

UBCOMMUNITY

Department of Communication Newsletter Volume 3, Issue 1



A Message from the Chair

From Dr. Melanie Green

Hello, COM students and friends of the Department! These are exciting times at the Department of Communication. We are delighted to have welcomed three new faculty members this year: Professors Art Raney, Laura Arpan, and Bonnie Nickels. In this newsletter, you can learn more about them (and students, don't miss the opportunity to take a class with them!) The department has a great line-up of exciting courses that will help you prepare for your career and help you think more deeply about current issues, like media effects, misinformation, and health communication. COM also continues to be a leader in research: our department faculty have earned major grants, published in the top journals, and have been featured in leading news outlets. (Students, you can get involved in research, too – just reach out to your favorite faculty member to find out more.) The future looks bright, and we are excited to have you be a part of it!

The Department of Communication is here to support you!

We are located at:
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Buffalo, NY 14260

You may contact us at:
[716-645-2141](tel:716-645-2141)

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Undergraduate Classes

COM 466: Entertainment-Education: Health Promotion through Storytelling

Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

In this elective course, you will embark on a journey in the U.S. and worldwide with Professor Wang to explore how writers, producers, directors, and researchers have used storytelling in popular media to save lives and change norms. By the end of this course, you will have developed a deeper understanding of the entertainment-education communication strategy for health promotion and behavior change, including its historical evolution, diverse applications, theoretical foundation, collaborative practices, and program evaluations.

COM 467: Media and Well-being

Tuesday/Thursdays, 2 – 3:20 p.m.

The course will introduce you to the scientific theories and research that have helped us better understand how media use and technologies can positively impact individuals. Professor Raney will take you through the growing body of scholarship that has explored the positive sides of media (particularly entertainment), including how media content and technologies can benefit our overall well-being.

COM 468: Misinformation and Society

Tuesday/Thursdays, 2 – 3:20 p.m.

As discussed often in this class, misinformation was not born with the Internet and social media. Instead, it had been casting its shadow on individuals and societies from time immemorial. Misinformation often serves as the basis for our beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, many of which result in deleterious influence. Professor Ophir will consider history, psychology, sources, and effects of misinformation in this course.

NEWS IN DEPARTMENT RESEARCH

As seen in the UBNOW article, David Lee, an associate professor in the Communication department, has received a grant for a five-year study on the association between inflammation and social media usage, as well as their likely relevance to depression in susceptible groups. The National Institute of Mental Health gifted the grant, and they report chronic inflammation is responsible for more than half of deaths globally, including those caused by mental diseases like depression. Lee says, "One common hypothesis for this change is the rapid spread of social media use by this group." Lee released research illustrating that inflammation promotes social media usage, and he has another publication arguing that social media use might cause inflammation.

If you would like to read more about the plans for the research, you can [click here](#).

Three New Faces in the Department



Laura Arpan

Dr. Arpan comes from about 550 miles away in Bloomington, Indiana. She stayed there to obtain a bachelor's degree in Journalism and Economics. She then moved south to work in public relations and then attended the University of Alabama, where she earned a master's and Ph.D. in Mass Communication and Communication Theory and Effects. Dr. Arpan's research interests relate to how people evaluate and sometimes reject messages about environmental behaviors or risks and health risks. She is working on a project committed to understanding the effects of user-generated pro-health and -environmental messages on attitudes and behaviors. The classes she enjoys

teaching are in persuasion and social marketing (a course that uses marketing principles to plan campaigns encouraging people to practice pro-environmental, prosocial, or health behaviors). The faculty is what drew Dr. Arpan to work here, stating it is composed of people doing excellent and relevant research, and she wanted to be a part of the group. She enjoys the architecture, restaurants, Delaware Park, the AKG museum, and the nice people in Buffalo. Her free time is spent with Dr. Raney and their dog, Bosco. They enjoy hiking, cooking, traveling, and family time with their children. Her favorite sports team is the U.S. women's soccer team, although she expects to become a serious Bill's fan soon

Check Out Conversations about Communication!



Zach Carr, Ph.D. has created the Department's first podcast, *Conversations about Communication*. The podcast explores the world of communication science and the many aspects of human interaction. Includes interviews and discussions with scholars in the field! Scan the QR code or [click here](#) to visit the Spotify page!



Three New Faces in the Department



Bonnie Nickels

Dr. Nickels is a Western New York native; she grew up in Geneseo and Livonia near Conesus Lake. Her academic journey began at Morrisville College, where she earned an Associate's degree in Journalism. Then her bachelor's in Communication was earned from SUNY Geneseo, a Master's was accomplished at RIT, and a doctorate at UB in 2016. Most of Dr. Nickels' research has been on end-of-life communication, socially supportive messages, and analysis of mediated depictions of end-of-life communication. Currently, she is running a study about end-of-life communication during COVID-19, and her team is in the data analysis stage. Dr. Nickels chose to pursue a teaching career at UB because of its

friendly and welcoming atmosphere and diverse student population, where one can engage with others from different backgrounds and perspectives and gain invaluable cultural exchange. She enjoys teaching Interpersonal Communication, and her enthusiasm for the topic shines, often evaluated by former students as contagious. When she isn't teaching, she aims to prioritize her family, so her free time is spent with her husband and children. They enjoy traveling to Disney World together and have deemed Epcot their favorite park.



Arthur Raney

Dr. Raney hails from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where he grew up on the campus of the University of Alabama where his father was a professor. He stayed to obtain his Bachelor' of Arts degree in Communication because of the sweet family discount; he returned several years later to complete his Ph.D. in Mass Communication. During his hiatus from Alabama, he received a Master's degree in Theology at the Southwestern Baptist. Dr. Raney studies media entertainment and has specifically explored how one's morality influences the media one consumes. The chance to work alongside the outstanding faculty in the Department of Communication attracted him to UB, as he

has previously cited many of them in his research. Dr. Raney has been enjoying the weather in Buffalo, but we might have to ask him that again in February! He reminds students to stay curious and try to fall in love with learning, just for the sake of gaining more knowledge. His free time is spent with Dr. Arpan, but he also enjoys watching sports, including Alabama football (obviously), and Chelsea soccer. (He is still working on his Bills and Sabres fanship.)

Thinking about Graduate School?

Explore your opportunities with UB!

Graduate programs at the UB focus on merging communication theory with modern research techniques and fascinating themes, emphasizing the social scientific study of human communication processes.

Consider applying if the following are of interest to you:

- Narrative communication and social influence
- Science, health, environmental, and risk communication
- Digital/social media and well-being
- Political communication
- Facial expressions and deception detection
- Social support, social networks, and end-of-life communication
- Entertainment, morality, and positive media psychology

New students are admitted once a year, and the application deadlines are:

- December 1 for all PhD applicants
- April 1 for international MA applicants
- August 1 for domestic MA applicants

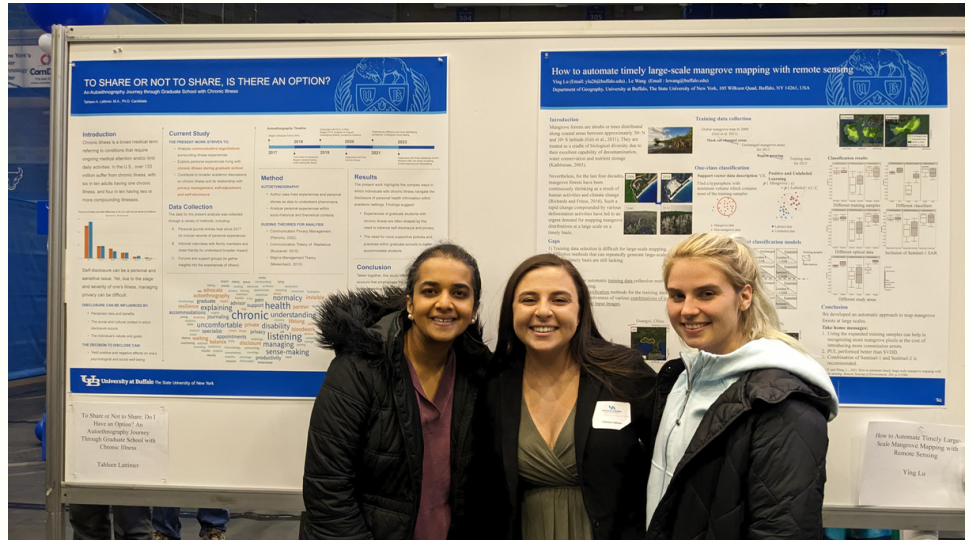


Dr. Nickels shared that she thoroughly enjoyed her experience in the Doctoral Program at UB. She said, "The department faculty was welcoming, and I had an engaging cohort of peers. The courses challenged me intellectually and provided the greatest foundation for the teacher-scholar I have become today... I received full approval, encouragement, and support [on a thesis topic pitch]."

More on Graduate School

Here are some thoughts, advice, and experiences from those new faculty members!

Dr. Raney explained, "I always ask would-be Ph.D. students, 'Why do you want to do this?' Getting a doctoral degree is a long, hard journey; students should have a pretty good idea of why they want to take that journey and where they think it will lead them."



Similarly, Dr. Nickels says to "be clear on your academic and career goals, yet be flexible and resilient to adjust your goals as your understanding of the field and job market evolves. When it comes to your research area, find the topics that excite you and bring you joy, which makes you light up when you start talking about them. Doctoral research often leads to unexpected discoveries and shifts in direction - don't be afraid to follow those leads. But most importantly, maintain a healthy work-life balance that prioritizes self-care and enables you to grow as a person while your professional identity as a scholar/teacher grows."



Finally, Dr. Arpan reminds us to enjoy our time as students. Saying, "It's such a beautiful and eye-opening time of life for those of us who are fortunate enough to be able to pursue higher education. Think about classes in terms of what you get to learn from people who can guide you and who want to help you grow, rather than in terms of what you are required to learn. It's a privilege. For those considering a doctoral degree, I would recommend they think about the very specific area they want to study and then choose a program that has multiple experts in that area".

Student Highlight

Two stories of recent Communication graduates and their post-grad lives

Alexa Tronolone

Alexa graduated from UB in May 2023 with a degree in Communication. Her journey is a testament to the program's impact. Transitioning from English to Communication, she discovered her passion for human connection through standout courses with professors like McKenzie Vorpahl and Zachary Carr. Active as a student assistant and communication department ambassador, Alexa contributed significantly to UB's vibrant community. Equipped with critical thinking and problem-solving skills, UB prepared her for the workforce, where she now balances part-time work for her mother's home décor business. Alexa aspires to return to UB, actively interviewing for positions within the university and showcasing a diverse career path for communication graduates. Beyond her professional pursuits, she unwinds with activities like reading, playing the drums, and practicing makeup. Alexa's story is an excellent example of a communication degree's impact on personal and professional growth.

Ellie Nucheren

Ellie is a recent UB graduate, May 2023, with a degree in Communication. Currently, she excels as a Client Coordinator at Monroe Medspa. She ensures client satisfaction, drawing skills she developed as a student at UB. Switching from business to communication, Ellie found her passion in interpersonal communication classes, notably under Michelle Green's guidance. UB instilled knowledge and confidence in navigating professional scenarios, attributing her success in client coordination to critical thinking and adaptability learned on our campus. Ellie likes to unwind with books, hike, and spend quality time with her best friends outside of work. She also emphasized a great affinity for attending Buffalo Bills games with her family, as Ellie is a proud Buffalo native and is a big fan of the team.

Resources

Counseling Services:

120 Richmond Quad (North Campus), 716-645-2720

202 Michael Hall (South Campus), 716-829-5800

Health Services:

4350 Maple Rd, Amherst, NY 14226, 716-829-3316

