



# VilasVoice

Fall 2020 | For Alumni and Friends of the Department of Communication Arts



Students experiment with new GH5 digital video cameras and vintage lenses from 16mm cameras used in the 1950s.



INSIDE  
VILAS

2 Resilience and  
Adaptation

4 Giving  
Matters

6 Department  
News

7 Dean's  
Message



# VilasVoice

is the alumni newsletter of the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, 821 University Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

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## Chair's Voice

### Resilience and Adaptation



Communication Arts faculty are known for their dedication and innovation in the classroom, but COVID-19 pushed us to a whole new level of flexibility. In March 2020, we used our spring break to transform our traditional courses into online courses. Over the summer, we expanded our online teaching skills by participating in “boot camps”—online, of course!—organized by the College of Letters & Science. We recorded our lectures in mini studios created by the excellent staff in the Instructional Media Center. We incorporated film and television clips into our lectures, added voiceover to our PowerPoint presentations, and refined techniques for fostering online discussion. This fall, we are teaching a mixture of in-person and online courses and things are going smoothly. Our energetic faculty, staff, and teaching assistants are committed to excellence in teaching, regardless of format.

In 2018, the Department of Communication Arts created a Diversity & Equity Committee. We are proud of the progress we have made in creating inclusive classrooms and expanding diversity among our faculty, staff, and students. Much remains to be done, however. The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis last summer was a painful reminder that racial justice remains elusive in our nation. We are amplifying our efforts to hire faculty of color, improve

instructors' skills in inclusive pedagogy, strengthen faculty communication about diversity, and offer effective mentoring to our majors and graduate students. The Schweitzer Family Scholarship, designed to support our majors from underrepresented communities, is particularly welcome at this time.

Communication Arts majors are facing an uncertain economy and an ongoing pandemic. Traditional internships, so crucial these days for launching a career, might not happen in summer 2021, and so we are working with Communication Arts Partners (CAPS), our alumni board, to create online internships. CAPS recently established an audacious goal to create fifty funded internships for the summer of 2021. Could you introduce a Comm Arts major to your virtual workplace? Could you contribute funds to support those students who cannot afford to have an unpaid internship? Few gestures would have a greater impact on the life of a young person transitioning from college to career. Thank you for considering it.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kelley Conway'.

Kelley Conway, Chair  
Communication Arts Partners Professor  
Department of Communication Arts

## Graduate Student Profile

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### Caelyn Randall



Besides coaching high school soccer, graduate student Caelyn Randall (they/them) had no teaching experience upon arriving at UW–Madison, but quickly fell in love with the craft. Randall comes to the classroom with the belief that every student is capable of learning. They consider their job not just to provide content, but to create conditions where learning can flourish. In spring 2019, Randall taught Rhetoric and Power Online, a class which included conversations around sexual assault and the

#MeToo movement. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, they wanted to create an environment where students felt comfortable sharing their perspectives, while providing a sense of security and protection.

Randall hit upon a creative solution—an online platform allowing real-time Q&A. With 60 students spread across a large lecture hall, Randall would pause every 10 minutes with a call for questions, posed anonymously via laptop or smart phone. Randall feels the approach

worked well, and it received positive feedback in course evaluations. The solution is imperfect, as not every student has a laptop or smartphone, but it allowed an openness of conversation that might not have been possible otherwise.

This approach highlights Randall’s goal to “creatively eliminate structural barriers to learning, and to create the best conditions for learning to happen.” Randall’s teaching approach is reflected in their dissertation research, which looks at the Madison Metropolitan School District to consider how disability is racialized; that is, how perceptions of race may influence a student’s diagnosis, and what learning environment they are provided. For example, the diagnosis of autism, as opposed to emotional behavior disability, can affect whether a student is isolated from others.

Randall’s concern for inclusiveness has earned them several awards, including the 2019 Forward in Access Award from the McBurney Disability Resource Center, and the 2017 Campus-Wide Early Excellence in Teaching Award.

## Faculty Update

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### Two New Film Faculty Join Us This Fall



**Darshana Mini** earned a PhD in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Southern California. Mini’s work focuses on gender and sexuality in film, transnational media, and refugees’ use of media to amplify their voices and influence perceptions of their lives. Her current book project *Rated A: Soft-Porn*

*Cinema and Mediations of Desire in India* examines the genre of soft-porn in India and how it impacts public discourse on sexuality, obscenity, sex work, and sex education.

**Aaron Greer** earned his MFA from Temple University and comes to us from Loyola University Chicago, where he led the Film and Digital Media program for six years. Greer is celebrated for his features *Gettin’ Grown* and *Service to Man*, but he has recently ventured into a new medium. His narrative podcast series “Big Sandy” was recently selected for the Independent Film Project’s Forum,



helping him connect with large media companies like Netflix and Amazon Features. Greer notes that the first work of film analysis he read was by (Emeritus Professor) David Bordwell and (Honorary Fellow) Kristin Thompson, and is excited by the support for his work among faculty and staff.

## Kahl Family creates Media Production Professorship



Thanks to the generosity of Kim and Kelly Kahl (BA'89), we are celebrating the creation of the Kahl Family Media Production Professorship. Kim Kahl, a publicist, and Kelly Kahl, president of CBS Entertainment, have long supported UW–Madison through their participation in alumni events and an internship program for Communication Arts majors at CBS. Kelly Kahl is a member of CAPS (Communication Arts Partners), the alumni board of the Department of Communication Arts, and winner of the 2017 UW–Madison Distinguished Alumni Award.

Kelly Kahl came to UW–Madison to study engineering, but switched to Communication Arts during his sophomore year. “I loved the form of television and seeing how it could push the envelope.” Even as a kid, watching *Hill Street Blues* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, Kahl enjoyed thinking about the

strategies involved in television scheduling. With the support of his parents—a public school teacher of industrial arts and a homemaker—and the critical thinking skills he absorbed from faculty such as Joanne Cantor and Tino Balio, he packed up his Ford Escort in 1990 and headed to Los Angeles. Kahl completed an MA in Communication Management at USC’s Annenberg School and then secured a research internship at Lorimar Television. By the mid-1990s he had his “dream job,” VP of Scheduling at CBS. Two decades later, still with CBS, he is a leading executive in television. Kahl has also worked in film, serving as Executive Producer on three films directed by fellow Badger Sean Hanish (BA '90): *Return to Zero* (2014), *Sister Cities* (2016), and *Saint Judy* (2019).

The inaugural Kahl Family Professor in Media Production is Professor Eric Hoyt, a media historian and pioneer in Digital Humanities. Hoyt authored *Hollywood Vault: Film Libraries before Home Video* (2014), and co-edited *Hollywood and the Law* (2015) and *The Arclight Guidebook to Media History and the Digital Humanities* (2016). Hoyt is also the Director of the Media History Digital Library (MHDL), which has digitized more than 2.5 million pages of out-of-copyright film and broadcasting periodicals for broad public access. He also designed and produced the MHDL’s search and visualization platform, Lantern.

With Communication Arts Professor Jeremy Morris, Hoyt co-created another Digital Humanities project, PodcastRE, a digital archive and analytics platform for podcasts supported by a UW2020 grant and a NEH Digital Humanities Advancement grant.

Professor Hoyt’s students appreciate his innovative media production courses, including CA 155 (Introduction to Digital Media Production) and CA 468 (Producing for Internet TV and Video), which allow students to think entrepreneurially about how they can forge careers in the new media landscape. “As a teacher of production courses, my goal is always to help students share their voices with an audience using the tools of cinema and media,” Hoyt said. “I also take my duty very seriously to help support students as they make the transition into careers. I am deeply grateful to the Kahl family for their generosity and for being such role models in giving back and creating opportunities for our students.” The Kahl Professorship will support Hoyt’s innovation in research and teaching.

“Kim and I are extremely proud to sponsor this professorship and the Kahl family is honored to be associated with it,” said Kelly Kahl. “We’re also delighted that Professor Hoyt is the first recipient. His groundbreaking research, instruction, and leadership are helping propel UW and the Department of Communication Arts to the forefront of film and media studies and digital media production. We would like to offer special thanks to John and Tashia Morgridge, whose incredibly generous matching fund allowed us to help endow this professorship.”

## Announcing the Schweitzer Family Scholarship



Inspired by recent political events and the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement, Adam Schweitzer ('99), Stephanie Schweitzer, and their children Alexis and Jake, created the Schweitzer Family Scholarship. The scholarship will recognize outstanding undergraduate achievement among those living or working in diverse or socio-economically disadvantaged environments. In his position as Managing Director of Talent and Branding at ICM, Adam Schweitzer has thought deeply about Hollywood and diversity. "My company has worked to expand diversity, but we can do more." Acknowledging that the creation of diversity in media requires intervention on a number of fronts, he and his family want to "attract and support a diverse group of majors in the Department of Communication Arts, and then support them as they start their careers."

While a Comm Arts major, Schweitzer ruefully came to the conclusion that he would never be a director or an actor, but "the courses I took on film theory and production helped me think about film as an art form." Schweitzer worked as an

unpaid intern at Nickelodeon for two summers while in college and then found work at a small film production company upon graduation. There, he began to understand that in order to combine his passion for movies with his skill set of connecting people and launching projects, he needed to become an agent.

His advice to college students: "Start to understand the things you are good at. Passion is great but can get in the way and muddy your vision. Think about the skill set you possess. That skill set, combined with hard work, can make you successful at many things." Thanks to a friend of a friend, he landed an interview at ICM as an agent's assistant, got the job, and started learning the business. Today, he represents an impressive group of actors, including Christoph Waltz, Uma Thurman, Katie Holmes, and Patrick Stewart.

Schweitzer's clairvoyance is legendary. In a defining moment of his career, he signed Christoph Waltz, who would go on to play a key role in *Inglorious Basterds*. Waltz, an Austrian actor, was unknown in the U.S., but Schweitzer had read Tarantino's script and felt confident that whomever was cast in the role would be Oscar material. Schweitzer's foresight paid off. Waltz's memorable performance won an Oscar for best supporting roles in both *Inglorious Basterds* and *Django Unchained*.

Adam's wife, Stephanie, is an interior designer and passionate consumer of literary and genre fiction. She shares Adam's love of film and keeps him in the loop on emerging literary talent. Adam and Stephanie are working together to engage their children in philanthropy.

"We want our kids to understand the importance of giving back and creating opportunities for others. They're starting to become more aware of the world around them and, since UW is a part of our family life, this gift makes perfect sense for our family."

## Betty & Vance Kepley Research Award Supports Communication Arts PhD Candidates



Betty and Vance Kepley's connection to UW-Madison dates from the 1970s when they moved to Madison to attend graduate school. Betty earned an MBA in the School of Business and Vance received his PhD from Communication Arts. Vance then went on to teach in the department for 36 years until his retirement in 2017. About 20 years ago, the Kepleys learned that the department's annual teaching award for graduate teaching assistants came with a commendation but not an annual monetary award since the prize was not endowed, so they decided to fund the TA award. Recently they took note of the increasing costs Comm Arts graduate students incur for dissertation research—expenses like translation, archive travel, and data acquisition. Last year they added an annual research award to assist with dissertation expenses. This award will make a profound difference in the lives of our graduate students. Thank you, Betty and Vance.

*Continued on page 6.*

## Congratulations to the Recipients of the 2019–2020 Kepley Award



Fangjing Tu studies why people accept and share misinformation and proposes methods to encourage people to fact check online information. Tu has run a study that examines the contextual and psychological cues that people use when engaging with social media.



Hamidreza Nassiri studies the effect that widespread, inexpensive digital technologies have on Iranian and global cinema, and the effect that institutions of power (states, corporations, studios) have on independent filmmakers' access to markets and audiences.

## Communication Arts Partners (CAPS)



As President, CEO and co-founder of Customer Care Measurement & Consulting, Scott M. Broetzmann (BA'82, MA'18) helps companies translate the voice of customer survey data into effective, actionable business plans. He traces his expertise directly back to his Comm Arts experience.

“When you're sitting in a small windowless room in Vilas as an undergraduate and learning about the theory and practice of small group discussion, non-verbal communication or how to do factor analysis, it's difficult to connect the dots to the practical benefit of the material. But when you go out into the real world, so many of these lessons become invaluable in driving meaningful change in organizations.

There's not a day that goes by when I don't have an opportunity to put the knowledge and skills acquired in Comm Arts to good use with our clients.”

In 2009, Broetzmann joined the Communication Arts Partners (CAPS) board, and in 2013 he became the first-ever CAPS Chair. His primary call to action was the challenge of revitalizing the CAPS board, which he took on with purpose and enthusiasm. Under his leadership, the CAPS board grew considerably and is among the most respected boards of visitors on campus. The Department of Communication Arts is deeply grateful for Scott Broetzmann's leadership.

After seven years as chair, Broetzmann remains a board member while Erik Hellum (CA'87) takes over

the role of chair.

Hellum says that studying Comm Arts helped him learn to write, inspired his love of learning, and laid the groundwork for a lifelong career in radio. He has worked in sales and management, and is currently COO/Local Media for Townsquare Media, the third-largest owner of radio stations in the U.S. Hellum serves on several nonprofit boards, but says CAPS is his favorite, due to the energy and enthusiasm of its members. Of Broetzmann, he says, “Scott did an incredible job, and we'll be continuing his work.” Hellum's priorities include enhancing engagement with alumni, helping students find internships, and expanding fundraising efforts on behalf of Communication Arts.

## From the Dean's Desk

### Fall 2020 Dean's Message

PAULIUS MUSTEKIS



In June, I was honored to assume the role of Dean of the College of Letters & Science, during one of the most challenging times in my 25 years at UW–Madison. As we wrestle with a global pandemic, social unrest, and economic turmoil all at once, I am reminded of what makes a Letters & Science education so timelessly important. The values we teach—compassion, intellectual curiosity, tolerance, and resilience—prepare our students not only to flourish in good times, but to learn, grow, and change during periods of challenge and hardship.

Hard times—particularly times of protest—often bring about change. That's overdue here at UW–Madison, where many of our students of color have, for far too long, experienced a UW that feels less welcoming to them.

We pride ourselves on the world-class experience offered to our students, preparing them for positions of leadership and illuminating their path forward. A key leadership priority for me is creating an inclusive environment where all students can feel at home and thrive.

Another priority is research. We are an “R1” (preeminent) research institution, and much of this ground-breaking work happens right here in L&S. I intend to support and elevate research opportunities for faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates. The knowledge that we take for granted today is based on curiosity-driven scholarship and creativity that started decades ago. Now, more than ever, we need to feed that intellectual flame. We need those big-picture thinkers to help us solve complex problems and expand the horizons of what we know.

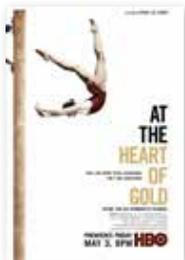
By the time you read this, if all goes as planned, the fall semester will be well underway, with a mix of remote learning and in-person courses, as well as comprehensive protocols for keeping everyone safe. The year ahead will not be easy, but we will not lose heart. We will dig in—because that's what Badgers do.

Thank you for all you do to support L&S. It means the world to us.

*On, Wisconsin!*

Eric M. Wilcots  
Dean, College of Letters & Science  
MaryC. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy

## In Brief

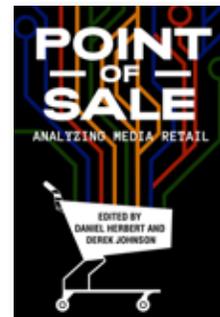


Congratulations to Erin Lee Carr (BA'10) for winning a TV Academy Award for her documentary *At the Heart of Gold: Inside the USA Gymnastics Scandal*. While at UW–Madison, Carr majored in Communication Arts and studied screenwriting and independent cinema with Professor J.J. Murphy. Carr is celebrated for her incisive documentaries for HBO and Netflix and for her 2019 memoir about her relationship with her father, journalist David Carr, *All That You Leave Behind*.

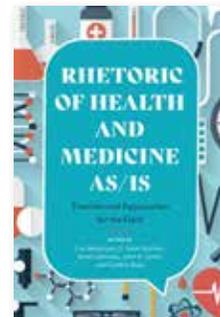
## Professors' Voices



**Derek Johnson**  
*Transgenerational Media Industries*



**Derek Johnson**  
*Point of Sale*  
Edited with Daniel Herbert



**Jenell Johnson**  
*Rhetoric of Health and Medicine AS/IS*  
Edited with Lisa Melonçon, S. Scott Graham, John A. Lynch, and Cynthia Ryan



**Catalina Toma**  
*Human Communication Research*, Associate Editor



**Lyn Van Swol**  
*Group Dynamics*, Associate Editor



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## How do we regulate our emotions through social media?

*Recent research by Professor Toma provides insight*

Regular users of social media recognize their own positivity bias, that is, the tendency to favor sharing of positive life events over negative ones. One surprising finding from recent research by Professor Catalina Toma is that even while we recognize our own tendency to accentuate the positives and downplay the negatives, we forget that others, whether old high school friends or public figures, do the same.

This was among several findings in recent research from Professor Toma, who focuses on how we use modern communications technology (including social media, texting, online dating) to regulate our emotions. Others include:

- While sharing positive events on social media can make the events more memorable and boost positive emotions, many prefer sharing positive events one-on-one in order to avoid being perceived as a braggart
- Sharing negative events can actually make negative feelings worse
- Positive events were likely to generate “likes,” or other one-click reactions, while negative ones tend to elicit more written responses

After a year during which many people worldwide were stuck indoors and mostly limited to digital communications, Professor Toma’s research is especially timely.

