

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA | COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION SCIENCES

# COMMUNICATOR

SPRING 2020

INSIDE » Teaching Corporate Social Responsibility / WVUA 23 Alumni / Experiential Learning in Live Entertainment

## Investigating White Lies

How two instructors cracked  
a 50-year-old cold case and  
turned it into a podcast.

PAGE 12







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## DEAN'S NOTE



### DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

Our community of alumni and donors play a vital role in helping ideas grow to action. From meaningful philanthropy to inspiring mentorships, your support continues to inspire me, our students, and our faculty and staff. We see and feel the difference our donors and alumni make in the life of the College every day and, together, we are transforming lives.

Last fall, we celebrated the largest gift in the College's history. A \$10 million endowment from the Holle Family Foundation is a significant gift that will accelerate many of our plans for the College, including a Center for Communication Arts. This interdisciplinary center will promote creativity in communication and storytelling, and will distinguish us from other institutions across the country.

Additionally, the Holle gift will add to our successful efforts in recruiting highly-qualified undergraduate and graduate students. Last year, we focused on increased funding for minority, first-generation and underserved populations at the doctoral level. With many of our faculty interested in research of diversity and social justice and the addition of a doctoral concentration in social justice and inclusion advocacy, C&IS is a leader both on campus and around the country.

We will continue to emphasize diversity, equity and inclusion as we move forward. Leading us in these efforts

This year, the College celebrates 30 years of the C&IS Ambassadors.

is Dr. Suzanne Horsley, who was named Assistant Dean for Accreditation, Assessment and Diversity last summer. We also welcomed a new department chair in advertising and public relations, Dr. Damion Waymer, alongside eight new faculty members who contribute to our mission as talented scholars and teachers.

Finally, I hope you will join us in celebrating our undergraduate student success. Tisch Student Services and External Relations has truly transformed the experience of our undergraduate students with the implementation of various college-wide services and student engagement programs. As a result, C&IS achieved the highest student retention rate and the highest four-year graduation rate the College has experienced in the last 10 years.

This issue of *Communicator* offers a view into the people and programs that are influenced by your support and generosity, and we thank you for all you do!

Mark D. Nelson, Ph.D.  
Dean and Professor

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## VOLUME 40

*Communicator* is published by the Capstone Communication Society and The University of Alabama's College of Communication and Information Sciences. Its purpose is to keep alumni and supporters informed about the programs, services and activities of the College, as well as developments in the fields of communication and information.

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# CULTIVATING CAREERS

WVUA 23 GIVES GRADUATES THEIR START

FUTURE MEDIA PRODUCTION SPECIALIST

FUTURE SPORTS REPORTER

FUTURE PRODUCER

FUTURE REPORTER

FUTURE STUDIO OPERATOR

FUTURE ANCHOR

FUTURE ON-AIR REPORTER

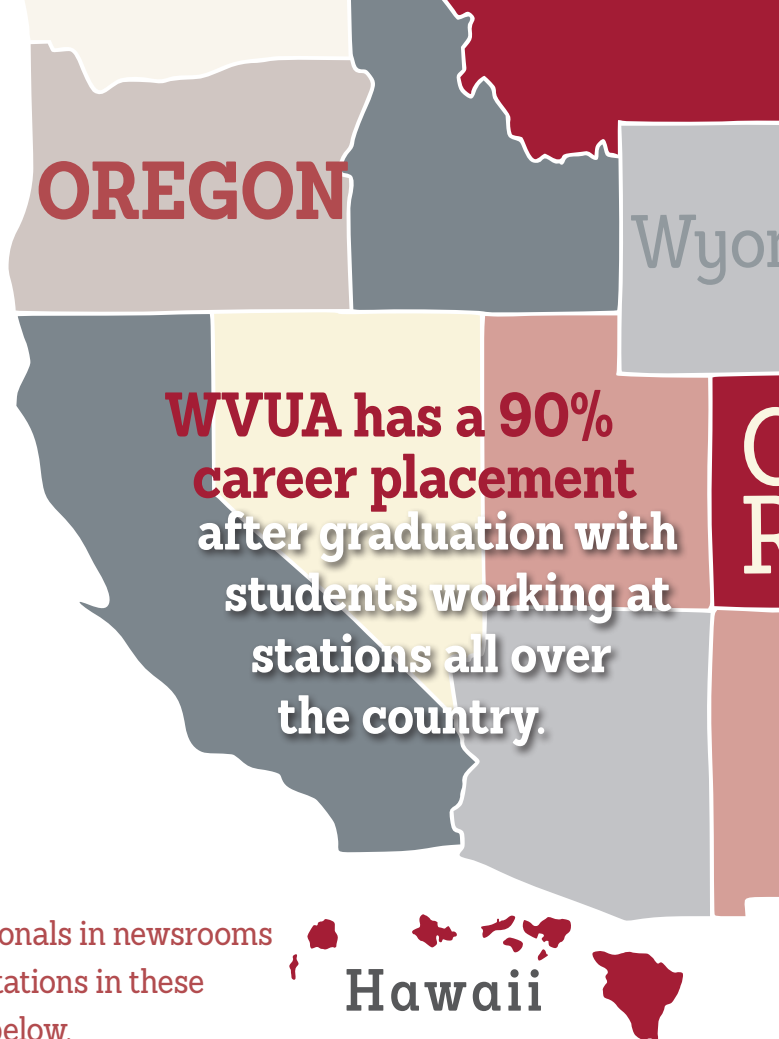
Student interns with WVUA 23 in the Digital Media Center have access to state-of-the-art facilities and get hands-on experience in a working newsroom, including (from left) current interns Blake Steaman, Amanda Hull, Belle McDonnell, Libbi Farrow, Julia Daniels, Rory Turner and Hunter McCoy.



**W**hen you step out of the elevator onto the third floor of UA's Digital Media Center (DMC), the first thing you see is a quote from Benjamin Franklin displayed above the welcome desk: "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." It's fitting that Franklin's quote is so prominent at the main entrance to the DMC, a place for C&IS students to learn and practice in the industry where they will soon be professionals. The DMC is home to four media outlets, which also serve as learning laboratories. Founded in 1998, WVUA 23 is one of two commercial television stations owned by public universities in the country. From its studio in the DMC, WVUA 23 broadcasts news programs at 5:00, 6:00 and 10:00 p.m., each almost exclusively operated and produced by students.

Students who work for the station start as editors, putting together video clips and footage before moving up to be producers or on-air reporters. Steve Diorio, news director of the station, recruits students who are passionate about news broadcasting and trains them in all aspects of the station. Their hands-on experience sets C&IS students apart as they begin their job search. The success of recent graduates speaks to the program's ability to prepare news media students for various jobs and markets.

**Working at WVUA 23 prepares interns to be professionals in newsrooms around the country. Recent graduates now work at stations in these states (right) and others. Read some alumni stories below.**



**Bryn Caswell '18**  
Multimedia Journalist, WKEF/WRGT  
Dayton, OH

"Within my first year in this business, I faced professional challenges that most experience decades into their career, or perhaps never at all. Thirteen tornadoes swept through Dayton during Memorial Day weekend, and a few months later there was a mass shooting, killing 9 innocent people and injuring 27 others. I believe it was my strong journalistic background, which I developed at WVUA, that helped me push forward."



**Keldreck Conwell '19**  
Weekend Anchor, WRBL  
Columbus, GA

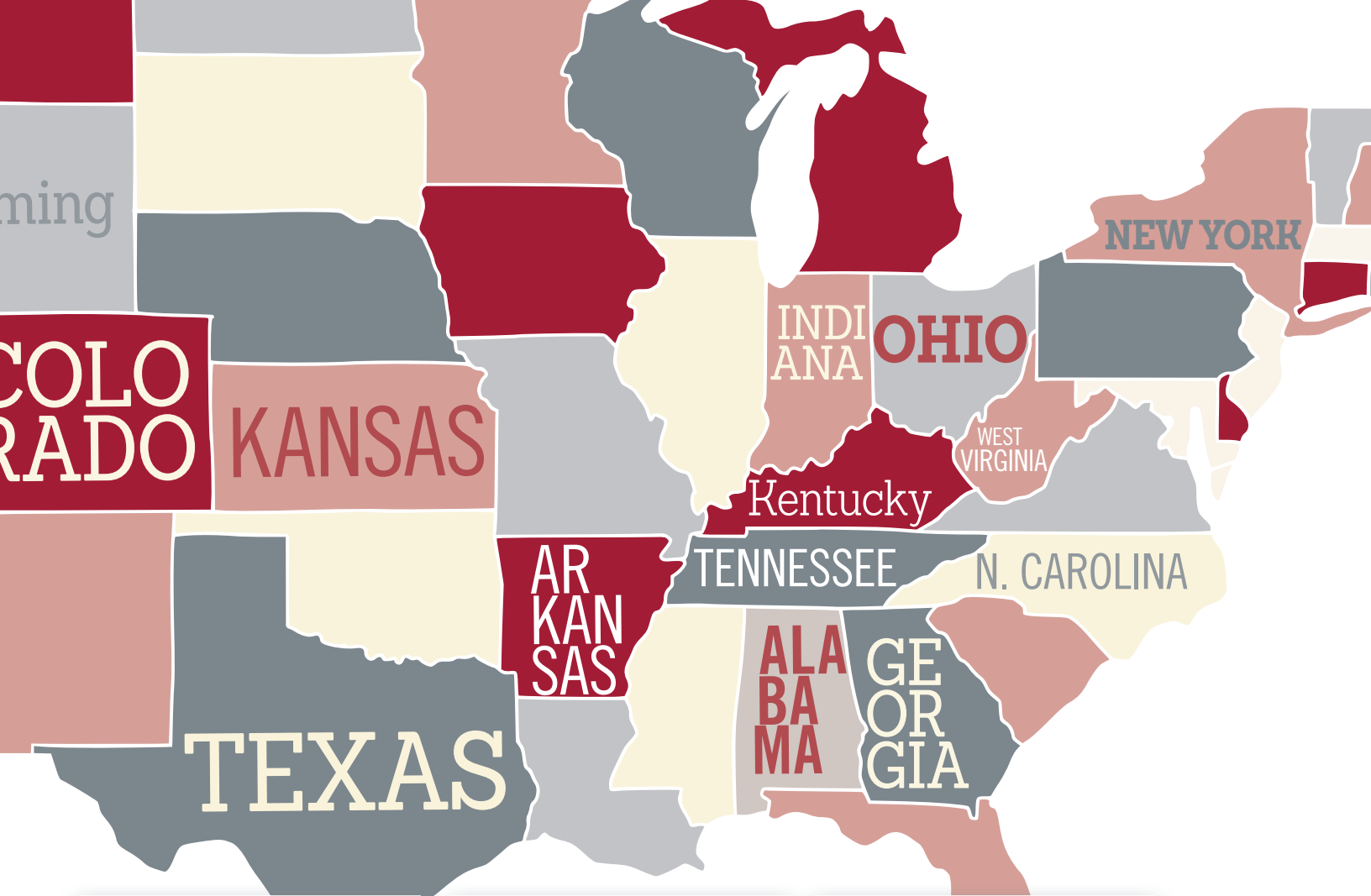
"WVUA helped me find out more about myself. It helped me realize what TV is all about. But I walked out of those doors more prepared for life in the TV business than I ever could have asked for. There is no place in the country like WVUA. It allows you to get hands-on experience with studio cameras, with telling stories and getting out into the field. WVUA prepares students for the next level."



**Bethany Miller '17**  
Sports Director, 14 News  
Evansville, IN

"The station really prepares you for working in the TV industry well before other students my age would get the opportunity. Not many established TV stations give students this level of responsibility, and in doing that, WVUA 23 allows you to make mistakes, learn from them and set yourself up to be a better reporter, producer and anchor."





**Jack Royer '18**  
Evening News Anchor, CBS 42  
Birmingham, AL

"The most valuable aspect of the job I held at WVUA 23 was the chance to have real world reps every single day, and the chance to make mistakes along the way and learn how to avoid them in the future. Being able to do the work and simply be on television every night was invaluable experience."



**Jocelyn Serembus '17**  
News Producer, Local 12  
Cincinnati, OH

"I have always enjoyed writing and I love that I can spend 6 or 7 hours of my shift writing an hour newscast every day. I also love the creative freedom producing gives me. WVUA was the perfect place to learn what being on the other side of the camera is like."





**Lauchlan Smith '14**  
Producer, Fox 6,  
Birmingham, AL

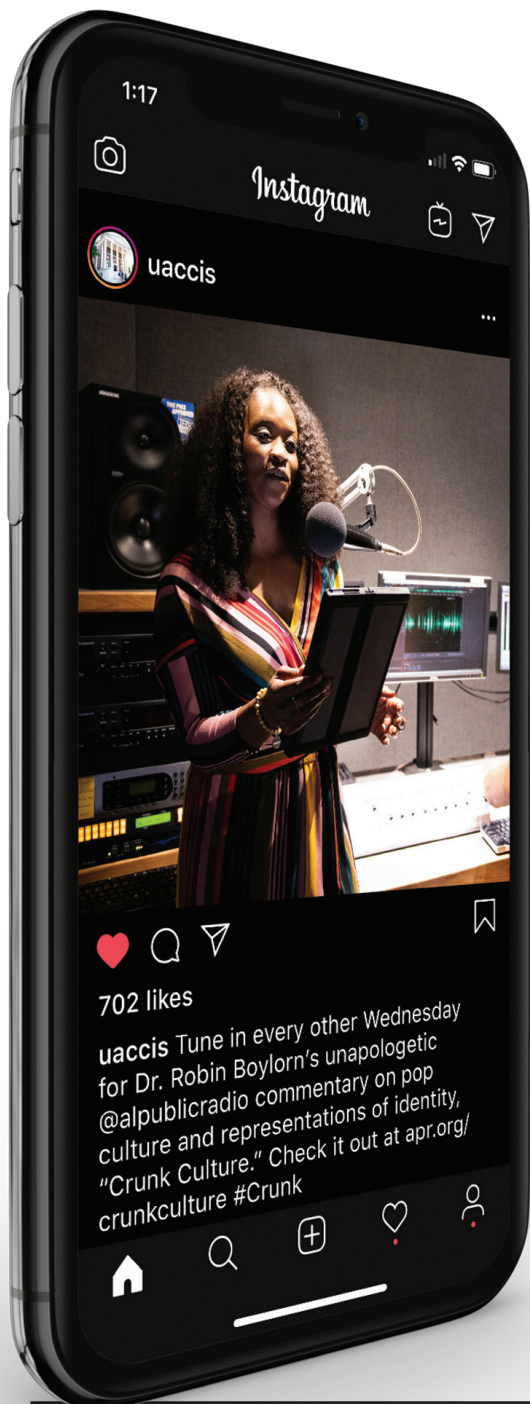
"I started as a reporter intern, then one of my coworkers suggested I try producing. They threw me into the fire and I produced my first newscast. I ended up falling in love with it and eventually phased out my reporter shifts with producing. This helped me to be familiar, comfortable and confident going into my job interview and first day on the job."



## INSTAGRAM INSPIRATION

@UACCIS on Instagram is the scene for all the buzz around C&IS. Give us a follow to check out featured stories, College updates and all the fun in between.

Our favorite guest lecturer  @ua\_big\_al stopped by to pass out some freebies and pose for a few selfies for #CISSharesTheLove 



**Above:** Students in the Capstone Communication Living Learning Community attend class together in their residence hall. Find out more information or apply for the next cohort at [cis.ua.edu/llc](http://cis.ua.edu/llc).

**Right:** The first book of its kind! Drs. Alexa Chilcutt and Adam Brooks partnered with IEEE and Wiley Press to author "Engineered to Speak" and help engineering professionals communicate their ideas to any audience. #CISProud







**Top Left:** C&IS in France 🇫🇷 takes on the Cannes Lions International Festival for Creativity. Each summer, students meet the world's most creative minds and get inspired to take action.

**Top Right:** SLIS partnered with the American Archive of Public Broadcasting to host four preservation fellows while they work on an ambitious project to digitize media content.

**Middle Left:** Student development on the beach ☀️. Developing leaders who do the extraordinary in C&IS and beyond at our inaugural Student Lead Retreat. #CISRocks

**Middle Right:** Taking #CISResearch into the future with VR! Dr. Matt Barnidge is studying the learning effects of virtual reality on news consumption.

**Right:** C&IS launched the Grant Writing Institute to position faculty for success in writing grant application proposals and securing grant funding. Read more at [cis.ua.edu](http://cis.ua.edu). #CISResearch





# CREAT





# ING MAGIC



**Students put production techniques to work in live entertainment with two unique programs.**

**It's a scene everyone has experienced. The unrivaled audio-visual effects of a live concert. Colorful lights, video and booming amplifiers you can feel in your soul all come together to produce a feeling that only comes from being there in person. And C&IS students aren't only there to experience this magic, they help create it.**

"I always tell my students we are shooting for the people in the back," says Teresa Gawrych, instructor of journalism and creative media, when discussing how she motivates her team of students. On summer evenings in Tuscaloosa, Gawrych becomes the director of her student camera crew who shoots live concerts at the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater. It becomes their job to shoot video that provides every member of the audience with a view they wouldn't get otherwise, helping them feel they are in the very front regardless of their seat location.

According to Dr. Kenon Brown, program director, Alabama Program in Sports Communication, the entertainment market has become so saturated that companies are looking to improve the experiences they provide. "People have more entertainment options today than ever before," said Brown. "The entertainment industry knows they have to improve the audience experience to keep their business alive."

With a growing interest in the entertainment industry, the College has responded with opportunities for students to get hands-on experience in live video production in two specific ways. A partnership with the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater provides one opportunity, and Gawrych took it a step further by creating a second learning experience called Encore.

## **THE BIG STAGE**

The students who work at the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater learn different techniques that enhance the experience in a high-stakes, big-stage environment. They are learning in class and then putting those techniques to work.



"We're working with national and international artists at the Amphitheater, so it's a high-pressure environment," Gawrych said. "The artist and their team act as our 'client' and we work as a team to enhance the audience experience while also working with special requests from the artist."

Dressed in all black to blend in to the scene, C&IS students become a critical part of the production. They arrive several hours early to strategize and review requests before they take on various roles in the program from production assistants to directors who help choose which shots make it onto the screens during the concert. Many of the students operate cameras around the venue, focusing on different angles of the artists and the crowd. From there, they collaborate with the artist's producer to select shots for the big screens that draw in every member of the audience.

"Students who are operating cameras are tasked with both listening to the director to get the shots and selling the shot when the operator is looking for something to capture a moment during the concert," said Gawrych. "They rotate through different positions to expand their skills and find their niche."

## STUDENTS GET TO SHOW THEIR LEADERSHIP, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE ON THE BIGGEST STAGE IN WEST ALABAMA.

"I knew this opportunity would give me marketable tools and skills," said Jason Anthony, a senior majoring in creative media. "This is the first time I worked on live production and I was able to push myself with this experience."

The pressure is real in live entertainment and that's what makes this experience so valuable. It's something students cannot learn sitting in class. This is why Gawrych takes class to the venue.

Through the program, C&IS students have worked on concerts for nationally-recognized headliners such as Willie Nelson, Mary J. Blige and Rob Thomas. With such a big stage, students feel a sense of pride in having worked on a major concert before they graduate. However, due to the high-profile nature of the artists, sometimes the students cannot keep their video footage. Gawrych had a solution.

"I wanted to find a way for our students to tangibly build their portfolios with the extraordinary work they are doing," Gawrych said. The answer was Encore, a live music television program shot and produced by students in Studio A inside UA's Digital Media Center.

## OUR HOUSE

Live audience production can take many forms and the creative solution of Encore helps students build their portfolio by producing live, social media broadcasts that feature smaller musical acts playing in front of live audiences right on UA's campus. The mission of Encore is to promote smaller acts where students gain the same hands-on experience they get at the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater while allowing them to keep their footage for the portfolios.

"Both arenas are teaching opportunities, but with the Amphitheater we're working with big clients, who have personal requests we need to meet," Gawrych said. "Encore allows the students to grow even further because they are building the program from the ground up, making decisions and catering to a student audience."

Through Encore, students lead every aspect of the live entertainment experience, starting in pre-production and running all the way through to show time. Students research potential acts, brainstorm ideas and discuss ways to improve from the previous show. During the show, they work multiple cameras and production roles while the performance broadcasts over Facebook and YouTube.

"The most valuable part of Encore is gaining a plethora of experiences in roles and positions I never knew I was

**THE SHOW HAS GIVEN ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO FEEL LIKE I CAN MAKE IT IN THE INDUSTRY.**

— Emily Kaplan







**Above:** Through Encore, students produce, shoot and direct a music show in the Digital Media Center's Studio A, where smaller local acts play in front of a live audience.

**Right:** While some students operate cameras during Encore, others work in the control room to pick shots and direct the team.



**Left:** At the Amphitheater, students work with high-profile acts like Willie Nelson, Rob Thomas and Mary J. Blige (pictured with Nas).

capable of," said Emily Kaplan, a senior majoring in telecommunications and film. "The show has given me the opportunity to feel like I can make it in the industry."

### LAUNCHING CAREERS

These high-caliber experiences make C&IS a unique place to study creative media. "Interning at Encore and the Amphitheater has allowed me to gain such valuable experience that not every school has to offer," said Kaplan.

The students understand the value of having this level of experience before they graduate and attribute their career readiness to these programs.

"Anything and everything can go wrong in live production and it's up to us to be prepared and have plans to deal with potential issues," said Anthony. "I know taking this class and having this opportunity has helped prepare me for my next step."

Building students' confidence, portfolios and skills is the core of these unique experiential learning programs, but launching a student into the career of their dreams is the ultimate payoff.

"When students can talk about their experience at a venue like the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater and then show their portfolio of work producing live music videos with Encore, they position themselves for competitive careers in a variety of fields," said Dr. Mark Nelson, Dean of C&IS.

Interns have gone on to work in a variety of industries, including late night television, major league sports, music and more. C&IS is committed to expanding the learning opportunities in live entertainment and continues to respond

to student interest and industry demands, equipping students with skills to create comprehensive and diverse live entertainment experiences.

"It's not enough to have just the game, or just the music or just the show," said Brown. "Students who work in sports and entertainment roles must understand how to create experiences for their fans or for their audience."

The Tuscaloosa Amphitheater and Encore experiential learning programs provide a strong foundation for students to navigate live-entertainment demands. Creating the fan experience is crucial to the future of live entertainment and the students who work in these venues understand this. They hone their craft in Tuscaloosa, Alabama and then go on to create magic for audiences around the world.



# INVESTIGATING WHAT







## C&IS instructors' top-ten podcast gives an old story a new ending.

On March 8, 1965 a Unitarian Universalist minister named Jim Reeb read a telegram from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., calling on clergy from all over the United States to journey to Selma, Alabama and march to Montgomery, protesting the mistreatment of Black Americans the previous day—a day which has since been infamously known as “Bloody Sunday.”

The telegram from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. read, “In the vicious maltreatment of defenseless citizens of Selma, where old women and young children were gassed and clubbed at random, we have witnessed an eruption of the disease of racism which seeks to destroy all of America. No American is without responsibility. All are involved in the sorrow that rises from Selma to contaminate every crevice of our national life. The people of Selma will struggle on for the soul of the nation, but it is fitting that all America help to bear the burden. I call therefore, on clergy of all faiths representative of every part of the country, to join me for a ministers’ march to Montgomery on Tuesday morning, March 9th. In this way all America will testify to the fact that the struggle in Selma is for the survival of democracy everywhere in our land.”

Stirred by the words of King and the call to act, Reeb put his daughters to bed, told his wife goodbye and left his home in Boston to join the march in Selma. On March 11, 1965 at Birmingham’s University Hospital, Jim Reeb succumbed to injuries suffered at the hands of four violent men in Selma and was pronounced dead.

Though authorities charged three men with first-degree murder and witnesses identified one of the accused as Reeb’s attacker, the defense prepared a list of 150 character witnesses to persuade a 12-man, all-White jury to render a nonguilty verdict; none of the character witnesses actually testified. A counter narrative introduced in the closing arguments speculated that civil rights supporters in Selma, desperately searching for a White martyr to the cause, had murdered Reeb themselves. This narrative spread throughout Selma and is still believed by many today.

**Left:** The corner of Selma Avenue and Washington Street where the attack on Jim Reeb occurred.  
**Above:** Mug shots of the men charged with Reeb’s murder in 1965: Elmer Cook, William Stanley Hoggle and Namon O’Neal Hoggle, courtesy of the FBI.



# WE REALIZED THEN...THERE WAS A



**J**ournalism and creative media faculty members Andy Grace and Chip Brantley are challenging the Jim Reeb narrative. Using old-fashioned, on-the-ground, investigative journalism, they have cracked this fifty-year-old cold case wide open. In their collaboration with National Public Radio (NPR), Brantley and Grace developed an in-depth podcast, *White Lies*, to set the record straight about what happened to Jim Reeb in Selma in March of 1965.

## PODCASTING: AN EMERGING MEDIUM

Grace and Brantley's investigative storytelling prowess comes as no surprise to their colleagues within the Department of Journalism and Creative Media (JCM). With their passion for fairness and justice, and their expertise in print journalism and documentary filmmaking, both have developed and taught C&S courses that combine different methods of communication with nonfiction storytelling. Together, they teach a long-form, radio journalism course called "Anatomy of a Trial," and Grace taught "Documenting Justice" for years, a film course about analyzing and documenting different components surrounding a true story of justice or inequality.

Each new year they teach "Anatomy of a Trial," they begin with a classroom exploration of three or four different narratives. Brantley and Grace lead the classroom discussion, whittling down the list of stories to a single investigation the class pursues together. Like a newsroom collectively reporting a breaking story, the students collect different components related to the case which all become a single piece by semester's end.

Five years ago, the class chose to investigate a story related to the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. The year-long class project culminated in a short documentary titled, "A Call from Selma." The piece explored how the death of Jim Reeb catalyzed the civil rights movement and the documentary was featured by *The New York Times* in March of 2015.

"We realized then that there was a much larger story there," said Grace. "The work

that we did with the class was much more about the legacy of Reeb's death, but it had nothing to do with the investigation of his death. So, we completed the work in class and then took it in a different direction."

The new direction became a seven-part NPR podcast, *White Lies*, which blends cinematic elements of narration and historical archive audio with live interviews recorded by Brantley and Grace. The podcast includes eye witnesses, personal confessions and native Selmians telling their stories.

"It's the most basic human function just to tell one another stories about our lives," said Grace. "What's cool about podcasting is that it's that simple, oral storytelling tradition but, because of the sensibilities of cinema that have informed podcasting, we have music and scenes that break things up and make people feel as though they're living in a movie."

According to Neilson and Edison statistics, there are more than 700,000 active podcasts in circulation with approximately 29 million episodes. Furthermore, 70 percent of the U.S. population is familiar with podcasting. For Brantley and Grace, the decision to launch *White Lies* as a podcast could not have come at a better time.

"Audio storytelling is in a golden age right now where there are increasingly huge numbers of podcast listeners," said Brantley. "The competition for the audience is not just the other thousands of podcasts, it's TV, books, movies and anything else on the internet. So, you have to engage listeners, lure them and capture their attention."

The results speak for themselves. Since its launch in May, *White Lies* has received nearly 10,000 listener reviews on the Apple podcasting platform alone, and holds a 4.5/5.0 rating overall. To date, the podcast has been downloaded millions of times. Apple named it one of the 10 Best Podcasts of the Year So Far, Marie Claire named it one of the best podcasts of the year, and it is a nominee for Best Crime Podcast of the Year in the iHeartMedia Podcast Awards. The higher the podcast's rating, the larger the audience, and therefore the larger the impact in setting the story straight.



# MUCH LARGER STORY THERE.

## CONFRONTING THE PAINFUL PAST

Unlike many cold case files, the Jim Reeb case had potential avenues of discovery: living witnesses to the assault, court records and an unredacted FBI case file. Before long, Brantley and Grace were on the ground in Selma, knocking on the doors of jurors from the Reeb trial, sorting through decades-old boxes of court transcripts and running down leads about buried time capsules. All along the way, they were constantly confronting the issue of misinformation—the belief that civil rights supporters in Selma killed Reeb to produce a much-needed White martyr for the cause.

**“WE ALL HAVE STORIES WE HAVE  
HEARD THAT WE DON’T CHALLENGE  
BECAUSE WE DON’T HAVE A  
REASON TO CHALLENGE THEM.”**

*Left:* Grace and Brantley became Selma regulars—analyzing the scene of the crime and talking with people in cemeteries, on sidewalks and going door to door.

*Right:* Many historical documents, including maps of Selma were discovered as part of the FBI file. Grace and Brantley pored over these documents as they worked to put the pieces together.

*Below:* Grace and Brantley made regular pitstops at The Sawmeal Restaurant where the duo would grab a bite and work the case.





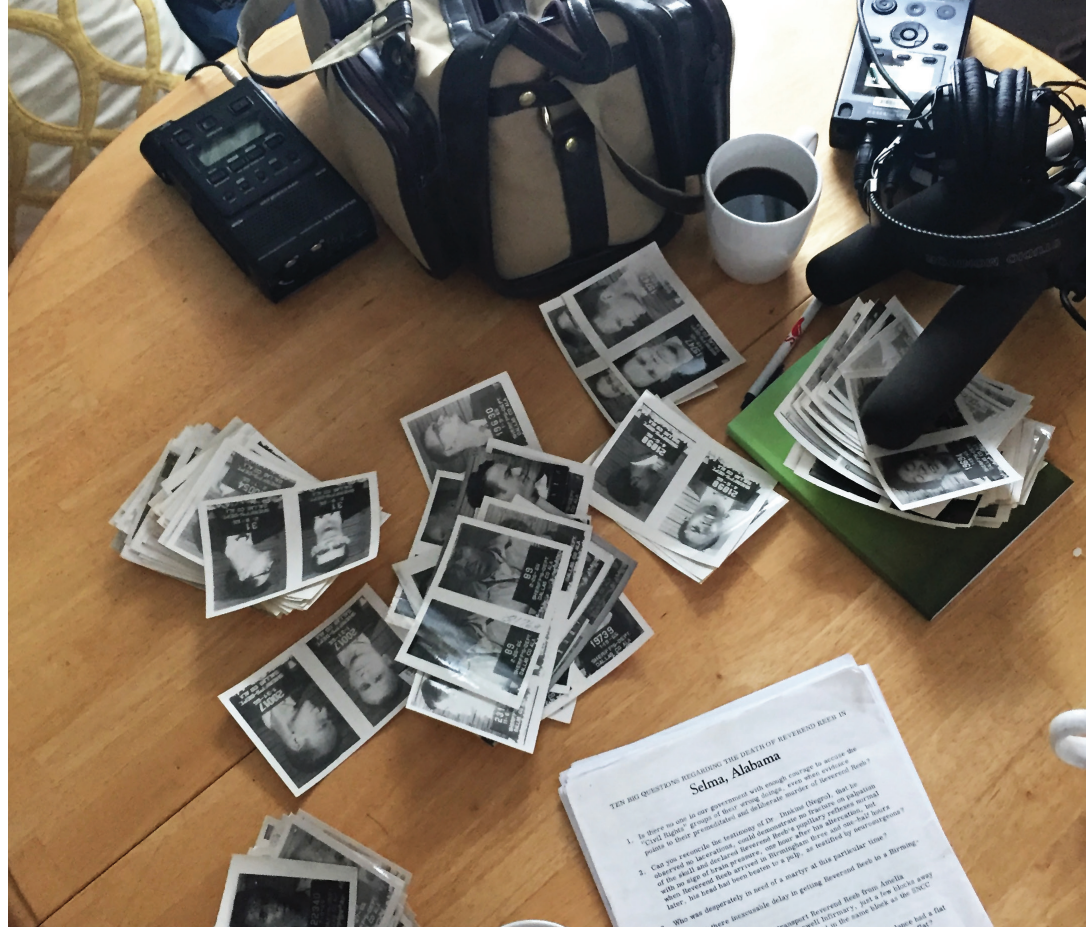
"We all have stories we have heard that we don't challenge because we don't have a reason to challenge them. They're just the stories we've inherited," said Brantley. "The counternarrative to Reeb's death was just the way the story got told over the years, and it is really hard to counter that story without a true rundown of what happened."

The biggest challenge for the team came from locals who have lived in Selma for generations and didn't want to talk about the past. They had a version of the story that was believable enough to satisfy any feelings of guilt. Even after 50 years, the wounds hadn't healed and bringing themselves to talk about it proved difficult. On a certain level for Brantley and Grace, who themselves are native Alabamians, this sentiment made sense, but on another level, they knew a healthy confrontation with the past could be a vehicle for healing and change.

All their pushing and questioning finally paid off. Brantley and Grace kept pursuing new leads and revisiting old ones. After four years and countless breakfast meetings at The Sawmeal Restaurant, they found someone willing to go on record who was an eyewitness to Reeb's attack. Frances Bowden broke her silence of more than 50 years, admitted to lying in the trial and lying to the FBI. In addition to identifying the three men acquitted at the trial in 1965 as Reeb's attackers, she also named one more.

The fourth attacker, William Portwood, admitted to Brantley and Grace that he kicked one of the men on the street that night. Within a couple of weeks of confessing his involvement, Portwood died at the age of 86. After so many years, the story was finally laid to rest, but no charges were ever filed. Though they will never be able to point to a conviction, their story has changed the way many think about the past and the way they talk about it.

"As White southerners, Chip and I thought a lot about that 'water under the bridge,' 'don't talk



about stuff in the past' philosophy," said Grace. "It hasn't worked; it's just not a good strategy. The one thing we haven't tried is talking about it, and it feels like that appeal has actually struck a nerve—not with everybody—but with a certain kind of person who has listened to this story."

Many among the White Lies audience found that hearing this story helped them reconcile parts of their own past. The story's popularity has opened the door to discussing difficult issues and racial violence.

"We've had all sorts of exchanges with people who have told us things about their own lives that they had never been able to speak about before," said Brantley. "It gave people space to talk about things that maybe they didn't feel they had a space to talk about before, and that's a good thing."

With the Jim Reeb case unofficially closed and the Selma counternarrative finally put to rest, Grace and Brantley may yet have other stories to investigate. The duo is currently in talks with NPR to develop a second season. Whatever the topic, the White Lies creators will bring their investigative prowess and passion for the truth to the case.



**Above:** Over the course of four years, Grace and Brantley familiarized themselves with every angle of the Jim Reeb case and talked to anyone who would speak with them.

**Below:** Grace and Brantley spent a lot of time in Selma around civil rights landmarks including the Edmund Pettus Bridge.



You can listen to the NPR podcast  
White Lies on any podcast platform.

For more information visit [npr.org/whitelies](https://npr.org/whitelies).





**Once upon a time, consumers bought their branded merchandise from the general store or supermarket based on a few simple criteria: cost, quality of product, personal preference. These were the primary ways organizations demonstrated their value. Because of a constantly evolving, consumer-driven marketplace, those days are quickly fading, and today's consumers demand more from brands than affordable, quality products. That's why in today's economy, your favorite chicken sandwich may have something to say about marriage equality, your razorblade may have an opinion on masculinity, and your sneakers may indicate whether or not you agree with developing social movements and hot-button political issues.**

As brands increasingly steer their message toward polarizing social and political issues, they risk alienating potential customers in order to capture a larger share of consumers. This move away from the safe harbor of conventional approaches to corporate social responsibility (CSR) out into the uncharted waters of corporate activism has researchers and agencies weighing the short-term danger against the long-term gains. As a top-ranked academic institution for advertising and public relations, preparing students to navigate this tempestuous marketplace is no small task. Understanding how CSR works and how it includes different forms of activism helps chart a course toward best practices in a brave new world of advertising and public relations.

#### **DRIVEN BY STAKEHOLDERS**

Corporate social responsibility became the standard business practice for many organizations early in the 20th century, as they received tax breaks and incentives for their philanthropic endeavors. During the significant social change and political turmoil of the 1960s, CSR shifted into a more activist approach, as the public began challenging corporations to achieve higher standards aligning with the issues of the time. In the years since, this pressure has continued, forcing corporate executives to balance the happiness of their customers and shareholders with their quarterly reports.





## STUDENTS EXPLORE CSR

Rachel Williams and Taylor Clark (pictured left), students in the creative advertising specialization, Minerva, conceived a CSR project which collaborates with MPOWERD, a company specializing in solar powered light. The concept is to hang 200,000 solar-powered LUCI lamps in high-traffic city parks. This illustrates the impact donated LUCI lamps have had on families around the globe who do not have access to clean energy sources. Clark and Williams also created a seven-second YouTube ad and collaborated with REI, utilizing the REI website to provide consumers with an interactive segue of the LUCI lamp impact.

Student art directors Katie Greco & Kristen Wallace along with creative writer Vanessa Suarez conceived a CSR project (pictured right) which makes use of WD-40's infinite uses to target key issues the super lubricant cannot fix: clean water access, illiteracy, poverty and more.



According to Dr. Damion Waymer, chair of the Department of Advertising and Public Relations, corporate social responsibility is the concept that organizations are to be held accountable for addressing at least a portion of the issues pertinent to the societies in which they operate. Waymer's research includes investigating corporate legitimacy by studying the gap between a corporation's actions and the expectations of one or more of their publics. As stakeholders and publics are increasingly expecting organizations to have purpose and values beyond their profit margins, these organizations must have a pulse on social movements and trending issues.

"CSR is broad," said Waymer. "If stakeholders are challenging corporations to be legitimate in certain areas or to address issues that are important to them, then the campaigns that follow are just subsets of the broader CSR umbrella."

Dr. Karla Gower, professor and director of the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, says corporations strategically apply CSR for three reasons. First, the workforce in the industry increasingly wants to work for companies that do the right thing—however they define it. Second, products now are so similar in cost and quality that companies seek alternative means to differentiate themselves from their competitors. And finally, consumers decreasingly trust that civic authorities have

the capability to tackle big issues such as clean water, waste and security, among many others.

"Depending on the industry, CSR can translate into a competitive advantage," said Gower. "You may spend money this quarter or this year to get that advantage down the line because you will benefit from how social capital builds up your organization's reputation."

But protecting the environment, caring for the poor and providing relief for victims of natural disasters are issues of a less politically divisive nature when compared to others such as gun control, abortion and marriage equality. Corporations have to evaluate the immediate and long-term risks associated with this kind of public stance that have not historically accompanied CSR, including damaging their company's relationship with its clientele.

C&IS faculty agree that with any approach to advertising—especially those with polarizing statements—the most important thing is to have a game plan. Corporations blindly targeting social issues as well as safe areas of public opinion to hastily score points with their audiences are unlikely to design campaigns that correspond to enduring and impactful response. That's why the College takes such care to teach its students proven methods, develop their artistic potential and

**I tell my students,  
'You're going to get hired on your craft, but you're going to advance your career on your ability to influence business.'**

—  
Mark Harris,  
Visiting Professor





social responsibility as giving back or taking a stance on an issue, they should be confident they have worked through this process to understand the potential outcomes. This approach may seem basic in its theory, but it's crucial in its execution. Whether advertising and public relations students are practicing these steps through work for Capstone Agency or as a part of their required coursework, the four-step process is critical for the strategic implementation of successful CSR communication.

"I tell my students, 'You're going to get hired on your craft, but you're going to advance your career on your ability to influence business,'" said Mark Harris, visiting professor at C&IS and former vice president of communications for IBM Global business services. "Preparing our students to be people that are really good at critical thinking is going to matter because the issues are getting harder, more complex and more personal."

### SHOWCASING STUDENT TALENT

Students in Minerva, the creative advertising specialization at C&IS, frequently discuss CSR in their courses. Every semester, these creative minds implement a CSR element into their portfolios, which are reviewed by industry professionals and submitted to local and national creative awards competitions.

One such campaign was "Follow the Signs," an advertising concept developed by C&IS students Emeline Earman, Charlotte Frank, Lauren Meadows, Nelle Thomas and Rick Molinaro to address the opioid crisis in the United States. The project proposed a collaboration with talk show hosts, YouTube vloggers or newscasters who would start acting out progressively worsening symptoms of opioid addiction to their audience.

While the campaign's celebrity partners are visibly deteriorating to the public eye, their communication teams would simultaneously work with media outlets like TMZ and the National Enquirer to drive narratives, bringing attention to the symptoms. At the end of three weeks, the celebrity influencers would reveal that they were a part of the campaign, which would help open the conversation, reduce the stigma, as well as inform the public about how to better recognize the signs of opioid addiction.

The students' concept was developed for submission to the One Show Young Ones Competition in New York, where it was named a Merit Winner. Additional awards included a local Gold ADDY, a Judges Choice in the local ADDYs, a district Gold ADDY and district Best of Show. Contest submissions like these transform the creative experience for C&IS students because they receive thoughtful evaluation and feedback on their work as it is compared to top talent from around the nation.

provide immersive, experiential learning opportunities, all of which prepare them for the evolving industry.

### TEACHING PROVEN METHODS

For years, Alabama Power has been a top client for Capstone Agency, the College's student-run integrated communications firm. Frequent power outages caused by severe weather keep the company in need of positive equity in their statewide reputation. Rather than throwing money at something that helps their bottom line, Alabama Power intentionally makes the state of Alabama a better place to live and work. To Capstone Agency, telling the story of Alabama Power means informing the public about the multiple \$5,000 undergraduate research grants, nonprofit organization grants and statewide higher education conference sponsorships the company annually awards.

"As public relations and advertising professionals, we have a unique skillset that can help us tell a story or give a voice to an organization," said Teri Henley, advisor to Capstone Agency. "It needs to be intentional. It doesn't need to be just jumping in at an opportunity. It has to be part of a strategy."

Any one of Henley's students will know the four-step process by the time they graduate: research, planning, implementation and evaluation. Whether a company views



The “right side of history” is never as easy to predict as it seems.



### ENGAGING CSR'S TOP VOICES

C&IS students also engage in the international CSR conversation. Now in its third year, C&IS in France takes students abroad for an immersive creative experience like none other at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. In Summer 2019, 17 C&IS students attended the festival, where they had a front row seat to the annual celebration of leading voices in the creative communication industry. Students attended award ceremonies, workshops, breakout sessions and panel discussions which all surrounded one key theme: corporate activism.

As a C&IS in France student participant and graduate student, Kirah Wurst has twice experienced the Cannes Lions festival. In her second year, she attended sessions with Procter and Gamble's chief brand officer, Marc Pritchard, who recently launched the famous “We Believe” campaign aimed at curbing “toxic masculinity.” According to Wurst, seeing the impact and creativity made possible through CSR at Cannes reshaped her perspective for the future.

“There’s nothing like the Cannes Lions festival,” said Wurst. “It allowed me to understand different perspectives. When I enter the workforce, I want to work for a company that has strong values and participates in corporate activism because I want to work for a company that has purpose.”

C&IS in France places students right in the middle of trending topics and conversations across the spectrum of creative communication. Ultimately for these students—and all C&IS students who have a future in the constantly changing world of advertising and public relations—corporate social responsibility and corporate activism are just a small component of what their futures will hold. Experiences like C&IS in France, the creative work students produce in their classes and the concepts they learn in class will all be elements shaping that future.

“We try to prepare our students as best we can, but at the end of the day there are going to be new trends and opportunities,”



*Students in the creative advertising specialization, Minerva, consistently create portfolios with elements of corporate social responsibility.*

said Henley. “If they understand the four-step process and don’t just attempt stand-alone tactics, when they get to the end of their campaign, they know that it should all be integrated and strategic.”

As an increasing number of organizations steer toward adding activist elements to their advertising and public relations strategies, tactical, critical thinking is going to be all the more important, because the “right side of history” is never as easy to predict as it seems. However, with a faculty dedicated to teaching students a proven approach to success, and opportunities to develop their skillset and test their ideas before they leave UA, the next generation of advertising and public relations professionals can make informed, calculated decisions. In the future of the industry, the lines drawn between corporate social responsibility and corporate activism—and the strategies and approaches crafted to promote them—will be trails blazed and paths forged by a group of industry leaders who call C&IS home.



## C&IS BOOKSHELF

Last year, C&IS faculty published more than 200 books and scholarly articles. Here is a look at some of the recent book releases authored by C&IS faculty that continue to raise the national and international profile of the College.

Dead Man's Hand / Citizen Relent / A Puncher's Chance

**BY DR. JEFF WEDDLE**

LIBRARY & INFORMATION STUDIES

Engineered to Speak

**BY DR. ALEXA CHILCUTT & DR. ADAM BROOKS**

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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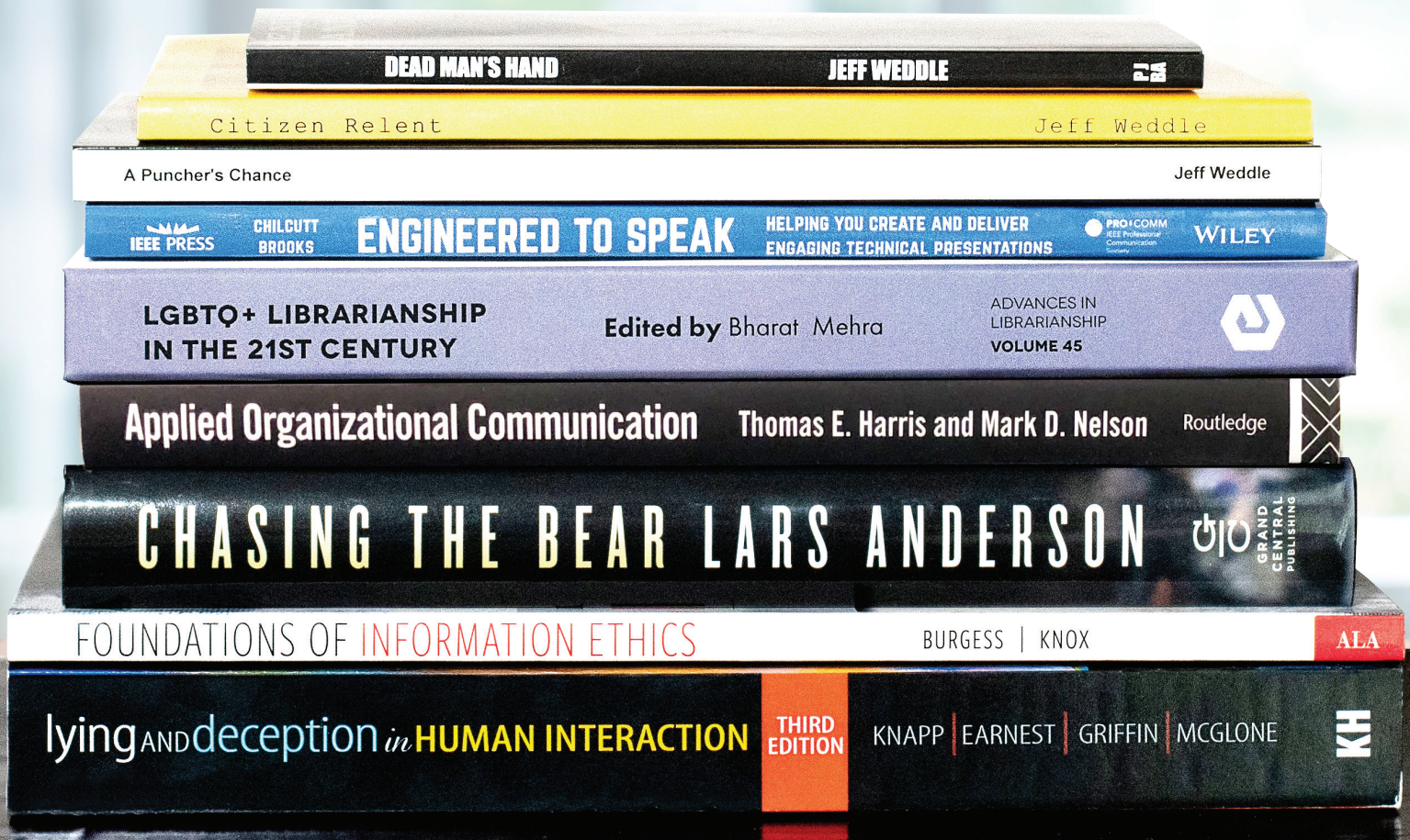
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Lying and Deception in Human Interaction

**BY DR. DARRIN GRIFFIN**

COMMUNICATION STUDIES







## C&IS STORYTELLERS:

Pat Duggins

Alabama Public Radio News Director Pat Duggins covered the U.S. Space Program for NPR for 14 years and has published two books about NASA.







*As a youngster, I'd turn off all the lights in my room late at night, switch on my portable transistor radio, and listen to the CBS Radio Mystery Theater, hosted by actor E.G. Marshall. These creepy stories, all told with nothing but sound, really taught me what radio could do.*

Working in radio means delivering your message with tight writing and recorded sound. I spent 22 years covering the space shuttle nationally on radio, which put the importance of words and sound into even sharper focus for me. I'm known for covering NASA for National Public Radio (NPR), but my first national space reporting job was for the USA Radio Network, a commercial news service based in Dallas. They wanted news stories that were thirty seconds long, including a five-second interview cut. The experience forged the concise writing style I use to this day and pass along to the students I mentor at Alabama Public Radio (APR).

APR's goal is to give our newsroom interns their best chance at carving out a journalism career, and writing is the key. Reporters who can "tell" a story can "sell" a story, which is a journalist's stock and trade. It's a skill I look for when searching for new staff, and my colleagues in the industry say they do likewise. Our veteran interns earn the chance to use their writing abilities to produce radio features for APR's major newsroom projects. These series and documentaries frequently win national awards, which these students get to claim as their own. Here are some of the highlights of what I teach them along the way.

### 1. Good audio storytelling isn't limited to the news.

I got my first taste of the power of audio when I was about ten years old. I'm an Air Force kid, and my family was stationed at Patrick Air Force Base just south of NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. As a youngster, I'd turn off all the lights in my room late at night, switch on my portable transistor radio and listen to the CBS Radio Mystery Theater, hosted by actor E.G. Marshall. These creepy stories, all told with nothing but sound, really taught me what radio could do. Good podcasts do the same thing today. And even though I'm a 30-year veteran journalist, I consider myself a storyteller at heart.

### 2. Sound makes listeners think.

The "who, what, when, where and why" in a radio news story are the basics. The goal at APR is storytelling that's memorable. The strongest tool to do that is the recorded background sound that radio reporters use to bring their stories to life. For example, I wanted to do a feature on the civil rights safe house in Greensboro where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once hid from the Ku Klux Klan two weeks before his assassination. It's a museum now. I heard some high school students were planning a field trip there, so I used that visit to tell the story. The sound of their school bus as it arrived, complete with the blast of the air brakes, led off the feature before I said a word.

It is sound that gives a radio news story a "sense of place." My goal was to create something called a "driveway moment," which is when a public radio story is so compelling, the listener doesn't get out of their car. They want to hear every minute.

### 3. Let the cake rise, if you can.

Good stories don't just happen, and you have to be ready to "let the cake rise" as much as you can in your given work situation. After a year-long investigation of rural health in Alabama, APR won the 50th annual Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for Radio. The first voice in our documentary is a woman we called "Fay." She was 72 years old, living on disability and dealing with the most aggressive form of breast cancer. My interview took three months of negotiation to arrange, with a social worker acting as the go-between. Once we were at "Fay's" home, it took three hours before she first made eye contact with me. Her story was powerful, and worth every minute I waited. Sometimes, you have to turn daily news stories around in a hurry. But, if you can take time, do it.

### 4. It's not about "you."

Listeners like to hear "other people" on the radio, which can be an ego crusher for trainee journalists who like to hear themselves on the airwaves. But it's something reporters need to take to heart. It's not uncommon for students in the APR newsroom to write their part in a news story first, then wedge in interview cuts afterwards. Good writing in radio is the opposite of that. I record my interviews, transcribe the best cuts into a document, and then re-arrange those cuts so they tell as much of the story as possible without me saying anything. That creates strong story flow. It also teaches students how to write "into" their cuts, so the interview sound actively helps "carry the load" in storytelling.

The privilege of covering NASA for NPR and winning prestigious awards simply doesn't stack up against watching students when they develop their writing skills and launch their careers. I read the stories our graduates in the industry are doing now, and can't wait for more!





## 2019 GIFTS TO C&IS

Thank you to our alumni and friends who supported the College of Communication & Information Sciences in 2019. The year was a great success. We received the largest gift in the College's history from the Holle Family Foundation, placed second in UA's Bama Blitz crowdfunding initiative and continued to build support for student scholarships. Your generous contributions further our mission to develop global leaders who do the extraordinary across the full communication, media and information spectrum, and we appreciate you.

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### THE HOLLE FAMILY FOUNDATION DONOR

In 2019, the College received a \$10 million gift commitment from the Holle Family Foundation of Birmingham, Alabama. As the largest gift in the College's history, it will promote a standard of excellence in C&IS and honor the life of Brigadier General Everett Hughes Holle. A distinguished broadcasting professional, Holle is highly regarded for his 40-year career in the Birmingham television industry at NBC 13, as well as his service as a dedicated leader throughout the community and in numerous civic organizations. The generous gift from the Holle Family Foundation will establish the Holle Center for Communication Arts to honor Holle's commitment to his alma mater. The Holle Center will distinguish itself nationally as a highly visible platform that prepares students to be active and engaged citizens in the digital age. The gift also establishes an Endowed Chair in Communication Arts, permanently endows The Holle Awards for Excellence and Creativity in Communication and provides sustainable funding in perpetuity for an event celebrating the Holle Awards and the C&IS Hall of Fame.

“The Holle Family Foundation Board of Directors is pleased and honored to partner with The University of Alabama College of Communication and Information Sciences to promote excellence in the communication arts by providing student scholarships, recognizing achievement in the communication field and supporting faculty growth and development.” — PATRICK O'NEIL, CHAIR OF THE HOLLE FAMILY FOUNDATION

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Ty Warren received a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism from The University of Alabama and was a member of the debate team. He was a public affairs producer for Alabama Public Television upon graduation and continued to support college debate when he created the Ole Miss Forensics Team at the University of Mississippi. LaVone Warren received a bachelor's degree in speech communication from The University of Alabama. She went on to graduate from the University of Mississippi School of Law before serving Samford University for 30 years in multiple roles including Assistant Dean for Continuing Legal Education, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, and Assistant Professor at the Cumberland School of Law. Ty and LaVone Warren's shared love of debate is why they continue to support the Mary D. Bauer Scholarship.



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In 2006, Mary Stanton published “Journey Toward Justice: Juliette Hampton Morgan and the Montgomery Bus Boycott.” This book proved a revelatory read for Juliette’s cousin, retired chef and filmmaker Robert “Jep” Morgan. After understanding the significance of his cousin’s life and death, Mr. Morgan, his sister, Paula Byrens, and family members subsequently came together to create a gift in Juliette Hampton Morgan’s honor.

After graduation in 1935, Juliette Hampton Morgan served as an English teacher and reference librarian in her hometown of Montgomery, AL. For her work in the civil rights movement, Morgan was inducted into the Alabama Women’s Hall of Fame, had a book written about her and was honored through the renaming of the Montgomery Central Library to the Juliette Hampton Morgan Memorial Library. In 2018, the Morgan Family established the Juliette Hampton Morgan Endowed Scholarship to benefit students pursuing a Master of Library and Information Studies degree.





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