



Master's Program in Communication

Graduate Faculty Profiles

[Updated July 2023]

Dr. John Baldwin



Dr. John Baldwin earned his Ph.D. from Arizona State University and joined Illinois State in 1994. Having served on over 200 graduate student thesis committees, Dr. Baldwin appreciates the hard work and dedication of students. Dr. Baldwin has led theses on many aspects of identity and prejudice, as well as intercultural communication (including areas such as cultural adjustment, intercultural competence, rhetoric, and verbal and nonverbal communication). His most recent research is on the possible notion of "cultural communication styles" and on different identities (race, nationality, LGBTQ+, sex/gender) in Brazilian popular music. He has written on different areas of intercultural communication (history of the field, ethics, relationships, prejudice/intolerance, the definition of culture). He is most proud of a resource book he edited and published with colleagues where they content analyzed over 300 definitions of culture, with essays on "culture" contributed by authors from six different disciplines.

Dr. Joseph Blaney



Dr. Joseph Blaney worked extensively in media before earning his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri and entering academe. His research explores how organizations and persons repair their reputations when they face threats. He has a particular interest in studying sporting and religious organizations. Dr. Blaney believes that communication is a goal-oriented activity and the maintenance of one's reputation is one of the primary goals. If people don't have their reputations intact, there's so many things they won't be able to achieve. Dr. Blaney has authored/edited eight scholarly books and dozens of articles in journals such as *Communication Law Review*, *Journal of Communication and Religion*, *Public Relations Review*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *Journal of Radio and Audio Media*, *Communication Quarterly*, *Communication Studies*, and *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*. He also serves on the editorial boards of some of the discipline's top journals.

Dr. Lauren Bratslavsky



Dr. Lauren Bratslavsky researches broadcast history, media literacy, television studies, political economy of communication, media ecology, and archiving. Dr. Bratslavsky earned her Ph.D. from the University of Oregon and her dissertation represented her media-focused research interests, assessing the history of television archiving. She is currently a research associate with the Library of Congress's Radio Preservation Task Force. Dr. Bratslavsky researches and teaches about representations of class and gender in media. Her professional background includes public access television, community media, and non-profit communication work.

Dr. Caleb Carr



Dr. Caleb Carr's research focus is on computer-mediated communication and organizational communication. He teaches courses related to communication, media history and effects, telecommunication, and management. Dr. Carr has published research on mediated intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, including the development, maintenance, and perception of identity online. He has taught both on-ground and online courses in many subject areas, including communication, media history and effects, telecommunication, and management. Dr. Carr obtained his Ph.D. from Michigan State University.

Dr. Phil Chidester



Before entering into academia, Dr. Phil Chidester worked as a reporter and staff writer at a daily regional newspaper and as a lecturer at Southern Utah University. Dr. Chidester obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Kansas. A media scholar, Dr. Chidester's research areas encompass individual and social identity, in relation to race and class, as they are created and reinforced by media artifacts. Additionally, he is actively engaged in research on song as a communication system, on contemporary myth and on the formation of modern publics through a shared fandom of various media texts.

Dr. Byron Craig



Dr. Byron Craig's research is centered around race, trauma, rhetoric, and media. A Fellow with the American Democracy Project, Dr. Craig is collaborating with several professors on an Empathy Project. Dr. Craig is specifically interested in the rhetoric of trauma and sites (such as The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, and Africa Town in Mobile, Alabama) and how those sites reflect and navigate racial trauma in a contemporary public culture. Currently working on different projects related to race and racism, Dr. Craig is also co-editing a book about Ferguson, MO and its impact on race and media. Dr. Craig earned a Ph.D. from Indiana University in Rhetoric and Public Culture.

Dr. Mary Beth Deline



Dr. Mary Beth Deline studies information avoidance, how change campaigns are implemented in organizations and communities, and how resistance to these changes occurs. Her professional background has ranged from crisis communication to social marketing. At Illinois State she teaches courses in environmental and organizational communication, research methods, and public relations. Dr. Deline utilizes a range of methodologies for her work including qualitative interviews to surveys and content analyses. She obtained her Ph.D. from Cornell University.

Dr. Rebecca Hayes



Dr. Rebecca Hayes came into the communication discipline through her work in public relations after obtaining a bachelor's degree in environmental policy and behavior. Dr. Hayes then earned a master's degree in public relations and Ph.D. in Media and Information Studies from Michigan State University. She was attracted to the field professionally because she liked getting to interact with the public, be creative, and engage with technology in order to reach audiences. Dr. Hayes researches different topics related to public relations, particularly in ways social media affects audience engagement. While much of her research is in the public relations uses of social media, the research stream of which she is most proud is my (and co-authors') work around Liking and Reactions in social media. She realized in 2015, hanging out with some friends at a conference, that no one had explicated the "Like," which is ubiquitous across social platforms and quantified its uses and effects. This resulted in a research stream around "paralinguistic digital affordances" which is now a commonly used concept in communication technology research. Dr. Hayes enjoys mentoring students and hearing when students get job offers after graduating. She is the Interim Director of the Communication Graduate Program.

Dr. John Hooker



Dr. John Hooker became interested in communication while sportscasting on local radio in high school. This developed into an interest in the academic areas of communication during his undergraduate career. An alumnus of Illinois State's communication master's program, Dr. Hooker chiefly studies instructional communication and examines the relationship between teachers and students and the subsequent impact on the learning process in a traditional classroom, in a distance learning setting, or in out-of-class communication. Dr. Hooker is Co-Director of the Communication as Critical Inquiry (COM 110) program, and he is heavily involved in preparing new COM 110 instructors. His favorite part of his role in the

School of Communication is training new Graduate Teaching Assistants how to become teachers and watching them grow as educators. Dr. Hooker enjoys transforming graduate students into scholars. Outside of instructional communication, Dr. Hooker notes that many employers are seeking employees equipped with effective communication skills, but that is not always clear what that means. He attended a conference with business leaders about specific communication skills and wrote a journal article that helped explain what specific communication skills are desired and how they are applied after graduation. Dr. Hooker obtained his Ph.D. from Purdue University.

Dr. Megan Hopper



Originally wanting to embark on a career as a radio DJ, Dr. Megan Hopper became interested in print journalism through courses at Illinois State as an undergraduate. Dr. Hopper is an alumnus of Illinois State's communication master's program and she subsequently earned her Ph.D. from the University of Missouri. Dr. Hopper believes that it is rewarding seeing students get excited about both theoretical and practical applications of communication and how they work together. Dr. Hopper's research concerns different elements of media literacy, media effects, and journalism. She is particularly proud of her work in the area of media literacy education initiatives with the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on the "Sexualization of Popular Music." For Dr. Hopper, it is very important to research and shed light on the objectification and sexualization of women by all forms of media and provide individuals with the tools to combat the harmful effects associated with exposure to such content.

Dr. Stephen Hunt



Initially interested in the field of political science, Dr. Stephen Hunt's interest in communication grew as he joined Emporia State University's debate team. Offered the opportunity to pursue a master's degree in communication, Dr. Hunt coached the debate team and taught public speaking courses at the University of Northern Iowa, where he developed an interest in communication education. Dr. Hunt received his Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Dr. Hunt studies communication pedagogy, or how instructors teach communication, and instructional communication, which is communication used in classrooms of all disciplines. The unifying thread behind all of that is an interest in persuasion and how students and faculty use persuasion in the context of the classroom, and outside of the classroom, how they influence each other, how they resist the influence attempts of others, how they build credibility. Working with students is one of Dr. Hunt's favorite parts of his current role, which he finds a rewarding experience. He is also passionate about incorporating relevant instruction in the classroom, including the pedagogy of civic and political engagement that looks at the kinds of things people can do to help students become meaningful citizens in a democracy.

Dr. Lance Lippert



Dr. Lance Lippert is a Professor of Communication at Illinois State University. He received his Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale in organizational and health communication. His research interests include civic engagement and political learning pedagogy, humor use, workplace relationships, and health care relationships. He primarily teaches in the areas of organizational communication, health communication, leadership communication, and training & development. Lance is currently the program coordinator for Communication Studies in the School of Communication and works with the study abroad program through the Office of International Studies Program

Dr. John McHale



Dr. John McHale is an award-winning documentary film producer and director, in addition to the Vice Chair Elect for the Mass Media Division of the Central States Communication Association. Dr. McHale researches political communication and religious discourse and teaches media writing and presentation, documentary film, and social and political movement communication. Dr. McHale earned degrees at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and Columbia College. He earned his doctorate at the University of Missouri.

Dr. Kevin Meyer



Dr. Kevin Meyer's interest in communication began with his involvement in policy debate and a fascination with the power of speech to advance the common good and advocate for others. An alumnus of Illinois State's communication master's program, Dr. Meyer earned his Ph.D. from Ohio University. He primarily studies instructional communication and persuasion. Dr. Meyer recently collaborated with Dr. Hunt on a persuasion textbook and they are in the process of writing a theory textbook. Dr. Meyer particularly enjoys quantitative research utilizing experiments and/or surveys. The research that he is most passionate about conducting himself are projects that defend students or instructors from a critical perspective (e.g., studying student silence and participation grades). His favorite experiences working with graduate students often happen when teaching seminars or serving on committees. If it involves research, regardless of the topic, Dr. Meyer is into it. He believes it is rewarding to see our hard-working and talented students go on to doctoral studies and academic careers or do awesome things in the private sector.

Dr. Aimee Miller-Ott



Dr. Aimee Miller-Ott is a Professor of Communication and the Interim Director of the School of Communication. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, in Interpersonal Communication. She has received the Outstanding University Teaching Award, the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding College Researcher Award, and the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding College Teaching Award at ISU. Her research program centers on two primary themes: 1) the negotiation of cell phone communication in personal relationships and 2) the presentation and negotiation of identity in interpersonal and family relationships. She has published numerous articles on the role of cell phones in romantic, family, and platonic relationships and how these devices impact attentiveness and face needs in interactions. She also studies relationships (e.g., foster families, families with parents with Alzheimer's Disease, families who use surrogates, work spouses) that rely on their discourse (communication) to define, explain, and defend their relationships as legitimate. She teaches graduate seminars in family communication, the dark side of interpersonal communication, and technology in close relationships.

Dr. Stephen E. Rahko



Dr. Stephen E. Rahko earned his Ph.D. from Indiana University-Bloomington. As a scholar of rhetorical studies and cultural studies, his research orbits around two central problems of American public culture: the rhetoric of late-capitalism and the emerging rhetoric of America as "post-racial." His work is motivated by an urgency to theorize newer and stronger forms of democratic sociality as a means of responding to not only these challenges, but also a host of others facing the human condition in the new millennium. He was trained in an interdisciplinary graduate program that emphasized rhetorical criticism as critical cultural critique, and his interest in the intersection of late-capitalism and race brings him to the study of race and cultural citizenship, media representation, the politics of corporate personhood, visual rhetoric, the political aesthetics of communication, biopolitics, and social movements.

Dr. Fernando Severino



Dr. Fernando Severino is an Assistant Professor at the School of Communication at Illinois State University. His academic work combines insights from journalism studies and political communication theories, mainly focusing on how international and U.S.-based media represent minorities and the role of journalists in shaping the news media coverage in a digital world. Severino's Ph.D. dissertation (2020) proposed a new theoretical and methodological comparative model to analyze the factors influencing news coverage about immigration. He explored immigration news in Latin American countries experiencing drastic demographic changes caused by recent interregional immigration movements. His work contrasts the existing theory about immigration and media from the Global North to different realities, such as those in developing nations. Fernando has held different communication and journalism roles in Chile and the United States. His more recent position was as Marketing Communications Specialist at 3M headquarters in St. Paul. Before coming to the United States, Fernando was the International News Editor and News Anchor for CNN Chile. Prior to this position, he worked on an international documentary project about the fall of the Soviet Union. Also, he was the Communication Director for a Public Policy Center at the Alberto Hurtado University in Santiago. He has a Ph.D. in Mass Communication from the University of Minnesota and a Master of International and Public Affairs from Columbia University in New York.

Dr. Brent Simonds



Dr. Brent Simonds spent several years as a producer and director at local television stations before entering academia. Dr. Simonds earned his Ed.D. at Illinois State University in post-secondary education with an emphasis in arts technology. Dr. Simonds researches media ecology and visual communication in addition to digital filmmaking, including aspects of documentary production, training, and education. His most recent documentary, *Sweet Dreams Do Come True*, has been publicly exhibited at film and music festivals, and has won three awards.

Dr. Cheri Simonds



Co-Director of the Communication as Critical Inquiry (Com 110) program, Dr. Cheri Simonds is passionate about bringing effective communication strategies to the classroom. Dr. Simonds was originally drawn to communication at the invitation of a friend to join her high school speech team. After participating in tournaments and receiving a first place award for a Standard Orientation speech, Dr. Simonds fostered a lifelong passion for the discipline. Once she received her Ph.D. at the University of Oklahoma, Dr. Simonds established an engaging academic career. Dr. Simonds is particularly interested in how effective communication can be utilized in the classroom to improve education. As a Communication Education scholar, she studies the domains of Communication Pedagogy (what are the best methods of teaching communication, specifically?) and Instructional Communication (what are the communication skills that all teachers need regardless of topic they teach or age of their students?). In doing so, she finds herself in the fortunate position of conducting research on the thing that she practices every day—teaching and teacher training. Her teaching and training gives her fodder for research and her research serves to guide her teaching and training practices. Part of her role as Co-Director of Communication as Critical Inquiry is conducting teacher training for incoming Graduate Teaching Assistants who teach Com 110. She loves training teachers to love teaching. She gets to prepare our future professoriate. Our graduate teaching assistants come to us with little or no training, so she gets to teach them how to teach, using various instructional strategies and what to teach, COM 110 specifically. She loves seeing them develop and blossom as new teachers.

Dr. Pete Smudde



Over his 36-year career, Dr. Pete Smudde worked for 16 years in industry as a professional communicator, primarily in public relations, and, since 2002, in academia as a professor of public relations. Pete earned his Ph.D. in communication and rhetoric theory in 2000 from Wayne State University in Detroit, while working full time, raising a family, and building a house. We can save the gory details of his career path for another time. When it comes to research, Pete has a few areas that have long interested him. The first and most prominent has been message design and PR discourse, which has been fueled by his observations about the intersection of rhetoric theory with pragmatic matters of organizations' officials needing and wanting to say and do "the right thing at the right time in the right way for the right reasons and the right people." Because of his move from industry to academe, Pete also researches corporate strategy, teaching and learning of public relations, and religion and spirituality in the workplace, particularly for its role in public relations decision-making. All told in these areas, Pete's published 8 books, 21 journal articles and 15 book chapters (the greater majority of which he's lead or solo author), presented 43 works for conferences, and published 31 invited pieces. When it comes to leading graduate courses, because of Pete's background in industry and academia, he likes to connect the dots between theory and practice because they inform and rely on each other. So, he applies principles, practices, and demands of "real world" public relations so students can become prepared for how they will be managed in their jobs. Given these points and his background, he sees himself as the "lead student" in his classes because everyone shares in learning and teaching about the subject of a class. Pete is a two-time Redbird, having earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in both Philosophy and in English (1986) and his Master of Science degree in Writing (1989). His wife and their two sons also are Redbirds, having graduated in 1988, 2018, and 2019 respectively. Pete is Accredited in Public Relations (APR) through the PRSA, which is a credential that connotes professional expertise in public relations and reflects high standards in the profession. Pete came to ISU in 2008 and is (full) professor in the School of Communication, the associate director of the School, the coordinator for the School's public relations program, and the director of the School's study-abroad program in the Netherlands. He also serves and has served ISU, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the School in a variety of capacities and committees, all of which are more gory details for another time.

Dr. Lindsey Thomas



Dr. Lindsey Thomas is a theory and methods nerd. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Iowa, and her scholarship focuses on interpersonal and family communication. Her multi-method research centers on studying communication processes and their intersections with culture, health, and policy, particularly in at-risk populations. Most recently, her work has focused on the contexts of foster care and family estrangement. Dr. Thomas has taught qualitative and quantitative research methods, communication theory, interpersonal and family communication, health communication, and introductory rhetoric courses. She also oversees COM 123 sections taught by GTAs and is the faculty advisor for Lambda Pi Eta.

Dr. Andrew Ventimiglia



Dr. Andrew Ventimiglia's passion for documentary film and visual ethnography transitioned into exploring other areas of media, leading to his current research area of media studies and law. After working as a publicist in film distribution and upon his return to academia for his Ph.D., he became equally interested in studying the behind-the-scenes aspects of media: the circulation and distribution of text, film, and digital media and the unique role that media distribution can play in things like identity formation and the construction of community. Dr. Ventimiglia examines the overlap between media studies, legal studies, and religion in society. Through this shift in focus, he began to study media law—particularly copyright law—and its capacity to legally shape distribution, with a specific focus on the use of copyright by religious organizations to control the circulation of sacred and prophetic texts. Dr. Ventimiglia extensively researches and publishes about copyright law. The book *Copyrighting God: Ownership of the Sacred in American Religion* was born out of his doctoral dissertation combining media law and religious studies. Dr. Ventimiglia earned his Ph.D. from the University of California Davis. He found a home here in the School of Communication primarily as a teacher of media law, with a focus on the ways that the legal regulation of communication—whether mass media, digital, or even interpersonal—can play a significant role in shaping culture and society. Dr. Ventimiglia finds teaching and working with students an enriching experience. He believes that ISU is unique in its focus on providing students 'individualized attention,' and this focus is not only beneficial to the student, but it is also what makes teaching so rewarding here. By being encouraged to provide individualized attention to his students, he is also able to better teach, to find connections between his own interests and those that his students bring, and to use those common points of interest as an entry point into new ways of understanding the world.

Dr. Joseph Zoppetti



Dr. Joseph Zoppetti is a rhetorical scholar who started his academic career in the political science world. Initially interested in pursuing further education in international relations, when offered the opportunity to receive a master's degree and coach debate at Illinois State, he shifted his focus to communication. He earned his Ph.D. from Wayne State University. His research and teaching areas of expertise include rhetoric, argumentation, semiotics, political communication, digital literacy & disinformation, argumentation & persuasion, critical theory, and cultural studies. Dr. Zoppetti utilizes rhetorical methods in his research and examines the impact of political discourse. One of his books, *Divisive Discourse: The Extreme Rhetoric of Contemporary American Politics*, analyzes political polarization as a result of controversial topics like race, immigration, gun control, and healthcare. He has authored or co-authored 8 books, some in multiple editions. He is also well-published in academic journals, such as the *Journal of Communication and Religion*, *Western Journal of Communication*, *Radical Pedagogy*, *Culture Theory & Critique*, *Cultural Studies*, the *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, the *Communication Law Review*, and others. Dr. Zoppetti has traveled to 60 countries, which includes 3 Fulbright grants (Sri Lanka, Brazil, Kyrgyzstan). He is the recipient of multiple awards, including the University Teaching Award and the 2022 Civic Engagement Fellow.

Graduate Faculty Members' Areas of Expertise/Methodology

Dr. John Baldwin: communication theory, intercultural communication, nonverbal communication, qualitative methods

Dr. Joe Blaney: image restoration, First Amendment, papal communication

Dr. Lauren Bratslavsky: communication theory, mass communication, media literacy

Dr. Caleb Carr: mediated communication, organizational communication, quantitative methods

Dr. Phil Chidester: communication theory, journalism, mass communication, rhetoric & public address

Dr. Byron Craig: organizational communication, rhetorical methods, rhetoric & public address, small group communication

Dr. Mary Beth Deline: communication theory, mass communication, organizational communication, persuasion, public relations, qualitative methods, quantitative methods

Dr. Becky Hayes: public relations, qualitative methods, social media

Dr. John Hooker: communication education, mediated communication, quantitative methods, training & development

Dr. Megan Hopper: journalism, mass communication, media literacy

Dr. Steve Hunt: communication education, persuasion, political communication, quantitative methods, rhetoric & public address, social media

Dr. Lance Lippert: health communication, leadership communication, organizational communication, qualitative methods, training & development

Dr. John McHale: documentaries, journalism, mass communication, political communication,

Dr. Kevin Meyer: communication education, communication theory, health communication, persuasion, quantitative methods, small group communication

Dr. Aimee Miller-Ott: family communication, health communication, interpersonal communication, mediated communication, interpersonal/family communication and identity, qualitative methods, communication in non-traditional/post-nuclear family relationships

Dr. Stephen E. Rahko: rhetorical studies, critical studies, media representations, visual rhetoric, race, biopolitics, social movements

Dr. Fernando Severino: political communication, journalism in the digital world, international and public affairs, immigration movements

Dr. Brent Simonds: communication theory, documentaries, mass communication, mediated communication

Dr. Cheri Simonds: communication education, qualitative methods, training & development

Dr. Pete Smudde: public relations & PR education, organizational communication, rhetoric & public address; leadership; religion/spirituality in the workplace

Dr. Lindsey Thomas: family communication, health communication, interpersonal communication, qualitative methods, quantitative methods

Dr. Andrew Ventimiglia: documentaries, mass communication; media law, cultural studies, religion and media

Dr. Joe Zompetti: digital literacy and disinformation, intercultural communication, argumentation and persuasion, political communication, rhetorical methods and theory, rhetoric & public address