

CommConnect



WINTER 2019

Welcome to the first-ever *CommConnect*, a new news source for the Department of Communication Studies at California State University, Sacramento.

With this newsletter we hope to provide important news and information about the Communication Studies program that you may have missed elsewhere.

Most of all, we want to highlight and celebrate the achievements of the more than 1,400 undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, and more than 70 full- and part-time faculty members.

As a new publication and information source, we are of course open to all ideas you may have for interesting features, news or other information that you would like to see. As we get started, please route your story ideas to me or

Assistant Professor **Andrew Stoner**, who has volunteered to be our newsletter editor.

We all share an interest in communication and how it can improve and impact the world around us. At the same time, we often find ourselves busy with the day-to-day demands of our classes, advising and our research, and leave behind important information we can benefit from sharing.

My hope is that *CommConnect* will do in fact what its name implies, connect us all just a little bit better.



Gerri Smith, Ph.D.
Department Chair

Exploring the Antarctic



Communication Studies Professor **Kathryn Kasic** is off to the great white north. (See page 2)

Photo courtesy **Billy Collins**.

Sac State PR program ranks among the best

Study.com ranks top public relations programs

A guide to the top public relations programs in the U.S. for 2019 by Study.com has included California State University, Sacramento on its list for the first time.

Study.com researched potential schools, degrees and careers to create the guide. The inclusion of Sac State was based on career and educational resources, faculty, job placement, and other factors.

The study specifically noted Sacramento State's commitment to Commission on Public Relations standards, the Epsilon Phi honor society for students, and the active Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter.



"The faculty who lead PR courses at Sacramento State have a breadth of experience in the PR world."

— Study.com

Professor goes deep for Antarctic research

Kathryn Kasic, a new assistant professor in the Sac State Film Program was a part of an unusual exploration of the Antarctic ice sheet in December.

Kasic was among scientists and academicians who researched a subglacial lake in Antarctica that will transform how we view the frozen continent.

The project, known as SALSA (Subglacial Antarctic Lakes Scientific Access), aims to better understand the interactions between the Antarctic ice sheet and the recently discovered rivers and lakes that exist beneath the ice.

A team of 50 scientists, support and technical staff (including Kasic) established a remote field camp about 500 miles from the South Pole using special tractors, sleds and ski-equipped aircraft. While there, they undertook large-scale expeditions to explore Mercer Subglacial Lake, a lake the size of Manhattan that lies beneath West Antarctica's Whillans Ice Plain.

Kasic's portion of this project was to use film and photography to regularly update the daily field



FACULTY NEWS

reports from the expedition. Those reports are available online at <http://salsa-antarctica.org>

The SALSA project was funded in 2016 in part by the National Science Foundation's Office of Polar Programs.

Kasic joined the faculty for film studies in the Department of Communication Studies in 2018. She holds an MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking from Montana State University, and a MA in Evolution, Ecology and Behavior from the University of Texas, where she also earned her undergraduate degree in Integrative Biology.



One-woman show makes its off-Broadway debut

Dr. Elaine Gale opens 'One Good Egg' for two performance in New York

Elaine Gale, associate professor, calls herself a “Possibilitarian,” not an Episcopalian or a Presbyterian like most residents of her hometown of North Platte, Nebraska.

That’s a line from the newly hatched one-woman show, *One Good Egg*, which Gale performed in its New York City debut off-Broadway in October.

“I remember one day I wrote, ‘one-woman show,’ on my whiteboard,” Gale said. “I had no idea how to do that. But I considered it a spiritual assignment, and I knew I would meet the right people to teach me and help me figure it out.”

One Good Egg was picked up by United Solo, a prestigious festival of one-person productions in New York. It played Oct. 19-20, 2018 at Theatre Raw. The show is essentially autobiographical, packed with humor and a vast “emotional palette.”

“It’s a mid-life story—about kind of coming to terms with saying goodbye to your youth and innocence and celebrating the life you have,” she said.

FACULTY NEWS



Elaine Gale on stage in *One Good Egg*.

Six Comm Studies faculty in the 2018 U-Nite lineup

Six professors in the Department of Communication Studies were included in the lineup for this year’s U-Nite event at the Crocker Art Museum.

U-Nite is an annual celebration of art and culture and invites the Sacramento community to discover the wonder and expressive power of art via performances, talks, film screenings, and collaborative presentations. The 2018 presenters from Communication Studies Department were:

■ Professor **Molly Dugan** and Assistant Professor **Philip Reese** who led an interactive presentation titled, “Fake News: What You Don’t Know Can Hurt You.”

■ **Dan Janos**, assistant professor, screened a working copy of his new film, “Flora Shall Cross (Edward’s Wife).”

■ **Kathryn Kasic**, assistant professor, presented a combination film screening and poetry reading titled, “Through the Mirrors.”

■ Professor **Jenny Stark** showed her film, “Teeny-Cine” in continuous performances.

■ **Andrew Stoner**, assistant professor, spoke about his forthcoming book, “The Journalist of Castro Street: The Life of Randy Shilts.”

The event was hosted by Dr. **Sheree Meyer**, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, and included a total of 33 performances, presentations and film screenings. Meyer noted the event compliments the recently adopted Creative Edge Plan by the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission.



Student, faculty news updates

A busy place like the Communication Studies Department produces a lot of activity — and plenty of achievements and accomplishments worth celebrating. Here's just a few.

■ Sacramento State was well represented at the National Communication Association 2018 convention at Salt Lake City, Utah in November. Ten current graduate students, recent alums, and faculty members presented at NCA:

David Clementson, assistant professor, made three presentations of his research, including *"Effects of a Journalist Accusing a Politician of Evasiveness," "Susceptibility to Deception in Political News Interviews,"* and *"How Apologizing is More Effective Than Evasion."*



Aryana P. Gooley, MA student, presented *"Playing with Epidemic Narratives: Repositioning Collective Cultural Consciousness with Black Identity as Praiseworthy Entities."*

Kyle Hanners, recent M.A. graduate, offered *"Immersion into Simulation: An Analysis of Cosplay," "Difference Matters: The Function of Comparison in Teacher-Learner Interactions,"* and *"Everyone Should Work in the Industry: How Employees Make Sense of Food & Beverage Service."*

Shawna Malvini Redden, assistant professor, made three presentations: *"Playing with Discursive Contradictions: How Social Media Organizes Communication," "Critical Play: Pushing Boundaries with Innovative Research Methods,"* and *"Using LEGO Playgroups to Address Issues in Organizational Communication."*

Kikuko Omori, assistant professor, presented *"East-West Intercultural Edutainment at Play," "International Students' Facebook Use and Acculturation,"* and *"Perception of Physician Credibility Through an Online Doctor Profile."*

Mendocino Mentions



State Hornet nabs National Pacemaker honors

The State Hornet was named one of 37 finalists for a high honor from the Associated Collegiate Press.

ACP honors college newspapers with its annual National Newspaper Pacemaker Award, and *The State Hornet* was nominated in the four-year college category (along with the student newspapers at Chico State and Cal Poly).

"The Pacemaker is the association's preeminent award," said **Laura Widmer**, ACP's executive director. "ACP is honored to recognize the best of the best."

In all, 165 student newspapers entered the competition, up 15 from previous years. Entries came from 40 of the 50 states and Canada.

Widmer said two teams of three judges devoted several days to the judging and studied every entry, discussing its strengths and weaknesses. In the end, 37 finalists were named, with Chico State being one of the final Pacemaker Award winners.

Dr. **Gerri Smith**, department chair, and **Stu VanAirsdale**, *Hornet* adviser, credited the hard work of an outstanding team of students for the honor.

Gary Lundgren, associate director and coordinator of the Pacemaker competition, noted: "The best newspapers didn't just recap campus events, they delivered tenacious in-depth reporting



STUDENT NEWS



and impartial and objective coverage. With so much happening in our country, it was interesting to see how those stories were reported from a campus perspective."

NCA presentations —

■ CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Erik Ramirez, MA student, "*The DREAMer Experience: A Qualitative Study of Undocumented College Students' Identity and Communication.*"

Michael Rangoonwala, MA student, "*Communicating Multicultural Identity in Marriages: An Exploration of Adult Third Culture Kids.*"

Haley Schaff, recent MA graduate, "*Is This the Part of Town Where Flies are Made?: Analyzing the Social Values in Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt.*" Schaff's paper was selected as one the Top Papers in the Master's Education Section.

Carmen Stitt, associate professor, "*Perception of Physician Credibility Through an Online Doctor Profile.*"

Mark A.E. Williams, professor, "*Dialogue, Confession and Faithful Citizenship: Christian Public Life in an Age of Contempt.*"



Hiring update

A search has begun for a new tenure track Assistant Professor in Rhetoric for the Department of Communication Studies.

The position was recently posted nationwide and seeks candidates with a Ph.D. in communication studies with an unambiguous emphasis on rhetoric. ABD candidates will be considered if all degree requirements are completed at the time of appointment.

Members of the Hiring Committee are professors **Jacqueline Irwin**, **Mark Williams** and **David Zuckerman**.

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled — with a targeted appointment date of August 2019.

Bonilla: Nonlinear storytelling in digital platforms

Professor **Diego Bonilla** has returned to his research on nonlinear storytelling in digital platforms.

Recently Bonilla presented *"The Aptitude to Find Patterns and the Production of Soft Cinema,"* at the 2018 Digital Humanities Conference in Mexico City, Mexico.

In addition, he recently offered a video recording of a presentation in Spanish for the Congresso Internacional Media Ecology and Images Studies Conference, and its section on "Challenges for Visual Narratives."



FACULTY NEWS

The title of his presentation was, *"The Construction and Editing of Narrative Cinema Through Programming."*

New faculty in Comm Studies

The 2018-19 school year started with two new full-time faculty members to welcome.

Kimberly Aguilar joined the faculty as an Assistant Professor. She will be teaching Theories of Interpersonal Communication, Instructional Design and Teaching, the senior seminar in Interpersonal Communication, and a graduate level course in Dyadic Communication.

Aguilar earned her Ph.D. from the University of Utah, and her B.A. and M.A. from California State University, San Bernardino. A native of Southern California, her research interests include classroom participation, cold calling and online learning environments. She is an active member of the Western States Communication Association.

Katherine Kasic, an assistant professor for film studies, also arrived at Sacramento State his year. She



KIMBERLY AGUILAR



KATHERINE KASIC

holds an MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking from Montana State University, a M.A. in Evolution, Ecology and Behavior from the University of Texas, where she also earned her undergraduate degree in Integrative Biology.

An article about Kasic's new research adventures in Antarctica can be found on page 2 of this newsletter.

FACULTY NEWS



Cringeworthy

Comm Studies alum gets serious about awkwardness

Awkward moments—it seems every life is full of them, some played out for all to see, and others (mercifully) started and ended in secrecy allowing one to live for another day.

The issue of awkwardness, often driven by nagging self-conscious feelings of doubt and fear, are at the center of a well-received new book from Sacramento State alumna **Melissa Dahl**.

Dahl, a 2007 graduate of the Communication Studies program at Sacramento State, works as editor of *New York* magazine's blog, *The Science of Us*.

Her blog work causes her to spend time studying science and research of all kinds. Inspired, she decided to take up a funny and highly readable examination of what it means to feel awkward. Her new book, *"Cringeworthy: A Theory of Awkwardness"* (2018: Portfolio/Penguin Books) takes a look at the upside of awkwardness, battling "cringe attacks" and why most things are not as cringe-worthy as they may seem.

In a *Sactown Magazine* interview conducted by our own **Stu VanAirsdale**, faculty adviser to *The State Hornet*, Dahl explained: "We typically think of awkwardness as ... a personality trait. I was more interested in the feeling. If someone says something awkward, maybe they don't necessarily even know that they've triggered that feeling for everyone else in the room, whereas it spreads and the rest of us can feel it."

Dahl's book considers the impact of social media in all of this, and noted: "If you've ever walked by someone who's taking a really elaborately performed selfie, or someone who's having [another person] take a really elaborately performed shot of them or something, it's sort of awkward to watch. I think it's because of that distinction between how you're trying to present yourself in the world and how other

people are seeing you. For me, when I looked into this, I saw this clash that seemed to evoke this cringey feeling."

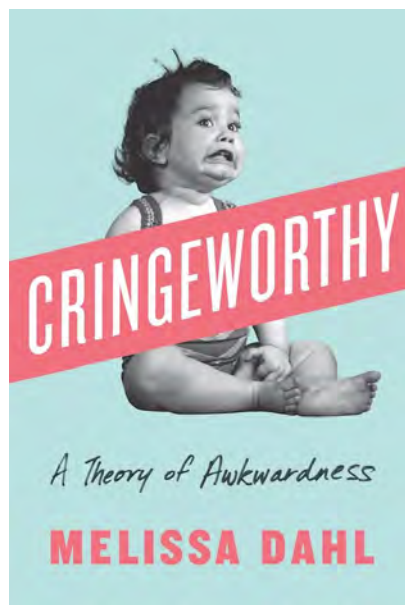
A portion of Dahl's work was inspired by her

work on *The State Hornet* during her college years. She spent two years working in the newspaper's office—a time she describes as "a bunch of 19- and 20-year-olds playing office." From that she gained "an interesting first look at office friendships and office politics."

In the end, Dahl recommends "a



MELISSA DAHL and her new book, *"Cringeworthy."*



ALUMNI NEWS

theory of self-indifference" and suggests, "Don't be so hard on yourself Maybe you didn't say something stupid ... maybe that's a time to indulge in some of that compassionate cringing and say, 'Oh, I've been here before.'"

The Communication Studies Department was proud to host Dahl during the Fall 2018 term for a book reading, and visits with current graduate and undergraduate students.

Alumni news for us?

We welcome news and information about what the alumni of the Sacramento State Communication Studies Department are doing. Please consider submitting information about the good things our former students are doing for future CommConnect issues to andrew.stoner@csus.edu

Two faculty members, two new books

Two Sacramento State Communication Studies professors enter 2019 with two new books rolling off the presses.

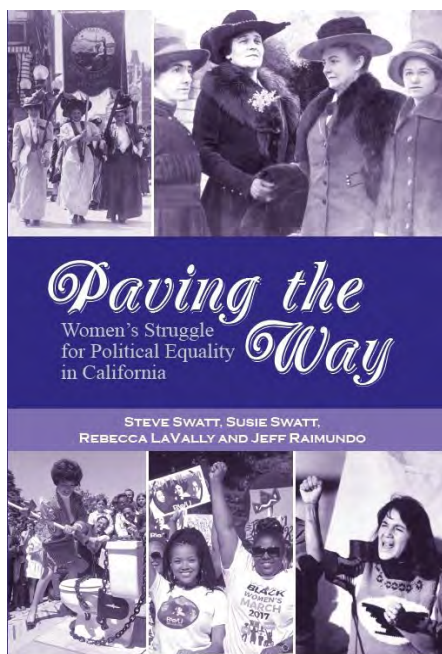
Interestingly, both books deal with issues found at the confluence of mass communication and political function in the United States.

Lecturer **Rebecca LaVally** is a co-author (with **Steve Swatt, Susie Swatt** and **Jeff Raimundo**) of *"Paving the Way: Women's Struggle for Political Equality in California"* (2018: Berkeley Public Policy Press). The book tells the politics of California women from the Gold Rush era to the 2018 election.

This is LaVally's second collaboration with this group of veteran California journalists and authors—their 2015 book, *"Game Changers: Twelve Elections that Transformed California"* (2015: Heydey/CHS Books) won the California Historical Society Book Award.

Praise for the current book on female trailblazers in California political history has won favorable advance reviews, including one from **Toni Atkins** (D), President pro Tempore of the California State Senate, who said the book "brings to life the remarkable stories of extraordinary women, many of them lost to history—who overcame discrimination and entrenched stereotypes to make exceptional contributions to California's rich political history."

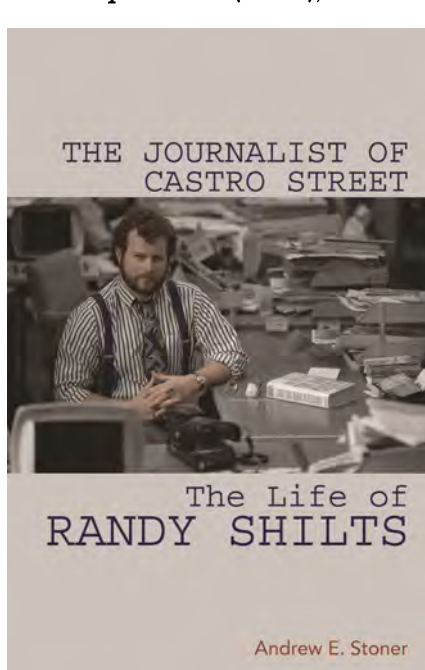
LaVally teaches rhetorical criticism, free speech, and persuasion at Sacramento State. She earned her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Language from the University of Texas at Austin. She is a former editor of the California State Senate's public-policy research office and former Sacramento Bureau Chief for United Press International and Gannett News Service.



Two new books from Dr. LaVally and Dr. Stoner.

Andrew Stoner, assistant professor, has a new book coming in early 2019 on the life and work of noted journalist and author **Randy Shilts** (1951-1994). *"The Journalist of Castro Street: The Life of Randy Shilts"* (2019: University of Illinois Press) examines the journalism and authorship of Shilts as the first openly gay reporter on the staff of *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Prior to his death in 1994, Shilts authored three salient books including, *"The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk"* (1982), *"And the Band Played On: Politics, People and the AIDS Epidemic"* (1987), and *"Conduct Unbecoming: Gays & Lesbians in the U.S. Military"* (1993). All three books were best-sellers and award winners.



An advance review of Stoner's book from **Edward M. Alwood**, former CNN correspondent and author, says, *"The Journalist of Castro Street* is engrossing yet haunting. It is indispensable for anyone who would understand the early years of the

FACULTY NEWS

AIDS crisis, the intersection of the epidemic and the news media, and the challenges facing Shilts as the openly-gay journalist blazed a trail into the media mainstream. It is not merely a biography of Shilts, it is more."

Stoner teaches public relations writing, crisis communication, campaigns and the senior seminar. An active member of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), he earned his Ph.D. from Colorado State University. A former reporter for *The South Bend Tribune*, Stoner served as deputy press secretary to the Governor of Indiana, and is the author of seven other non-fiction books.

Pulitzer Prize winners: Journalism's top honor given to three Sacramento State alumni

Students are often encouraged to dream big, and sometimes big dreams truly do come true.

Three Sacramento State University alumni are among this year's winners of the Pulitzer Prize, the top award given to journalists in the United States.

Derek Moore, Jim Sweeney and **Martin Espinoza** shared the prize in the Breaking News category for the online and print coverage of October 2017 fires that devastated parts of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County. All three men provided coverage for *The Santa Rosa Press Democrat*.

Pulitzer judges noted *the Press Democrat* "for lucid and tenacious coverage of historic wildfires that ravaged the city of Santa Rosa and Sonoma County, expertly utilizing an array of tools, including photography, video and social media platforms, to bring clarity to its readers—in real time and in subsequent in-depth reporting."

The Press Democrat, a daily newspaper with a circulation just under 50,000, received nearly five million hits to its website and 78 million separate page views of their fire coverage.

Sweeney, who serves as assistant editorial director at the newspaper, wrote editorials on the fires. His colleague Moore, who had just left

the Press Democrat staff after several years, volunteered to help write up daily coverage of the disaster despite being evacuated from his own home.

Espinoza, who also lived in the fire zone and had to evacuate his home, provided live online updates. "How overwhelmingly sad it was," he told *The State Hornet*. "You could feel the sorrow."



Above: Battling the Sonoma County flames.

Below: The Pulitzer Prize.

ALUMNI NEWS



All three men said they had to balance their pride in winning such a prestigious award with the reality of the loss and destruction across their community.

"You do feel conflicted because it reflects suffering on a massive scale," Moore said. "It comes with a sense of deep sadness, a loss of life."

While an undergraduate, Moore served as news editor of *The State Hornet*.

This is the second Pulitzer Prize for *the Press Democrat*. The newspaper also won the award in 1997 for its photographic coverage of firefighters struggling to save a teenager from a flash flood.



Remembering "Gene" Knepprath

Faculty, staff and alumni paused to remember **Hubert Eugene "Gene" Knepprath** who taught in the Communication Studies Department for 32 years prior to his retirement in 1993.

Knepprath died Sept. 12, 2018 at the age of 89. He is survived by his wife Kay and four children.

Memorial contributions in his honor may be made to the Knepprath Fund at Sacramento Self Help Housing:

<http://www.sacselfhelp.org>



College of Arts & Letters faculty having a good time at Future Hornets Day. Second from right, front row is our own Dr. David Zuckerman. Not pictured, but also volunteering were Dr. Gerri Smith and Dr. Mark Ludwig.



Sacramento State graduate student Aryana Gooley had her poster, "Audience Perceptions of LGBTQ Characters," accepted to the AEJMC National Convention in August.

PARTING SHOTS



The Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) attracted a big crowd to its opening meeting for the Fall term. PRSSA. A large contingent of Sac State students attended the PRSSA Convention in Austin, Texas, and won a bid for a regional PRSSA convention at Sacramento State University in 2019.



The SPJ chapter hosted two events this fall, including an Advising Workshop just in time for course scheduling for Spring 2019, and a post-election analysis panel featuring **Alexei Koseff** of *The Sacramento Bee*, **Dan Walters** of CALmatters, and moderator **Randol White** of Capitol Public Radio.