



Welcome PhD Class of 2015!

Please join me in welcoming the PhD class of 2015 to the School of Communication Studies at Ohio University.

Each student that this packet introduces you to reflects our efforts to search for a very bright and diverse group of scholars. In many ways, these individuals will serve as a foundation for much of what we will do in the school for the next four years.

As each of these individuals comes to join our School, we want them to feel welcome in our program.

To help our efforts to actively socialize and treat our graduate students as colleagues, I have asked each of these students to provide a brief biography and statement of interests. And, to help you associate each statement with a real human being, each has also provided a photograph so you can put a face with a story.

I look forward to working with each of you and each of our new students as they join the COMS community in Athens.

Best regards,

BEN

Amanda Torrens

I received a BA in Organizational Communication in 2008 from Western Michigan University with minors in Practical Writing and Nonprofit Management. After spending a year away from school looking for jobs in the Non-profit sector and working retail, I decided it was time to go back to school. With some encouragement from a few amazing faculty members, I began my MA work at WMU in the fall of 2009 and fell in love with teaching and studying Interpersonal Communication. I have worked closely with Drs. Chad and Autumn Edwards on research surrounding Peak Communication Experiences and I intend to continue this work with them as I begin my doctoral studies at OU.

Generally speaking, my research interests are centered on communication within interpersonal relationships, specifically close friendships. I am also interested in matters of spiritual and religious communication, both interpersonally and within organizational contexts, with particular focus on how personal narratives and other forms of ethnographic writing shape our understanding of these things.

When I need a break from school and teaching, I enjoy retreating to the outdoors for fresh air and exercise. Also, penning the great American novel is definitely on my life's to-do list. I have been writing for recreation and my own personal sanity since I was very young and this practice has served me well both academically and spiritually. Reading is one of my preferred escapes, and my guilty pleasures include anything by Dean Koontz or James Patterson.





Kevin J. Hales

Kevin Hales was born and raised in the Bronx, New York. He is a proud graduate of historic Fisk University, where he majored in history, religion and philosophy. His MA, in history, was earned at North Carolina Central University, with a concentration on British Colonial West Africa (the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria).

He has enjoyed two stints in Fulbright programs conducting research in both West and southern Africa. Kevin has taught at the two-year and four-year level. He has been a Visiting Researcher at the University of Michigan and a Visiting Scholar at Michigan State University. In 2005, Kevin was selected as the NISOD Teaching Excellence Professor by the University of Texas at Austin. Kevin was also selected as an NEH/Johns Hopkins University Summer Fellow in Mexico, Belize and Guatemala to research comparative Olmec and African indigenous writing-systems for 2011.

Researching the culture and lives of African-descended people is his passion. Currently, his research interests include: Lowcountry Gullah and Geechee culture, epigraphy and semiotics in West Africa and Black representations in Western media.

Pornchanok (Porsche) Ruengvirayudh

My nickname is "Porsche." I come from Thailand. I am a lecturer in Communication Arts (Television Broadcasting) at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. I also work as an MC (Master of Ceremonies) on television and a personal tutor for my little student for my part-time jobs. Moreover, I've been serving a Toastmasters club since when I was in Ottawa, Canada.

I earned my Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Kasetsart University and Master's degree in Speech Communication from Chulalongkorn University. My Master's thesis is about verbal and nonverbal personality development of 16-18-year-old Thai children.

For my Doctoral research, the area that I intend to pursue is interpersonal communication between children and personal coaches as mind shapers, character developers, and life coaches.

In my free time, I love playing tennis, jogging, snorkeling, traveling, watching movies, playing the piano, and cooking. Work hard, play harder !!





Jordan Compton

Over the past 10 years I have kept a short living radius. I received my undergraduate at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, MO. I then moved 23 miles to the south of Bolivar to Springfield, MO, where I received my MA from Missouri State University. At the completion of the MA program, I moved back to Bolivar, MO where I accepted an Instructor of Communication/Assistant Director of Forensics position at my alma mater and it is where I have remained for the past three years. I look forward to breaking away from the Ozarks as I transition to Ohio.

My previous research can be summed up as a mix between political and sports communication. I have enjoyed analyzing campaign messages developed on social networking websites, using Dr. Benoit's image repair typology to analyze the image repair strategies of politicians and sports figures, as well as performing research on Forensics pedagogy. I look forward to continue working in these research areas as well as broadening my interests while at OU.

On a personal note, I'm a bit of a sports nut. You can catch me in front of a TV Sunday afternoons in the Fall, especially if there is a Kansas City Chiefs or Green Bay Packers game on (I already have tickets to the Chiefs/Packers game in Kansas City during December). My love of sports does not just end at football, as I am a huge fan of the Kansas City Royals, as well. If this does not prove that I am dedicated, I don't know what will. I look forward to getting to know everybody in the department and look forward to the opportunity to watch a Chiefs/Packers Super Bowl with you in the future. I'd even take a Royals World Series game....

Zhou (Julie) Li

I received my Bachelor's degrees from both Sichuan International Studies University (Chongqing, China) and Dickinson State University (Dickinson, ND). I was in Dickinson for one-year exchange student program, and there I picked up the major of Communication Studies. But back in China during my college study, my major was English Translation. I got my Master's in Communication Studies from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

I dreamt of becoming a lawyer when I was a little girl and really enjoyed the feeling of convincing others. But after I missed the chance to get into a law school in China, I lost my way for quite a long time. Luckily, I found my interest again after I was exposed in Communication Studies at DSU.

During the two-year Master's study in UNL, I found myself interested in looking at different forms of political communication in terms of leadership, especially the contrast and comparison of leadership in China and the United States. Meanwhile, I also want to explore if public spheres and counterpublics exist in a highly-censored context, like China.

In my free time, I enjoy hanging out and watching movies with friends, or maybe just staying home and doing the cleaning stuff. I would love to empty my head and really relax when not studying.





Nancy Regina Gomez Arrieta

Cultural practices are susceptible to transformation, and through the study of communication we can identify symbolic forms on which such practices are supported. My interest in pursuing a Doctorate in Communication with emphasis on the relationship between communication and culture is supported on this thesis, understanding communication as a means to build societies where justice is a value and communication is polyphonic.

My interest in communication and culture area arose during the development of my undergraduate thesis, "Woman in public: A pending story" (2001). This investigation was carried out through the methodology of structural analysis. The search for a polyphonic communication and my growing interest on the urban processes led me to explore the relationship between neighborhood, youth and women in my Masters' Thesis from Universidad del Norte (Barranquilla, Colombia).

I am sure that this Communication Ph.D. will help me to identify specific tools that will allow the development of cultural diversity to include and to respect all groups and areas of society. For me this is a great opportunity for my personal and professional life. I will share this experience with my child, Jose Alejandro and my husband Roberto.

Maria Subert

I am a Hungarian media journalist, a member of the Hungarian TV and Film Artists' Association, and the Hungarian Film and Television Alliance. Along with my husband, I produced multiple documentary films around the world.

After earning a BA in music, I started studying philosophy in Budapest in 1978, one year after Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher, exiled members of the Budapest School, took up positions at The New School in New York City. My cultural heritage was their unique "life philosophy."

As a PhD student, I studied at Goethe University, Frankfurt from Karl-Otto Apel, Jürgen Habermas, and Richard Bernstein. I came to the United States with my husband and two children, and shortly after, I realized the power of language teaching minority students.

As a faculty member, I started studying communication at Kingsborough College, New York, and decided to pursue a PhD in this field.

I am interested in investigating what the "stranger's" function in a given linguistic and imaginary community is, and what kind of moral and ethical position he or she represents.

My favorite activities are watching movies, and talking with those who are considered strangers.





Jean Claude Kwitonda

I come from Rwanda. I did a Bachelor of Arts with Education (English Education) at Kigali Institute of Education in Rwanda in the Faculty of Arts and Languages.

After graduation in 2006, I became a Teaching Assistant in the same Faculty --in Kigali Institute of Education. Between 2005 and 2008, I worked as a consultant (copywriter) for an international NGO that uses social marketing to promote health behaviors.

Prior to joining Ohio University, I completed a Masters Degree (Msc) in Social and Educational Research Methods. In the fall of 2008, I joined Ohio University to do a second masters degree in Communication and Development Studies. After Graduation in 2010, I taught for two semesters as an Adjunct Faculty in Portsmouth, Ohio as part of my O.P.T (Optional Practical Training). I also participated in the 2010 forensics tournaments held in OU as a judge.

I am currently teaching introduction to communication theories, health communication, marketing and adverting communications, the art of public speaking in Rwandan Universities. My areas of research interest include various applications of narrative theories in the discourse of health and healing, health communication, communication and forensics pedagogy, cultural studies and communication research tools. In my free time, I enjoy playing or watching soccer (but with some good skills I posses in soccer, I often contemplate trying out American football as a kicker!)

Shelley Kimrey

I completed my BA at the University of West Florida and my MA at Ball State University. My professors have encouraged my inclination to gravitate towards culturally significant mediated texts and develop critical readings of those texts.

Because of this inclination towards mediated, popular culture texts, as well as power and oppression, several feminist and rhetorical media scholars have influenced my perspective. My goal for obtaining a PhD is to eventually teach rhetoric and communication theory, and possibly direct a Forensic Team myself.

These goals are rooted in the desire to force theory into motion by allowing students who may not have otherwise been exposed to the educational evolution that communication studies offers to be apart of that journey. This is my goal because I know firsthand the impact communication educators can have on a student. Without these educators in my own life, I probably would not be in the fortunate position I am today in that I have the ability to pursue my education. I want to allow others to have this same opportunity and your program would provide me with the best skills possible to achieve this goal.

My goal is also to use my scholarship to expand perceptions within the field of what constitutes significant texts for analysis and stress a continued relevance for a feminist perspective.





Tamra Portalla

Prior to Ohio University, I earned a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies and a Bachelor of Science in Safety Studies from Keene State College in 2003. After working several years within student affairs, I resumed my education at the University of Rhode Island, earning my Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies in 2009.

I have had the opportunity to travel to every state in the United States and several countries. I run, rock climb, skydive, practice yoga and ride a motorcycle. But these activities, do not provide the same fulfillment that I get from studying the way in which people form, establish and maintain relationships through communication.

I find the study of identity, social change and the role that culture plays in communication fascinating. Throughout my travels I have found that we all communicate so vastly different and attempting to make sense of those differences though research is important to me. With a natural curiosity for the world and a desire to positively impact the communication field, I ultimately want make a global difference.

My research interests include: interpersonal, intercultural, family and participatory communication. Specifically, I look forward to working on projects that focus on intercultural communication competence, identity, ethnicity, globalization, social change, sustainability and conflict resolution.

Steven Brunner

I was born and have lived in South Dakota my entire life. I completed my B.S. and M.S. degrees in communication studies from South Dakota State University. As an undergraduate I competed for the speech and debate team and developed a love for the activity. As a graduate student I worked as the graduate assistant for the forensics team where I aspired to become a successful forensics coach.

This past academic year I have been an instructor of communication and the director of forensics at Northern State University in South Dakota. I love working with speech teams and look forward to working with the extremely competitive and successful team at Ohio University.

Additionally, my research interests include studying Interpersonal Communication within Computer Mediated Communication. Recent studies of mine have focused on the role self-disclosure plays in text messaging interactions for traditional college aged students. I want to continue to study communication from this perspective.

I am very excited to be attending Ohio University this fall and I look forward to the academic growth that I will experience in the program.

