



College of Letters & Science
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



VilasVoice

Fall 2021 | For Alumni and Friends of the Department of Communication Arts

Helping others through the power of media

Decades of humanitarian work
culminate in Nobel Peace Prize for
Jonathan Dumont '84

Page 3



INSIDE
VILAS

2 Creating Community
through Diversity

4 Faculty
Research

5 CAPS in the
News

6 Student
Spotlight

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.

Email
info@commarts.wisc.edu

Website
commarts.wisc.edu

Department Chair
Professor Kelley Conway

Newsletter Editor
Peter Sengstock

Feature Writer
Mike King

Donor Contact
Marit Barkve
UW Foundation
608-308-5341
marit.barkve@supportuw.org

Online Giving
commarts.wisc.edu/giving

Design
Danielle Lawry
University Marketing

Production Editor
Kelly O'Loughlin (BA '99)
University Marketing

This newsletter was printed through gift funds administered by the UW Foundation. © 2021 Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System

The University of Wisconsin is an equal-opportunity and affirmative-action educator and employer. We promote excellence through diversity in all programs.

Front page banner photos: iStock Photo

Chair's Voice

Creating Community through Diversity



MICHAEL TREVIS

A return to in-person instruction and high vaccination rates on campus lifted our spirits in September 2021, yet the persistence of the pandemic concerns us all. I am deeply grateful for my colleagues' commitment to public health and for their efforts to maintain a high-quality curriculum at a difficult moment.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion in the Department of Communication Arts continues. In 2018, we created a Diversity & Equity Committee to explore the department's climate. We gathered information about the extent to which people feel welcome in the department; we learned that we can do more to create a diverse and welcoming environment for all. We believe that

diversity of race, religion, national origin, sexual identity, gender identity, age, and parental status strengthens our community. The D&E Committee meets once a month to develop concrete strategies to improve the department's climate while also serving as a point of contact for those with relevant questions or concerns. We gather and communicate information about issues related to diversity and equity on a regular basis and provide education and training for faculty, teaching assistants, and staff. We are proud of our recent achievements on this front but are determined to keep making progress.

Many alumni ask me, "How can I help?" We are deeply grateful for alumni contributions to the Annual Campaign, Day of the Badger, and Fill the Hill. Your gifts fund internships and scholarships, support research, and improve our media center. Your generosity means the world to us. Thank you. We welcome the thoughts, advice, and insight of alumni during this critical time in higher education.

Warmest regards,

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



BEN SEGEL

Our 2021 cohort of graduate students, enjoying some sun at our fall reception.

Cheryl (Sze Ying) Shea, Shreya Singh, Sarah Mae Fleming, Brooke Hubsch (Stanley), Jacob Valov, Kendra Winchester, Ashton Leach, Nathan Workman

Alumni Profile

Helping others through the power of media

As the world's largest humanitarian agency, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) delivers essential food and medicine to conflict areas across the globe. In charge of this critical mission is Emmy-award winning journalist and UW graduate Jonathan Dumont (BA '84), who serves as WFP's Head of Television Communications. Since 2003, Dumont has overseen the organization's video content, utilizing a diverse skill set that can find him reporting from a war zone one week and collaborating on globally distributed PSAs with Hollywood icons such as Penélope Cruz and Sean Penn the next.

Dumont first developed the skills he still draws on today in his undergraduate studies in communication arts. Under the tutelage of professors, including David Bordwell and JJ Murphy, Dumont came to understand how the language of moving images works and gained the practical techniques necessary to communicate stories to an audience. This combination of technical know-how, broad vision, and can-do drive have given Dumont the flexibility to take on a vast array of projects, all united by a strong sense of moral purpose and urgency.

Dumont's decades of humanitarian journalism—stretching from an internship at WHA-TV, to work for the BBC, CNN, and ABC, to his current position at the UN—reached a culmination in 2020 when he and his team at the WFP won the Nobel Peace Prize. Reflecting on the values that have long informed his work, Dumont cites the crucial role of empathy when shining a light on those in need, saying, "Empathy is critical to any storytelling, but all the more so for humanitarians who need to bear witness and give voices to those who have none." He emphasizes, "When someone is experiencing hunger, they



Dumont on location in Egypt.



Dumont holds the Nobel Peace Prize from the World Food Programme in 2020.

want the world to know what is happening. It's a question of finding a way to get to that story and making their voices heard. That's the real challenge."

Dumont's work is a sterling example of how the power of moving images can be used to help others, taking the filmmaking principles learned at UW-Madison and transforming them into principled filmmaking. Technologies may have evolved many times over throughout his career—from editing on a

Steenbeck flatbed in Vilas Hall, to traveling with cumbersome Nagra field recording gear, to the HD drone photography of today—but the storytelling fundamentals they serve remain the same. This command over the medium, combined with the enduring virtues of journalistic rigor and humanitarian empathy, propel Dumont's work, which, in turn, allows all of us to witness and understand the issues of our planet with greater clarity and consciousness.

Faculty Research

Micro Media Industries

SARAH MORTON



Media outlets typically face constant pressure to grow by increasing audience size, engaging new followers, or generating additional products. But in Professor Lori Lopez's new book, *Micro Media Industries: Hmong American Media Innovation in the Diaspora*, she points out how important it is to consider the opposite phenomenon—media outlets that are satisfied to remain small. What she calls “micro media industries” are those that are limited in

their ability to scale up due to constraints on funding, staffing, or audiences.

“In my research I focus on ethnic media outlets in the Hmong American community, but micro media industries are all around us,” she says. “There are rural newspapers serving small towns in Wisconsin, influencers making social media content on all sorts of niche topics, musicians who just post their songs to Spotify, food bloggers writing about their own recipes. Those are all important forms of micro media.”

A scholar of Asian American media, Lopez spent the last nine years investigating Hmong American media industries. Through fieldwork and interviews with more than 100 Hmong Americans in cities like St. Paul, Appleton, and Fresno, she found a thriving world of media professionals who had little interest in expansion. In fact, their small size meant they could be agile in adapting to changing technologies and resilient in the face of challenges.

“I’m not saying it’s easy to run a micro media outlet. These entrepreneurs are doing so much work and they could decide tomorrow that they just want to shut the whole thing down,” says Lopez. “But they’re also tenacious and ambitious, and they’re doing this because they have something to say. So I’m pretty sure we will be seeing way more of these kinds of outlets in the future.”

From the Archives

The Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research (WCFTR) continues to build its collections and enhance its outreach efforts, maintaining its reputation as one of the world’s major archives of materials relating to the entertainment industry and media arts. “Our big goals this year were to diversify our collections and expand public access to them,” said WCFTR Director Eric Hoyt.

One project from the past year that brought together the goals of greater diversity and public access was the acquisition and digitization of the Hartford Smith Jr. collection, which contains the raw and edited sound recordings used in the landmark 1968 educational radio series *Seeds of Discontent*. “Among the hundreds of 1950s and 1960s educational radio programs, *Seeds of Discontent* stands as an unusual example of a Black host and producer discussing topics that involve underrepresented groups and their experiences,” said Matt St. John, a PhD student in film and the WCFTR’s project assistant. Thanks to generous support from Communication Arts Partners (CAPS) member Stephen P. Jarchow and permission from the Smith family, all recordings and associated materials will be digitized for broad public use.

Digitizing efforts continue with the WCFTR’s collection of nearly 4,000 motion picture pressbooks. “Pressbooks were sent to theater managers by film distributors to help theaters build interest in and audiences for a film,” explained WCFTR Assis-



tant Director Mary Huelsbeck. They are visually stunning and historically significant primary sources. Thanks to the generous support of UW alumni Matthew and Natalie Bernstein, these



materials will also be freely available for public and research use.

Finally, the WCFTR team took on the daunting task of cataloging over 50 pallets of 35mm film from the Ziv Television and United Artists collections before transferring them to a climate-controlled preservation facility. “It’s exciting to finally be cataloging and transferring these films to preservation storage after decades on the shelves in a warehouse,” said WCFTR Head Film Archivist Amanda Smith. “At the State Archive Preservation Facility, the film will be kept at ideal temperature and humidity levels to prevent deterioration, ensuring it will be available to WCFTR researchers for as long as possible.”

WCFTR staff cataloging thousands of film cans. Eric Hoyt, Matt St. John, Amanda Smith, Pauline Lampert

CAPS in the News

“Under the Scarf” takes home Emmy

“Under the Scarf” features Mehrin (right) and the challenges she faces trying to navigate high school as a young immigrant.

Stephen Jarchow won a Daytime Emmy Award in 2021 for his documentary series *Girls’ Voices Now*. The award-winning episode, “Under the Scarf,” won in the “Outstanding Short Form Children’s Program” category. *Girls’ Voices Now* explores the challenges faced by young women of color in Los Angeles and helps young women learn to tell their own stories. “We provided the young women with cameras and other resources to present and direct their stories. We then shape their work to create the series,” Jarchow reported. The show is on Here TV, the cable and streaming service serving the LGBTQ community and other underserved audiences. Jarchow, who received his BBA, MS, and JD all with Honors from UW–Madison, has been involved in the production and/or distribution of more than 250 films and 22 television series. He is currently at work on a second season of *Girls’ Voices Now*.



Stay Prayed Up



George and Pamela Hamel hosted CommArts faculty and students at the debut of *Stay Prayed Up* in Telluride, CO

George and Pamela Hamel are the executive producers of *Stay Prayed Up* (2021), a documentary portrait of legendary gospel singers Lena Mae Perry and the Branchettes. The Hamels became aware of Perry through their friendship with Phil Cook, a musician and Wisconsin native. Pamela Hamel explained, “The original intent of the film was a music video of the Branchettes in concert at Long Branch Church in Newton Grove, North Carolina. As it happens with many things, the project took on its own life. *Stay Prayed Up* tells an extraordinary story of faith and music. What an honor to be part of this telling.” The film, directed by D.L. Anderson and Matthew Durning, premiered at the 2021 Telluride Film Festival.

Graduate Student Achievements

Brooke Stanley is a 2021 recipient of a Top Paper Award from the National Communication Association's (NCA) Lambda Pi Eta student organization. Stanley received the award for the essay "One Cel, Two Cel, Blackcel, Truecel: Language Creation in the Incel Community." Stanley's research focuses on the ways in which polarized groups form and strengthen identity, communicate with the other, and resolve disagreements.



Kai Prins is the inaugural winner of the Lloyd Bitzer Essay Award for the essay "I've Always Posted about Politics': The Visceral Convergence of Wellness Influencers and QAnon Conspiracy Theories in the Public Sphere." A generous gift from a former student of Professor Emeritus Lloyd Bitzer made possible the award, which recognizes excellence in rhetorical analysis and/or theory by a graduate student in Rhetoric, Politics, & Culture.



Dominique Salas conducted archival research at the Wisconsin Historical Society, looking into the papers of Benjamin Stucki, the headmaster of an Indigenous boarding school in Wisconsin. The article, "Decolonizing Exigency: Settler Exigencies in the Wisconsin Winnebago Mission Home," will be published in volume 52.2 of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*.



Joe Yizhou Xu has been conducting fieldwork on the tech industry in China since the onset of the pandemic. Despite hardships, he gained many insights into the technologies used to monitor people and workers during a crisis, which in turn enriched his dissertation project immeasurably.



Hamidreza Nassiri served as the director of programming for the 2020 Midwest Video Poetry Fest, a film festival dedicated to the intersection of film and poetry. The first of its kind in the Midwest, the festival received 1600+ submissions from 30+ countries. It screened 36 films over two days.



Student Spotlight

From Zimbabwe to Pasadena via Madison



In the late 1980s you would have found Sean Hanish (CA '89) on the second floor of Vilas Hall in the Communication Arts Film Lab processing 16mm film as a student. After directing three acclaimed feature films and many commercials, Hanish planned to return to Vilas Hall in the summer of 2021 to teach a new course, "Directing the Actor." The global pandemic foiled the plan for a return to Madison, and Hanish taught the course remotely from Pasadena, California.

Teckler Muvuti
in her video "609
Guest Gratitude"

While teaching a hands-on acting course remotely offered many challenges, it also created new possibilities. For one, students were no longer required to be in Madison to participate. Teckler Muvuti is among those who took advantage of the new opportunity, joining the class from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Muvuti is a civil engineering major who earned her Digital Cinema Production Certificate with "Directing the Actor," her fourth filmmaking course.

In the online format, Hanish turned to his many connections in Hollywood to help bring real-world experiences to class. Alfred Molina, Aimee Garcia, and Jess Weixler are among the distinguished actors and directors to make Zoom visits to class. To Muvuti, who was participating seven hours ahead in real time, the guests were a terrific resource. "It has opened up a whole new world that I wasn't aware of. You get to see people in character, but you don't really understand the preparation and energy that goes on behind the scenes. It really has been a great opportunity for me." Muvuti has a recommendation for those in the industry who get approached to be a guest in a communication arts class: "In future semesters, please say yes to student requests to have a chat with students—it goes a long way."

Hanish was impressed with the scenes that Muvuti directed for class. "She took full advantage of being in her hometown, she cast terrifically and really used the techniques that were the foundation of the course. She has a gift for it."

From the Dean's Desk

Fall 2021 Dean's Message

PAULIUS MUSTEIKIS



This fall marks a return to in-person classes and events, and it is exciting to be back on campus with students and colleagues! Our classrooms are full, our labs are humming, and the frisbees are flying again on Bascom Hill. The university's COVID-19 protocols are continually adjusted based on the shifting state of the virus. With safe behavior and a campus vaccination rate of more than 90 percent, I am hopeful that we will successfully navigate the fall and winter.

There is much good news to share. UW–Madison welcomed our largest-ever freshman class, with more than 8,400 new students arriving in early September. In October, we celebrated the conclusion of the wildly successful All Ways Forward campaign, which raised \$4 billion for UW–Madison, and \$652 million for the College of Letters & Science. Annual giving, too, is on track this year, mirroring strong pre-COVID giving trends. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to alumni whose unwavering support through the hardest of times enabled us to emerge stronger and ready to meet future challenges.

We have great news on capital projects to share. The Wisconsin legislature has approved funding for a

new academic building for the College of Letters & Science. Departments and classes currently housed in the deteriorating Humanities Building will be relocated to a modern, interactive, and world-class space that will transform the student learning experience.

A new building for our School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences is also underway, paving the way for this powerhouse new unit to meet a global need for students trained in computational thinking, big data, AI, and related fields.

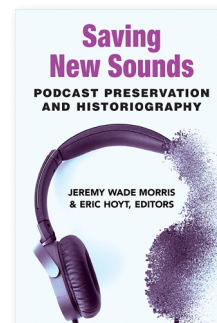
Finally—our highly anticipated new Chemistry Building should open in 2022, and the impact on our STEM programs will be profound.

It feels great to look forward to so much. As always, a heartfelt thank you for all you do to support L&S. It means the world to us.

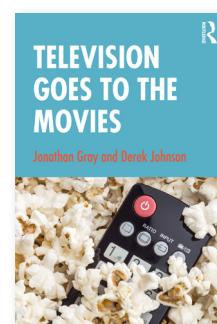
On, Wisconsin!

Eric M. Wilcots, Dean of the College of Letters & Science
Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy

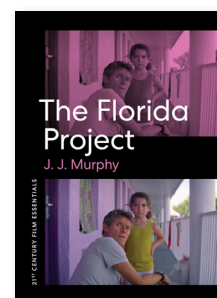
Professors' Voices



Editors **Jeremy Morris and Eric Hoyt**
Saving New Sounds



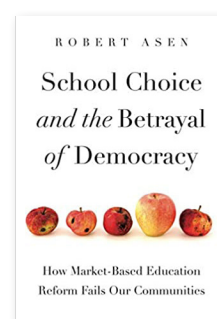
Jonathan Gray and Derek Johnson
Television Goes to the Movies



JJ Murphy
The Florida Project



Jonathan Gray
Dislike-Minded



Robert Asen
School Choice and the Betrayal of Democracy



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Department of Communication Arts
University of Wisconsin-Madison
821 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
UMS

STAY CONNECTED!



@uwcommarts

We want to hear from you!

Send us your update:
info@commarts.wisc.edu

Please update your contact information in the Alumni Directory by calling (888) WIS-ALUM (947-2586) or email your changes to AlumniChanges@uwalumni.com

Digitized pressbooks from the United Artists collection at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, with generous support from Matthew and Natalie Bernstein, Richard Koszarski, and the Mary Pickford Foundation. Freely available on the Media History Digital Library at mediahistoryproject.org/pressbooks.

