



OCA Conversation

Ohio Communication Association

September 2007 Vol. 3, No. 2

Dissolve the discipline?

Keynote debate highlights OCA's 2007 Conference

The 2007 Ohio Communication Association Conference, planned for Saturday, Oct. 6, at the Holiday Inn Youngstown South in Boardman, will feature a "Keynote Debate" in place of the traditional keynote address.

"We're very excited about this year's line-up," said Adam Earnhardt, OCA conference coordinator. "What I think was the most exciting part of the review process was reading the student submission we received. Those attending the conference will be pleased to see the outstanding work students are producing."

The inspiration for the keynote debate came from a program that was showcased at the Eastern Communication Association conference last spring. OCA executive council members spent some time "debating" possible resolutions and settled on the following controversial resolution:

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EARNHEARDT



SMITH

Register on the Web

Are you ready to register for OCA's fall conference?

You can do so quickly and easily on the organization's web site <http://www.ohiocomm.org>.

President's message

Discovering Disney's lessons for teachers

By Candice Thomas-Maddox

AS WE PREPARE for the start of a new academic year, I wonder (as I'm sure many of you do) where the summer has gone. While some of your days may have been filled with summer teaching or analyzing data for your latest research project, I hope that you had an opportunity to relax and re-energize for the coming year.



THOMAS-MADDOX

Recently, I enjoyed a trip to Disney World with my family. Each visit to the Magic Kingdom presents new lessons that can be applied in our professional careers. As I began to write this column, I reflected on three lessons learned from my most recent trip that could be applied to the start of our new academic year and the upcoming OCA convention.

Lesson One: Tradition is essential to building a solid foundation.

No matter if your last trip to Disney was in 1977 or 2007, some of the attractions remain the same. A quick glance at the park map will reveal that crowd favorites such as "Dumbo the Flying Elephant" and "Peter Pan's Flight" are still in place. While new characters may be introduced in films each year, Disney understands the value of the icons which are recognized by all.

The same holds true for our classes. How many times have you heard students say, "But that theory stuff is so old" or "Why do we have to study the history of communication?" An appreciation and understanding of the roots of our discipline is essential. While reading about the history of rhetoric may not be as exciting as surfing the net for stories about the Presidential candidates' most recent mud-slinging speeches, it is possible to weave the old and the new together to provide

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OCA Profile

OCA Executive Director Sheida Shirvani hopes to write a book about Iranian culture

What is your job and employer, and what do you teach?

I am a professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Ohio University's Zanesville campus and teach Health Communication and related courses, such as Cross Cultural, Family, and Gender Communication. Other courses cover interviewing, diversity, advanced interpersonal communication.

Tell me an interesting fact about you.

Oh, this is simple. Because the audience is unseen and reading this on paper, it is easy for me to say this: I born in Tehran, Iran, and moved to the United States in the mid-70's. More than half of my life I have been in the United States but I am still battling with my culture. I really do not know where I belong! This constantly brings on spirited conversations with my family, conversations which go in really very interesting directions.

What was your first job?

I grew up in a family and a culture that believes kids do not need to work while they are getting their education. But I wanted to have my independence, so during my college years I looked for a job. My first job back home was with the International Road Company as a translator of their publications. When I moved to the U.S., I was hired as a TA in the College of Education at North Texas State University to coordinate the computer lab part time. I also worked in the International Office working with international students.

Tell me about your education.

I received my B.A. in English Lit from Damavand College in Tehran and my M.A. in Communication Theory



SHIRVANI

under Drs. Anthony Schroeder and Timothy Ashmore at Eastern New Mexico University. My Ph.D. was earned at North Texas State University in the teaching of cross-cultural and interpersonal communication at college level.

What was your dissertation topic and what is your current research focus?

My dissertation topic was “A Comparison of Native and Non-native English-Speaking Teaching Assistants.” I was trying to find out if there were any differences between the teaching styles of international TAs and American native English-speaking TAs. Since I started my education, culture was one of the areas in which I was very interested. I continued this line of research in my career. I have done research in Appalachian and Middle Eastern cultures. Due to my interest in technology, in recent years I also have done several studies in the culture of technology. Last year one of my articles in “Gender and Technology” was

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RESOLVED: Communication scholars should dissolve the communication discipline and merge with related disciplines (i.e., theater, English, psychology, etc.).

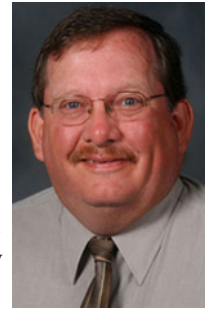
Matthew J. Smith (Wittenberg University), OCA vice president, will moderate the debate.

Several scholars from across the state were invited to serve as debate participants. Arguing for the affirmative team are **Lawrence Hugenberg** (Kent State University) and **Jenny Nelson** (Ohio University). Arguing for the negative team are **Judith Trent** (University of Cincinnati) and **Ali Ziyati** (Marietta College).

Dr. Hugenberg's research interests include sport fandom, sports communication, media studies and popular culture, and the basic communication course. He is a former president of the Ohio Communication Association. He was a co-founder of the *Basic Communication Course Annual* and served as the initial editor. He is a co-editor for *Teaching Ideas for the Basic Communication Course* -- currently in its 12th year -- and *Basic Communication Course Best Practices: A Training Manual for Instructors*. He is currently the inaugural editor of the *Journal of Communication Studies*. Larry is also co-editing a volume of sport fandom, entitled *Media and Mediated Sports Fans* to be published by McFarland Press.

Political communication with a strong focus on communication in presidential campaigns and the campaign strategies and rhetorical style of women in elective politics highlights the research interests of Dr. Trent. She has served as president of NCA, CSCA, and chaired NCA's Leadership Team for the national project, Preparing Future Faculty. She was the program Director/Administrator for NCA's Mentor Fund and, in 2003, co-chaired NCA's Search Committee for an Executive Director. The author, co-author, or editor of 23 books or book chapters, 37 academic journal articles and more than 180 presentations at state, regional, national, and international communication conference, Dr. Trent is probably best known for her co-authorship of *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices*, the first book-length study of election campaigns that utilized the principles and practices of communication to examine elective politics. Trent has appeared numerous times as a political communication analyst for ABC, NBC, and CBA television affiliates in Cincinnati and her research has been cited in various newspapers including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Dr. Nelson earned her doctoral degree in Speech Communication at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, with an emphasis on philosophy of communication (Semiotic Phenomenology) and media theory. After teaching 2 years at the University of New Hampshire, she joined the School of Telecommunications at Ohio University. She served as Director of Graduate Studies from 1990-94 and was voted Outstanding Graduate Faculty in 1993.



HUGENBERG



NELSON



TRENT



ZIYATI

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published. This coming year two of my articles about using different programs and packages to improve the culture of online classes will be published in computer science education journals.

What do you like about your job and your workplace?

I like the challenge that comes in the teaching environment. The fact that I meet so many different individuals with different cultural backgrounds gives me opportunities to make differences in their lives. You see, I love my workplace because I consider all my colleagues as members of my family. I have been with Ohio University Zanesville for 20 years and have grown with them each year. They were there for my marriage, the birth of my child, and every promotion and change which happened in my career. They all were with me in both happy and sad times. How could I not love my workplace as I love my own family? They are my second family.

Tell me something about your personal life (such as family).

I am married, and my life partner is my best friend. We have been co-authors and co-researchers on some of my research. We have a son who just turned 16 and is now driving, causing more than a little stress for both of us. My son always complains that he does not have a chance to live comfortably because everyone expects more from him because both his parents are in academia. I really enjoy him very much and am grateful to have him in my life. He is one of the reasons I try to work hard. I want him to be proud of his mother.

What other significant achievements have you had?

I am proud of many of my achievements. A few are more memorable than others. Being recognized as the outstanding graduate student during graduate school

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She received a Fulbright Award and taught media studies at Hassan II University in Casablanca and Mohammed V University in Rabat. She has recently returned from two years teaching media studies in the United Arab Emirates.

Dr. Nelson's research/teaching interests include Media & the Middle East, phenomenology of convergence media, comics, the semiotics of the hijab, pointing out obscure product placements to her viewing companions. The last four dissertations she directed have won "First Prize" awards in the International Division of ICA. In 2006 she was elected an Outstanding Scholar by the International Communication Institute.

Dr. Ziyati returns to Ohio after teaching for several years in the Middle East. He earned his doctoral degree in Mass Communication at Ohio University with an emphasis on International/Intercultural Communication and Research Methods. After teaching a variety of courses at every branch campus in the OU system, he moved to Morocco where he taught at the International Institute of Higher Education in Morocco, The Institute of Languages and Communication Studies, and the Institut Supérieur de Journalisme, which has produced many of the premiere journalists in the Middle East and North Africa. After four years serving as dean of the faculty of Mass Communication and Public Relations at Ajman University in the United Arab Emirates, Ziyati has recently returned to Ohio to teach in the Communication and Media Studies Department at Marietta College.

Posters and Panels

This year's conference includes several faculty and student posters as well as 17 panel sessions that include over 50 papers. The student poster sessions will be competitive, with a top poster awards going to the best overall undergraduate and graduate student poster.

Another highlight of the conference includes the top undergraduate and graduate student papers. This year's top undergraduate student paper award goes to Ashley Wollam (Marietta College), "A Rhetorical Analysis of Instant Messaging and Away Messages through the Critical Lenses of Corey Anton, George Herbert Mead, and Kenneth Burke." The top graduate student paper award goes to Bridget E. Rubenking (Cleveland State University) and Bettina Lunk (Cleveland State University), "Are College Students Online for Class Work? The Role of the Internet in College Students' Education."

Register today

OCA members are urged to reflect on the resolution in light of the conference theme: "Change, Challenge & Opportunity: Communication in the 21st Century," and come prepared to participate in a spirited and informative debate. Go to <http://www.ohiocomm.org> to register online.

"I know I speak for many of my colleagues and our students at Youngstown State University when I say how excited we are about the conference," said Earnhardt. "Boardman and the Greater Youngstown area have a lot to offer visitors, including Mill Creek Park, a thriving art scene, fantastic golf courses, and so much more."

The conference location is 7410 South Avenue at US224, Boardman, Ohio 44512, (330) 726-1611. For more information and directions, go to <http://www.hiboardman.com>.

Dr. Shirvani to receive OCA Distinguished Service Award

Sheida Shirvani, a 20-year member of the Ohio Communication Association and its predecessor, The Speech Communication Association of Ohio, has been named recipient of the association's 2007 "Distinguished Service Award." The honor is bestowed on a person who has made an outstanding contribution and shown great dedication to the field of communication in Ohio.

A professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Ohio University Zanesville since 1987, Dr. Shirvani was born in Tehran, Iran, and moved to the United States in 1976. Shirvani has taught courses ranging from Fundamentals of Human Communication to Gender and Family Communication in her 20 years at the Zanesville Campus.

Dr. Shirvani has been executive director of the association since 2003. She was journal manager from 2002 to 2004 -- having worn both hats in 2004. She is been known for her innovative teaching methods. Recently, she has named one of two Ohio University regional campus outstanding professors. The award recognizes faculty at regional campuses who have demonstrated excellence in teaching, scholarship and service. Shirvani has served on OU-Z's Faculty Council and chaired many other committees

Dr. Shirvani is dedicated to her research, which focuses on culture, gender and technology. Since 1999, she has published five times in peer-reviewed journals and has three more articles set for publication this fall. She has delivered many professional presentations, many of which focus on research in intercultural, cross-cultural technology, and gender communication. She lives in Columbus, Ohio, with her husband and son.

Dr. Miki Crawford, an Ohio University associate professor, nominated Dr. Shirvani for the award, noting that Shirvani has been instrumental in building the OCA website, planning conferences, working with the finances, assisting with online registration and the use of PayPal, and promoting the online access of the Ohio Communication Journal through EBSCO. "All of these are important and time-consuming tasks that reveal her as a leader and as a team player in OCA," said Crawford.

"Dr. Shirvani has also encouraged others to participation in OCA through inclusion of her panel submissions and collegial networking," added Dr. Crawford. "Throughout the years she could be found hosting the registration table at conferences or helping attendees with whatever needs arise."

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was one of the first achievements in the United States. I was recognized as Distinguished Teacher of 2002 by the Ohio Communication Association. Most recently I was recognized as Ohio University RHE Outstanding Professor for 2007-2009 and received the Distinguished Service award from Ohio Communication Association.

What are your goals now?

For a long time I have wanted to write a book on different aspects of Iranian culture. I was always distracted with different projects, teaching loads, and family distractions. Now that I am fully satisfied with my career and the direction it has taken me, it is time to pursue this goal. My goal, then, is to finish the book.

What goal do you have for the Ohio Communication Association?

In 1987 when I took this teaching position with Ohio University Zanesville, I saw the necessity to establish a connection with my community and our state organization, so I became member of OCA. I have seen many changes and excellent progress with this organization. We have had outstanding leadership in the organization, and year after year the younger generation has taken responsibilities within the organization. I hope this continues in the future. I personally would like the organization to be known nationally and get more support from educators in our state. I hope in near future our organization can grow to have a greater impact with all scholars inside and outside the State of Ohio.

If you had to describe yourself, what words would you use?

Definitely **Type A!** Workaholic, content, and ambitious.

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a clear understanding of where we have come from and where we are going.

OCA is an organization that has built a solid foundation. As we prepare to meet for our 71st conference, the stability of our Association is apparent. While many state communication associations have ceased to exist over the years, OCA has remained strong. As you prepare for this year's convention, reflect on the list of Ohio scholars, teachers, and OCA past officers who have put our state on the map as one that has contributed to the foundation of our discipline.

Lesson Two: Always look for ways to keep things fresh. Even though some of the rides in the Magic Kingdom are the same from the park's first day in business, Disney adopts a philosophy of keeping things fresh. Rides such as "Pirates of the Caribbean" add a new twist to an old favorite through the use of innovative video technology. My personal favorite, "Mickey's PhilharMagic" is an excellent example of blending the old with the new – Disney icons such as Mickey and Donald interact with characters from Disney's newest movies such as "Aladdin" and "The Little Mermaid."

As you prepare for the new year, think about ways to breathe new life into your classes. How can we take information and make it new, fresh, and exciting? Students who enter our classrooms are part of the technology generation. They have learned how to multi-task like no other generation before them. Students can send instant messages to friends while simultaneously writing a term paper, surfing the net, and checking e-mail. Think about ways to breathe new life into your classes to appeal to this new generation of students. Explore opportunities for workshops focusing on audience response systems (aka: "clickers"), utilizing Blackboard or WebCT, incorporating video technology, or encouraging student development of online portfolios. Challenge yourself to add one new "spark" to a class that you may have been teaching for the past several years.

The theme of the 71st OCA convention reflects our Association's commitment to adapting to changes which face our discipline. "**Change, Challenge & Opportunity: Communication in the 21st Century**" allows us to focus on ways in which we can respond to the changing face of communication in our society. Plan to join us as research scholars share innovative findings, scholars debate the challenges facing our discipline, and students and faculty discuss future directions for communication scholars and teachers.

Lesson Three: Have fun. The bottom line is that regardless of your age, Disney is fun. I have been

fortunate to enjoy the Magic Kingdom many times throughout my life, and I always walk away with a smile. Disney is committed to making every visitor's experience an enjoyable one.

As you begin the new year, remember what it is about teaching communication that attracted you to this profession. Rediscover that passion, and have fun as you share knowledge with your students. Have fun!

When you plan your calendar for October, be sure to join us for the OCA convention. Please join me in thanking Adam Earnhardt, Sheida Shirvani, Jeff Tyus, and the faculty and students at Youngstown State who have been dedicated to putting together a conference that will be both educational and fun. We hope to see you on October 6th!

Candice Thomas-Maddox is completing the first year of a two-year term as president of the Ohio Communications Association. She is an associate professor of communication studies at Ohio University, Lancaster campus. She may be reached at Thomas@ohiou.edu.

Professor's site offers ideas for 'socially responsible' TV

A retired professor from Xavier University in Cincinnati has posted a web site with essays and ideas promoting "Socially Responsible Television." The work is the culmination of 28 years of work, study and teaching by David L. Smith, professor emeritus of visual communications and former director of the Xavier Television Center. It offers perspectives, inspiration and program ideas. Smith says his objective in creating the site was to "find a paradigm that would become a beacon for students wanting to work more constructively and positively in the television industry." The ideas are offered to any aspiring producer and Smith says they may be used freely.



SMITH

The URL is http://www.xu.edu/communication_arts/television/index.html.

This newsletter was created and edited by Dr. Richard D. Hendrickson, an associate professor at John Carroll University, using InDesign CS2 software. If you have corrections or suggestions, write to rhendrickson@jcu.edu.

Ohio 2007 distinguished student winners

Tops in graduate school: Kent State's Scott Juba

The Ohio Communication Association has recognized Scott Juba as Ohio's Distinguished Graduate Student for 2007. Juba graduated in August from Kent State University with a master's degree in public relations.

For his master's thesis, Juba conducted an online survey of a random sample of PR Newswire's client database to examine what types of blog measurements have the most credibility in the eyes of PR professionals. His findings indicate there is a disconnect between what PR practitioners view as an ideal blog measurement method as compared to the type of metrics they are actually conducting.

In addition to his thesis, Juba co-authored several papers with Kent State faculty members, including "Mavens of New Media: Exploring How Blogs Have Expanded the Role and Scope of Public Relations Practitioners." Co-authored with William Sledzik, APR, and Jeanette Drake, Ph.D., APR, "Mavens of New Media" was presented at the Tenth Annual International Public Relations Research Conference in Miami, FL.

This fall, Juba will be a member of the panel, "Blogging, podcasting and distance learning: Faculty and students demonstrate public relations pedagogy for the iPod generation" at the 2007 Ohio Communication Association conference.

Prior to his graduate work, Juba earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Baldwin-Wallace College, where he graduated Summa Cum Laude and was a Collegiate All-American Scholar. While at B-W, Juba received the Albert L. Gray, Jr. prize in economics.



JUBA

Mount Union's Spencer distinguished undergrad

Leland Spencer, a 2007 graduate of Mount Union College, has won the Ohio Communication Association Distinguished Undergraduate student award.

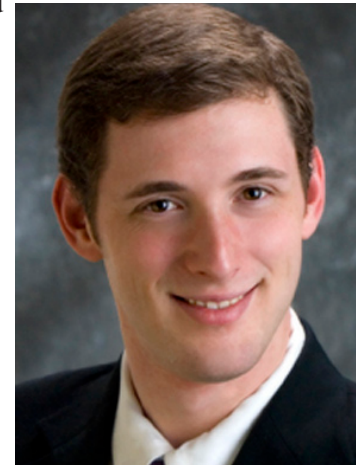
Spencer, who majored in Communication Studies, is enrolled this fall in the graduate program at the University of Cincinnati.

At Mount Union, Spencer received several awards, including the Heaton W. Harris and Corinne Harris Smith Prize for academic achievement, the Good Citizenship Award, the Jane Weston Chapman Award, the Alfred Henry Ringwald Debate Prize, and the award for the highest grade point average in the major. Additionally, he was a finalist for the Outstanding Senior Man Award.

Spencer will present a pilot study of his senior thesis, "Rhetoric, Christianity, and Gender Identity in the United States," at the 2007 conference of the National Communication Association.

Chairperson of Mount Union's chapter of Lambda Pi Eta for two years, Spencer was also a leader of the Gay Straight Alliance, a member of the Women's History Month committee and a member of the Subcommittee for Intellectual Atmosphere. He was also active in campus religious life and was honored to address Mount Union's 2007 baccalaureate service.

Spencer worked in the Writing Center at Mount Union for the 2006-07 academic year and served as a part-time licensed local pastor of the Mapleton United Methodist Church in East Canton from 2005-2007. He also serves occasionally as a Lincoln-Douglas Debate judge for high school forensics competitions. Before enrolling at Mount Union, Spencer attended Massillon Perry High School where he graduated in 2003 as valedictorian.



SPENCER

OCA news briefs...

Wittenberg students at 'Comic-Con International'

Dr. Matthew J. Smith of Wittenberg University led a group of students on a field study to Comic-Con International in San Diego on July 25-30, 2007. Students participated in the week-long program, studying the ways mass marketing intersected with fan culture at the popular event. The students were even able to present publicly some of their preliminary findings on the final day of the convention. The participants included students from Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, Henderson State University in Arkansas, and the University of Washington. Comic-Con draws more than 125,000 fans of comics, Hollywood films, network television, manga, anime, toys, gaming, trading cards, and more each summer. If you have students who are interested in any of these media industries, popular culture in general, or marketing, please have them contact Smith for information about the 2008 program at msmith@wittenberg.edu.

YSU appoints Earnhardt

Adam Earnhardt was appointed assistant professor and basic course coordinator at Youngstown State University. Adam and Mary Beth's second daughter, Kate was born April 27, 2007.

KSU promotes Barbato

Carole A. Barbato was promoted to professor in the School of Communication Studies Kent State University-East Liverpool Campus, effective Fall 2007. She has had a chapter published in the newly released book (2008) from Prentice Hall Publishing, "Time it Was: American Stories from the Sixties" edited by **Karen Manners Smith** and **Tim Koster**. The chapter, "Ordinary Lives: Kent State, May 4, 1970" was coauthored with her colleague and friend, **Laura Davis**, associate provost and associate professor of English also at Kent State. The chapter chronicles their "ordinary lives" growing up in the sixties culminating with their experiences during the tragic weekend and the shootings at Kent State in May 1970.

JCU promotes Hendrickson

Richard D. Hendrickson, Ph.D., who teaches journalism courses at John Carroll University and edits *OCA Conversation*, was granted a letter of tenure and promoted to associate professor, effective at the start of the 2007-2008 academic year. A teacher at JCU since 2001, Hendrickson was a working journalist before that for 40 years. In 2000, he earned a doctorate in communication studies from Bowling Green State University. He lives in Lakewood, OH, with his wife, Carol.

Kleman wins fellowship

Erin E. Kleman, a doctoral candidate at Kent State University, has been awarded a University Fellowship for spring 2008. As a University Fellow, she will be afforded uninterrupted time to complete her dissertation, tentatively titled, "Journaling for the World (Wide Web) to See: A Model of Self-Disclosure Intimacy in Blogs."

Akron '2380 Project' best student effort

The Ohio Communication Association will honor the "2380 Project," a student film group at the University of Akron, for carrying out the best 2007 communications student effort.

With a name based on the number of miles separating Akron and Hollywood, the group was founded three years ago. It has completed two films and is now working on a third, "Throwing Stones" by Nick Smith.

The goal is to make a feature length original film every year. Students produce all aspects of the film, including scriptwriting, production, editing, and acting.

The project benefits the community by providing a venue to filmmakers to show their creative work. There are no other student film organizations in Northeast Ohio.

JCU seeks CO chair

John Carroll University's Department of Communication and Theatre Arts is searching for an associate professor/professor and chair for a term beginning next July. The Department is the largest major in the College of Arts and Sciences with approximately 300 undergraduate majors, 55 graduate students, 11 full-time faculty, 3 adjunct program administrators, and 19 part-time faculty. The chair manages the budget, personnel, scheduling, mentoring of faculty, participating in university committees, and teaching courses in his or her area of expertise. A doctorate in Communication, media or related areas, a focused agenda of research in the field and extensive teaching experience are required. For more information, call or right Dr. Richard D. Hendrickson, search committee chair, at 216-397-3078 or rhendrickson@jcu.edu.

2007 CONFERENCE POSTERS 8 to 11 a.m. Conference Room C

Undergraduate Student Posters

“Women, Body Satisfaction, and the Media”

Rachel Blazak, Youngstown State University.

“An Analysis of Playboy: Organizational Culture and Change” Theresa Nutter, Ohio University – Lancaster, Leah Cole, Ohio University – Lancaster.

“Heavy Television Viewers Living in Televisions Reality: Cultivation Theory Reviewed” Ciara D’Altorio, Youngstown State University.

“Exploration of Codes of Ethics in Broadcast Journalism” Krysta Kluge, Youngstown State University.

“Body Image and Ideal in the Media” Colleen Smith, Youngstown State University.

“Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Men Don’t Have to Take It Either” Leland G. Spencer, Mount Union College.

“Growing Away: A Video Interview Documentary of Three College Students from Highly- structured Religions of Amish and Mennonite” Andrew Wilsterman, Kent State University Tuscarawas.

Graduate Student Posters

“The University of Akron & Upsurge in Off-campus Crime” Mili Banerjee, University of Akron. “For My Eyes Only? The MySpace.com Crisis in Akron-Canton Schools” Stephanie Kirkpatrick, University of Akron, Melissa Adams, University of Akron.

“Ghost in the Machine? Exploring Communication Dynamics in Human-Computer Interaction” Rekha Sharma, Kent State University.

“The Downfall of U.S. Senate Candidate Jack Ryan” Drew Veeneman, University of Akron.

Faculty Posters

“Does Your Mother Know You’re on MySpace?: An Analysis of Computer Mediated Communication Among Middle School Students” Brian Billingsley, Ohio University – Lancaster.

“Energizing Your Student Organization: Strategies for Creating a Successful Recruitment Plan” Nancy M. Somerick, University of Akron.

Story on reality TV show draws comment from Ohio

A CBS television reality show that sent 40 children out to build a society in a ghost town in New Mexico got the attention of a *Los Angeles Times* writer who produced a story that quoted Ohio Communications Association president-elect Matthew Smith. The story by Maria Elena Fernandez, published Aug. 17, described “Kid Nation” as “the most controversial show of the fall season.”

Fernandez said TV critics asked about legal, moral and ethical issues that had been raised by the show, which offered a prize to children who stayed 40 days in the remote town without access to their parents, even by telephone. The children were asked to set up their own government and create laws and a society – all in front of television cameras.

Dr. Smith, a teacher and department chair at Wittenberg University, was contacted because he is editor of “Survivor Lessons: Essays on Communication and Reality Television.”

Fernandez quoted him as asking who would answer for effects on the children. “Who is ultimately responsible here, the network that dangles the \$20,000 prize in front of these parents or the parents who have allowed or encouraged their children to move forward with this situation?” asked Smith.

“Obviously, the situation wouldn’t exist if CBS didn’t say, ‘Come, but don’t bring your parents.’ But also, the parents, after I’m assuming reading lengthy legal documentation from CBS, still went through with it and said, ‘Go on ahead. I think little Suzie or Johnny can be fine for a period of 40 days without me.’ Even when I say that aloud my eyebrows start to do funny things,” said Smith.

“Any kind of television experience is fraught with potential rewards and detriments,” he added. “When a parent sends a child into this situation, there’s a good chance that it could help the child build self-confidence, build social skills and build a network. But you don’t know that going in, because it could be that your child suffers the detriments. It could suggest deficiencies that they have. They could regret the appearance and they could regret the fame.”

The story also quoted Mark Andrejevic, associate professor of communication studies at the University of Iowa and author of “Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched.”

To read it, go to <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/tv/la-et-kidnation17aug17.0,3651934.story?coll=la-home-entertainment>