

# COMMUNICATION STUDIES

s o m e t h i n g   t o   t a l k   a b o u t

interpersonal/organizational | rhetoric | performance

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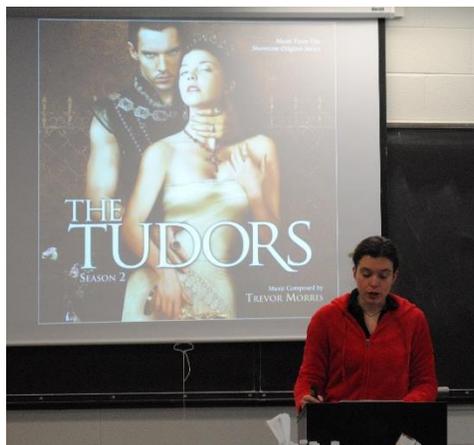


Despite terrible weather conditions, these brave students and UNT professors braved ice and snow to participate in the "New Voices, New Perspectives" conference!

# UNT Annual Student Research Conference

## *“New Voices, New Perspectives: Mini Conference”*

Due to icy Texas weather and a University Closure, the Communication Studies Annual Student Conference, “New Voices, New Perspectives,” was cancelled... for the most part. In spite of all of the weather, several faculty members worked together to pull off a small “mini conference” to salvage something for the students who made their way to campus. The students and faculty braved the cold and ice to UNT, some even walked. Students managed to travel from far and wide and we had 12 presenters including the students who wrote the two top papers, and 17 other attendees. Dr. Wang, Dr. Ahmed, Dr. Lain and Dr. Hlavacik were able to arrive early, organize a refreshment table, and set up a podium and projector for students to use for their presentations. The presenters and faculty members were in good spirits, despite the havoc created by the weather. Kicking off the day was Mary Beth Lursen from the University of Southern Alabama giving her first ever conference presentation “A Virtual Ethnography of *Pottermore*: Blending the Harry Potter Books, Movies and Fandom into one Online Site.” The presenters and attendees had four hours of insightful and rousing discussion. Helene Thompson from Southwestern University presented the top undergraduate paper “‘Screaming Like a Little Girl’: A Dark Descent into Gender, Video Games, and Fear.” Top graduate paper winner, Julie Escurignan of the University of Texas-Austin, also presented her paper “‘History has Never Seemed so Dumb:’ The Uchronization of Style in Modern American Historical Drama Television Series.” The UNT Communication Studies department would like to thank the students, professors, and friends who were able to come out and make the conference a successful event.



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# Faculty Spotlight

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## *Dr. Ahmed's Research & Social Media Class*

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Assistant professor Dr. Ahmed is currently working on two large research projects sponsored by the National Science Foundation concerning the evolution of virtual organizations as a social technology system and the role communication plays throughout this process. Specifically, Dr. Ahmed is examining, when organizations become effective, how this is made possible, precisely what makes an organization effective, and how people negotiate this effectiveness within their organizations. The first project, VOSS: Research on the process of development of virtual research environments, began in 2012 and is expected to be completed sometime this year. Dr. Ahmed's second project is titled GECAT: Global initiative to enhance better scale and distributed computing and analysis technologies to address grand challenge problems around the world. This research began last year and is expected to last five years. For both of these projects, Dr. Ahmed is the principle investigator, and he has received almost \$400,000 dollars to fund the two projects.

In house, Dr. Ahmed has also been doing substantial work in expanding the curriculum of the UNT Communication Studies department. His new class COMM 3820, Social Media Perspectives, is currently in its second semester and has been causing a lot of buzz. What began as a special topics course has evolved into a catalog course, as well as a Digital Media Certificate course. Specifically, Social Media Perspectives focuses on the development of communication technology and its impact on people's lives. Students critically examine the relationship between individual and society as mediated by communication technology. In discussing the course, Dr. Ahmed explained that the course revolves around two large group projects. The first requires the students to use a communication perspective to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of either UNT's Communication Studies department's use of social media or that of one of the department's affiliated organizations. The students use communication principles to examine whether these social media sites are communicating effectively or not and, based on their results, the students then must offer insightful recommendations for how the department and its' organizations may improve their virtual presence. The second group project of Social Media Perspectives focuses on privacy matters and concerns within social media. Students are required to read different "Terms & Condition" documents for social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. By examining these documents, which most people never read, the students analyze the information concerning how these sites share personal information, whether there are any law or policy violations, and how these agreements affect our privacy. Dr. Ahmed is proud of this course's success and of the practical value his course provides the students skills they can use in their future organizational and employment endeavors.

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## Alumni News

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UNT alumnus Stephen Lane Davis received his Bachelor's degree in Communication Studies in 2009 and his Master's degree in 2011. Upon graduating he worked as an adjunct professor at community colleges around North Texas until 2012, when he started working with Park West Gallery where he became an art auctioneer in 2013. Stephen currently lives and works on a cruise ship. When discussing his time within the UNT Communication Studies department, Stephen states that he applies information from each course he took when practicing his current profession. "Intercultural Communication is more important to me now than ever before. As an authority on art, I reference annotations from Dr. Lain's course on Visual Rhetoric, Dr. Trudeau's Performance Methods/Theory, and my business card even has a quote from Aristotle's Poetics that I originally read in Dr. Treat's course on Classical Rhetoric. However, the most important characteristics of my education that apply

to my position are the skills related to public speaking. Communicating with audiences ranging from 50 to 200 people several times a week is an integral aspect of the job and, to be successful, I draw on all of the techniques that I learned and taught during my tenure in the communication studies department." When recalling obstacles that he has had to overcome as a public speaker, Stephen reminisces about a cruise he was working on that was rented out by a group of over 2000 nudists. "Most Communication Studies professionals are aware of the old adage that if a speakers are anxious when speaking in front of a crowd, that they should imagine them in the nude, which (theoretically) would alleviate their anxiety of speaking in public. Now, from personal experience, I can definitively state that this piece of advice should never be used again. It is most definitely not easier to speak in front of a group of naked people!" Through this interesting and sometimes surprising profession, Stephen has been afforded the opportunity to travel the world and meet new and exciting people. So far, Stephen has traveled to 5 continents, more than 50 countries, and over 100 different ports of call. These are life-changing opportunities, he says, were made possible by the knowledge he gained from his many years as a communication scholar and teacher.

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## UNT Debate

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### *UNT Debate Continues to Impress*

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During the weekend of February 27<sup>th</sup> UNT's mean green debate teams braved the snowstorm and journeyed on to the University of Texas at Dallas for two debate tournaments. Junior, Hope Saucedo and Senior, Darrian Carroll competed in the District 3 Qualifying Tournament where they advanced to elimination rounds but sadly lost 2-1. Meanwhile, Erick Alonso and Daniel Martinek fought their way through the Mid-American Conference where they advanced to the final round and came out as champions of the tournament! The UNT department of Communication Studies would like to congratulate this team on their impressive success, and to congratulate Erick Alonso for being the first

student from the Dallas Urban Debate Alliance to win a college tournament!

*UNT Debate at the 2015 National Debate Tournaments*

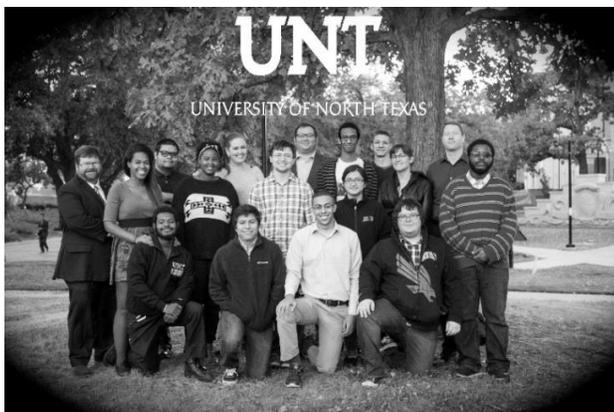


Earlier this month our UNT debate teams traveled to two different national debate tournaments. These tournaments began with preliminary rounds where each team participates in eight debates, four affirmative and four negative. Teams that win five or more debates progress to elimination rounds. In the elimination rounds, a loss signals the end of the competition for the losing team. During the weekend of March 13<sup>th</sup>, UNT debaters Hope Saucedo and Daniel Martinek traveled to the Parliamentary Debate Association's National tournament in Kansas City, Kansas where they advanced to the double-octa

elimination round but regretfully lost with a 2-1 decision. The next weekend, March 19<sup>th</sup>, the dynamic mean green debaters traveled back to Kansas City for the Cross Examination Debate Association National Tournament. At this tournament Daniel Martinek and Erick Alonso went 4-4 in the prelims, but lost in the break round negating their advancement to elimination rounds. Hope Saucedo and Darrian Carroll impressively finished with a 6-2 record in prelim rounds, which afforded them the privilege of bypassing the triple-octo finals. Advancing directly to double-octo finals, their team was one of the 43 teams that qualified for elimination rounds out of the 116 teams present. Despite their hard work, Hope and Darrian lost to a team from the University of Texas at Dallas in the elimination rounds with a 2-1 decision. Impressively of the 240 debaters competing, Darrian Carroll was recognized as 7<sup>th</sup> best speaker of the national tournament and Hope Saucedo was recognized as 21<sup>st</sup> best speaker. The UNT Communication Studies department is very proud of the strides our UNT debaters' are making



*Debate-A-Palooza 2015 and Debate Alumni Reunion*



**This year UNT's Debate-A-Palooza will be held Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup> in the Business Leadership Building. We are very excited to announce that this event will also include a debate alumni reunion! Dr. Lain is inviting all alumni to return and enjoy Debate-A-Palooza and the special banquet celebrating UNT debate team-past and present!**

# Student Activities

## Lambda Pi Eta



Enjoy \$2 golf cart cab rides around campus!!  
**March 23rd 11am-2pm**  
**March 24th 2-5pm**  
**March 25th 11am-2pm**

Proceeds go to the Department of Communication Studies Honor Society Lambda Pi Eta.



Back from spring break, Lambda Pi Eta had an exciting week full of philanthropic activities. LPH hosted a fundraising event titled “Comm Cabs,” where Lambda Pi Eta members charged students \$2 for golf cart rides to and from their classes and vehicles. Also, Lambda Pi Eta participated in the citywide event titled the Great American Clean-Up. This event, hosted on behalf of the non-profit organization “Keep Denton Beautiful,” strives to encourage the community to be actively involved in creating a clean and beautiful city. The Communication Studies department is thrilled for and impressed by these hardworking students pursuing selfless acts benefiting the environment and the Denton community. Look to our next department newsletter for a recap of these events and pictures!

## Meet the President of Lambda Pi Eta

Lambda Pi Eta President Madi Rodriguez is a senior Communication Studies major from Keller Texas. Madi’s research focus is rhetorical studies, and she enjoys analyzing education programs and at-risk youth communities. Her favorite Communication Studies class so far has been Gender Communication with Dr. Enck because of the interesting and thought provoking topics addressed in the class. One can usually find Madi in the Comm library preparing for class with her peers but, when she can manage an escape, Madi enjoys spending time with her family, playing with her four dogs Roxie, Bella, Penny and Tyson, and going out with friends.



Fun fact about Madi: She loves Communication Studies so much so she had a symbol of such permanently tattooed on her arm. When explaining her reasoning for she said that after she completed her introductory courses she found that many elements she needed to be successful in life are based in communication principles and practices.

### NCA Future Pros

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Earlier this month NCA Future Pros hosted their first guest speaker of the semester, UNT Communication Studies alumnus Brittany Gilbert, a senior HR generalist at Texas Health Harris Methodist hospital. Attendees characterized Ms. Gilbert's presentation as extremely enlightening. She spoke to the organization about resume building and the do's and don'ts of what to include on one's resume. Further, she discussed important qualities to demonstrate during an interview like how to dress, how to handle difficult questions, etc. Ms. Gilbert also discussed her professional life with the students, detailing the many duties of an HR generalist ranging from dealing with mass quantities of emails to hosting team building activities to doing the task that no one enjoys--firing employees. Moreover, she

highlighted the importance of creating a judgmental free zone for employees to express their concerns so that the company can address important issues and move forward.

### Meet the President of NCA Future Pros

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NCA Future Pros President and senior communication studies major Kylee Ince is from Carrollton, Texas, and has been a member of the organization for one year. When asked what motivated her to become president, Kylee exclaimed, "I just really enjoyed the organization and working with Dr. Richardson, so I was really anxious to get involved and be a leader for NCA Future Pros members." Kylee is Interpersonal and Organizational studies oriented; however, her most recent enjoyable research combined rhetorical and performance scholarship to focus on black feminist culture and the popular archetypes of black females portrayed in mediated popular culture. Kylee's favorite class in the department was Performance of Literature with Dr. Holly Vaughn her junior year. This class was by far her favorite because the comfortable environment allowed students to experience new and different methods and perspectives while being vulnerable with one another. The supportive climate allowed the members of the class to bond and allowed her to make friends that she still has today.



Fun fact about Kylee: She is a self-proclaimed dog whisperer who has the ability to calm rambunctious puppies and to train dogs to entertain. Outside of academia, she enjoys watching romantic comedies, attempting to cook, making Pinterest inspired DIY crafts that "sadly never turn out as pretty as the picture" and, when she has the time, she enjoys long distance running.

### *Introducing the President of the Performance Interest Group*

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PIGs President Amanda Koen is a senior communication studies major from Ft. Worth Texas. Amanda expresses excitement over her leadership role within PIGs, which she decided to seek after working closely with Dr. Holly Vaughn. Like many of us, Amanda has a fear of performing onstage but, rather than letting this hold her back, she used it as a motivating force to push herself to work harder to attain her goals in performance studies. Amanda describes how she fell in love with performance during her first UNT performance studies class, Performance of Literature, with Dr. Holly Vaughn, where students selected excerpts of literature to perform. She describes this class as being fun, enlightening and very inspirational. Amanda's favorite class during her time at UNT has been Performance Methods, also with Dr. Holly Vaughn, where students created their own material and critiqued performances for the first time. "It was a very creative atmosphere in that we took one performance and then had to find ways to tell the same story through three different methods." Amanda's favorite quote from the class which has stuck with her comes from Chimamanda Adichie: "The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."



discipline those who function outside them.

Amanda's research consists of analyzing bodies and how they perform, how language is used to create structures of power, and researching the social constructions of society and the implications of critiquing them. For example, she recently participated in a group performance where the performers analyzed and critiqued how, as children, we are taught what love is, what the stages of love are, and how we are expected to perform love. The main trope used within the performance was the song "a boy and a girl sitting in a tree..." In the performance, the performers began to subvert the social constructions of gender and sexuality to demonstrate how these structures

Fun fact about Amanda: "After high school I spent a couple years in Oregon, which is where I met my husband and where we will be moving after graduation to begin building a home while I work to receive my graduate degree." Further, Amanda enjoys teaching at elementary schools where she promotes self-esteem and financial literacy to young boys and girls. "I am passionate about finding ways to teach younger generations in ways that I believe the education system is failing to do so."

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# Around Town & Other News

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Comm Ambassadors for Spring 2015

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We are excited to announce the Communication Studies Ambassadors for Spring 2015!

Kenzie Muckway, Catalina Torres, Lucas Martin, Cotton Hensely,  
Sarah Wright, Alyssa Jenkins, Taylor Bell & Austin Schubert.

These student ambassadors mentor and tutor their peers currently enrolled in lower level Communication Studies courses. The ambassadors help students with upcoming assignments, projects, exams, and general advice pertaining to classes they are taking. Students, please feel free to visit the ambassadors in the CMC Lab in GAB 318, and check out the communication studies department website for further information regarding days and times when the ambassadors are available.

[www.communication.unt.edu](http://www.communication.unt.edu)

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Upcoming Graduate Performances

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Alicia Garavaglia's graduate performance *Provoking the Princess: Unlocking Femininity's Vault* will premier Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> in the black box theatre. "*Provoking the Princess* is a real and fictional journey of transformation for three young dancers performing as princesses. Together they explore concepts of gender identity and femininity as displayed on the body through dance. Using play theory to trouble the normative categories of gender and race, *Provoking the Princess* aims to unlock the Disney vault and answer questions of fundamental ambiguity."

Bryan Lysinger's graduate performance *About Face* will premier Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> in the black box theatre. "*About Face* is a show about how individual soldiers navigate personal identity within the confines post-9/11 Army ideals. Using Kenneth Burke's dramatic pentad, *About Face* investigates motive behind military responses to issues such as PTSD, suicide, sexual assault, and "heroism."

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# Looking Forward

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## Upcoming Events:

*Alicia Garavaglia's graduate performance "Provoking the Princess,"  
Black Box Theatre, April 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm*

*Bryan Lysinger's graduate performance "About Face,"  
Black Box Theatre, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm*

*Lambda Pi Eta Induction Ceremony, May 1<sup>st</sup> at 7pm in the Black Box Theatre, GAB 321*

*Debate-a-Palooza, Business Leadership Building, May 1<sup>st</sup>*

Look for another issue of our newsletter next month.

Keep in contact with us through our website [www.communication.unt.edu](http://www.communication.unt.edu)



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