

## DEPARTMENT OF

## COMMUNICATION

## Teaching in Troubled Times

By John Moist, Communication doctoral student

Teaching students in a lecture hall requires skill, practice, and care. This past spring, however, teachers across the country had another challenge: teaching their students from hundreds of miles away. As instruction at the University of Illinois moved online after Spring Break, teachers in the Department of Communication brought that same skill, practice, and care to the remote classroom. In April, the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences profiled several faculty members who creatively adapted their teaching. Billy Huff, a lecturer in Communication, told LAS staff writer Therese Pokorney that he took a “students first” approach to the changes. He surveyed students to take stock of their online access, availability during the week, and their course delivery preferences.

“It was their feedback that dictated the decisions I made in the transitions,” he said. Huff was teaching Argumentation and Social Movement Communication, two courses that have become more relevant than ever. He transitioned his lectures to video, using images and artifacts from media coverage of COVID-19. “Students are experiencing the urgency of media literacy,” he said, and the similar urgency of “having the ability to critically examine arguments that surround them.” Huff’s Social Movement Communication students were able to apply what they learned in the remote classroom to the world around them: Huff’s students created a page of resources for students affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Students, said Huff, are “certainly experiencing the communication advantages of using social media to organize, but they are also experiencing the frustrations and drawbacks that accompany a lack of face-to-face interaction.” Despite those challenges, Huff told Pokorney that he’s “profoundly proud of them for innovating and creating new ways of using communication technologies to create solidarity and support among Illini students.”

The teaching of William Barley, an assistant professor of Communication, was also featured by LAS. Barley, who was also

selected to deliver the virtual faculty address for the 2020 New Student Convocation, told Pokorney that he used his lectures to apply his subject matter to the health crisis. He teaches CMN 410: Workplace Communication Technology, which focuses on how communication technologies emerge, adapt, and are adopted in institutions. Barley soon found himself using technologies he’d discussed in class to keep up with students digitally from miles away. While the adoption and spread of those technologies had been theoretical weeks before, he and his students were putting their learning into practice right away by getting accustomed to the world of digital-first teaching. Just like Huff, Barley welcomed student input on how the class moved online. His first remote

lecture reflected that input, titled “What’s the best way to use Zoom?”

Similar adjustments happened throughout the department, as internships moved online, materials were adjusted, and plans changed quickly. Changes came rapidly to CMN 112: Oral and Written Communication II. Students in CMN 112 typically end the semester by competing in the Lincoln Hall Debate Series, but this year’s stay-at-home

orders made that plan impossible. Instead, students completed the course’s capstone assignment online. The debates continued in different form there, as students uploaded their speeches and responded to arguments, rebuttals, and blocks asynchronously. While the pandemic may have changed some of their plans, the instructors “wanted to give the students an opportunity to show what they’d learned,” said CMN 112 Peer Leader and Communication graduate student Pam Axtman-Barker. Reflecting on the abrupt change to his own instructional plans, Barley said, “We’re in uncharted territory. I planned on continuing lecturing like normal on Zoom, but then I said, ‘Wait, if you expect things to go on as normally, then you don’t have room for challenges.’” This past spring, faculty, students, and staff all rose to the instructional challenges the pandemic posed. ♦



# Greetings from John Caughlin, Department Head

## FALL 2020

### Communication Newsletter

Editor: Cara Finnegan  
Writer: John Moist  
Editorial Support: Colleen Kling

Department of Communication  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
702 S. Wright St., MC-456  
Urbana, IL 61801  
communication@illinois.edu  
hcom.illinois.edu

-  [Facebook.com/IllinoisComm](https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisComm)
-  [Twitter.com/IllinoisComm](https://twitter.com/IllinoisComm)
-  [LinkedIn.com/groups/  
University of Illinois  
Department of Communication](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/University-of-Illinois-Department-of-Communication)

Produced by the College of Liberal Arts  
& Sciences Office of Communications  
and Marketing

**75** YEARS  
**DEPARTMENT OF  
COMMUNICATION**

1947-2022

This has certainly been a challenging year in many ways, and I know it has been a painful one for many of our friends, families, and communities. The health and social difficulties facing the U.S. and the rest of the world have been on our minds throughout the spring and summer.

Even as we reflect on all that has gone on around us in 2020, we have worked very hard to be a sustained source of excellence on campus and beyond. We have been adapting constantly since the beginning of the pandemic, and I am extremely grateful to all our staff, faculty, and teaching assistants who did what they could to make the best of a surprising spring semester.



The 2019-2020 school year did not end how we would have liked, but it also gave us a chance to see real resiliency in the department and our alumni community. For example, we were all disappointed when the university canceled convocation, but our scheduled alumni speaker, Graham Grady, recorded an optimistic and thoughtful message for our graduates. His words helped make this year's celebrations memorable in a unique way.

I do not know what the exact state of on-campus instruction will be when you read this. Regardless of exactly what happens, I am confident we are ready to provide top-notch teaching. We have invested a tremendous amount of time and energy being ready for anything this fall, ensuring that even if instruction does not look the same this year, our students will continue to benefit from the best that an Illinois Communication education has to offer.

Thanks to all of you reading this. As always, feel free to reach out by phone, mail, or email. I look forward to when I can say you are all welcome to visit the department in person! ♦

# Faculty Bring Focus to Current Events

By John Moist, Communication doctoral student

In complex times, it's more important than ever for faculty to bring their research talents to bear on difficult problems. In 2020, faculty in the Department of Communication are using their expertise to address the realities of an ongoing global pandemic, a contentious presidential election year, and a rise in social justice movement activity around issues of race. Since the pandemic began, associate professor Cabral Bigman, who specializes in communication about risk and inequality, has addressed conversations about the risk of COVID-19 infection. "Health communicators need to be honest," she told Craig Chamberlain of the university's News Bureau, "and provide clear, timely, and accurate information about the risks and the actions people can take to address those risks...as the science evolves, it may be necessary to revise what was communicated earlier. If the public doesn't feel that communicators have been honest with them about what is known and what is not known, that can undermine public trust and communicator credibility." During the pandemic, many of those tense conversations have been happening within our own homes. Professor and department head John Caughlin, who studies interpersonal communication and the role of technology in close relationships, says that it's important to maintain those relationships despite the complicated times we live in. "There is no doubt that relationships can be strained any time people experience stressors," he told the News Bureau's Chamberlain, "and the COVID-19 situation certainly counts. But good communication is also one of the most important factors in coping with stressors, and that goes for how we use our digital tools."

Other faculty have been focusing on the public discourse circulating around us during the pandemic. Professor Cara Finnegan, who studies the role of photography in the public sphere, co-hosts the webcast *Chatting The Pictures*, where she and a colleague regularly analyze news photographs. The webcast began highlighting coronavirus-related news photography way back in February, and has continued exploring the visual culture of the pandemic as it has evolved. Professor John Murphy was interviewed by the *New York Times* on the subject of President Donald Trump's COVID-19 rhetoric. While many presidents avoid taking personal credit for victories, Murphy said Trump's rhetoric on the health crisis was in line with his earlier statements. "It's consistent with the way he campaigned," said Murphy, "when he said, 'I alone can fix it.'"

Emily Van Duyn, a new assistant professor in the department, was interviewed by the *New York Times* about how the pandemic is affecting couples with clashing political views. "People are trapped with each other at home and can't walk away," said Van Duyn. "Before, the answer was to withdraw

completely, and now they can't." Along similar lines, Professor Scott Althaus was featured in a video produced by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, where he offered advice on how to discuss those clashing political views with someone who doesn't share your point of view. He advised that we "listen for understanding, not advantage." Althaus explained, "You're not going to be listening in a way that's trying to trip someone up or show that you've got a better position... if you listen for understanding, it's going to help you to create a common space where you can explore where you really are differing, and maybe some areas of common ground that you weren't seeing."

Questions about information and misinformation animate the political sphere. Assistant professor JungHwan Yang, a scholar of political communication and data science, appeared on Illinois Public Radio to talk about changes to Twitter's policies regarding "harmfully misleading" content. "There are a lot of kinds of inauthentic behavior happening on social media," he said. While discussions of misinformation may often focus on "bots" and other inhuman influences, Yang said that might not always be the case. "There are actually a lot of misinformation campaigns organized by humans who manage multiple accounts." These "AstroTurf" campaigns may seem natural, Yang says, but they're largely composed of inauthentic voices.



This past summer, issues of racial justice and institutional violence returned to the public agenda. Stewart Coles, a new postdoctoral fellow in the department, has written about social movements like Black Lives Matter, and how the racial identity of #BlackLivesMatter supporters on social media affects support for the movement. His research finds that the prevalence of white supporters of Black Lives Matter leads to more support for the movement from white voters. "At the same time," he wonders, "when will Black people simply be listened to without having to have our words pass through

White lips?" Professor Travis Dixon has also been bringing his research on media stereotypes and biases to bear on the current political climate. Dixon commented on how stereotypes might affect policing, telling Craig Chamberlain of the campus News Bureau that "officers remain as susceptible as anyone else to bias based on cultural context, socialization, or upbringing... racial bias may lead to over-policing of Black drivers through more and lengthier stops." Despite the challenges ahead, Dixon trusts in our ability to bring about change. "We have such a long way to go," he said, "but we should not despair and think that no progress has been made. Everyone needs to remember that these biases exist in all of us and that we must continually work to limit their influence." ♦

# Ramey and Baer Earn Awards for Outstanding Teaching and Advising

Mary Ramey and Neil Baer recently won multiple awards for undergraduate teaching and advising. Mary Ramey, a senior lecturer whose courses are consistently in high demand, received both the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching and the Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. Student testimony plays an important part in the awards nomination process. One student nominator said that Ramey “uses humor, storytelling, and shows a genuine respect and knowledge about college-aged terminology.” Being able to connect with students where they are at is especially important in the courses that Ramey teaches, including sexual communication, advanced interpersonal communication, and family communication.

Neil Baer, an academic advisor in the department, was similarly recognized with two awards, the College of LAS Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Advising and the Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Advising. Baer helps students make informed decisions about their future, including their career, educational, and life goals. He received more than two dozen student nominations for the awards, a signal that students rely on Neil for much more than advice

about what courses to take. One student said that Neil “is someone I trust in helping me make any decision regarding my educational and professional future. We have built a sound relationship over the past two years and I am looking forward to its continuation.” The department is grateful for Ramey and Baer’s continued dedication to excellence in student instruction and advising. ♦



Mary Ramey



Neil Baer

## Graduate Students Earn Campus Fellowships



Katie Bruner

Doctoral students Katie Bruner and Manny Pulido have won competitive campus fellowships to support their research during the 2020-2021 academic year. Bruner received a Graduate College Dissertation Completion Fellowship to support research for her dissertation, “Seeing Systems: A Rhetorical History of Vision at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1931-1969.” Bruner’s project investigates the role of technology in the history of rhetoric. Pulido received the Graduate College’s Marion Morse Wood Fellowship, which supports research in interpersonal communication. Pulido will use the fellowship to complete his project, “Refining Interpersonal Communication Theory and Practice for Chronic Pain Management,”



Manny Pulido

which explores how social support can help people manage the health and relationship stressors produced by chronic pain. ♦

## Leanne Knobloch Named ICA Fellow



Leanne Knobloch

The International Communication Association has selected Professor Leanne Knobloch as one of 31 scholars chosen from around the world for its 2020 ICA Fellows class. Selection as an ICA Fellow

recognizes distinguished scholarly contributions to the field of communication and fellows make up only a small percentage of the organization’s membership. The nomination highlighted Dr. Knobloch’s award-winning research on how people in close relationships communicate during times of transition. In particular, she was cited for her studies on how romantic couples deal with mental health issues and how military families navigate deployment and reintegration. Knobloch joins other ICA Fellows from the department, including Professors Scott Poole, Travis Dixon, and John Caughlin, as well as Executive Vice President & Vice President for Academic Affairs Barbara J. Wilson and Emeritus Professor Jesse Delia. ♦

# Professor Ned O’Gorman Named University Scholar



Ned O’Gorman

This fall Professor **Ned O’Gorman** was one of five faculty members on campus to be named a University Scholar. This prestigious, system-wide award recognizes midcareer faculty for their demonstrated excellence in all three areas of research, teaching, and service. The honor brings with it \$15,000 per year in research funding for the next three years. Professor O’Gorman is the fourth faculty member from

the department to be recognized with this honor; Leanne Knobloch (2015), Cara Finnegan (2017), and the late Dale Brashers (2004) also earned this designation.

O’Gorman, a historian of political rhetoric and the Cold War, has been a faculty member in the department since 2005, and also served as associate head. In his new book *Politics for Everybody: Reading Hannah Arendt in Uncertain Times* (University of Chicago Press, 2020), O’Gorman argues for the importance of political engagement and participation. He says that politics is a form of human relationship, and relationships are all around us: in our communities, our places of gathering, and our homes. O’Gorman’s focus in the book is the work and life of Hannah Arendt, a Jewish thinker who fled Nazi Germany for the United States. Arendt wrote prolifically about the relationships among democracy, authoritarianism, and political life. For O’Gorman, the primary way we should think of ourselves is as citizens. Thinking this way, he says, helps us redeem politics from its “winner-take-all” reputation. “If we stopped and looked and thought and opened our eyes,” says O’Gorman, “...maybe these arguments from ideological extremes start to lose some of their compelling nature.” ♦

## Welcome, New Faculty!

The Department of Communication is excited to welcome a number of talented scholars who have joined us in the last year:



Billy Huff

**Dr. Billy Huff** joined the department as a lecturer in Fall 2019 from the University of Florida, where he served as the Director of LGBTQ Affairs. He teaches Social Movement Communication, Argumentation, and Gender Communication. Huff’s research focuses on how the body is used as a vehicle for social change and studies the intersections of transgender embodiment and queer sexuality.



Stewart Coles

**Dr. Stewart Coles** joined the department in Fall 2020 as an Illinois Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellow. Coles received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Prior to his time at the University of Michigan, Coles served for ten years as a public affairs officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. His research examines how people develop their understanding of social issues related to identity.



Brooklyne Gipson

**Dr. Brooklyne Gipson** joined the department in Fall 2020 as an Illinois ACLS/DRIVE Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellow. Gipson received her Ph.D. from the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. Her research explores how political discourse online frames women and the ways in which online speech is weaponized against women.



Emily Van Duyn

**Dr. Emily Van Duyn** joined the department in Fall 2020 as an assistant professor. Prior to coming to Illinois, she served as a postdoctoral fellow in the Program on Democracy and the Internet at Stanford University. She received her Ph.D. in 2019 from the University of Texas at Austin. Her research focuses on new media, political communication, democracy, and how people use digital media to express and organize themselves in secret. ♦

# Department Hosts Student-Led Conferences

During the last academic year, the Department of Communication hosted two conferences organized and led by graduate students. The Organizational Communication Mini Conference, held in October 2019, provided graduate students a platform to present their research, prepare for the job market and their career, and build connections across the field. The OCMC celebrates the diversity of ideas, theories, and methods within the field of organizational communication. Students attended a preconference on machine learning, speaker panels, poster sessions, and more. While the conference originally began as a collaboration among midwestern Communication departments, its impact and community have spread across the United States. The student organizing team was Sarah Bell, Ann Bryan, Rachael Gregory, Lauren Johnson, Chandler MacSwain, Luisa Ruge-Jones, and Hallie Workman.

The Midwest Winter Workshop, held in February 2020, brought together participants from over twelve midwestern



universities. Hosted by Big 10 universities on a rotating basis since 2006, the MWW offers an opportunity for graduate students and faculty to discuss rhetorical methods and theory. In addition to speaker panels, discussion sessions, and professional development events, students participated in workshops designed to provide feedback and encouragement on their research. The Department of Communication's Cara Finnegan delivered the 2020 workshop keynote, "Scholarly Writing as Creative Work." The workshop was co-organized by Matt Pitchford and Katie Bruner, with many other Communication graduate students helping out as volunteers. ♦

## Retirement News: Professors McChesney and Stole

After forty-two combined years of service at the university, Robert McChesney and Inger Stole have retired from teaching. McChesney, who arrived at the University of Illinois in 1999, spent his career studying the political economy of communication and twentieth century media history. He authored and edited more than twenty-three books, including many key works on the political economy of communication policy in the United States. McChesney was also a Senior Research Scientist at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications. Inger Stole, who also arrived in 1999, worked as a historian of consumer movements and present-day consumer activism. Stole taught courses that traced the history of the American advertising industry, including Public Relations and Propaganda and Commercialism and the Public. Drs. Stole and McChesney, who are married, are spending the beginning of their retirement at home in Madison, Wisconsin. McChesney

plans to work on projects with Free Press, the media reform organization he co-founded in 2003, and both he and Stole are eager to travel and reconnect with friends. ♦

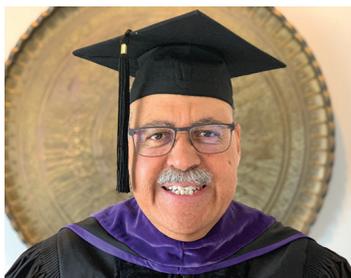


Robert McChesney



Inger Stole

## The Department Convocation Goes Online

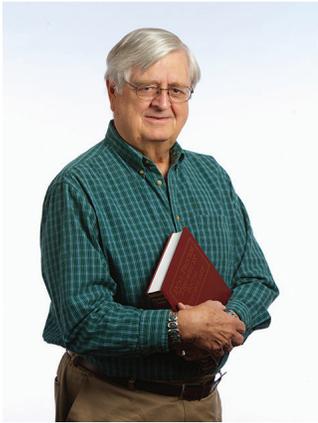


Graham Grady

Despite the cancellation of our usual in-person convocation celebration at Krannert's Great Hall, the department wanted to find a way to celebrate with our 2020 graduates. Our convocation speaker Graham Grady (a CMN alumnus and partner at Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP) graciously volunteered to record his speech and share his insights with the class of 2020. The 2020 convocation ceremony was released as a video for all graduates to watch, and a number of faculty members made themselves available via Zoom for one-on-one meet-and-greets with students and their families. While we would much rather have gathered in person, we hope that our digital convocation offered a good opportunity for our graduates to celebrate with friends and family. ♦

# In Memoriam: Kenneth Andersen and Tom Costello

The Department of Communication lost two beloved longtime faculty members in the early months of 2020.



*Ken Andersen*

## Ken Andersen

Emeritus professor Kenneth Andersen died in Champaign in January. Ken was born into a family of Danish immigrant farmers in Iowa. After graduating from high school, Ken earned his B.A. and M.A. from Iowa State Teachers College and taught speech at the University of Colorado before serving for two years in the United States Army as an education specialist and

part-time instructor. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1961, and held subsequent positions at the University of Illinois-Chicago, the University of Southern California, and the University of Michigan. He joined the faculty of the University of Illinois in 1970. During his time at Illinois, Ken taught persuasion, parliamentary law, communication ethics, and freedom of speech. His published work focused on many of the same topics. He served eagerly in a professional capacity both on campus and off, working as an interim head of the department, as an associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and as Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs for the campus. He also gave his time generously to national work, most notably serving as the president of the Speech Communication Association (now National Communication Association) in 1982-83. In 1999, Ken planned the conference that formulated NCA's Credo for Ethical Communication, which he viewed as his most enduring contribution to the field. Before his passing, Andersen established the Building the Future for Communication Students Scholarship fund, the announcement of which was featured in last year's department newsletter. "We have our own life story," he said, "but all of us owe a debt to the teachers, to the people who made it possible...it's a way of paying debt that we don't really have on paper, but we do have in reality." Ken hoped that by establishing the Building the Future fund, others would be inspired to contribute to it, thus making it possible for many more students to benefit from its support in the years to come. ♦



*Tom Costello*

## Tom Costello

Tom Costello passed away suddenly in April 2020. Tom taught decades of University of Illinois students, and was a deeply influential figure in the lives of many undergraduate majors. Tom joined what was then called the Speech Communication department in 1972 and worked at the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District for nearly 40 years. With his wife Rose,

Tom was a visible and active citizen of the Champaign-Urbana community. Costello was recognized for his teaching with awards from both the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences and the campus. His teaching was frequently cited as inspirational by students, and many contributed their thoughts to an online memorial page the department set up in his honor. "His lessons were not just for the classroom," wrote one alum, "[they] were fundamental building blocks for life. I can tell you that over 10 years later, I still use his direction both professionally and personally on a daily basis." Another said that Costello's defining characteristic was that "he made sure to go as above and beyond as possible for his students." Students and alumni frequently mentioned his caring, warm demeanor. One student added that "my mother was also a student of Tom's...he was a great guy and a true leader in today's world." One local resident remembered a particular instance of Costello's kind deeds: "I remember when there was storm damage in North Champaign, north of I-74, Tom was up there with an MTD bus keeping people warm after their houses were damaged. Tom was the kind of person who would chip in any way he could." In February 2020, Rose and Tom Costello were elected to the Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette's Seventy Over 70, a distinction honoring "those who have demonstrated a lively curiosity and willingness to learn something new, an aptitude for personal and professional growth, and a commitment to bettering others." While many across Champaign-Urbana remember Tom for how he made life better for everyone in the community, we in the department remember him best as the funny, engaging, supportive, and often wonderfully irreverent colleague who devoted himself to teaching students not only how to be good communicators, but also good people. ♦

# I ILLINOIS

## Communication

### COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

3001 Lincoln Hall  
702 S. Wright St.  
Urbana, IL 61801

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit #75  
Champaign, IL

## Invest in the Future of the Department of Communication

You can make a gift to the department online, by phone, or by connecting with our advancement officer, **Joseph Baldwin**, by calling (217) 300-5967 or emailing him at [jbbaldw2@illinois.edu](mailto:jbbaldw2@illinois.edu).



Ensure continued excellence in teaching, research, and public engagement by supporting the Department of Communication with a gift!

### You can designate your gift to:

- Building the Future for Communication Students Scholarship Fund
- Communication Annual Fund, which supports an array of activities
- Robert L. Husband Leadership in Communication Fund
- Joseph Wenzel Undergraduate Support Fund
- Thomas Conley History of Rhetoric Award
- Ruth Anne Clark Student Scholar Award Fund
- Dale Brashers Memorial Fund

### You can also boost your gift:

See if your company is listed as one that has a matching gift program (some even double or triple your gift).

### Give Online

Visit our website at [communication.illinois.edu](http://communication.illinois.edu) and click on the **Give!** button.

## Got Internships?

Communication students are eager for real-world experience. We offer our students course credit for interning with organizations that put them to work in a supervised learning setting. Employers who partner with us report that they benefit from our students' communication skills and gain from evaluating the on-the-job performance of potential employees. Communication interns are eager to apply what they have learned to the work world. If you have internships to offer or would like more information, please contact Kate Ditewig-Morris via email: [comm-internships@illinois.edu](mailto:comm-internships@illinois.edu). ♦