



Ohio Communication Association 90th Annual Conference

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FOUNDATIONS & FUTURES:

Constructing Meaning
in a Fragmented World

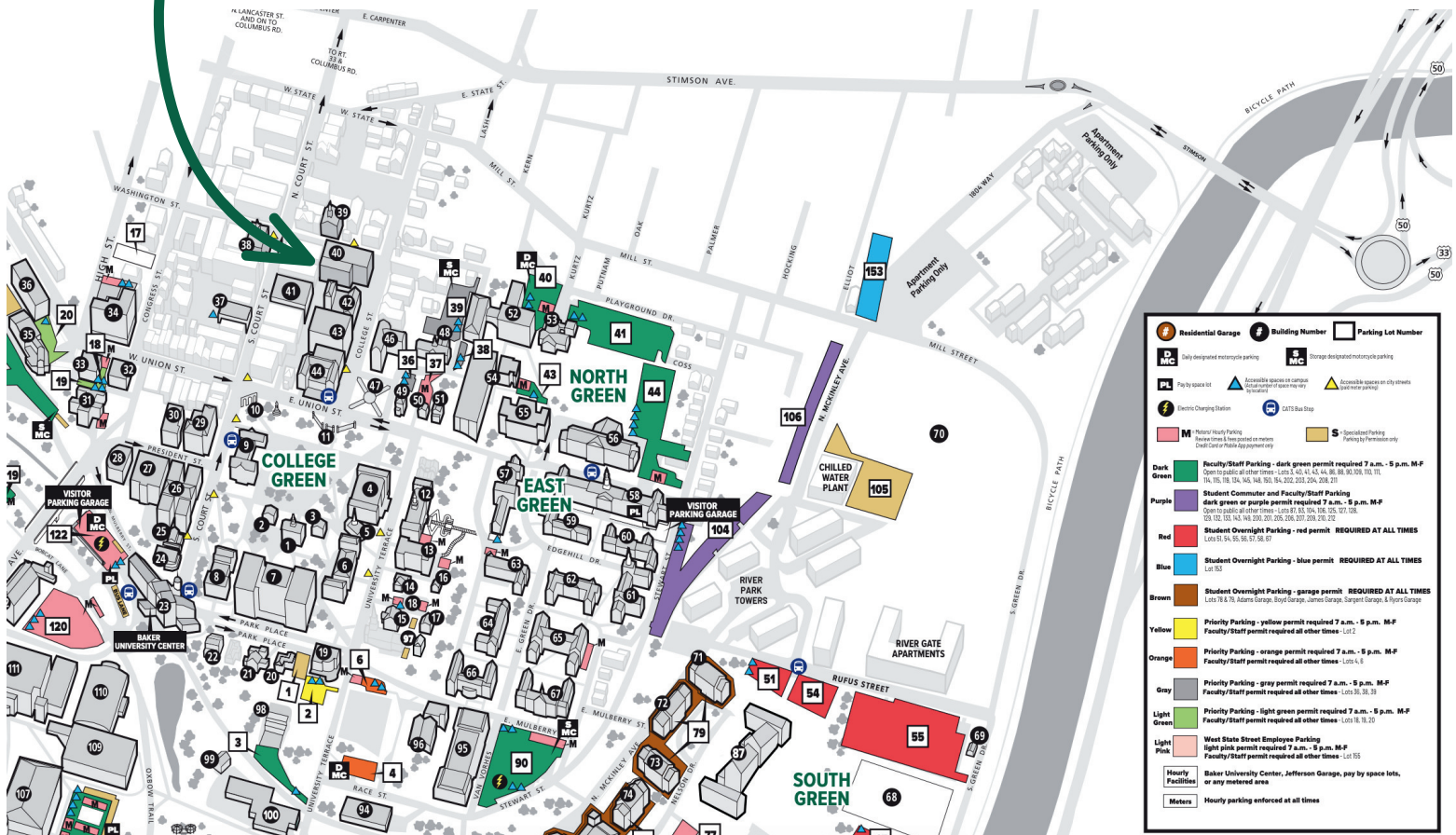
Athens, Ohio | October 2 & 3, 2026

OHIO

UNIVERSITY

Partial Campus Map

- Building 40 - Parking Garage (Athens City)
- Building 43 - Radio-Television Building
- Building 44 - Schoonover Center



Full campus map:



www.ohio.edu/transportation-parking/map



Welcome to the **90th annual conference** for the Ohio Communication Association!

Our annual conference is a way that we can gather and foster a sense of community, and we're happy to have you join us at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.

This year's conference theme,
"Foundations and Futures: Constructing Meaning in a Fragmented World"
is a way to reflect how the communication field's intellectual foundations
can help us understand how people create meaning amid today's divisions—
and how communication can contribute to better futures.

If there are ways that the Ohio Communication Association can support you further,
please let us know.

Have a wonderful conference!

Sincerely,
The Ohio Communication Association Executive Board

Join Us!



Join Us!

Executive Board Open Positions

2 - Member-at-Large Positions

2 - Graduate Student Representative Positions

Vice President

If you have any questions about what each of the open positions requires, feel free to ask any current or former OCA Board Member or review our by-laws available at
www.ohiocomm.org.

Foundations and Futures: Constructing Meaning in a Fragmented World

Thursday, October 1		
5:00 pm-8:00 pm	Executive Board Meeting	Ohio University Schoonover 508

Friday, October 2		
9:00 am-10:00 am	Conference Registration	Schoonover Center Lobby
12:00 pm-4:00 pm	Opportunity Fair	Schoonover Center Lobby
10:00 am-5:00 pm	Conference Sessions	Schoonover Center and RTV Building
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm	Awards Ceremony & Raffle	Schoonover Center Room 450
9:00am - 6:00 pm	Quiet Space/Recharge Room	Lasher Learning Center Schoonover 130

Saturday, October 3		
8:00 am-9:00 am	Conference Registration	Schoonover Center Lobby
8:00 am-9:00 am	Networking Breakfast	Schoonover Center Lobby
8:00 am-11:00 am	Opportunity Fair	Schoonover Center Lobby
11:00 am-12:15 pm	Keynote Speaker: Christina Beck, Ph.D. Scripps College of Communication Ohio University	Schoonover Center Room 145
12:30 pm-1:50 pm	Lunch, Business Meeting, & Raffle	Schoonover Center Room 450
2:00 pm- 3:50 pm	Conference Sessions	Schoonover Center and RTV Building
9:00am - 6:00 pm	Quiet Space/Recharge Room	Lasher Learning Center Schoonover 130

Foundations and Futures: Constructing Meaning in a Fragmented World

90th Annual Ohio Communication Association Conference

October 2-3, 2026 | Ohio University | Athens, OH

Friday, October 2

**Friday | Conference Registration
9:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.
Location: Schoonover Center | Lobby**

**Friday | Opportunity Fair
12:00-4:00 p.m.
Location: Schoonover Center | Lobby**

Visit our sponsor tables to learn about them and to say thanks
...they're a big part in making this conference happen!

Social Media & Session Evaluation Raffle!

Use #OCA2026 to tag your posts & pictures on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, or X during the conference (remember to make your posts public).

One raffle ticket will be added for each public post you tag with #OCA2026.

One raffle ticket will be added for each session evaluation completed. Scan here:



We will raffle **\$75 - \$150 Amazon gift cards** at the Awards Ceremony, the Business Meeting, & the end of the conference.



THANK YOU to Youngstown State University
sponsoring \$300 worth of raffle prizes!

Friday | Session 1

10:00-10:50 a.m.

Location: Schoonover Center and RTV Building

*Research
Papers*

Room: RTV 265

*Chair: Cody
Clemens (Ohio
University)*

**Constructing Hope in a Fragmented World: Financial Framing, and
Meaning-Making in UN FGM Reports**

Ahmed Aly (Ohio University)

This paper examines how financial reporting functions as a site of meaning-making in global health communication through a mixed-methods content analysis of the UNFPA–UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation annual reports from 2008 to 2024. Rather than treating financial sections as neutral administrative records, the study approaches them as communicative texts that frame urgency, accountability, and institutional legitimacy. Across 15 report years, findings show a shift from largely technical and institutional reporting toward narratives emphasizing resilience, partnerships, women-led organizations, and girls’ agency. At the same time, donor-centered accountability remains dominant, revealing tensions between upward accountability and more community-centered or justice-oriented forms of representation. In relation to the conference theme, the paper shows how organizational discourse constructs meaning about progress and responsibility in a fragmented world, where numbers do not merely record action but also shape how global problems, solutions, and futures are understood.

Rethinking Risk Communication When Trust Is Under Pressure

Carolina Herrera-Céspedes (Ohio University)

Drawing on theoretical frameworks like the Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF) and crisis communication literature, the study examines how risk perception and trust are co-produced through social, spatial, and institutional dynamics. Through comparative case studies, the paper highlights how structural barriers such as the digital divide, language exclusion, and historical neglect weaken crisis responses.

**Fragmented Support, Hidden Distress: Communication and Postpartum
Motherhood Among South Asian Women**

Shatakshi Semwal (Ohio University)

Postpartum emotional distress among South Asian mothers is shaped not only by psychological vulnerability, but also by cultural norms, relational expectations, and communicative practices that influence whether suffering becomes recognizable or speakable. This qualitative meta-synthesis examined how South Asian and immigrant mothers communicate and seek help for postpartum distress across cultural, relational, and institutional contexts. Guided by Noblit and Hare’s meta-ethnography and Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis, 33 qualitative and mixed-methods studies were synthesized. Four themes emerged: (1) cultural motherhood norms emphasizing endurance and silence; (2) relational gatekeeping by husbands, in-laws, and community networks; (3) health-system barriers shaped by institutional constraints and cultural mismatch; and (4) a central Support–Disclosure Tension in which mothers balanced the need for support against fears of stigma and loss of maternal legitimacy. Findings advance a communication-centered framework for understanding postpartum distress and help-seeking among South Asian mothers.



Stay in touch with OCA all year long!



@OhioCommunicationAssoc

www.ohiocomm.org

Check back for pictures and news from the conference!

Friday | Session 1 10:00-10:50 a.m. (continued)

*Discussion or
Research Paper
Panel*

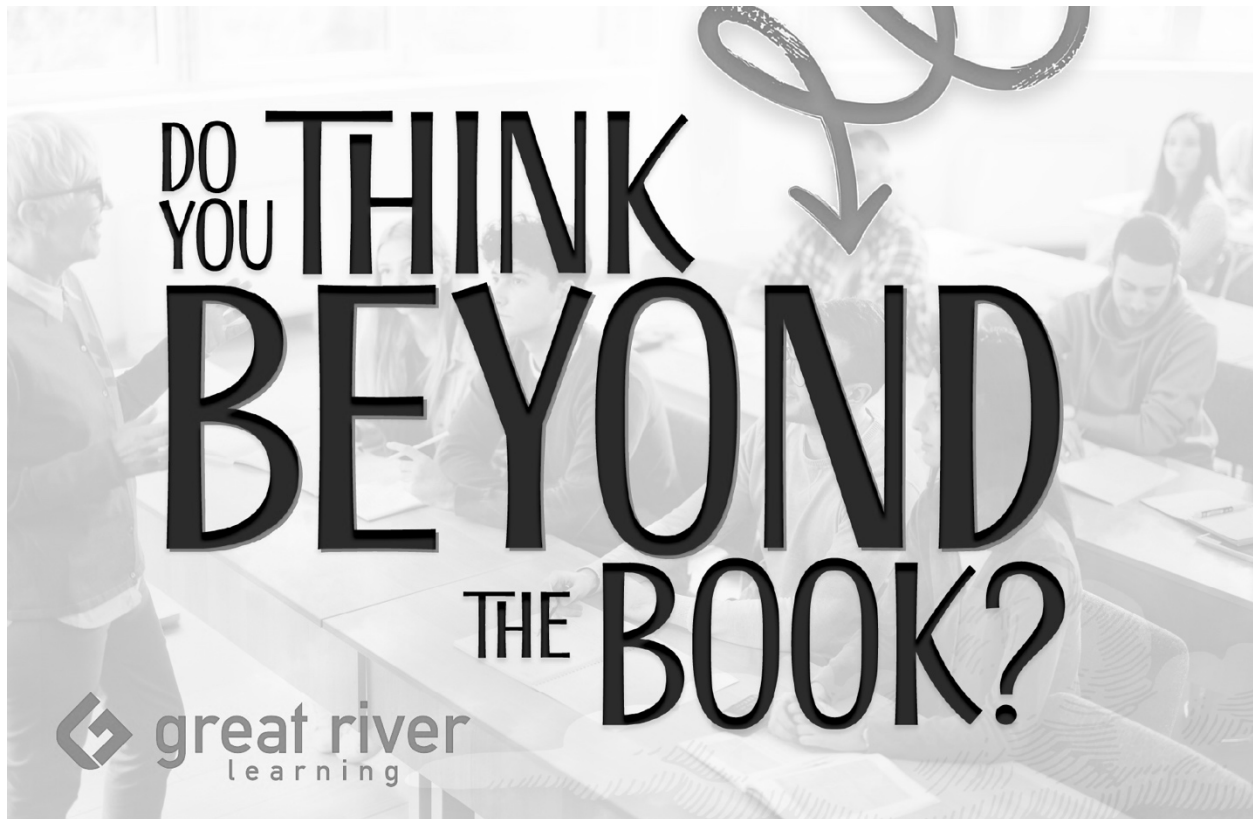
Room: Schoonover 380

*Chair: Christiana
Lansana (Ohio
University)*

**Inner Foundations: How Spiritual Dispositions Shape Teaching
Presence in the Communication Classroom**

Laura Russell (Denison University), Nicole Egbert (Kent State University), Alina Haliliuc (Denison University), Craig Pinkerton (Denison University), and Jeffrey Tyus (Youngstown State University)

The word “spirituality” rarely appears in syllabi, course objectives, or teaching evaluations. Yet for many educators, spiritual dispositions quietly shape everything from how they compose themselves before students to the pedagogical commitments that animate their courses. This roundtable invites an open discussion about that often-unspoken relationship. Panelists begin by interrogating the term, spirituality, and framing it diversely: for some, it is anchored in religious tradition; for others, it describes a secular development of the inner self. Uniting these varied expressions is the conviction that inner formation does not stop at the classroom door. In an era defined by cultural and informational fragmentation, attending to the spiritual foundations of one’s teaching presence may be among the most consequential acts a communication educator undertakes. Panelists explore how their respective practices and orientations manifest in their pedagogy, what they have learned from examining these connections, and what this discussion might offer the discipline.



Friday | Session 1 10:00-10:50 a.m. (continued)

*Research
In-Progress*

Room: RTV 281

*Chair: Mary
Olivia Roberts
(Ohio
University)*

Structures of Command: Constructing Meaning Through Communication and Prison-Inmate Relationships

James Bortey Annan (Ohio University)

This study examines how communication shapes power, resistance, and everyday relationships between prison officers and inmates in Ghanaian prisons. Drawing on a qualitative case study of Kumasi Central Prison, the project explores how command structures, institutional rules, and officers' discretionary decisions influence prison life and inmate experiences. The study also investigates how inmates negotiate, interpret, and resist institutional control through everyday interactions, informal communication, and subtle forms of resistance. While prison research in Ghana has mainly focused on overcrowding, rehabilitation, and prison conditions, limited attention has been given to communication and officer-inmate relationships. Using interviews, focus groups, and narrative interviews, this project seeks to provide deeper insight into how meaning, authority, and resistance are socially constructed within prison settings. The study contributes to communication scholarship, African prison research, and critical organizational communication by highlighting the lived experiences and voices often overlooked within institutional environments.

Algorithmic Agenda-Setting and the Construction of Political Meaning in Fragmented Digital Public Spheres

Hafiz Zain Itrat (Ohio University)

As social media platforms increasingly serve as primary sources of political information, algorithms play a growing role in shaping what people see, discuss, and understand about public affairs. This research examines how recommendation systems, engagement-driven ranking mechanisms, and platform design features influence the visibility and interpretation of political content. Drawing on agenda-setting theory and research on algorithmic governance, the study explores how personalized information environments contribute to fragmented public discourse and competing constructions of political reality. Through a mixed-methods analysis of social media content and platform affordances, the project investigates how digital platforms function as influential agenda-setters in contemporary democracies. The findings aim to advance understanding of how algorithmic systems shape political meaning-making, public opinion, and democratic deliberation in an era characterized by information fragmentation, platform power, and rapidly evolving digital communication technologies.

Promoting Mental Health Awareness through Play-Based Activities: Engaging Adolescent Youth

Abdul Qayyum (Ohio University)

Pakistan's 48 million adolescents face a growing mental health crisis, yet the country allocates only 0.4% of its health budget to mental health and has fewer than 500 psychiatrists nationwide. In this resource-scarce context, deeply rooted stigma and limited mental health literacy leave young people without the vocabulary or services to address psychological distress. This study proposes a qualitative exploration of how existing play-based activities in government schools in Lahore and Karachi support adolescent mental health awareness and emotional wellbeing. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, the research examines how structured play satisfies adolescents' fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Semi-structured online interviews will be conducted with physical education teachers, sports coaches, and parents across both cities. By centering adult voices closest to adolescents' daily experiences, this study aims to generate culturally grounded evidence that can inform school-based mental health promotion programs and advocate for protecting play in Pakistani schools.

Exploring How Contraceptive Side Effects Influence Usage: A Pilot Study in a Peri-Urban Ghanaian Community

Priscilla Adzimah (Ohio University)

This pilot study looks at how side effects affect women's use of injectable contraceptives and intrauterine devices (IUDs) in a peri-urban Ghanaian community. It focuses on women aged 25 to 35 and explores how and where they get information, what they understand from this information, and how their experiences shape their choices. Many women know about contraceptives, but they may not always receive clear information about possible side effects. As a result, they may feel worried, confused, or unsure about whether to continue, switch, or stop using a method. Using semi-structured interviews, the study will listen to women's personal experiences and examine how messages from health workers, friends, partners, relatives, media, and social media influence their decisions. The study connects with the conference theme by showing how women make meaning from mixed health messages. The findings may support clearer counseling, more trusted and open conversations about contraceptive use.

Friday | Session 1 10:00-10:50 a.m. (continued)

Workshop

*Room:
Schoonover
276*

*Chair: Rose
Moremoholo
(Ohio
University)*

AI-Powered Communication Pedagogy: Practical Tools for Teaching and Professional Practice

Dolapo Michael Oyedokun (Ohio University)

Generative artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming higher education, communication industries, and professional workplaces. While many individuals are familiar with popular platforms and tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini, fewer are aware of the broader ecosystem of AI tools that can enhance teaching, support visual communication, improve productivity, and facilitate creative content development. This course is designed for faculty members, graduate students, communication professionals, and practitioners seeking practical skills rather than technical expertise. Through demonstrations and guided activities, participants will explore tools for presentation design, educational support, and workflow automation. Attention will also be given to ethical considerations, transparency, bias, intellectual property concerns, and responsible AI use within educational and professional contexts.

**Let
country roads
take you home**

to West Virginia University



DEPARTMENT OF
**COMM
STUDIES**



Friday Session 2 11:00-11:50 a.m. Location: Schoonover Center and RTV Building	
<i>Research Paper</i> <i>Room: RTV 265</i> <i>Chair: Rayna Batool</i> <i>(Ohio University)</i>	Narrating Dialogue: Digital Storytelling and the In-Between Spaces of Classroom and Community Stephen Agyei (Ohio University) This paper explores how ICAD’s website constructs dialogue as a bridge between the classroom and the community. Using narrative inquiry, the study shows how digital storytelling frames collaboration, participation, and democratic engagement. While these narratives promote inclusion, they also smooth over tensions and power dynamics. The study reveals how institutions construct meaning and possibility in a public sphere that shapes who belongs in dialogue and how civic futures are imagined. “I am an outcast among outcasts”: An exploration of how Mentalcels manage stigma Nolan Bowers (Ohio University) Mentalcels, a subset of involuntary celibates (“incels”), believe that their incelhood is induced by their mental illness or alternative neurotype (e.g., autism). While incels express the stigma they experience due to their incelhood, mentalcels add onto this perceived stigma with an additional stigmatized identity. However, researchers have yet to investigate how mentalcels manage their perceived multifaceted stigma. As incels (and mentalcels) interact with one another in curated internet forums that craft their own subculture, it is important to understand how this medium may provide insight into alternative stigma management techniques. Guided by the theory of Stigma Management Communication (SMC), the present study investigates how mentalcels manage their stigmatized identities through a thematic analysis. Findings indicate that mentalcels manage their stigma in four ways: (1) avoiding stigma, (2) accepting stigma, (3) advocating for inclusion, and (4) eliminating future experiences with stigma. This study furthers SMC theoretically and offers implications for practice. From Promise to Proof to Legacy: Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo’s Rhetoric in Ghana’s 1D1F Policy Dominic Asitanga (Ohio University) This paper examines how development policy is rhetorically constructed through presidential discourse in postcolonial Ghana. Focusing on the One District One Factory (1D1F) initiative, I analyze a decade of speeches by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, including campaign addresses, State of the Nation Addresses, commissioning speeches, and major policy statements. Drawing on rhetorical history and constructionist theories of discourse, I argue that presidential rhetoric does more than communicate policy; it actively shapes public understandings of economic crisis, development, citizenship, and national progress. The analysis traces how 1D1F evolved from a campaign promise into a broader narrative of industrial transformation, economic resilience, and national self-reliance. In doing so, the paper demonstrates how presidential discourse constructs coherence amid changing political and economic conditions. The study contributes to scholarship on rhetorical history, political communication, and public policy by showing how meanings of development are continually negotiated and sustained through discourse across time.

Friday Session 2 11:00-11:50 a.m. (continued)	
<i>Discussion or Research Paper Panel</i> <i>Room: Schoonover 380</i> <i>Chair: Bill Jennings (University of Cincinnati)</i>	Expanding Horizons: Challenges, Innovations, and Best Practices in Faculty-Led Study Abroad Programs Jeffrey Tyus (Youngstown State University), Cody Clemens (Ohio University), Kimberly Jordan (Ohio University), Mary Roberts (Ohio University), Mary Catherine Kennedy (Ohio University) Faculty-led study abroad programs offer powerful opportunities for global learning, yet they come with unique challenges that require thoughtful planning and communication expertise. This panel brings together faculty to explore key issues shaping these programs, including risk management, ethical engagement with host communities, inclusive student recruitment, and the evolving expectations of today's learners. Panelists will discuss strategies for designing culturally responsive curricula, preparing students for intercultural communication, navigating institutional policies, and managing on-site logistics or unexpected disruptions. Attendees will gain practical insights and adaptable approaches for creating meaningful, academically rigorous, and sustainable study abroad experiences within Communication programs.
<i>Workshop</i> <i>Room: Schoonover 276</i> <i>Chair: Shatakshi Semwal (Ohio University)</i>	Beyond the Lecture: Transforming the Communication Classroom Through Experience and Human Connection Lillian Zarzar (Columbus State Community College) Communication is not learned through theory alone. This presentation examines a highly interactive teaching methodology designed to help students experience communication concepts rather than simply study them. Through discussion, audience interaction, reflection, storytelling, speaking exercises, and applied communication scenarios, students develop confidence, self-awareness, and practical communication competence. This session highlights methods used to create psychologically safe, engaging classrooms where students are encouraged to think critically, participate authentically, and improve both interpersonal and public communication skills.

Social Media & Session Evaluation Raffle!

Use #OCA2026 to tag your posts & pictures on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, or X during the conference (remember to make your posts public).

One raffle ticket will be entered into the drawing for each public post you tag with #OCA2026.

You can earn additional raffle tickets by:

- Picking up your conference packet at registration
- Turning in completed session evaluations online – scan this QR code!



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THANK YOU to Youngstown State University
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Friday | Session 2 11:00-11:50 a.m. (continued)

*Research
In-
Progress*

*Room:
RTV 281*

*Chair:
Nancy
Jennings
(University
of
Cincinnati)*

Framing the Crisis: A Comparative Content Analysis of 2025 Student Visa Cancellation Media Coverage

Eric Boll (Ohio University), Ryan Eisenhuth (Ohio University), Ann Natiom (Ohio University), and Van Pham (Ohio University)

This study aims to examine news representations of the 2025 student visa controversy in the coverage of both domestic and international news outlets. By adopting framing theory as a theoretical framework and quantitative content analysis as a research method, this study examines the framing of 212 news articles from six U.S.-based news organizations and six international news organizations that focused on the controversy. Currently, the study expects to find that while American journalists devote substantially more attention to legal proceedings, the overwhelming predominance of pro-visa and neutral frames and near absence of pro-cancellation frames suggests that both domestic and international journalists view the Trump administration's visa-related actions as problematic. The expected results of this study have several implications for understanding the power of media framing in shaping public controversies in a variety of media ecosystems.

Holding the Home Together: How Patriarchy is Communicated and Negotiated in Married Women's Lives

Namra Nadeem (Ohio University)

This study explores how newly married professional women in Pakistan experience and communicatively negotiate work-family conflict within patriarchal and joint family systems. While women's participation in education and employment has increased, they continue to face significant challenges balancing professional responsibilities with expectations related to marriage, caregiving, and household labor. Existing research has largely focused on structural and economic barriers, with limited attention to the everyday communicative processes through which women navigate these demands. Guided by Feminist Standpoint Theory, this qualitative study uses semi-structured interviews with newly married professional women living in joint family systems in Lahore, Pakistan. The study examines the challenges women encounter, the communication strategies they use to negotiate expectations and relational tensions, and their experiences of spousal support. Findings will contribute to communication scholarship by highlighting women's lived experiences and advancing understanding of gender, power, and family communication in non-Western contexts.

Family Health Communication and the Framing of Responsibility During Measles Outbreaks in Ohio

Mildred Komey (Ohio University), Ezinne Abaneme (Ohio University),
Athar Memon (Ohio University), Evans Opoku (Ohio University)

This paper examines measles risk communication in Ohio, focusing on how public health agencies and media sources communicate risk, prevention, and community responsibility during recent measles-related events. Using a qualitative content analysis of public health messages, news reports, and related communication materials, the study explores how measles is framed as a public health concern, how vaccination and exposure risks are communicated, and how messages address families, caregivers, schools, and broader communities. The project also considers whether maternal, infant, and child health concerns are made visible in measles communication and how messages provide guidance for action. By examining Ohio as a timely case, this study contributes to health communication scholarship on infectious disease risk messaging, vaccine communication, and public health preparedness. The findings offer practical insight into how public-facing messages can better support informed decision-making and strengthen community-level responses to preventable disease threats.

Framing of Opioid Use on Social Media: An Analysis of Opioid Discourse in Ohio

Emmanuella Seyram Aku Kwamee (Ohio University)

The opioid crisis affects over 16 million people globally, evolving from prescription drug misuse into a complex issue involving synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Ohio is particularly hard-hit, with high overdose death rates worsened by economic decline, limited healthcare access, and stigma — especially in rural and Appalachian communities where structural inequality deepens vulnerability. Social media has become a key space for opioid-affected individuals to share experiences, challenge stigma, and advocate for harm reduction. This study examines how experiential knowledge and lived experiences are framed on platforms like X and YouTube, guided by standpoint and framing theories. Three research questions explore how experiential knowledge is integrated into content, what dominant frames characterize opioid discussions, and how audiences respond to those frames. Using qualitative content analysis and the DAV framework, the study analyzes five YouTube videos and ten X posts from 2016–2026. Findings aim to inform culturally responsive health communication strategies for underserved communities.

BREAK FOR LUNCH

12:00-12:50 p.m.

Friday Session 3 1:00-1:50 p.m. Location: Schoonover Center and RTV Building	
<i>Discussion or Research Paper Panel</i> <i>Room: Schoonover 380</i> <i>Chair: Stephen Agyei (Ohio University)</i>	Visual Communication as Social Action: Art, Propaganda, and Environmental Engagement Sharon Croft (Capital University), Evie Swick (Capital University), Zoey Burleson (Capital University), Vanessa Adams (Capital University), Kendyl Roberts (Capital University) Through the rhetorical analysis of influential visual artifacts, this panel illustrates how visual communication encourages audiences to navigate complex environmental and social issues. Specifically, the presenters examine the works of the U.S. Forest Service, Herman de Vries, Benjamin von Wong, and Banksy. The first presenter illustrates how visual imagery in persuasive messaging, such as in the Smokey Bear campaign, motivates civic responsibility through ethical forms of propaganda. The other presentations employ Mehrabian and Russell's dimensions of nonverbal communication—immediacy, arousal, and dominance—as a framework for examining the persuasive power of environmental and socially conscious artworks. As part of their analytical work, these presenters also share their creative responses to their chosen artifacts, illustrating how scholarly analysis and artistic practice can work together to generate new forms of environmental meaning and visual persuasion. Collectively, these presentations demonstrate how visual persuasion shapes public understanding of environmental responsibility.
<i>Workshop</i> <i>Room: RTV 027</i> <i>Chair: Ryan Eisenhuth (Ohio University)</i>	AI Feedback in Communication Classrooms: From Tool to Teaching Strategy Carla Dalrymple (The University of Akron) As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into communication classrooms and training environments, educators must navigate both its potential and its limitations. This interactive workshop explores how AI-driven feedback tools can be used to support communication skill development while maintaining meaningful, ethical, and student-centered learning experiences. Grounded in principles of Social Cognitive Theory, participants will examine how AI feedback influences self-reflection, skill development, and perceptions of communication competence. Through guided activities, attendees will analyze sample AI-generated feedback, evaluate its effectiveness, and identify potential challenges related to authenticity, equity, and over-reliance on automated systems. Participants will then begin designing their own AI-integrated activity or assignment using a structured planning tool. Aligned with the conference theme, this workshop invites educators to consider how meaning is constructed, and sometimes fragmented, when communication learning is mediated through artificial intelligence.

Friday | Session 3 1:00-1:50 p.m. (continued)

*Research
Papers*

*Room: RTV
265*

*Chair: Mary
Catherine
Kennedy
(Ohio
University)*

Mindless Scrolling, TikTok Addiction, and Critical Thinking About Health (Mis)information on TikTok

Andrea Meluch (The University of Akron) and Rhiannon Kallis (The University of Akron) TikTok, and similar social media platforms, presents users with a highly personalized and potentially addictive feed that can include a considerable amount of health-related content (O'Donnell et al., 2023). This study examines how social media addiction and mindless scrolling are related to users' perceptions of their critical thinking about health-related content viewed on TikTok. Study participants (N = 327) included college students who used the TikTok platform and completed an online, cross-sectional survey measuring their social media usage and perceptions of critical thinking about health-related content on the platform. Results supported the hypothesis that TikTok addiction was strongly related to mindless scrolling on TikTok. Additionally, a hierarchical regression found that mindless scrolling significantly predicted participants' perceived critical thinking about health-related content. The implications of these findings on social media users' processing of health (mis)information, social media behaviors, and health implications are discussed.

Ritual Performance and Group Flex in Organizational Communication Following Human Induced Disaster

Mary Le Rouge (Cleveland Institute of Music)

In this paper, I explore how organizational communication theory applies to the narratives circulating in towns experiencing human induced disaster, specifically through intercultural workgroup communication theory (Oetzel et al., 2012) and Weick's theory of organizing (Weick, 1979), informed by Coombs conception of situational crisis communication (Coombs, 2023) and the application of a new concept called group flex. Government and corporations manage the narrative and establish in-groups and out-groups through ritual performance to support their claims and maintain their stability. However, there is also a preexisting tendency toward equilibrium in organizations, where conflicting group forces in a community, despite temporarily disturbing the normal function of an institution, tend to equal out and end up maintaining the status quo. One way that this cycle occurs is through group flex, a process where community members divide into factions after a crisis event and then regroup into new configurations to make reconstitution of the community possible over time. This makes real change in organizations difficult, although it does serve to create relative stability, especially when facing influence from external factors, such as in the context of a human induced disaster. Sites of research include East Palestine, Ohio (2023 train derailment); Flint, Michigan (2014 water crisis); Love Canal, New York (1978 toxic waste); and Middletown, Pennsylvania (Three Mile Island nuclear emergency, 1979).

Media Literacy: How Research Can Inform Practice For Children's Media Production

Nancy Jennings (University of Cincinnati) and Ella Marciel (University of Cincinnati) Media provides a way to share stories, ideas, wisdom, and art that can inspire and transform our current understanding of ourselves, our world, and our history. Media literacy skills can be taught to children and youth, and they should guide production and design decisions, be a part of the writing and editing rooms in the creation, production, and distribution of media, too. In this presentation, we provide some evidence-based recommendations and research, particularly for content producers of media for children and youth, in areas of media forms and characters, and learning outcomes such as aggression and gender. We submit that media literacy and responsible children's programs can reduce polarization, build trust, and promote children's rights.

Friday | Session 3 1:00-1:50 p.m. (continued)

*Research
In-Progress*

Room: RTV 281

*Chair: Namra
Nadeem (Ohio
University)*

Performing Credibility: Social Media Influencers, Political Messaging, and Misinformation in Ghana's #FixTheCountry Campaign

John Acquaful (Bowling Green State University)

Social media influencers (SMIs) are currently important political actors in Ghana's digital space. This paper studies how Ghanaian SMIs act as political educators or perpetrators of misinformation. Using the framework of Source Credibility Theory by Hovland & Weiss (1951), this paper adopts qualitative content analysis from four prominent SMIs who were active during the #FixTheCountry campaign (May-August 2021). The paper argues that where there is a lack of editorial control in the digital space, visibility, emotive appeal, and authenticity determine what credibility is, instead of expertise. This process has actual implications for the spread of accurate political information and misinformation in new democracies such as Ghana.

Leading Through Grief: Decision-Making and Organizational Health Among Small Business Owner-Leaders

Carrie Horner (Tiffin University)

This research-in-progress addresses a gap in understanding how small business owner-leaders experience decision-making while navigating significant personal grief and how those experiences may affect organizational health. In small businesses, owners often remain deeply involved in daily operations and serve as pillars of organizational success. When struck by grief, these owner-leaders may have limited ability to step away from leadership, potentially creating disruption within the organization. As a result, grief may shape not only the leader's cognitive and emotional processes, but also workplace communication, stakeholder relationships, and organizational stability. Guided by the Dual Process Model of Grief, this qualitative interview study examines how owner-leaders describe decision-making during grief, how they make sense of those decisions in hindsight, and how they perceive the effects on employees and the broader organization. By focusing on grief as a leadership and organizational issue, this study contributes to conversations about communication, loss, and organizational life in small business contexts.

From Tool to Kin: Symbiotic Agency and Quasi-Kin Emergence in Domestic Human-Chatbot Interactions

Chinwe Joboson (Regent University)

Conversational AI has become deeply embedded in our social fabric. While discourse abounds about its impact on jobs and livelihoods, less attention is paid to sophisticated agents like ChatGPT, which are increasingly assuming intimate and domestic roles. Narratives and experiences regarding AI chatbots portray an emerging and fragmented reality, where human-AI interactions are perceived as kin-like. Compelling questions emerge: How are chatbots redefining kinship? Can people genuinely experience their chatbots as relational persons? This research-in-progress investigates the communicative conditions under which domestic chatbot users develop quasi-kin relational bonds — connections characterized by warmth, empathy, and perceived mutual care. Drawing on Symbiotic Agency Theory, these bonds are framed not as anthropomorphic projections, but as relational identities co-constructed through repeated, intimate symbolic exchanges. Using in-depth interviews and reflexive thematic analysis, this qualitative study examines how daily domestic rituals shape quasi-kin attributions. Findings are expected to extend family communication theory, informing ethics and AI design as our futures navigate the knowable Unknown that is AI.

Constructing Meaning Through HIV Care: ART Nurses' Perspectives on Stigma in Ghana

Mary Otaah (Ohio University)

Despite advances in HIV treatment, stigma remains a significant barrier to care engagement and treatment adherence among young people living with HIV. This study examines how healthcare providers; ART (Antiretroviral Nurses) in Greater Accra, Ghana, conceptualize and implement stigma-sensitive communication practices when working with adolescents and young adults living with HIV. Guided by the HIV Stigma Framework, the project explores how provider communication influences anticipated, internalized, and enacted stigma within clinical encounters. Using semi-structured interviews with healthcare providers involved in HIV care, the study investigates communication strategies, confidentiality practices, and institutional factors that shape interactions with young patients. By focusing on ART Nurses' perspectives, this research highlights the role of communication in constructing meanings around HIV, identity, and care. Findings are expected to contribute to health communication scholarship by offering insights into how communication practices can reduce stigma, strengthen trust, and support treatment adherence among young people living with HIV in urban Ghana.

Friday Session 4 2:00-2:50 p.m. Location: Schoonover Center and RTV Building	
<i>Research Papers</i> <i>Room: RTV 265</i> <i>Chair: Katlin Medjesky (Wood County Health Department)</i>	Managing Meaning in Fragmented Contexts: Communication and Therapeutic Depth in Art Therapy J. Helen Schneider (Kent State University), Dr. Kele Ding (Kent State University), and Ginger Yang (Center for Injury Research and Policy Nationwide Children's Hospital) This study examines how meaning is constructed and regulated within a Creative Arts Therapy (CAT) program serving veterans of homeless status, drawing on 442 therapist-reported post-session surveys from a Midwestern transitional housing shelter. Reframing the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) through a communication lens, the study analyzes how art therapists regulate therapeutic depth, modality selection, and topic progression in response to participant readiness and contextual instability. Findings reveal a deliberate sequencing of meaning engagement: resource-building topics emphasizing grounding, trust, and emotional safety consistently preceded more complex trauma-related or identity-reconstructive work. Nonverbal and symbolic modalities frequently carried the therapeutic process where verbal exchange could not. These patterns suggest the ETC functions not only as a clinical framework, but as a mechanism for managing the emergence of meaning under conditions of instability. “Aura for Aura”: Shifting Gendered Attitudes toward Marital Infidelity in Nigeria Rosemary Charway (Ohio University) This paper examines how Nigerian social media users negotiate meanings surrounding marital infidelity through reactions to the Frank Edoho, Sandra Edoho, and Chike controversy. Guided by Feminist Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA), the study analyzes 120 publicly accessible comments posted on Instablog9ja’s X platform. Using reflexive thematic discourse analysis, the findings reveal growing challenges to patriarchal sexual double standards, through the emergence of retaliatory infidelity discourse framed as “aura for aura.” Rather than condemning women’s infidelity outright, many commenters positioned it as a form of resistance against expectations that women should endure male infidelity while remaining faithful. The analysis also reveals resistance to traditional patriarchal punishment narratives. References to sending women back to their “father’s house,” once a powerful disciplinary threat, were frequently dismissed as outdated and ineffective in contemporary society. These findings suggest that Nigerian digital spaces are increasingly functioning as sites where marital expectations are actively contested and renegotiated. Regulating Truth: The Weaponization of Misinformation Discourse Sandra Frimpong (Bowling Green State University) This paper argues that the central problem of misinformation governance in the contemporary United States is not, at its core, a legal or technological problem. It is a rhetorical one. The determination of what counts as misinformation, who has the authority to identify and address it, and what mechanisms are available for doing so are all communicative and political decisions embedded in public discourse rather than neutral technical categories. The paper employs critical rhetorical analysis as developed by McKerrow (1989) and applied across a body of public discourse surrounding misinformation regulation in the United States from 2020 through 2024, with primary focus on the 2024 presidential election period.

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Friday | Session 4 2:00-2:50 p.m. (continued)

*Discussion or
Research Paper Panel*

Room: Schoonover 380

*Chair: Seth Smith
(Columbus State
Community College)*

Meet OCA's Perspectives Council—An Interactive Discussion on Current Work and Next Steps

Seth Smith (Columbus State Community College), Melissa Cumberbatch (Columbus State Community College), Rhiannon Kallis, (The University of Akron), Amber Ferris (The University of Akron), Ashley Kennard (Ohio Wesleyan University), Man Luo (Bowling Green State University) Cody Clemens (Ohio University), and Andy Hunt (University of Cincinnati)

The Ohio Communication Association's Perspectives Council works hard behind the scenes to further the organization's work related to their commitment to matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly as it relates to gender and gender identity/expression, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, and socioeconomic status. This panel will provide a public forum for all members of the organization to come and learn about the work that the council is already doing, as well as provide input and feedback on the work that they would like to see done in the future. For the panel, members of the Perspectives Council will engage in an open dialogue with audience members and the exploration of new ideas will be encouraged.

Friday | Session 4 2:00-2:50 p.m. (continued)

*Research
In-Progress*

Room: RTV 281

*Chair: Abdoulie
Singhateh (Ohio
University)*

The Rise of Neoliberalism and Construction of The American Dream in Latin America

Jean M. Lagreca (University of Cincinnati)

Support for neoliberal practices in Latin America have recently increased, with leaders calling for a socio-economic shift in the region. Argentinian President Javier Milei and Brazilian ex-President Jair Bolsonaro have been two of its biggest proponents in implementing such governmental policies in the region to ensure success, while also closely aligning with the US. As the American Dream is traditionally positioned as available for all, the reality is much different, functioning as an ideological device rather than an imaginary concept. In this paper, I examine speeches conducted by Milei and Bolsonaro in international conferences through Burke's dramatism. Furthermore, I argue that recent inceptions of the American Dream communicated by both leaders function as a rhetorical apparatus that aids in the construction of a colonized Latin America through neoliberal practices.

Mobile Messaging as Mutual Aid Infrastructure: A Case Study of WhatsApp in the Nigerian Diaspora

Adetola Fajembola (Ohio University)

WhatsApp has become a primary channel through which Nigerian diaspora communities maintain connection, share cultural life, and sustain community across geographic distance. But as these communities navigate ongoing insecurity and crises back home generating urgent real-time information needs, a more consequential question emerges, has WhatsApp moved beyond app status to become the infrastructure through which Nigerian diaspora mutual aid and community support actually operate? This paper examines whether and how Nigerian graduate students at three Ohio universities depend on WhatsApp not merely as a communication tool but as embedded community infrastructure, the architecture through which missing persons are located, emergency information circulates, families stay connected, and communities support each other across borders. Drawing on infrastructure theory and connected migrant scholarship, semi-structured interviews explore how everyday digital practices have collectively produced community-built infrastructure operating independently of formal institutional channels. Findings will contribute to diaspora communication, infrastructure studies, and community resilience scholarship.

Differences in Perception of Support and Loneliness in American Expatriate-Spouse Pairs

Anita Gregory (Tiffin University)

This research-in-progress project examines how working expatriates and accompanying spouses describe the same international relocation differently. Drawing from a larger qualitative study of American expatriate loneliness and cultural adjustment, this project focuses on paired interviews in which both members of the relocating couple were interviewed separately. The analysis explores how role position shapes experiences of loneliness, support, belonging, and adjustment abroad. By comparing paired narratives, this project considers expatriation as a household-level transition rather than only an individual career experience. The study contributes to expatriate adjustment and communication scholarship by examining how connection and disconnection are experienced differently within the same move and how those differences may shape broader adaptation abroad.

The role of technology in influencing the digital divide in education. A study of Makueni County

Peter Muema (Ohio University)

This research in progress examines how socio-economic conditions and infrastructural factors shape teachers' access to and meaningful engagement with educational technologies in primary schools at Makueni County, Kenya. Using a qualitative podcast-based interview approach, the study explores teachers' experiences with digital tools, internet connectivity, electricity reliability, device availability, training, and household barriers affecting ICT integration. Grounded in van Dijk's digital divide framework, the project highlights how access alone does not guarantee meaningful use of technology in education. Instead, teachers' digital literacy, pedagogical adaptation, and school support systems determine whether technology improves classroom instruction and student learning outcomes. By centering teachers' voices through storytelling, the project contributes to communication and development studies by showing how rural schools navigate digital inequality. The findings are expected to inform education stakeholders, policy makers, and development practitioners seeking more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches to ICT integration in Kenyan schools.

Friday | Session 4 2:00-2:50 p.m. (continued)

GIFTS <i>Room:</i> RTV 027 <i>Chair:</i> Siyuan Xiang (Ohio University)	Constructing the Past: Teaching Communication Historiography Through Archival Role-Play Elina Nikolskaya (Ohio University) This interactive classroom activity introduces undergraduate students to communication historiography through the analysis of competing historical sources. Using archival materials from the Soviet Union of the 1930s — including political speeches, newspaper articles, personal testimonies, judicial documents, and visual propaganda — students work in small groups to construct and defend historical interpretations from the perspective of their assigned source. Through role-play, collaborative analysis, and guided debate, participants encounter conflicting narratives and examine how rhetoric, ideology, and power shape historical knowledge. The activity encourages students to critically evaluate evidence, identify bias and positionality, and reflect on the challenges of reconstructing the past from incomplete and contradictory records. By emphasizing interpretation rather than factual recall, the exercise demonstrates how historical narratives are produced through communication processes and contested meaning-making. The adaptable format can be used in communication historiography, media history, and related undergraduate courses. Who's Behind the Screen? Preparing Students to Deal with Online Deceptive Communication Alex Boesch (Ohio University) This GIFTS introduces an interactive class activity to engage students in understanding deceptive communication. It outlines the rationale, steps, and debriefing procedure for an activity intended for a class unit about mediated communication in an interpersonal communication course. The activity aims to prepare students for real-life encounters with deceptive communication in online scenarios. Teaching the Uncomfortable: A Diasporic Inquiry Activity for Intercultural Communication Kay-Anne Darlington (University of Rio Grande) This G.I.F.T.S. presentation introduces an inquiry-based assignment that helps students examine how cultural meaning is constructed across diasporic contexts. Grounded in intercultural communication theory and diasporic inquiry, the activity moves students beyond static understandings of culture by engaging them in guided analysis of identity, history, and power. Students investigate a diasporic community, map cultural tensions, and reflect on how meaning shifts across contexts and representations. The assignment addresses key learning outcomes related to intercultural communication competence, identity complexity, and global awareness. It is adaptable for traditional and non-traditional classrooms and supports discussions of complex or contested topics through structured inquiry rather than declarative instruction. This activity provides a practical approach to helping students critically engage with fragmentation, develop intercultural flexibility, and construct meaning in a globally interconnected yet divided world.
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Friday | Poster Judging | Q&A
3:00-4:50 p.m.
Location: Schoonover Center - Lobby

*Competitive
Posters*

Judges:
Ashley Kennard (Ohio Wesleyan University),
Jeff Tyus (Youngstown State University),
Man Luo (Bowling Green State University)

The Grief Algorithm: Nommo, Necropolitics, and Why Sudan Doesn't Trend

Eirene Binabiba (Ohio University)

The Role of Humor in the Adaptation of Nigerian International Students in the United States

Ifeyinwa Onwelumadu (Morehead State University)

What Makes Mental Health Content Stick? A Qualitative Study of Memorable Social Media Messages

Rhiannon Kallis (The University of Akron) and Andrea Meluch (The University of Akron)

Emerging Trends in Organizational Communication Scholarship: A Content Analysis of Theories, Topics, and Methods in Management Communication Quarterly (2014-2024)

Stephen O. Agyei (Ohio University), Peace Chinenye Nwachukwu (Ohio University), James B. Annan (Ohio University) and Lyzbeth S. King (Ohio University)

TikTok Motives and Predictors of Parasocial Interactions

Rhiannon Kallis (The University of Akron), Amber Ferris (The University of Akron) and Erin Hollenbaugh (Kent State University at Stark)

Tinhatting Fans: Queer Reading Against the Grain or Crossing Boundaries

Devanshi Sarin (Ohio University)

Fragmented Public Spheres: Digital Discourse Analysis of the Bad Bunny NFL Half-Time Show

Sadicamin Oboh (Idaho State University)

AI Disclosure: Investigating Non-Disclosure of GenAI on Social Media in Africa

Theorose Elikpllim Dzineku (Kent State University)

The Impact of the Entertainment-Education Show 'By the Fireside' on Ghanaian Students at Ohio University

Emmanuel Mensah (Ohio University)

FTC Disclosure Visibility, Parasocial Trust, and Audience Engagement in Creator-Led Film Marketing

Ann Mary Biju (Ohio University)

Negotiating Transnational Gender Norms & Academic Identity of Pakistani Doctoral Students in the USA

Namra Nadeem (Ohio University) and Hira Nadeem (University of Delaware)

Friday Session 5 3:00-3:50 p.m. Location: Schoonover Center and RTV Building	
<i>Research Papers</i> <i>Room: RTV 265</i> <i>Chair: Samantha Roberts (Ohio University)</i>	Environmental Harm in the Funny Pages: How The Far Side and Calvin and Hobbes Depict the Environment Eric Boll (Ohio University) Newspaper comic strips are a medium of mass communication that has largely been unresearched by communication scholars. This study seeks to begin filling this gap by analyzing how often The Far Side and Calvin and Hobbes depict the environment, the topics depicted, and the assignment of responsibility and blame for environmental issues. This study's findings suggest that blame assignments in newspaper comic strips is highly dependent on topic and is rarely assigned. Additionally, this study presents supporting evidence for the claim that major events and crises often inspire individual strips and serve as vehicle for political commentary. Lastly, this study presents findings which suggest that frame building in the medium of comic strips is highly complex and has both physical and artistic influences on the final message. Evaluating Strategies for Introducing a Mission Statement: The Role of Channel, Message Frame, and Source Credibility Robert Whitbred (Cleveland State University) This study investigates the impact of channel richness (paper versus video), message framing (unframed versus contextually framed), and receivers' assessment of message source credibility on the introduction of a mission statement. Outcomes include receivers' immediate recall of the statement, personal involvement with the statement, and evaluations of the importance of the statement. Results suggest: (a) a leaner paper channel positively influences message recall and personal involvement with the statement, (b) contextual framing positively influences message recall and personal involvement, and (c) source credibility positively influences evaluations of the importance of the mission statement. Fabulating the Environmental Villain: Digital Cultural Rhetorics and the Formations of Ecological Justice in the #StopGalamseyNow Movement Gabriel Opare (University of Maryland, College Park) and Sandra Boateng (University of Maryland, College Park) In this study, we theorize how galamsey actors are rhetorically fabulated as environmental villains within Ghanaian protest rhetorics. Through a rhetorical discourse analysis of posts collected during the #Stopgalamseynow movement on X, this paper traces how African cultural rhetorics of moral culpability and community literacies of ecological kinship are discursively communicated in Ghanaian digital culture. In attending to the rhetorico-discoursal valences of activist discourses, we ground our analysis in ukama, a Shona relational philosophy which emphasizes kinship, care, and multispecies stewardship. Our analyses trace recurring strategies of topicalization, metaphorization, and ancestricide discursivities through which galamsey actors are sculpted as unsavory threats to Ghana's land, water, and national futures. We argue that such technocultural insurgencies on X enact a praxis of environmental fracturization, which renders galamsey actors as communal villains, while topicalizing triad structures of political complicity, neoliberal extractive governance, and clandestine galamsey networks. Given the reticularity of protest rhetorics, we advocate that digital authorship of ecological justice must regularly be synergized with offline, place-based rhetoricities to catalyze systemic transformations towards just ecological futures.

Friday | Session 5 3:00-3:50 p.m. (continued)

<i>Research In-Progress</i> <i>Room: RTV 281</i> <i>Chair: Bill Jennings (University of Cincinnati)</i>	How Do We Get on the Same Page? Amy Drake (Columbus State Community College) The purpose of my research is to determine why we, as a society, feel more isolated and distanced from each other than we did prior to ubiquitous use of social media and email. My research will include an overview of the history of communication leading up to the split-second transmissions of today. My paper will also touch on various historic methods of written communication, from which we glean relevant information about the socially accepted communication conventions of earlier societies and examine what about these communication methods instilled in us the sense of a more cohesive culture. An Examination of Whether Generational Differences Exist in Intercultural Attributes Katherine Alkire (Tiffin University) Generational cohorts are often used to identify groups of people, predict their behavior, and understand their preferences. However, researchers have difficulty reaching consensus on the start and end years for these groups and still report notable differences between them. This study investigates whether generational differences exist in intercultural attributes across cohorts. Intercultural attributes were chosen for this research because of the rising globalization and the multicultural makeup of workplaces. These attributes include a person's interest in other cultures, cross-cultural communication skills, ethical orientation, and emotional regulation. The study will use a cross-sectional, causal-comparative, quantitative methodology to examine whether significant and meaningful differences exist between generational cohorts and whether these differences are evident when individuals self-identify their generational group. Reclaiming the Body: Digital Activism, Social Influence, and Women's Resistance in Iran Parvin Kazemimanesh (Ohio University) In Iran, removing a headscarf is not a fashion choice. It is a political act. This study examines how Iranian women use Twitter/X to negotiate the politics of compulsory hijab, build solidarity, and sustain resistance in one of the world's most restrictive digital environments. Drawing on Herbert Kelman's social influence framework alongside scholarship on everyday resistance and digital activism, the project argues that online discourse does more than coordinate protest: it actively shifts women's relationship to veiling norms from state-enforced compliance toward peer-driven internalization of values rooted in bodily autonomy. Using NodeXL Pro to collect and analyze a minimum of 10,000 Farsi and English tweets, the study combines content analysis with social network analysis to map the themes, hashtag dynamics, and interaction patterns that define women's emancipation discourse on Persian Twitter, and to trace how meaning is constructed across a fragmented digital landscape.
<i>Workshop</i> <i>Room: Schoonover 276</i> <i>Chair: Shatakshi Semwal (Ohio University)</i>	Break Digital Barriers: Strategies to Boost Engagement and Excellence in Online Higher Education Amy Krenitsky (Columbus State Community College) Online learning has become an essential and rapidly evolving pillar of higher education. Yet, both instructors and students face persistent challenges with engagement, communication, motivation, and achieving academic excellence. Thriving in the digital classroom demands more than just mastering technology; it requires intentional, high-impact communication strategies that foster genuine connection, clarity, and active participation. This hands-on workshop empowers educators with actionable, research-driven techniques to elevate teaching and learning in virtual environments. Participants will uncover powerful ways to amplify instructor presence, craft immersive course experiences, boost student engagement, and spark meaningful dialogue across diverse online settings. Drawing on both educator and student perspectives, this session delivers practical tools and proven methods ready for immediate implementation. Through vibrant discussion, collaborative exercises, and real-world examples, participants will discover how communication-centered teaching not only transforms student satisfaction and learning outcomes but also builds an inclusive, supportive, and thriving online learning community.

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Friday Session 6 4:00-4:50 p.m. Location: Schoonover Center and RTV Building	
<i>Workshop</i> <i>Room:</i> <i>Schoonover 276</i> <i>Chair: Ryan</i> <i>Eisenhuth (Ohio</i> <i>University)</i>	Using Science Fiction Texts in the Popular Culture Classroom Dana Cloud (University of Cincinnati) The session will use the films War of the Worlds and Free Guy to discuss how to use science fiction in the classroom to encourage students to see beneath the manifest text to the latent, ideological, values-oriented content of an artifact. We ask our students to understand what something is "about" on the surface level, but also what it is ABOUT at a deeper cultural level. We will employ narrative analysis and ideology critique to unpack the texts. Science fiction is ideal for this purpose because it often covers what Barry Brummett calls a "hidden transcript" about society with a disorienting and action-packed narrative. Attendees are encouraged to watch the films in advance and prepare by asking themselves what they think is going on culturally and ideologically in the text. This method is an empowering tool for students seeking to understand popular culture.

Friday | Session 6 4:00-4:50 p.m. (continued)

*Research
Papers*

Room: RTV 265

*Chair: Christiana
Lansana (Ohio
University)*

Beyond Orientation: How Institutional Support Shapes International Students' Adjustment and Belonging

Aicha Sawaneh (Youngstown State University)

This study examines how institutional support shapes the cross-cultural adaptation, sense of belonging, and academic success of international students at Youngstown State University. Using semi-structured interviews with nine undergraduate and graduate students, the project explores how students navigate academic structures, social environments, and immigration-related responsibilities while adjusting to life in the United States. The findings reveal four interrelated patterns: interpreting institutional messages, navigating clarity and confusion in support systems, experiencing cultural and academic misunderstandings, and relying on peer networks to fill gaps in formal services. Consistent with adaptation scholarship, participants described adaptation as an ongoing process that requires both institutional responsiveness and individual agency. This study extends existing research by illustrating how institutional communication, campus climate, and student organizations collectively shape international students' experiences on a midwestern campus. The results highlight the need for coordinated communication, culturally responsive training, and structured peer mentoring to better support international student success.

When Algorithms Become Therapists: Trust, Acceptance, and Usage of AI Chatbots in Mental Health Care

Albert Junior Nyarko (University of Kentucky)

AI-therapy chatbots powered by large language models have attracted growing attention for their apparent ability to understand mental health concerns and provide tailored support. However, their acceptance and use may be shaped by declining trust in traditional healthcare providers and by concerns about potentially harmful or inadequate responses. Guided by the technology acceptance model, this study examined whether perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were associated with attitudes toward and intentions to use AI-therapy chatbots, as well as the moderating role of trust. Data were collected via an online cross-sectional survey of 289 participants living in the United States, conducted from February to April 2026, and analyzed using multiple regression and Hayes' PROCESS macro. Results indicated that perceived usefulness, but not perceived ease of use, predicted attitudes. In turn, attitude positively predicted intention, and trust moderated the relationship between attitude and intention. Both theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Audience Meaning-Making and Ideological Negotiation in Responses to IShowSpeed's Africa Tour

Dominic Asitanga (Ohio University)

This paper examines how American audiences construct meaning about Africa in response to IShowSpeed's widely circulated 2025–2026 Africa tour. Rather than focusing on the livestreams themselves, the study analyzes 75 social media comments posted on X to explore how audiences interpret representations of African cities, infrastructure, and everyday life. Drawing on framing theory, postcolonial scholarship, and critical discourse analysis, the study identifies recurring interpretive frames, including Africa-as-Exception, Epistemic Surprise, Comparative Validation, Deficit Reassertion, and Corrective Counter-Discourse. Findings reveal that while the tour generated moments of surprise that challenged dominant deficit narratives of Africa, audiences often employed discursive strategies that reconciled contradictory representations with preexisting assumptions. At the same time, counter-discursive responses challenged these narratives and exposed ongoing struggles over representation and knowledge. The paper argues that social media platforms function as sites of ideological negotiation where competing meanings coexist and interact, illustrating how global imaginaries are constructed, contested, and sustained within fragmented digital publics.

Friday | Session 6 4:00-4:50 p.m. (continued)

*Research
In-Progress*

Room: RTV 281

*Chair: Nancy
Jennings
(University of
Cincinnati)*

**Nostalgia is Not a Strategy: A Cluster-Agon Analysis of Mark Carney's
"Rupture" Rhetoric**

Yang Lin (The University of Akron)

This extended abstract of an ongoing research project analyzes Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's "rupture" rhetoric using Kenneth Burke's cluster-agon method to uncover its underlying value structure and strategic intent. Focusing on three key speeches, including his 2026 Davos address, the study examines how Carney's rhetoric reframes a shifting global order as a decisive break from the past. The analysis identifies "values" as the central god term, supported by associated good terms such as honesty, solidarity, sustainability, and strength, which collectively construct Canada's identity as a principled yet capable middle power. In contrast, "nostalgia" functions as the primary devil term, representing misguided attachment to a declining rules-based order, alongside related terms like anarchy and fortresses. The initial findings suggest that Carney's rhetoric moralizes increased middle-power engagement in global governance while legitimizing a more assertive and autonomous role for Canada in shaping a new international system.

**Rhetoric as Practice: Developing Community-Centered Communication in
Public Health**

Katlin Medjesky (Wood County Health Department) and Kami Wildman (Wood County Health Department)

Public health organizations increasingly operate within environments characterized by declining institutional trust, misinformation, political polarization, and communication fatigue. While public health communication scholarship has emphasized trust and community engagement, less attention has been given to how rhetorical theory can inform organizational communication strategy. This work-in-progress project examines how Jeffrey St. Onge's theory of radical friendliness informed the development and implementation of a community-centered communication strategy within a local health department. This project explores how rhetorical concepts including identification, visible care, relational presence, and community ownership can be translated into organizational communication practices that support awareness, trust, engagement, and community action. Using a practice-based research approach, the study documents the process of translating rhetorical theory into strategy while also exploring the development of a qualitative evaluation framework. Long-term goals include refining the framework and developing a practical, replicable model that communication and public health practitioners can adapt to assess relationship-centered communication strategies within their own organizations.

**Freedom 250: Continuing Mediated Spectacles of Violence to Recenter Toxic
Masculinity**

Christopher Medjesky (University of Findlay)

This study examines how, during President Trump's second term, state rhetoric and public events work to reassert hegemonic masculinity through the normalization of violence. Policies and speeches, such as Hegseth's Quantico address, emphasize discipline, physical standards, and exclusionary masculine ideals while disparaging deviation. These themes are amplified through initiatives like Freedom 250, particularly events such as UFC Freedom 250, which appear to celebrate aggression, toughness, and dominance as core elements of national identity. Building on prior research that identified the administration's use of spectacle to renormalize violence and link it to whiteness and masculinity, this project extends that analysis to later events. Grounded in scholarship on spectacle and hegemonic masculinity, this study uses an ideological critical rhetoric framework informed by Marxist, queer, race, and gender perspectives to assess whether these events sustain and reinforce violent masculine norms and their implications for American identity formation.

Patriarchal/Anthropocentrism in the Fantasy Genre

Elis Fricker (Ohio University)

Examining some of the most popular fantasy works indicates a presence of patriarchal anthropocentrism, human supremacy, especially male supremacy, in the genre -- which normalizes the anthropocentric mindset in the real world. Additionally fandom around these stories promotes consumerism which reinforces anthropocentrism.

Friday | Session 6 4:00-4:50 p.m. (continued)

Workshop

*Room:
Schoonover 380*

*Chair: Rose
Moremoholo
(Ohio University)*

Constructing Meaning Through Coaching Communication: Lessons from Fitness Training

Mary Olivia Roberts (Ohio University) and Samantha Roberts (Ohio University)

Fitness coaching environments provide a highly visible, real-time application of communication principles in practice. Fitness professionals must quickly establish trust, motivate individuals through discomfort and uncertainty, adapt communication to diverse audiences, and create rapport that encourages accountability and sustained engagement (American Council on Exercise, 2020). Grounded in the foundational work by Sullivan (1988) on Motivating Language Theory, this workshop explores how communication functions as a motivational and relational tool in fitness coaching contexts. This interactive workshop examines how communication strategies used in fitness coaching can translate into broader leadership, educational, and organizational communication contexts. Participants will analyze examples of effective and ineffective coaching communication, evaluate how verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors influence participant response, and practice reframing discouraging or unclear language into communication that promotes trust, motivation, and engagement.

**Friday | Awards Ceremony
5:15pm - 6:45 p.m.
Schoonover Center 450**

Ohio Communication Association 2026 - Awards Ceremony

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Saturday, October 3

Saturday | Session 1

9:00-9:50 a.m.

Location: Schoonover Center and RTV Building

Research Papers

Room: RTV 265

*Chair: Katlin
Medjesky (Wood
County Health
Department)*

Negotiating Motherhood and Surrogacy in Celebrity Online Discourse: The Case of Meghan Trainor

Rosemary Charway (Ohio University)

This study examines how digital publics construct meanings of surrogacy, motherhood, and reproductive legitimacy through responses to Meghan Trainor's 2026 surrogacy announcement. Guided by a social constructionist perspective and framing theory, the study qualitatively analyzes 314 comments from Instagram and X to explore how online audiences make sense of surrogacy and maternal legitimacy. The findings revealed that commenters frequently defined "real" motherhood through pregnancy, childbirth, and bodily sacrifice, positioning gestation as a prerequisite for authentic maternal identity. As a result, non-gestational motherhood was often framed as less legitimate and as bypassing an experience deemed central to womanhood. The findings further demonstrate how women's bodies became sites of intense public regulation. Many commenters interpreted surrogacy as an attempt to avoid the physical transformations associated with pregnancy, constructing maternal legitimacy through expectations of bodily endurance and sacrifice.

From Security to Repression: Rhetoric, Law, and the Making of Political Belonging in Putin's Russia

Elina Nikolskaya (Ohio University)

Drawing on scholarship in law and rhetoric and rhetorical citizenship, the paper traces how constructions of threat articulated in official discourse become codified in Russian law between 2000 and 2022. The analysis examines presidential addresses, State Duma debates, explanatory notes, and federal legislation, treating them as interconnected stages in the institutionalization of political meaning. The findings show that categories such as "extremism," "foreign agent," and "foreign influence" emerge first in political discourse and are subsequently translated into legal classifications. As these categories expand, law increasingly functions as a mechanism for defining political belonging, distinguishing between legitimate members of the political community and actors designated as threats. The article contributes to scholarship on authoritarian governance by demonstrating how rhetoric acquires institutional force through legal codification and how legal classifications reshape the boundaries of citizenship, participation, and exclusion.

Speaking Truth for a Fee: Political Influencers and Institutional Authority in Ghana's election 2024

Sandra Frimpong (Bowling Green State University), Halima Lul Ali (Bowling Green State University) and Rhodalene Naa Ayekai Odai (Bowling Green State University)

In the weeks before Ghana's December 7, 2024, presidential election, fabricated audio recordings attributed to both major candidates circulated widely on X (formerly Twitter), framed not as misinformation but as truths that institutional media had suppressed. The actors who spread these materials were not fringe actors: many were paid political influencers operating on behalf of party-aligned networks. This paper examines the communicative strategies through which such influencers constructed epistemic authority during Ghana's 2024 electoral period, drawing on Fairclough's (1995, 2003) critical discourse analysis framework and Bartsch et al.'s (2024) integrative model of epistemic authority. We employed a mixed method design combining documentary content analysis with critical discourse analysis to identify three discursive patterns: populist positioning against institutional expertise, commodified authenticity as an epistemic strategy, and the deliberate manufacture of epistemic proximity to ordinary audiences.

Saturday | Session 1 9:00-9:50 a.m. (continued)

*Discussion or
Research Paper
Panel*

*Room:
Schoonover 380*

*Chair: Seth Smith
(Columbus State
Community
College)*

**Navigating Title II of the ADA and Other Legislation: A Moderated Panel
with OCA's Perspectives Council**

Seth Smith (Columbus State Community College), Melissa Cumberbatch (Columbus State Community College), Rhiannon Kallis, (The University of Akron), Amber Ferris (The University of Akron), Ashley Kennard (Ohio Wesleyan University), Man Luo (Bowling Green State University) Cody Clemens (Ohio University), and Andy Hunt (University of Cincinnati).

The Ohio Communication Association's Perspectives Council will engage in a panel discussion that aims to discuss, explain, and clarify some of the most recent state and national legislation impacting institutions of higher learning in Ohio. For the panel, members of the Perspectives Council will engage in an open dialogue with each other about their personal experiences at both public and private institutions. Participation from audience members will be encouraged.

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Saturday | Session 1 9:00-9:50 a.m. (continued)

<i>Research In-Progress</i> <i>Room: RTV 281</i> <i>Chair: Theorose Elikplim Dzineku (Kent State University)</i>	Digital Ghosting in Close Relationships-A Narrative Approach to Relational Loss Namra Nadeem (Ohio University) and Hira Nadeem (University of Delaware) The paper explores digital ghosting in long-term romantic relationships and examines how individuals make sense of being abruptly cut off without explanation after relationships lasting 12 months or more. Guided by the Narrative Paradigm and Sensemaking Theory, the study focuses on vicenarian adults (ages 20–29) and investigates the emotional, relational, and coping consequences of ghosting. Existing research has primarily examined ghosting in casual dating contexts or from the perspective of the ghoster, leaving a gap in understanding the experiences of those who are ghosted after significant emotional investment. The study proposes semi-structured narrative interviews with 15–20 participants who have experienced ghosting following long-term relationships. Data will be analyzed using thematic, in-vivo, and narrative coding to identify patterns in emotional responses, coping strategies, and meaning-making processes. The research aims to enhance understanding of ambiguous loss, emotional healing, relational identity, and future relationship behaviors, while contributing to scholarship on digital intimacy and contemporary relationship dissolution. Technocultural Agency in Human–GenAI Co-Creation: Renegotiating Authorship, Identity, and Originality Arnab Biswas (Bowling Green State University) As generative AI (GenAI) platforms become embedded in everyday creative and intellectual life, a pressing question emerges: do users genuinely direct these tools, or do the tools quietly direct them? Drawing on Radhika Gajjala’s concept of technocultural agency, this qualitative study investigates how university students navigate authorship, identity, and originality when co-creating content with AI systems such as ChatGPT and Midjourney. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews analyzed via reflexive thematic analysis, the project explores how users perceive their own agency, how they attribute creative ownership in AI-assisted work, and how their sense of self as creators shifts across these interactions. Findings will contribute to theoretical conversations at the intersection of communication, digital culture, and human–AI collaboration, while offering practical implications for academic integrity policy and digital literacy education in an era of increasingly generative machines. Examining the Impact of Digital Media (AI) on Environmental Conservation Behavior among School-Age Children Fuseini Tia Iddrisu (University of Cincinnati) This study examines how AI-supported digital media content influences environmental conservation behaviors among children, considering socioeconomic and cultural factors and the moderating role of parental mediation. In response to increasing global environmental challenges, the research explores how digitally mediated learning environments can promote pro-environmental behaviors in children aged 8–12. Grounded in social cognitive and media effects theories, digital media is conceptualized as a social learning platform where children develop environmental knowledge, norms, and self-efficacy through observation and interaction. Using a quasi-experimental, survey-based approach, data will be collected from approximately 200 schoolchildren in Cincinnati, United States, focusing on exposure to AI-driven environmental content, environmental sensitivity, conservation behaviors, and parental mediation practices such as co-use and discussion. Descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses will assess relationships among variables. Findings aim to inform educators, policymakers, and parents about ethically leveraging AI-driven media to foster sustainable behaviors in children.
<i>Workshop</i> <i>Room: RTV 027</i> <i>Chair: Peace Nwachukwu (Ohio University)</i>	Foundations of Rhetorical Fieldwork: A Workshop on Constructing Meaning in a Fragmented World Ryan Eisenhuth (Ohio University) In this workshop, participants will learn the fundamentals of embodying rhetorical fieldwork as a research method. Rhetorical fieldwork can be broadly defined as an approach to rhetorical criticism that integrates rhetorical and qualitative methodologies to explore in situ performances in the field. While there is no precise “how-to” guide for doing rhetorical fieldwork, applying the research method involves honoring five commitments including: (1) attending to the field from the field, (2) attending to ecological interactions between text and context, (3) attending to local, vernacular, and everyday rhetorics, (4) attending to embodied presence(s), and (5) attending to ethics and reflexivity. After each of these commitments is discussed, participants will be given the opportunity to complete their own mini-criticism while applying the commitments of rhetorical fieldwork and will be invited to partake in a discussion with co-participants about the value of rhetorical fieldwork in our increasingly fragmented world.

Saturday Session 2 10:00-10:50 a.m. Location: Schoonover Center and RTV Building	
Research Papers Room: RTV 265 Chair: Siyuan Xiang (Ohio University)	Improving Representation of Plus-Size Women in Media and Publishing Rontora Nolan (Kent State University) This paper examines the impact of media and publishing representations on societal perceptions of beauty, particularly regarding plus-size women. It explores how limited and stereotypical portrayals in television, film, social media, and literature contribute to unrealistic beauty standards and influence body image among women ages 18 to 30+. Drawing upon theories such as Normative Social Influence and Social Comparison Theory, the paper analyzes how repeated exposure to narrow beauty ideals shapes self-perception, self-esteem, and social acceptance. The study also discusses the psychological effects of idealized media imagery and the underrepresentation of diverse body types in mainstream media. In addition, the paper proposes a strategic communication plan designed to promote more inclusive and authentic portrayals of plus-size women through persuasive messaging techniques, including emotional appeals, source credibility, message repetition, and positive framing. Ultimately, the project advocates for greater diversity in media representation to encourage healthier and more realistic standards of beauty. The Perception of Public Policy Among the Voting Populus of the United States Garen Ryan (Wilmington College) This paper examines the political divides in the United States and the opinions held by the divided populous. To examine this, a survey was distributed amongst voting age adults in the United States. Respondents were asked about their opinions on their own political extremity (or lack thereof), opinions on policy ideas such as immigration, as well as opinions on specific policy examples such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement action under Donald Trump's second term. Results indicated that those who identified as any level of conservative (radical to lean) were significant supporters of Trump era political polices, in spite of their self identified opinions on policy. The same is true of those who identified as more liberal. Overall, the data suggests that regardless of an individuals personal convictions, their politics are largely attached to symbols in society that represent political ideas such as Donald Trump or a political party. From Silence to Support: Self-Disclosure and Social Support Among Men Experiencing Infertility on Reddit Ezinne Abaneme (Ohio University) and Mildred Komey (Ohio University) The study examined how men with infertility use the Reddit community r/maleinfertility to disclose their experiences and receive peer support. Analyzing 424 posts, comments, and replies from January to May 2026, we conducted qualitative thematic analysis guided by self-disclosure and social support theories. Men's disclosures blended detailed medical data (semen analysis results, hormone levels) with emotional vulnerability and relational concerns, often framing infertility as a shared couple experience rather than a personal diagnosis. Despite masculine norms discouraging help-seeking, users openly expressed grief, shame, and anxiety. We also found that there are five types of support: informational (medical guidance), emotional (empathy and validation), esteem (affirmation of competence), network (sense of belonging), and tangible (supplement recommendations, financial tips). The study concludes that male infertility should be understood as a relational reproductive health issue and that anonymous online communities meaningfully complement formal clinical care.

Saturday | Session 2 10:00-10:50 a.m. (continued)

*Discussion or
Research Paper
Panel*

Room: Schoonover 380

*Chair: Rayna Batool
(Ohio University)*

The Power of Play: Innovative Teaching Practices in K–12 and Higher Education

Amanda Kporwofa (University of Cincinnati), Michael Awuah (University of Cincinnati), Albert Junior Nyarko (University of Kentucky), Annika M Baldwin (University of Cincinnati), Russell Adzedu (University of Cincinnati), and Fuseini Tia Iddrisu (University of Cincinnati)

This panel explores how playful and participatory teaching practices can transform student engagement and learning across K–12 and higher education settings. As educators seek alternatives to traditional lecture-based instruction, many are incorporating activities such as icebreakers, games, simulations, storytelling, role-playing, collaborative challenges, and creative classroom exercises into their teaching. Drawing from communication, education, and pedagogy scholarship, panelists examine how these approaches foster active participation, improve knowledge retention, encourage critical thinking, and create more inclusive learning environments. Presenters will share practical examples from diverse educational contexts, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges of implementing playful pedagogies. By bringing together educators working across different levels of education, this panel demonstrates how learning can be made more engaging without sacrificing academic rigor. Ultimately, the panel argues that play is not merely an instructional supplement but a powerful pedagogical tool that can enhance learning, creativity, and meaningful student participation.



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Saturday | Session 2 10:00-10:50 a.m. (continued)

Research In-Progress

Room: RTV 281

Chair: Shatakshi Semwal (Ohio University)

Heroes, Villains, Victims, and Fools: An Integrative Review of the Rhetoric of Character Archetypes

Craig Pinkerton (Denison University)

Character archetypes (heroes, villains, victims, and fools) are central to public discourse and have attracted scholarly attention across nearly every discipline in the humanities and social sciences. Yet no integrative review of this literature exists. This project addresses that gap by synthesizing scholarship on the rhetorical construction of character archetypes as applied to real people and groups in political, historical, and public discourse. Drawing on literature from rhetorical studies, sociology, political science, psychology, journalism, and related fields, the project identifies themes, frameworks, and rhetorical mechanisms across bodies of scholarship that have largely developed in isolation from one another. The goal is to produce an integrative framework useful for rhetorical scholars working on narrative, political rhetoric, and public memory. The project has theoretical implications for understanding how moral characterization operates in public discourse and practical implications for democratic communication and civic life.

Constructing Climate Meaning: How Children's Media Shapes Eco-Anxiety, Worry, and Self-Efficacy

Usman Bah (University of Cincinnati)

Children today come of age in a media-saturated world where climate change is no longer distant or abstract, but a constant presence woven into their informational, social, and physical environments (Gislason et al., 2021; Parnes et al., 2024). Through television, streaming channels, animated series, YouTube, podcasts, and platforms such as TikTok, they repeatedly encounter narratives and images of floods, wildfires, droughts, and storms. With this, climate change enters not only their informational world but their emotional one. I ask how children construct meaning about climate change from a fragmented media landscape, and how that meaning-making shapes both their emotional foundations and their sense of the future. Understanding how the design of climate messages helps to generate or to ease distress is therefore both timely and consequential, especially for children's mental health, for media practice, and for educational policy.

How Female Graduate STEM Students Navigate AI and Gendered Barriers: A Positive Deviance Study

Kudzaishe Masendeke (Ohio University) and Dr. Saumya Pant (Ohio University)

This research-in-progress study examines how female graduate students in STEM at a large midwestern university experience and respond to the intersection of artificial intelligence, gender equity, and academic persistence. Using a qualitative design, the study will conduct semi-structured interviews with master's and doctoral students across STEM disciplines to explore how gendered structural and cultural barriers shape their access to, confidence in, and use of AI tools. Guided by a positive deviance framework, the project shifts attention from barriers alone to the strategies women use to succeed despite inequitable conditions. The study also considers how AI functions as both a potential resource and a source of inequity in graduate STEM education. Findings are expected to contribute to communication research on AI and gender while offering practical recommendations for faculty mentors, program directors, and policymakers seeking to create more inclusive STEM environments.

Communicating Risk in Lyme Disease Emergence Zones

Carolina Herrera-Céspedes (Ohio University)

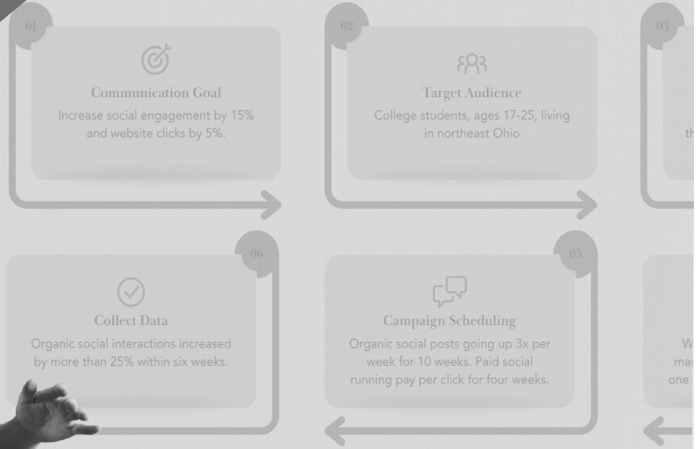
Emerging infectious diseases are increasingly driven by climate and environmental change, exposing new populations to health risks. Lyme disease, the most common vector-borne illness in the United States, has expanded rapidly in Ohio, particularly in regions with limited prior exposure. This mixed-methods study examines how communication processes shape Lyme disease risk perceptions and preventive behaviors in Southeast Ohio.

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Saturday Session 2 10:00-10:50 a.m. (continued)	
GIFTS <i>Room: RTV 027</i> <i>Chair: Abdoulie Singhateh (Ohio University)</i>	Building an Organization from the Ground Up: Leveraging an AI Chatbot to Help Students Apply Organizational Communication Theory to Pitch a Hypothetical Organization Andrea Meluch (The University of Akron) This GIFTS shares an assignment for the organizational communication course that integrates a custom AI chatbot. The AI chatbot built for this course assignment serves as a thinking partner to help students refine ideas for a hypothetical organization to pitch to the class. Scrolling at What Cost? Teaching the Ethical Risks of Social Media, Influencers, and Algorithms Mary Olivia Roberts (Ohio University) and Samantha Roberts (Ohio University), Cody Clemens (Ohio University), and Mary Catherine Kennedy (Ohio University) As social media increasingly shapes communication, identity, and culture, students must critically evaluate not only what social media can accomplish, but also the ethical consequences associated with its use. This activity aligns with the convention theme, Foundations and Futures: Constructing Meaning in a Fragmented World, by asking students to examine how social media platforms, algorithms, and influencers shape the ways individuals create meaning, form relationships, and understand themselves and others in an increasingly fragmented digital world. Language Activity Elis Fricker (Ohio University) This is a GIFTS for a class activity about analyzing language in public speeches.

Saturday | Keynote Speaker | Session 3
11:00-12:15 p.m.
Location: Schoonover Center | Room 145

A Small Sliver...

Fusing Foundation(s) of Common Ground in a Fragmented World

Dr. Christina S. Beck, Ohio University



Christina S. Beck (Ph.D., University of Oklahoma) is the Interim School Director and Barbara Gerald Schoonover Professor of Health Communication in the School of Communication Studies at Ohio University (USA). She is also a Past-President of the National Communication Association and the Central States Communication Association. She was inducted into the Central States Communication Association Hall of Fame in 2023, and, in 2024, the National Communication Association presented her with the Samuel L. Becker Distinguished Service Award.

Beck has produced 15 books and numerous book chapters, journal articles, and conference presentations. For the past two decades, Beck's work has bridged her interests in health communication, popular culture, fandom, and media audiences, including her co-authored book, *Celebrity Health Narratives and the Public Health* (2015) and her single-authored book, *Celebrity in the Time of Covid: Fandom and the Influence of Pandemic Messaging* (2022). Most recently, she edited (and contributed to) *The Routledge Handbook of Health Communication and Popular Culture* (2025), and she is currently co-editing *The Routledge Handbook of Health Communication and Social Justice* (with Vinita Agarwal).

In addition to this scholarly work, she serves as the Course Coordinator for Interviewing (COMS 2040) and the founding advisor of the Ohio University chapter of Lambda Pi Eta (the National Communication Honor Society).

Keynote Address

In the early 1990s, Kenneth Gergen wrote about the complexities of then-contemporary life, underscoring the fragmentation implicit to the postmodern era. Now, some 30 years later, continually expanding communicative platforms and technological advances complicate and confound communication and connectedness more than ever before. Yet, scholarship in our discipline holds rich potential for helping us to understand both obstacles to and opportunities for shared understandings and connection. As one example, in this keynote address, I discuss ways in which narrative can provide meaningful and impactful pathways to at least a small sliver of common ground amid fractured identities and divisive perspectives in this chaotic world.

Chair: *Rhiannon Kallis (The University of Akron)*

Saturday | Session 4 | Business Lunch | 12:30-1:50 p.m.
Location: Schoonover Center | Room 450

Lunch & OCA Business Meeting

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Saturday | Session 5 | Top Paper Presentation | 2:00-2:50 p.m.
Location: Schoonover Center | Room 450

Chair & Respondent: Phokeng Dailey (Ohio Wesleyan University)

Communicating AI into Resources: Responsive Communication and Employee Resource Gain in Workplace AI

Xiaofeng Jia (Bowling Green State University) | **Top Professional/Educator Paper**

AI adoption at work is often discussed as a technological challenge, but this study asks a more human-centered question: What helps employees experience AI as a resource rather than a threat? Drawing on conservation of resources theory, this study examines how responsive organizational communication about AI-driven changes shapes employees' personal AI resources, perceived AI justice, and support seeking from AI. Using survey data from 544 full-time U.S. employees, the findings show that responsive communication helps employees view AI adoption as more usable, fair, and supportive. However, not all AI support seeking works the same way: instrumental support seeking is linked to greater work self-efficacy, while emotional support seeking is associated with higher flourishing but lower work self-efficacy. The study offers practical insights for more responsive and human-centered AI implementation.

Negativity Bias or Positivity Deficit? Explaining Facebook Engagement Through Sentiment

Arnab Biswas (Bowling Green State University) | **Top Graduate Student Paper**

This study examines how the emotional tone of politically charged Facebook posts shapes both audience engagement and content visibility. Applying VADER sentiment analysis to over 14,000 posts, the research finds that nearly three quarters of content skewed negative in tone — and that negativity drove significantly higher rates of reactions, comments, and shares, consistent with negativity bias theory. Critically, however, the relationship between sentiment and visibility tells a different story: negative and neutral posts reached comparable audiences, while positive posts were systematically less visible regardless of engagement. These findings suggest that emotional framing not only influences how audiences interact with political content but also determines whether that content is seen at all, with important implications for algorithmic amplification and democratic discourse.

Guilty Yet Electable? How Partisanship Shapes Belief in Trump's Criminality

Anna Wise and Audrey Wagstaff (Wilmington College) | **Top Undergraduate Student Paper**

This study explores how partisan politics and social pressures shape U.S. voters' attitudes toward Donald Trump's criminality and electability following the 2024 election. Using survey data from 104 voters, it examines how voting behavior, party affiliation, and social environments influence perceptions of Trump's guilt across multiple legal accusations. Findings reveal a strong partisan divide: Trump voters and Republicans were significantly less likely to view him as guilty, while Democrats and Harris voters overwhelmingly believed he was guilty. These results suggest that partisanship acts as a primary filter for interpreting legal information. Additionally, individuals with politically homogeneous social circles were more likely to adopt aligned views, reinforcing existing beliefs. Overall, the study demonstrates that partisan identity and social context play a central role in shaping political perceptions, raising questions about the role of objective evidence and democratic accountability in contemporary American politics.

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Saturday | Session 6

3:00-3:50 p.m.

Location: Schoonover Center and RTV Building

Discussion or Research Panel

*Room:
Schoonover 380*

*Chair: Peace
Nwachukwu (Ohio
University)*

How the Rhetoric of Place Communicates Connection and Contestation

Nhat Linh Dang (Denison University), Quynh Doan (Denison University), Alina Haliliuc (Denison University), Linh Le, (Denison University), and Cheryl Nguyen, (Denison University)

Our social environments abound with both connection and disconnection, leaving us to question the conditions that bring people together or push them apart. "Place" prominently, though often discretely, shapes our interactions and the relationships we form through them. From the settings in which we take part, be they public and private, professional and personal, or in-personal and virtual, we routinely negotiate different places populated with historical, cultural, and presently unfolding meaning. This panel brings place to the forefront by exploring its rhetorical impact on human communication. Featured panelists will explore varying contexts while asking: How do theories of place position us to become more mindful of conditions that unite and divide us? What creative methodologies and pedagogical practices are useful for examining the communicative and rhetorical dimensions of place? In what ways might our understandings of place equip us with agency for making transformative changes in the places we inhabit?

Saturday | Session 6 3:00-3:50 p.m. (continued)

*Research
In-Progress*

Room: RTV 281

*Chair: Abdoulie
Singhateh (Ohio
University)*

ChatGPT in Higher Education: A Longitudinal Investigation of Sentiment and Engagement on Facebook

Gabriela Gonzalez (Bowling Green State University) and Arnab Biswas (Bowling Green State University)

This research in progress conducts a sentiment analysis of Facebook posts pertaining to ChatGPT in higher education. In addition to identifying trends in sentiment, the relationship between polarized sentiment and digital engagement is also investigated. Data for this longitudinal study was accessed directly from the Meta Content Library. Wave 1 of the data consists of Facebook posts pertaining to ChatGPT in higher education that were posted during the 2023 calendar year. Wave 2 consists of Facebook posts meeting the same criteria that were posted during the 2025 calendar year. Analysis will reveal trends of the public's sentiment towards ChatGPT in the higher education setting and also provide insight into how a post's polarized sentiment, whether positive or negative, affects the level of digital engagement the post receives.

Silence and Signals: Navigating Career Futures Through Institutional Communication in Midwest USA

Mary Otaah (Ohio University) and Samuel Cobbinah Okaah ((North Dakota State University)

International graduate students often make life-changing career decisions while navigating fragmented communication environments characterized by incomplete information, ambiguous guidance, and institutional silence. This study examines how international graduate students in Midwest U.S. universities interpret and respond to these communicative gaps as they make decisions about employment, immigration pathways, and post-graduation futures. Guided by Uncertainty Management Theory and co-cultural theory, the project explores how students construct meaning from silence and conflicting institutional signals, how these experiences shape career decision-making, and what communicative strategies they employ when guidance is absent or unclear. Through qualitative interviews with international graduate students, the study investigates the relationship between communication, uncertainty, and agency within higher education institutions. By examining how students navigate fragmented communication systems, this research contributes to intercultural and organizational communication scholarship while offering insights into creating more transparent and equitable support structures for international students.

Where the Map Turns Red: A Participatory Narrative Inquiry into Positive Deviance Among Progressive

Molly Nagin (Ohio University)

Since 2016, research has documented a deepening urban-rural political divide fueled by a "politics of resentment," in which rural working-class communities blame urban populations rather than structural forces for the conditions they face—a dynamic scholars link to a broader fascistic crisis in the United States. Yet dominant narratives framing rural America as monolithic and culturally backward compound the problem, promoting stereotypes that intensify rather than resolve that resentment. Ashtabula County, Ohio exemplifies this tension: devastated by deindustrialization, it nonetheless harbors a persistent progressive constituency. Understanding how that constituency survives and communicates is both a scholarly and strategic imperative. Recent issue-based electoral victories, including the 2023 reproductive freedom amendment and the 2011 collective bargaining referendum, demonstrate that rural-urban progressive coalitions are possible and consequential. Applying the Positive Deviance (PD) framework as an analytical lens, this study seeks to generate the granular communicative knowledge necessary to sustain and expand them.

Beyond Personal Choice: Social Support and Prenatal Decision-Making in Online Pregnancy Narratives

Mildred Komey (Ohio University), Evans Opoku (Ohio University), and Rhoda Osei, (Ohio University)

This project examines how pregnant women and members of pregnancy-related online communities use Reddit to make sense of prenatal decision-making and social support. Using publicly available Reddit pregnancy discussions from 2024 to 2026, the study approaches prenatal decisions as communicative and relational processes shaped by healthcare providers, partners, family members, online peers, embodied experiences, and uncertainty. Guided by Relational Dialectics Theory 2.0, the project explores how users negotiate tensions among provider authority, peer experience, family advice, personal choice, relational responsibility, reassurance, and medical caution. Preliminary review suggests recurring discussions of prenatal care, provider communication, online peer support, family and partner involvement, uncertainty, and nutrition. The project contributes to conversations about digital health communication, maternal health support, and prenatal decision-making in online communities.

Saturday Session 6 3:00-3:50 p.m. (continued)	
<i>Workshop</i> <i>Room: RTV 015</i> <i>Chair: Stephen Agyei (Ohio University)</i>	What Makes Communication Human? Curriculum and Assessment in the Age of AI Amber Ferris (The University of Akron) Artificial intelligence has transformed how students create and interact with communication, prompting educators to reconsider long-standing assumptions about teaching, learning, and assessment. While many discussions focus on academic integrity, detection tools, and classroom policies, this workshop asks a more fundamental question: What makes communication competence uniquely human in an age when AI can generate speeches, media content, strategic plans, and other communication artifacts? This interactive workshop explores the relationship between communication expertise, critical thinking, ethical judgment, and effective AI use. Participants will examine how AI challenges traditional approaches to communication education and engage in facilitated discussions about the knowledge, skills, and competencies that remain essential for student success. Through small-group and large-group dialogue, attendees will consider what communication educators should prioritize in their curricula and how communication programs can prepare students to thoughtfully evaluate and use AI-generated content. Participants will leave with practical frameworks for ongoing reflection and curriculum conversations within their own institutions.
<i>Workshop</i> <i>Room: RTV 027</i> <i>Chair: Rose Moremoholo (Ohio University)</i>	Toward a Practice of Cozy Leadership: Exploring Vibe Facilitation in Small Groups James Jarc (Cuyahoga Community College) This interactive workshop explores "Cozy Leadership" as an emergent practice of facilitation where warmth, informality, and intentional relational safety become strategic and productive communication choices. Grounded in scholarship on psychological safety, relational leadership, and nonverbal immediacy, participants will learn to recognize and create the conditions where vulnerability and productivity coexist, whether in person or on screen. Through a hands-on "Vibe Audit," attendees will diagnose the affective climate of their own meetings or classrooms and generate concrete experiments for increasing relational warmth without sacrificing outcomes. The session also addresses critical tensions: when does coziness serve the group, and when might it backfire? Designed for facilitators, educators, and leaders navigating fragmented, screen-mediated contexts, this workshop offers practical tools for reimagining how we lead collaborative spaces in a world that desperately needs both connection and results.



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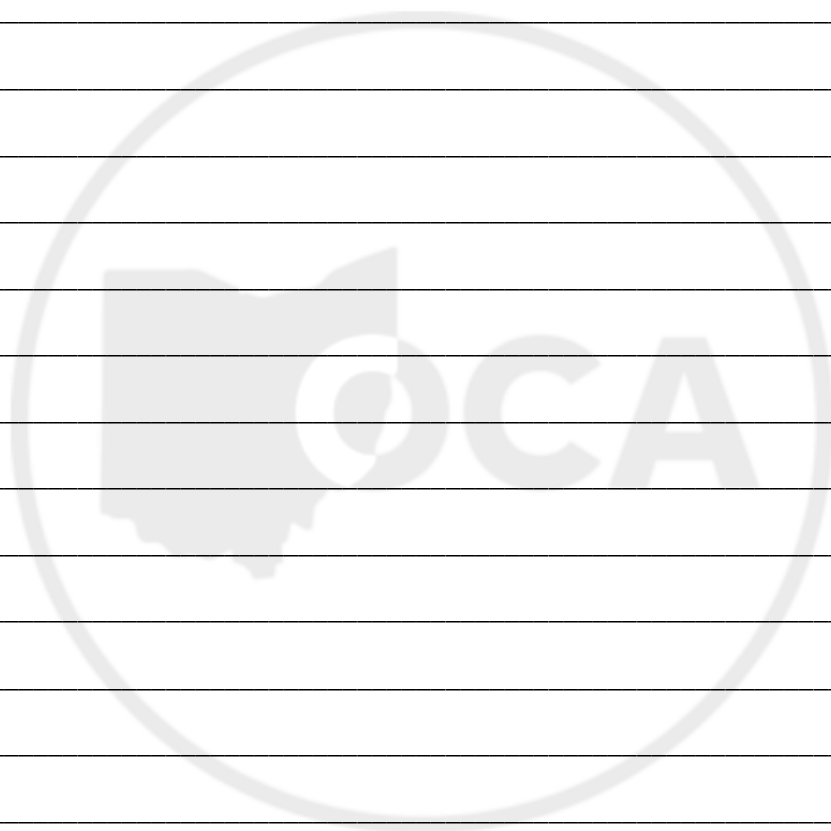
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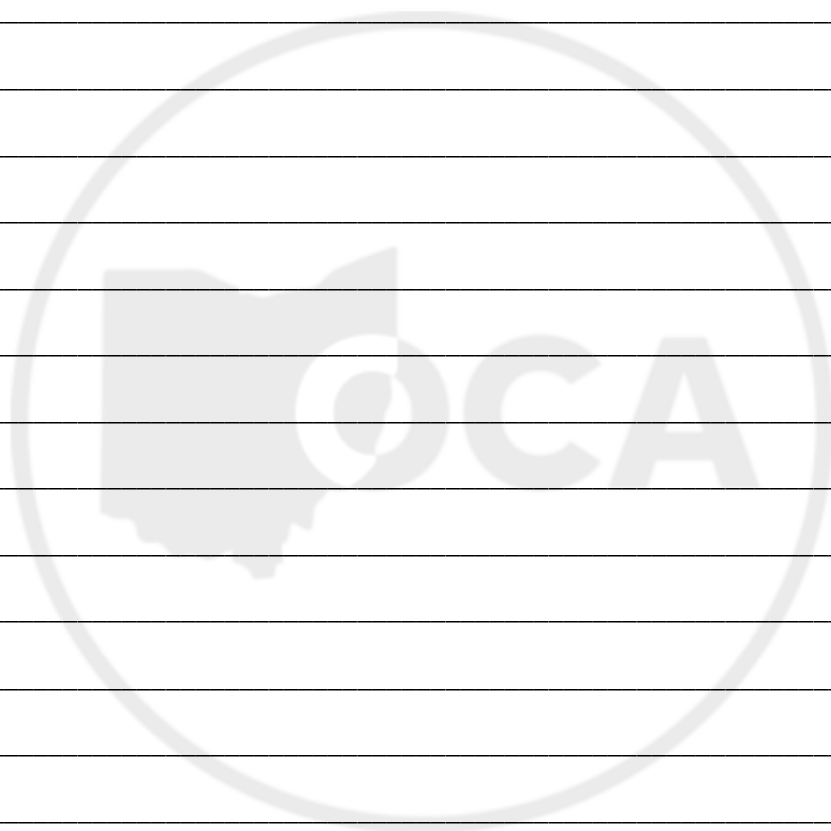
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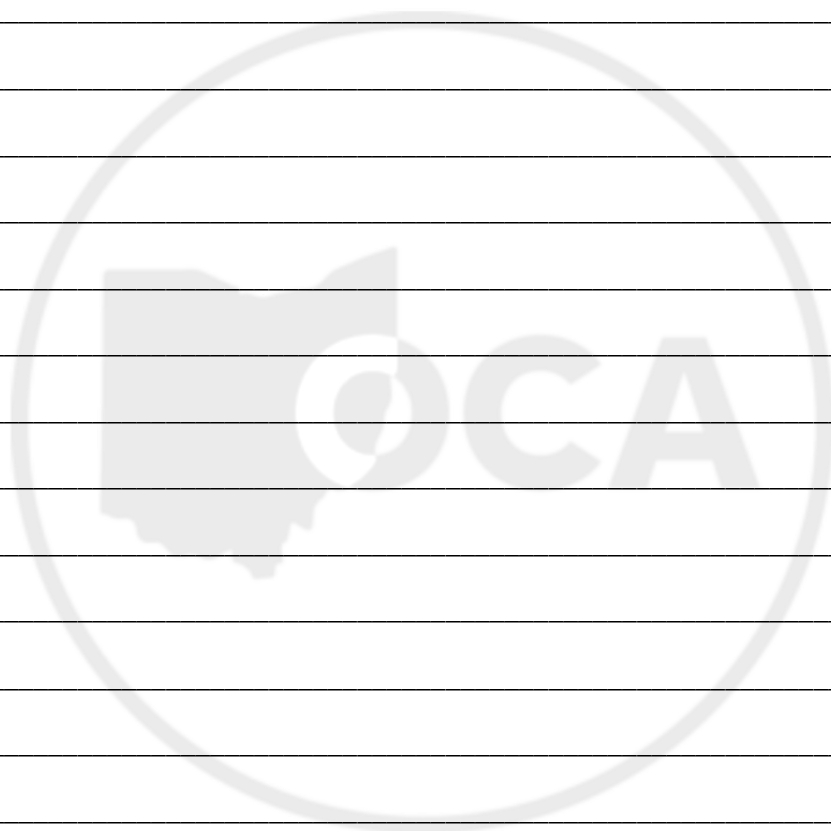
Dr. Christina Beck for sharing her time, talent, and treasures with us.

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SPECIAL THANKS

to the talented Clark State College students of the GPH 2085 Service Learning Capstone, under the instruction of Scott Dawson, Professor and Coordinator of Graphic Design and New Media.

The Ohio Communication Association conference program cover and graphics were created by

ABBEY TAVALERO.

In addition to Abbey's excellent work, the final submissions were so strong that we included the additional designs on this page as a thank you for the hard work of all the students involved.

The GPH 2085 Service Learning Capstone students also included the following:

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