls. However, they remained convinced that Disney was way off balance in their attempt to present this Chinese story in a respectful way. As a result of this discussion, and others like it, my teaching colleagues and I have become more sensitized to careless or racist characterizations of Asia on Hollywood screens.[6]

Thinking McDonald's/Thinking Hong Kong

Although there are many studies of the impact of McDonald's globally, I assigned two readings for discussion in our first-year course, "Consuming Culture: Decoding American Symbols." The readings were excerpts from James Watson's *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in Asia* and George Ritzer's *The McDonaldization of Society* (Ritzer 2000; Watson, 1997).[7] These works were selected because they reflect opposing views of the impact of McDonald's. Ritzer argues that the influence of the fast-food giant expands well beyond its industry to shape the way many aspects of modern life are systematized, accelerated, and homogenized. Watson, however, argues that local settings in East Asia have made McDonald's their own as franchise managers and regional marketing directors have had to adapt to specific cultural contexts.

McDonald's is an ideal interdisciplinary case study to teach students about multiple cultural flows. In addition to the two readings mentioned above, a mini-lecture discussed other works from various disciplines written about McDonald's. We discussed the difference between McDonald's television advertisements in the U.S. and in Hong Kong and we watched a segment from the Hong Kong film, *Comrades: Almost a Love Story*. In the film, McDonald's is a symbolic bridge between the Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, and the U.S. In addition to their readings, students were assigned to spend 30 minutes at any McDonald's in Hong Kong and then write a short reflection on what they observed. Student opinion ranged from enthusiasm to repulsion. Both will be highlighted briefly here.

Most students, like Helen, whose views are excerpted here, view McDonald's presence as indicative of Hong Kong's acceptance of western, particularly American culture growing out of a colonial past that melded British and Chinese cultural influences ('Helen', 2003):

> People from elsewhere all opposed the idea of having a McDonald's in their own country and they conceive of McDonald's as a threat to their indigenous cultures. However, as for the case of Hong Kong, its 'indigenous' culture has already been 'destroyed' by the British Government more than 100 years ago. The established indigenous culture in town is a mixed one, under the influences of both Chinese and Western beliefs. Before McDonald's landed we already had cafes and high tea menus…The success of McDonald's shows the adaptability of Hong Kong people – whatever is good, we accept it and we assimilate it as part of our own indigenous culture.

Li Ming extends Helen's argument. She asserts, "Mixed cultures are part of the uniqueness of Hong Kong. Thus, it shouldn't put the guilt of stripping Chinese culture from Hong Kong on McDonald's" ('Li Ming', 2003). It is, she says, too easy to see "everything which follows the same procedure … as a sign of McDonaldization. In fact, the word McDonaldization is nothing to be scared of, in my opinion, McDonald's brings more benefits than detriments to Hong Kong." ('Li Ming', 2003). Many students concur with James Watson who argues that McDonald's tries to be sensitive to local tastes and customs. Ceci argues, "McDonaldization is not simply Americanization. McDonald's changes from place to place. McDonald's in Hong Kong even provides rice." Like other responses I read, Ceci claims, "A local McDonald's becomes part of our culture. It is a part of our lives" ('Ceci', 2003). Lee says she wishes academics and cultural critics would "leave McD's alone and find another corporation to bully…It's getting old by now." ('Lee', 2003). These students are quite comfortable with Watson's viewpoint that McDonald's does not impinge on local culture in harmful ways.

Other students were inclined to side with Ritzer and the anti-McDonald view. As Grace writes, "Although McDonald's restaurants enable our society to operate predictably and efficiently, they invade our lives and threaten our personal privacy in an unimaginable way." As customers, she writes, "we need to be critical and avoid taking everything for granted" ('Grace', 2003). In some cases, students extended their critique of McDonald's to encompass politics asserting that apathy about consumption might be related in some respects to apathy in politics. A few students noted that Hong Kong people do not like to criticize or "speak out" against institutions generally so it is no surprise that resisting McDonald's is something that few do. It will be interesting to see if this attitude changes in the wake of this summer's public demonstrations against Article 23, the Hong Kong Government's proposed anti-subversion legislation.

For the most part, however, connections between self and popular culture were more personal than political. Ellen writes, "I was born at the end of the 1970s, almost the same time when McDonald's arrived in Hong Kong. So we are the generation that grew up at the same time with McDonald's expansion in Hong Kong." ('Ellen', 2003). Although most of the students in the course are ethnically Chinese, a few are not. One student, a U.S. citizen who has a Hong Kong permanent identity card and has grown up in Hong Kong, agreed with Watson that McDonald's functions – intentionally or not- as a symbolic space (Watson, 1997: 87). "In an urban landscape that is poorly signposted and sometimes without outstanding landscape features, a location that can be found by

every member of one's peer group is a blessing that cannot be discounted." ('Tom', 2003) For Tom, McDonald's, as a landmark "became part of our daily life, even when we did not patronize it." However, he says, presence need not be equated with McDonaldization. "While Hong Kong has undergone dramatic paradigmatic changes," he writes, "I would argue that most of these are in response to global culture in general. On the whole, it seems to me that Hong Kong has changed McDonald's more than the other way around" ('Tom', 2003).

Some students linked McDonald's to family outings and childhood memories. They agree with Watson's thesis that the fast-food chain had an impact on Hong Kong children's development. Rose recalled a favorite McDonald's commercial from her childhood, which illustrated that "children can learn to place their orders confidently at McDonald's." The trend continues today, she notes ('Rose', 2003). Some student responses, such as this one by Ko, reflect McDonald's place in the nostalgic past ('Ko', 2003):

> McDonald's is a name never wiped from my heart. When I was a kid, I had fish burgers as my snacks and my seven-year-old birthday party was held in McDonald's. During the primary school, McDonald's become a place for my proper meal and in secondary school; McDonald's was already a warm social gathering place for me. Therefore, I had a deep feeling towards the impact of McDonald's in Hong Kong…Parents usually take McDonald's as an encouragement for the children. They may say, 'If you finish your homework right now, I'll bring you to McDonald's.' What's more, they could eliminate social stratification. The children from rich and poor families could still afford to pay for a hamburger and they both like it. The discrimination will be eliminated among children. Instead, it pulled their friendship closer when they have common topic about McDonald's.

It is important to note that many students embraced neither Ritzer nor Watson. A few incorporated some of each perspective as they discussed their own anxieties about modernity, Americanization, and Hong Kong. Ying illustrates this most clearly ('Ying', 2003):

> I had not had a meal in any McDonald's for almost a year already (before this assignment). I had a long history of struggling with Ronald McDonald. …Since I took a course in environmental studies, at the stage of my identity seeking when I was 18, I quit eating McDonald's and beef altogether. I said 'quit' as I was so used to having McDonalds' meals four times a week. I was angry because they cut down trees to rear cattle for Big Macs and hamburgers in rainforests but yet still pictured themselves as charitable and wanted our loyalty. As a result, I went to Pacific Coffee, Starbucks some of the time and sat near the harbor with my Sony headphones on to escape from what I believed in escaping…But after the lecture and with the readings done, I was more lost than before as there really seems no way out of the corporatization and rationalization of the food industry, not to mention other aspects of consumption. So with the excuse of this assignment, I went to the place and had my

> lunch there. It felt great. It might be exaggerating a bit to say that part of my childhood was revived but somehow it's true. As pointed out by James Watson in his *McDonald's in Hong Kong*, the restaurant did succeed in its localization and made people feel engaged to it. It did supply an extra sense of security for the associated predictability and homogeneity…in sum, I thought I would be more begrudging against McDonald's after this lesson but in fact I was not. Since there is no means of completely escaping from the McDonaldized world, all I need to do is to be cautious - of making sure my pleasure is not built upon the exploitation of others.

Students claim an awareness of the impact of McDonaldization /Americanization, but they believe Hong Kong must also be pragmatic if it is to overcome its economic difficulties. Wong Hing says he likes the fact that, "McDonald's also follows a formula in serving consumers in a polite manner. " He suggests that the Hong Kong catering industry should follow a model where "consumers are put prior to everything else. Only in this respect can Hong Kong's tourism be boosted "('Wong Hing', 2003).

It would be unwise to generalize about Hong Kong attitudes towards McDonald's from these limited responses in an American studies course. However, the student narratives provide suggestive data for those interested in the impact of U.S. popular culture in an age of transnational corporate cultural flows. For those of us teaching American studies, McDonald's is a rich case study that raises more questions than answers. Even though we know that students will assign their own meanings to their consumption of popular culture, we continue to challenge them to see multiple perspectives. We remind them that although they may see McDonald's as their own, Ritzer and Elizabeth L. Malone argue that such "cultural transformations, like the development of indigenous McDonaldized settings, exemplify the power of McDonaldization. Its impact is far greater if it infiltrates a local culture and becomes a part of it than if it remains perceived as an American phenomenon superimposed on a local setting" (Ritzer and Malone, 2000: 107-8). Put another way, "that deeply held norms are being transformed by McDonald's is evidence of the profound impact of McDonaldization" (108). What makes the debate particularly interesting for those of us who live and teach in Hong Kong is the fluid nature of the particular postcolonial geopolitical location we inhabit. We tell our students that we have our own struggles with the arguments they read and students seem quite comfortable taking us on when we appear to be favoring one perspective over another. Ultimately, in Hong Kong, McDonaldization/Americanization is in conversation with earlier and more significant cultural encounters as a result of colonialism. Or, as one student asked, "Can you threaten indigenous culture if there is not really an indigenous culture in the first place?" While we believe this question is, of course, indicative of the colonial legacy itself, it raises important questions about the need to consider the impact of American popular culture as one of many influences in play in a particular local context.

The Disney Debate

As a follow up to the McDonald's assignment, students in the "Consuming Culture" course turned to an analysis of Disney in Hong Kong. During the academic year 2002-2003, our visiting Fulbright Professor was Richard L. Foglesong, Disney critic and author of *Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando* (Foglesong, 2001). Foglesong was a guest lecturer in the course and he pointed out several potential problems Hong Kong might encounter as it moved toward the opening of a Disney theme park on Lantau Island in 2005.

First, he argued, the Hong Kong government has to assume too much financial responsibility for the construction of the theme park. Second, he warns that tourists could easily patronize Disney re-creations of Hong Kong rather than Hong Kong itself. Third, the power of Disney's brand and logo (Mickey Mouse) could overpower Hong Kong's own attempts at promoting its own brand (Dragon). Fourth, an influx of migrant labor recruited from the Chinese mainland or from the Philippines to accept low-paying jobs could threaten the stability of the job market at a time when it is struggling to stabilize after the impact of the Asian economic crisis and the SARS outbreak. Finally, Disney's historical lack of transparency in their operations combined with the Hong Kong Government's reluctance to consult the public broadly on matters of public interest could mean a further repression of democracy in the region (Foglesong, 2003).[8]

In addition to Foglesong's presentation, students read a chapter from Henry Giroux's book, *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence* (Giroux, 1999: 17-61). Giroux argues that Disney's claims to innocence are ingenuous and consumers need to be more cognizant of the messages sent through Disney productions, as well as corporate communications. To counter the Foglesong and Giroux critiques, students also read several pro-Disney editorials, promotional material from the Hong Kong managers working with the Disney Corporation, and criticisms of Dr. Foglesong's views. In their reflection papers for the Disney unit, students were asked to take a stand – for or against – the building of the Disney theme park in Hong Kong. There were students on both sides of the Disney debate. Although the group was nearly equally divided, the anti-Disney essays edged the pro-Disney essays 51 to 48.[1]note *[1]* *In addition to the 99 papers that reflected a clear stand, seven did not Rather than try and allocate them to a side, I count them as neutral.*

Bring on the Mouse

Reprising a theme previously discussed in the McDonald essays, students like Claudia argued that claims to damaging an indigenous culture were problematic because of Hong Kong's colonial past and character.

Disney is trying to run the park with respect to the local culture. Moreover, there is no "purely original, indigenous culture". The point is how to absorb other culture's good and turn it, change it into our local landscape. It is more important to learn how to generate a suitable and beneficial "new" rather than avoiding all incoming cultural influences. It's no use to reject its opening in order to avoid its cultural hegemony in HK. Even if it does not open in HK, it can be in Shanghai, other Asian countries; we will also be infected if we still not start to work on strengthening HK's national unity, national sense and citizen's self-awareness. That is the only and correct way to gain from Disney's theme park ('Claudia', 2003).[9]

Another similarity between the two groups of essays is the attitude toward Americanization in Hong Kong. As Meg writes ('Meg', 2003):

> Some people think the Americans try to spread their culture to Asia by building Disneyland in Hong Kong…I think these worries are understandable but not necessary. In fact, the American culture has been spread to Hong Kong for decades, like McDonald's and Starbucks. In my view, the Americans are good at things in which the local companies are weak. Thus, we should learn from others so as to make progress. We can't refuse everything exotic. Let's welcome Disneyland and face the challenges thus created in a positive and optimistic way so as to make the local entertainments more attractive and competitive.

Disneyland's successful opening is seen as particularly important at this time of economic turmoil in Hong Kong. For Robert, "Disneyland is a place where our future hopes are laid and it may be a pill healing the deteriorating economy and gloomy prospect of Hong Kong." ('Robert', 2003). Deborah concurs that Disneyland is needed to alleviate the psychic gloom brought on by the economic recession and the SARS epidemic. While somewhat sympathetic to the Giroux critique, she believes that escaping reality for Hong Kong people is something to embrace rather than eschew ('Deborah', 2003):

> As people from all walks of life in Hong Kong suffered greatly these years, they are extremely depressed and apprehensive of the unclear future… No one will deny that Disneyland is a dream and a magic place where hope is always present. Though we are conscious that it is merely a fantasy, we are happy and content after having a moment of magic in Disneyland. Accordingly, having Disneyland built in Hong Kong will provide the locals a place to escape from the cruel reality as well as recollecting their lost innocence.

Ming writes, "Hong Kong people work so hard every day. Even the children work very hard to do their schoolwork. Everyone in Hong Kong has lots of pressure all the time. They need a place for leisure. …Disneyland is a good place to go" ('Ming', 2003).

Against Disneyland in HK

But if there was strong support for Disney in the student essays, there was also clear opposition as well. Many of the students wrote about what they perceived to be inconsistencies between Disney's democratic rhetoric and larger realities. Kathy writes ('Kathy', 2003):

> As the Disney Company worships its culture of 'democracy', I wonder why it resists paying its own way. According to Professor Foglesong, the Disney Company has to pay HK $2.45 billion while the SAR Government needs to invest HK $22 billion. However, our Government only shares 10 percent of the revenue while the Disney Company has 90 percent. Owing to the huge amount of money being invested in building infrastructure, the building of Disneyland not only fails to reduce financial burdens, but also makes the budget deficit worse than before.

Hoi Yee fears ethnocentric attitudes on the part of Disney's US employees who might not be able to share power and position with local Hong Kong managers and laborers. She wonders if Disney managers are, perhaps, Americans who "refuse to believe that Chinese are capable of doing the supervision work in an American company." She also wonders if Disney "will tend to import workers from the States to work in Hong Kong?" ('Hoi Yee', 2003).

Eric agrees with Giroux that Disney pretends to an innocence it does not really own. He writes ('Eric', 2003):

> The cartoons are touching and educational. However, they affect our local culture a lot. Disney puts children into a world with no violence, full of hopes and fantasies. This greatly reduces the chances for them to engage in critical thought. For educational purposes the Disney Corporation makes Disney sell lots of products for teaching through

> tapes and games. This reduces the awareness of children of society and government. The sense of citizenship is also reduced.

Another concern relates to Disney's portrayal of Asian, particularly Chinese culture in Hong Kong. As mentioned previously, students are upset by Disney's reproduction of the Chinese folk tale Mulan and they fear that representation will be repeated in other ways in the theme park. Bill writes ('Bill', 2003):

> The Disneyland in Hong Kong is the first one built in a Chinese Society and it signifies Disney's invasion of the Chinese culture. A traditional Chinese story was transformed to a Disney animation *Mulan* in 1999. It views Chinese in the eyes' of westerners. Why do Chinese have small eyes and big mouths? Why is the Chinese story animation produced by a foreign company? Chinese people would all agree that *Mulan* depicts the Chinese story inaccurately. However, it's very likely that more and more such productions will be made in the future in order to attract more attention from Chinese societies. It's predictable that Chinese culture will be more seriously misinterpreted in the coming decades because of the arrival of Mickey Mouse in Hong Kong and China.

Stephanie's critique, excerpted below, concludes the discussion of Disney debate here. It was the most direct, of the student comments and it also summarizes the anxieties that accompany Disney's arrival for some of the students ('Stephanie', 2003):

> Three years from now, Mickey Mouse and his folks will land here, the Pearl of the Orient, Hong Kong. May the almighty Aladdin grant us a wish that it will not be true for they are 'poison' rather than 'panacea' for the sinking economy and society in Hong Kong…In order to maximize its profit, Disney may purvey twisted culture to Hong Kong's visitors by ignoring and misrepresenting authentic Asian culture, just like she did in Mulan and Pocahontas or she may just simply 'ignore the exclusionary dynamics of class and race' (Giroux 39). If our future generations are brought up with such distorted cultures, our society will be inferior and 'ignorant', and then Hong Kong will be a real 'cultural desert'.

Conclusion

Hong Kong, despite Stephanie's concern that it may become such, is not a cultural desert. As we have learned as teachers, and as the student narratives show, Hong Kong is a rich and multi-dimensional -as well as multicultural- environment. Because it is a space so heavily saturated with various types of American popular culture, teaching American studies here offers both opportunities and challenges. For students, an exploration of popular culture through the interdisciplinary lens of American studies offers a fresh approach to the study of U.S. culture. Students "use" American studies in a variety of ways in the process of their own identity formation. They learn, sifting and sorting through the texts they read/observe, what they wish to accept and reject in their own culture and in American culture. Since September 11th, 2001, we have observed a decrease in the enthusiasm for "things American" generally among our students, but student enrollments in the program continue to rise. Perhaps students are less starry-eyed about the U.S. than they once were, but they still seek for ways to understand the changes that surround them and the impact of Americanization in Hong Kong

and globally. It also seems that anti-American sentiment, while more pronounced than it was two years ago, is not as strong here as it appears to be elsewhere in the world. American studies can play an important role in measuring various modes of local response to global American popular culture in tandem with modes of response to U.S. policy worldwide. Although it is important to teach American studies both inside and outside of the U.S., the perspective from the outside, is of vital importance to the future of the field.

Works Cited

Foglesong, Richard E. "Disney in Hong Kong," guest lecture in course at Hong Kong University "Consuming Culture: Decoding American Symbols" Spring.

Foglesong, Richard E. (2001). *Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ford, Stacilee and Slethaug, Gordon (1999) "Hong Kong Students Look at the U.S.A.: American Studies in Hong Kong". *American Studies,* 40:2 (Summer): 151-182.

Giroux, Henry A. (1999). "Disney and the Politics of Public Culture". In Giroux, *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield: 17-61.

Noble, David W. (2002) *Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ritzer, George (2000). *The McDonaldization of Society*. Thousand Oaks CA: Pine Forge Press.

Ritzer, George, and Malone, Elizabeth L. (2000). "Globalization Theory: Lessons From The Exportation Of McDonaldization and the New Means Of Consumption". *American Studies* 41: 2/3 (Summer/Fall): 106-15.

Rowe, John Carlos (2002). *The New American Studies.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Watson, James L. (ed.) (1997). *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Yetman, Norman R. and Katzman, David M. (2000). "Globalization and American Studies". *American Studies* 41,2/3 (Summer/Fall): 1-14.

---

[1] David W. Noble, *Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); John Carlos Rowe, *The New American Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

[2] *American Studies: Globalization, Tran nationalism, and the End of the American Century* (Summer/Fall 2000), Volume 41, Numbers 2/3.

[3] The teaching team at HKU during the academic year 2002-2003 was comprised of myself, Gordon Slethaug (Chairman of the Programme), and visiting scholars Russell Leong, and Richard and Suzanne Foglesong. Slethaug's vision for the program has been to make it increasingly interdisciplinary and pragmatic.

[4] A general discussion of the HKU American studies program and student reactions to teaching methods is found in Stacilee Ford and Gordon Slethaug, 'Hong Kong Students Look at the U.S.A.: American Studies in Hong Kong,' *American Studies,* 40:2 (Summer 1999), 151-182.

[5] The insights and scholarship of Richard Horwitz, who was a visiting scholar in Hong Kong in the mid- 1990s, were significant in the early stages of this process.

[6] As I write this the most recent Disney release, *Freaky Friday* has opened in Hong Kong. It attempts to portray a 'real family with real problems' according to promotional materials for the film being circulated here. However, I (and many of the students) found the film's portrayal of a mother and daughter who are the proprietors of a Chinese restaurant surprisingly stereotypical in a film that claims to move beyond other stereotypes of family and culture.

[7] George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2000) and James L. Watson, ed., *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). We focused specifically on Watson's essay, 'McDonald's in Hong Kong: Consumerism, Dietary Change, and the Rise of a Children's Culture,' 77-109.

[8] In addition to his visit, Foglesong also provided the text of an article he delivered to the History Department during Fall 2003, and newspaper coverage of his views in the local press.

[9] 'Claudia,' Consuming Culture,' Disneyland! Essay, 10 March 2003.