

Northwestern | SCHOOL OF  
COMMUNICATION

# Dialogue

*summer 2017*





## Calendar of events

### ***A Midsummer Night's Daydream***

by William Shakespeare  
*Adapted and directed by David Catlin*  
July 21–30  
Ethel M. Barber Theater

### **Imagine U: Backstage Workshop** ***A Midsummer Night's Daydream***

July 23  
Upstairs Blackbox

### **Imagine U Block Party**

July 29  
Arts Circle outside Ethel M. Barber Theater

### ***The Who's Tommy: In Concert***

by Pete Townsend  
*Directed by Geoff Button*  
August 3–6  
Ethel M. Barber Theater

### ***In the Red and Brown Water***

by Tarell Alvin McCraney  
*Directed by Henry Godinez  
and Jerrell L. Henderson*  
October 12–29  
Josephine Louis Theater

### ***Company***

by Stephen Sondheim and George Furth  
*Directed by Bill Brown*  
November 3–19  
Ethel M. Barber Theater

Information and tickets at  
[communication.northwestern.edu/wirtz](http://communication.northwestern.edu/wirtz)

**Stage on Screen:**  
**National Theatre Live's**  
**Encore Series**  
Ethel M. Barber Theater

#### ***Peter Pan***

July 22

#### ***Twelfth Night***

July 26

#### ***Obsession***

August 9

#### ***Rosencrantz and*** ***Guilденstern Are Dead***

August 10

#### ***Angels in America*** ***Part One: Millennium Approaches*** ***Part Two: Perestroika***

September 23

#### ***Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?***

October 18

#### ***Salomé***

November 1

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From left: David Bell, Dominic Missimi, Kate Baldwin, Dean Barbara O'Keefe, Michael McCormick



Visiting the Great White Way inevitably means seeing some purple. In March the Northwestern Alumni Association sponsored a Broadway weekend in New York City—dinners, discussions, and, of course, three days of shows. Members of the Northwestern community were treated to such Tony Award-winning productions as *Hello, Dolly!*, featuring School of Communication alumni Kate Baldwin (C97) and Michael McCormick (C73) and produced by Ruth Hendel (GC75); *Dear Evan Hansen*, directed by Michael Greif (C81); *The Glass Menagerie*, produced by Hendel and Barbara Whitman; *Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*; and *Come from Away*. Panel discussions on Broadway production and music featured Zachary Baer (C10), Tom Casserly (C11), Mark Hoebee (C82), and Carole Rothman (C70); a special conversation with Greif focused on his work for *Dear Evan Hansen* and *War Paint*. The weekend wrapped up with an exciting glimpse into Broadway's future: the Northwestern University New York Senior Showcase, starring 26 students from the acting and music theatre programs.

On the cover: Digital image of Arsinoe from Molière's *The Misanthrope*, created by MFA in stage design student Lauren Nichols on a Wacom Cintiq tablet (see article on page 2)



**In 2000 I left a position** as director of the University of Michigan's digital media and technology center, the Media Union, to become dean of Northwestern's School of Speech. The contrast was stark: from dancing on the bleeding edge of new technology development, I found myself leading a unit in which most faculty and students had little awareness of what the digital revolution would mean for the communication arts and sciences.

Seventeen years later, the situation has changed dramatically. In every department faculty are leading in technology development and application, and our students are demanding more digitally alert curricula and instruction. In our research and artistic work, we have projects that use brain and body imaging, big data analysis, modeling and predictive analytics, digital libraries and new information services, interface design, social media development and regulation, social network analysis, text analysis, web design, game design, digital media production, open media channels and distribution, computer-aided theatre design, digital lighting and projection technologies, and virtual reality systems. Now we have computing everywhere.

And as our mastery of new technologies has grown, so has our ability to provide key capabilities to cross-disciplinary teams and projects focused on communication development, the neuroscience of communication, computational social science and network studies, team science, delivery of health information, reorganization of healthcare, exhibitions of artistic and intellectual achievements in new kinds of venues, and online education. With all this new activity, our partnerships with other technology-intensive schools—particularly the Feinberg School of Medicine and the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science—have blossomed.

This issue of *Dialogue* showcases a selection of the computing-intensive projects in which our faculty and students are engaged. It is the third issue in a series reporting on our progress in achieving three key goals:

- innovation everywhere—supporting the creation and dissemination of new work (winter 2017)
- computation everywhere—leading the communication arts and sciences in development and application of digital technologies
- Northwestern everywhere—developing a global presence along with research programs and curricula that are globally aware (summer 2016)

As with the two previous issues, I think you will see that we are moving very quickly toward achieving these strategically important goals.

As I always remind you, our partnership with our alumni and other supporters is critical to achieving our ambitions for the school. Your ideas, your financial support, and your willingness to pull together and share with others provide the foundation for moving the whole community forward. The next issue of *Dialogue* will turn to that topic—how to build an even stronger and more interesting School of Communication community. As we plan that issue, we would welcome your comments and suggestions. Be part of the dialogue.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, which appears to read 'Barbara O'Keefe', written in a cursive style.

Barbara J. O'Keefe

Dean, School of Communication

Start a dialogue: [dialogue@northwestern.edu](mailto:dialogue@northwestern.edu)





# THE DIGITAL STAGE

## HOW FACULTY IN THE ARTS ARE EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

An artist will always need a pen. Yet in a digitized world, an artist needs a computer too. School of Communication theatre faculty member Ana Kuzmanic is an accomplished booster of digital design, with stunning work to prove its worth.

**A**ward-winning costume designer and associate professor of theatre Ana Kuzmanic (GCo4) leans over a workstation in her Evanston studio, her deft hand adding saffron shading to a whimsical illustration. She is the costume designer for an upcoming stage adaptation of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, and today Kuzmanic is fine-tuning the prince's coat. She lifts her pen from the drawing, backs away, and gives it a look—then swiftly puts thumb and forefinger to the sketch and zooms in for detail, just like on a smartphone. Then with a few quick taps of her pen on the screen, the shading vanishes while the remainder of the drawing remains perfectly intact.

Her creation, bearing all the organic charm of a pen-and-ink sketch, is entirely digital—and is representative of how



she now prefers to work. No more smudges, no more desks full of pens, no more pressure to get a design perfectly right on the first pass.

“Computer technology makes virtually anything possible—but the computer is still operated by the artist’s hand,” says Kuzmanic. “In my classes I often use the term ‘dramaturgy of the line.’ What I mean is that costume designers utilize visual elements like line, form, volume, and color to develop design ideas. The pressure of the hand drawing the line, the volume of the shapes, and the rhythm of drawing crystallize the final idea. However, while we articulate the thought with the line, only the right line will advance the development of thought. Technology allows for all the above.”

Kuzmanic has embraced the ease, intuitiveness, and outcomes of digital tools in her professional design work, notably





with the Wacom Cintiq Interactive Pen Display and stylus pen, Corel Painter, and Adobe Photoshop. Thanks to recent grants from the School of Communication and the Alumnae of Northwestern, she is now teaching her students to do the same.

Life is easier with digital help, she says—even for a traditionalist. Wacom’s high-definition monitor display has stunning resolution, and its accompanying stylus can recreate the whisker-thin graphite etchings of a pencil, the saturation of oil paints, and every texture in between. The software allows her to build her designs in layers, thus making changes and “do-overs” simple. The screen can be raised, lowered, and angled, and the desktop dashboard may be customized for left- or right-handed users. Kuzmanic can share her work-in-progress with a production’s director and can seamlessly move between drawing, color coding, collaging, and redrawing without ever having to prep a work surface.

“Theatre is a closely collaborative process, so ideas go through transformations and tweaks constantly. Computation helps the designer make changes instantly, which saves a great deal of time,” says Kuzmanic. “Technology helps collaborators communicate visually from various parts of the world and change the appearance of design specifications in real time during virtual meetings.”



Kuzmanic additionally uses Autodesk Maya to create 3-D costume figurines and ZBrush for digital sculpting and painting. With theatre professor Todd Rosenthal, another technology enthusiast, she coteaches a computer graphics class for MFA stage design students.

A sought-after, Tony-winning set designer who’s headed for Broadway with *Roman Holiday* this fall, Rosenthal says that training students in the digital sphere is essential for future leaders in theatrical and entertainment design. “They must have access to the latest technologies. Competing academic programs are staying current, so we must continue to upgrade our resources,” he says. “Also, better tools empower you. They allow you to communicate ideas more clearly, and they expedite problem solving.”

Rosenthal always begins his professional designs with a sketch, which he then manipulates in Photoshop. For museum exhibitions he relies on SketchUp, a 3-D modeling program. Final designs for exhibitions and theatre sets are rendered in AutoCAD, a precision drawing and sharing software for 2-D and 3-D design and documentation. He uses a laser cutter to work on final models and also uses HTC Vive virtual reality equipment—the same model profiled on page 18—to gauge applications in 3-D painting and set design. He sees the next wave of technology fast approaching.



“These drawing tablets let you return to traditional ways of working while still keeping everything computerized. There is no longer a disconnect between your hand and your work.”

—MFA stage design student Lauren Nichols

“I can’t wait until there are sophisticated drawing programs that allow you to generate set designs in an immersive three-dimensional canvas,” says Rosenthal, “and then export your work into design drawings, like Tony Stark’s holographic design station in the movie *Iron Man*.”

Kuzmanic has used digital technology in her work for two decades, but today’s programs make the process more natural. While these programs are common in major motion picture and game design, they’re less so in professional theatre circles—still less for students, even those reared on technology. But Kuzmanic recognizes, and teaches, the difference between computational proficiency and artistry.

“It is one thing to learn the language and capabilities of a computer program and an entirely different thing to learn how to direct those skills toward developing and executing a creative idea,” she says. “I am teaching computer graphics technology as a design class rather than a skill class. The students focus on generating strong design ideas first and then develop

them further while learning the language of the programs.”

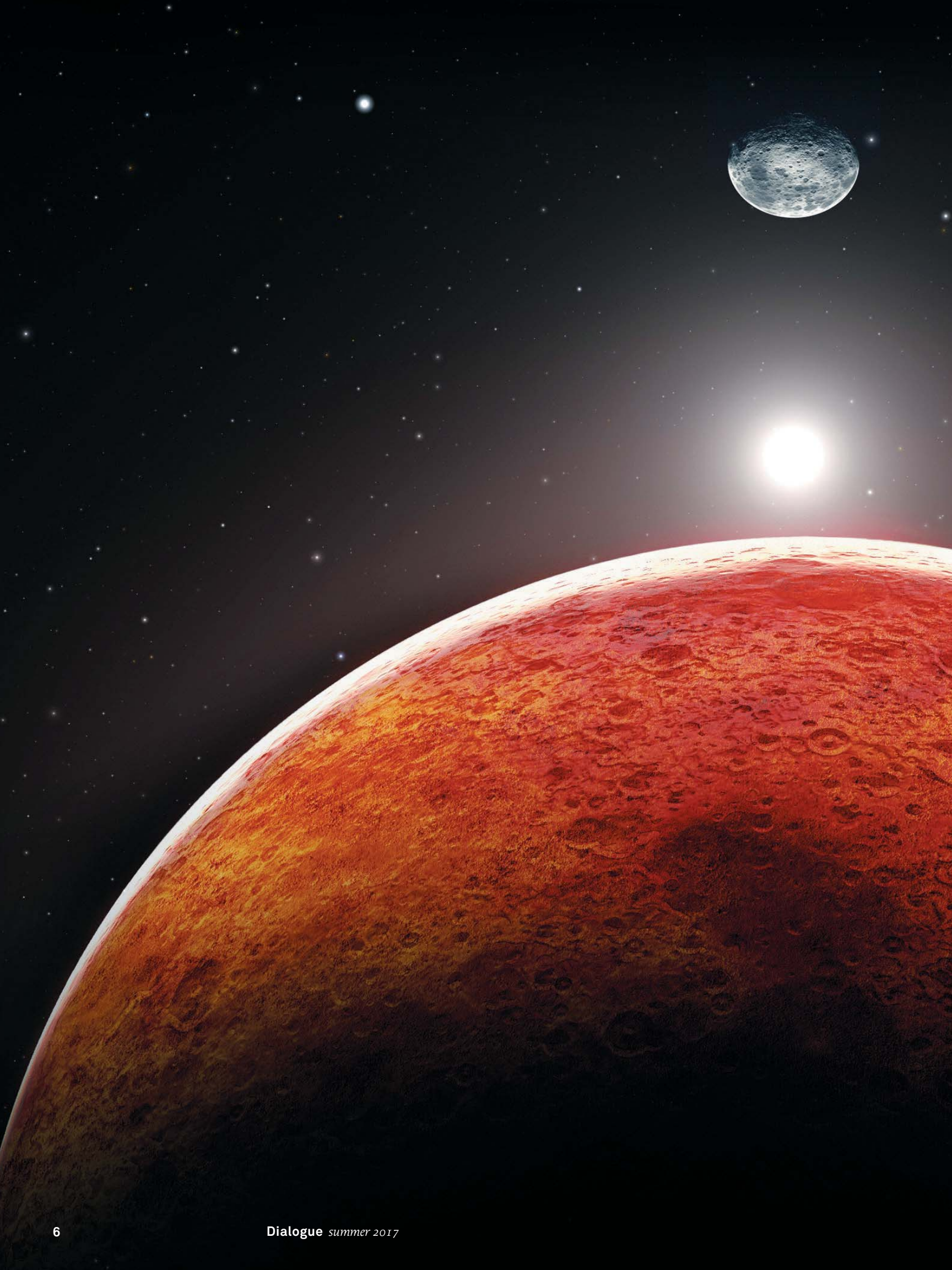
A third-year MFA stage design candidate specializing in set and scenery, Lauren Nichols was one such early user of software like Photoshop, but the exposure to sophisticated equipment is new—and revolutionary.

“Northwestern has given me the gift of using a Cintiq, a product that would never have touched my hands otherwise because of its price,” she says. “These drawing tablets let you return to traditional ways of working while still keeping everything computerized. There is no longer a disconnect between your hand and your work.”

So purists need not worry; the approaches are complementary, not competing.

“There are moments when you have to pull out a pen and napkin to brainstorm, but I’ve found that working digitally really brings your work to life in a way that markers, paint, or ink cannot,” says Nichols. “Modern art needs digital components, and their use in educational settings is critical.”







# DEEP-SPACE NORTHWESTERN

In 20 short years, humans are scheduled to embark on what will arguably be the most treacherous, challenging, and significant voyage in history—and Northwestern School of Communication faculty and students are helping make it possible.

**N**ASA has formalized plans to send a manned spacecraft to Mars, the inhospitable terrestrial planet that is 34 million miles from Earth at its nearest point. Among the worldwide teams of researchers toiling over the journey's inherent physiological and engineering obstacles, professors in the Department of Communication Studies have been selected to study one essential element that will determine the mission's success: how the crew can best function.

Even for a well-trained astronaut, the psychological demands of this Mars journey will be exceptional.

The space capsule will be small—roughly the size of a studio apartment; the round-trip journey will take more than two years; the crew members will face language and research barriers; communication delays with worldwide mission controls will exceed the 20-minute mark.

“NASA is interested in technology and in human physiology,” says Noshir Contractor, the Jane S. and William J. White Professor of Behavioral Sciences in the School of Communication, the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science, and the Kellogg School of Management. “They are really interested in the effect on an individual’s mental state and affect, but also, more importantly, in how team members can work together.”

Contractor is collaborating with Leslie DeChurch, who recently joined the faculty as professor of communication studies, and Suzanne Bell of DePaul University on four NASA-funded projects exploring team dynamics and compatibility in preparation for the Mars journey. Each project focuses on a different aspect of crew functioning and involves collaborators who are leading experts in their fields: team composition (Bell), social networks during extreme isolation (Jeffrey Johnson at the University of Florida), and team cognition (Jessica Mesmer-Magnus at the University of North Carolina–Wilmington). Alongside student researchers, they collect and analyze data, design and run computer simulations, and work closely with NASA scientists to ensure that this crew, and all subsequent crews, have the right teamwork stuff.

“These are super humans. They are people who are incredibly physically fit and extremely smart. They are highly motivated and have amazing psychomotor abilities,” says DeChurch. “We’re taking an already state-of-the-art crew selection system and making it even better by finding the values, traits, and other characteristics that will allow NASA to compose crews that will get along.”

Contractor, a leading expert in network analysis and computational social science, leads Northwestern’s Science of

Networks in Communities (SONIC) research group. DeChurch, with her Advancing Teams, Leaders, and Systems (ATLAS) lab, keeps a close watch on psychology, social interactions, and how multiteam systems best function. (See sidebar on page 12.)

“Our complementary strengths have been a winning combination for tackling the big interdisciplinary questions,” says DeChurch.

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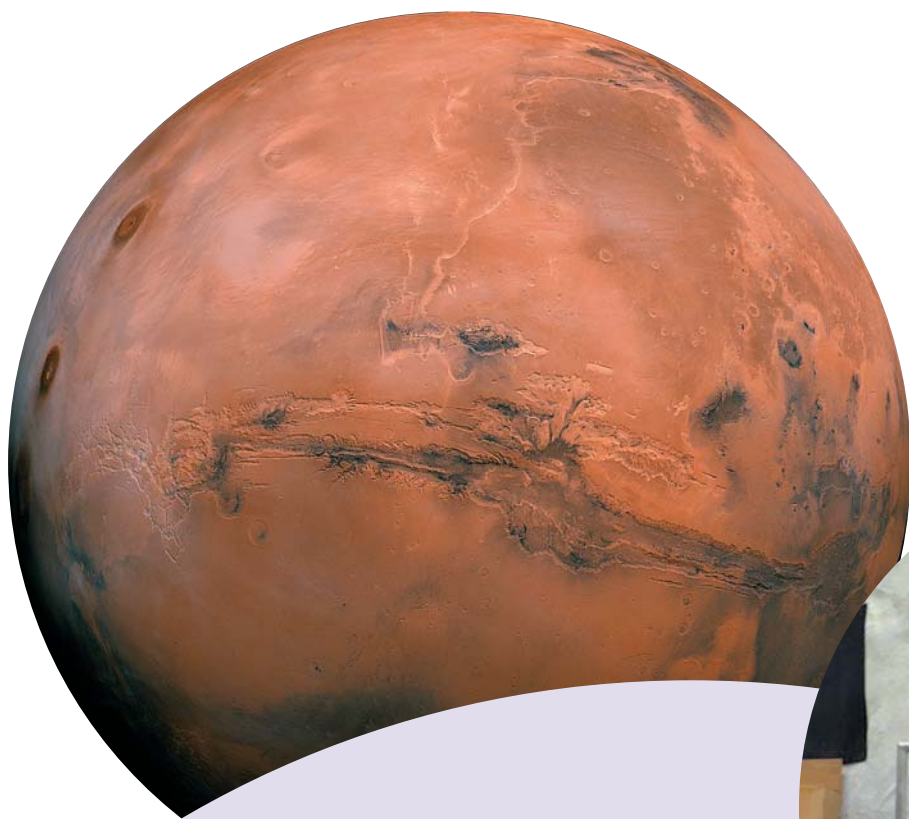
### The Mission

In collaboration with international space programs, NASA has pledged to send humans to the Red Planet in the 2030s. For decades researchers have dispatched robotic emissaries to Mars to collect data about water, life, and, coming soon, the availability of oxygen. But a manned mission involves considerably more, well, gravity.

Consider the scope. The moon is about 239,000 miles from Earth and took Apollo astronauts three days to reach. Mars, however, is 140 times farther away. Once the crew of four (or six) astronauts arrives on the planet, they will spend about a year gathering atmospheric data, taking soil samples, and seeking signs of microbial life. Then it’s another year heading home—all despite immense mental and physical discomfort. Factors such as effective communication, leadership, teamwork, and coping strategies might be overshadowed by technological challenges, but NASA has recognized that crew camaraderie can and will make or break the mission.







Opposite page: Gabe Plummer, a fourth-year media, technology, and society student, guiding lab exercises for Project RED

Left: Mars's Valles Marineris canyon system as composed from Viking Orbiter images (© 2013 NASA)

Below: Suzanne Bell, Noshir Contractor, and Leslie DeChurch outside the Human Experimentation Research Analog at the Johnson Space Center



## TEAMS THAT WORK

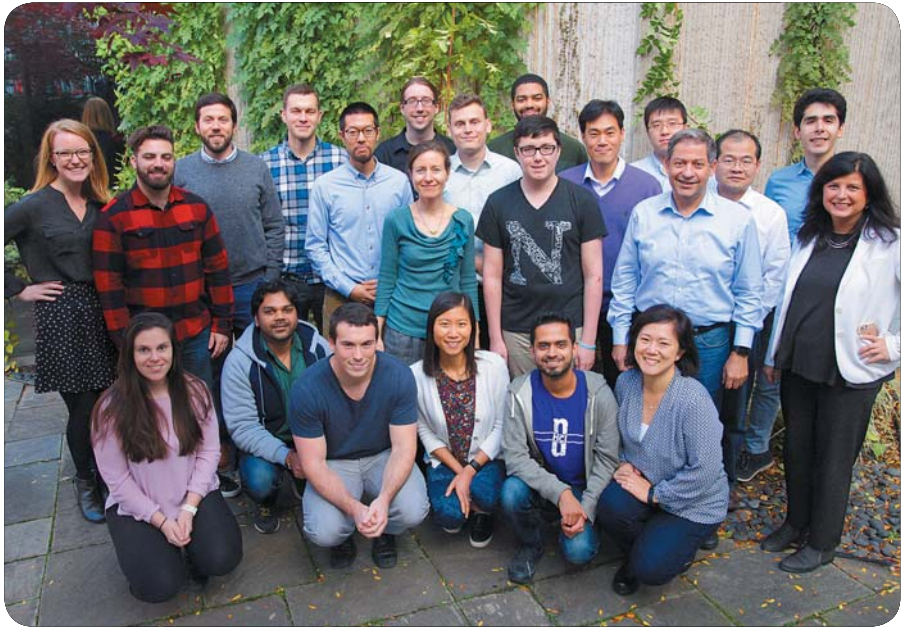
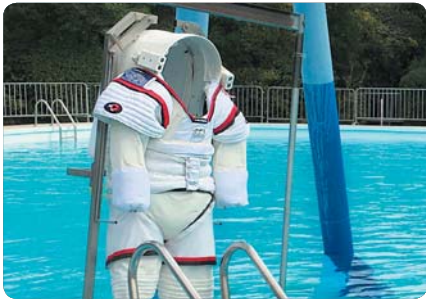
Mars-bound astronauts are not the only team in question. There will be teams in mission control centers around the world and the teams of researchers and scientists supporting them. How these teams of teams interact and collaborate can determine the mission's success.

A novel, and helpful, element of Northwestern's research and simulations of multiteam systems is that they are in fact operating as a multiteam system. Students from the ATLAS and SONIC labs collaborate with each other and with Bell and Johnson's research teams; DeChurch and Contractor are coordinating their own complementary research objectives; and the whole outfit is exchanging information with international partners and their sponsors at NASA. Until last fall, DeChurch and her ATLAS lab were based at Georgia Tech, throwing an added kink into the collaboration. But lessons learned in their

daily operations contribute to the larger research objectives.

"The breaks that are ultimately going to determine whether the mission fails are much more likely to happen at the borders between teams than they are to happen just within one of those crews," says DeChurch. "In terms of how that focus affects how we build our labs at Northwestern, it's been very synergistic for us to create these boundary-spanning roles and interdisciplinary cross-lab teams."

DeChurch and Contractor met through military research sponsors while DeChurch was at Georgia Tech. Each had been tapped independently for NASA projects, but the synergies across their research interests soon led to a partnership—and to DeChurch's eventual move to Northwestern. They now operate a system of teams working in tandem, much like the very subject they're tasked with codifying.



“There is no getting out of the team,” Contractor says, “so team dynamics become important.”

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### The Projects

The first three of the four NASA studies address different aspects of the crew’s challenges:

- The likelihood that the crew and its support teams on Earth will have good chemistry and coping mechanisms; how to predict possible crew-compatibility outcomes
- Work design; structuring the workflow so that astronauts can better manage transitions from solo to team tasks
- Identifying and building shared mental models, whereby a team of varied specialists can find enough common ground to effectively accomplish their tasks but not so much that they engage in “group think” or form alliances

The fourth and newest study—in partnership with Roscosmos, the Russian space agency—examines measures of interpersonal effectiveness discovered in Russian space analogs and seeks to validate them in US flight analogs.

The Northwestern researchers are culling data from existing literature as well as real-time surveys of astronauts at work. Much of the useful data is drawn from the Human Experimentation Research Analog at Houston’s Johnson Space Center. HERA’s capsule simulator houses astronauts for up to 45 days; a mock mission control outside the capsule augments the realism with sound effects, vibrations, and communication delays. Those on the inside play simulation games, undergo sleep deprivation, and try to perform tasks. Contractor,

DeChurch, and their students collect moment-to-moment metrics about individual performance, moods, psychosocial adaptation, and more.

Additionally, National Science Foundation research conducted in Antarctica will be used to examine the effects of isolation and confinement on crews. Further data will come from the International Space Station, where astronauts will begin answering short surveys on teamwork and task completion that were developed right here on campus.

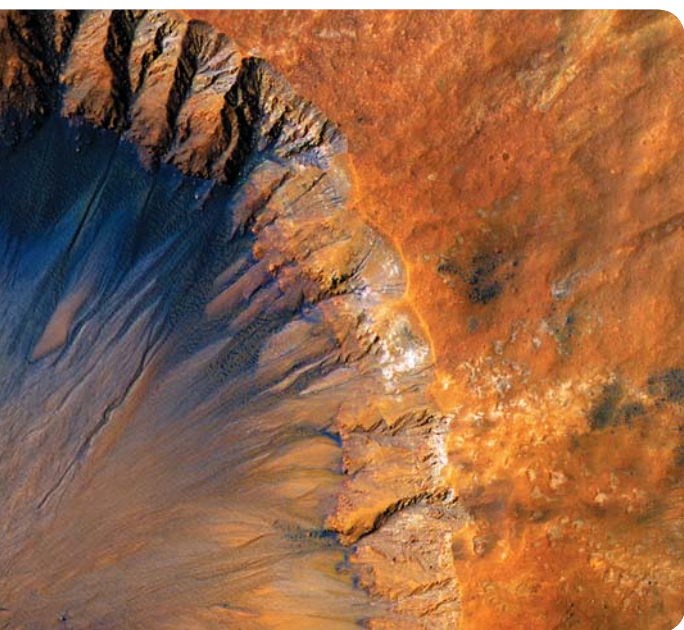
“It’s a very exciting opportunity to make a difference in a way that most people don’t,” says Contractor. “NASA has an acute awareness that it’s not only about technology and physiology—it’s also about social sciences, it’s also about social dynamics.”

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### Computation, Data, and Modeling

The project looking at compatibility and predicting team outcomes is the most computationally intense. The large data arrays generated by HERA, the ISS, and past missions as well as information from physiological exams are fed into the Crew Recommender for Effective Work in Space (CREWS)—custom-built simulation models designed by Contractor and his students. The simulators use the platform Netlogo, a popular multiagent programmable system available to students and professors worldwide (and developed by Northwestern School of Education and Social Policy professor Uri Wilensky). The researchers then parametrize, or add importance, to certain personality factors or scenarios. As they run the simulations,





“NASA has an acute awareness that it’s not only about technology and physiology—it’s also about social sciences, it’s also about social dynamics.” —*Noshir Contractor*

they can manipulate the configurations around prospective team members or personality traits to track their effect on team cohesion and performance. After over 4 million model runs, the simulation’s predictive qualities have proved phenomenal.

Even at these early stages, CREWS is useful to NASA. As researchers plan to send new teams into HERA or on low-orbit missions, the simulations can help predict how well they will work together.

“We know that when people go into space, there are negative biological effects: their bones get lighter, eyeballs enlarge, and more. It’s good to know these things will happen, but it’s also good to mitigate their happening,” says Contractor. “It’s the same analog they know from the life sciences that they are asking us to apply to the social sciences.”

So just as an astronaut would do special exercises to strengthen bone density, the simulations can help prescribe certain adjustments or task changes that will promote the health of the team. In researching mental models, Contractor and a postdoctoral student studied a 1970s mission to Skylab, the precursor to the ISS. At one point the crew became so upset with the unrelenting flow of tasks sent by mission control

that they went on strike for a day. Contractor says that in their analysis, they could see advance warnings that such a communication breakdown would occur—and their predictive models could have prevented it.

Describing how the model works, Contractor says, “It’s like a movie that shows the team on day one until the end of the mission, and how much they will like and dislike each other over the course of the mission. If you put this team together, how likely are they to fall apart?”

DeChurch’s ATLAS lab collects much of the human subject data for CREWS using the platform Project RED (Redplanet Exploration and Development). The ATLAS lab houses a mock mission control center in Northwestern’s Frances Searle Building that directly interacts with NASA’s HERA crews to locate and design a well that may support a future colony on Mars. The software allows the collection of high-resolution data on information sharing, decision effectiveness, communication, leadership, and many other variables integral to crew functioning. This data is then used to parameterize the computational models designed at SONIC.

“This platform allows us to conduct experiments that mimic the kinds of separation the crew will experience as they journey farther from Earth,” DeChurch says. “For example, our software allows us to induce a time lag on messages between the crew and mission control.”

The longer crews do these exercises—up to 45 days on HERA—the more accurate and dependable the data sets are. The information is useful not only for intracrew functioning but for how teams of teams collaborate.

# THE STUDENT RESEARCHERS

Noshir Contractor and Leslie DeChurch each have about a dozen undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows working on the four NASA-funded projects. The graduate students represent the doctoral programs in technology and social behavior, industrial engineering and management sciences, and media, technology, and society; the undergraduates are largely but not exclusively communication studies majors. Contractor directs the SONIC (Science of Networks in Communities) research group, involving many of his graduate students; DeChurch runs the ATLAS (Advancing Teams, Leaders, and Systems) lab, which is new to the University.

“I was taking Professor DeChurch’s team communication class last quarter, and the more she explained her work, the more interested I became in her field,” says junior **Ann Kalfas**, who is now an intern with the ATLAS lab. “It’s amazing to think that we’re currently testing the same software that astronauts may use later when preparing for a trip to Mars.”

Glamorous client aside, the students are continuously learning about the patience needed for large research endeavors. “I think the biggest challenge of this work is the sample size,” says **Zachary Gibson**, a second-year

technology and social behavior student. “As a social scientist, I’m used to working with large samples from which it is relatively easy to use inferential statistics and make generalizable statements. As a computer scientist, I’m used to designing for small populations with a specific technology need. For me, this project requires a fusion of or shift from those mindsets to working with small samples in a social context.”

Yet the work is demonstrating both to students and to research communities beyond that this endeavor has fundamental value in science and society.

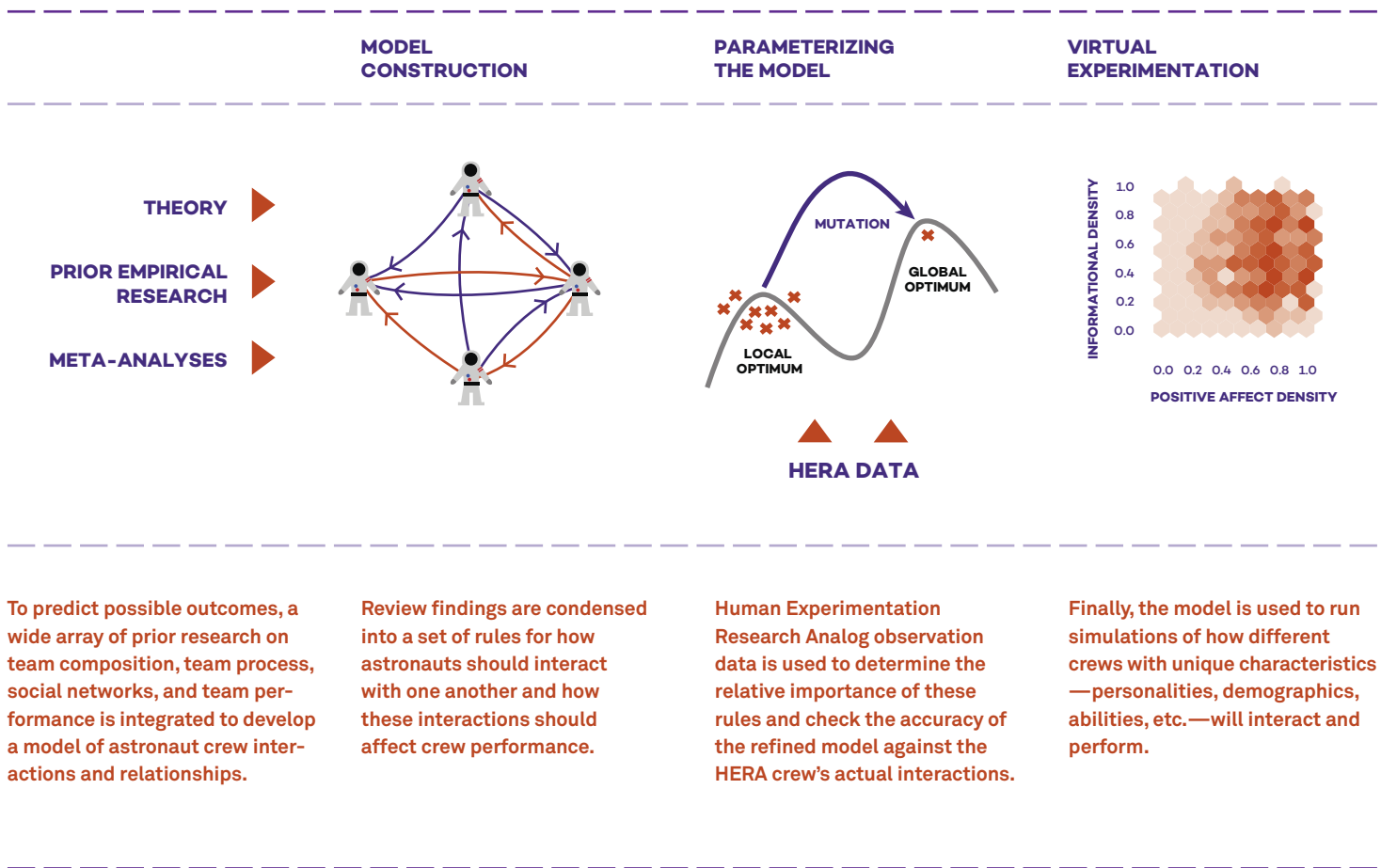
“People often view the study of teams as more of a ‘fun’ research area than a ‘necessary’ area, especially from the viewpoint of the harder sciences,” says **Lindsay Larson**, a third-year media, technology, and society student and the ATLAS lab’s student lead. “But researchers of teams, multiteam systems, and leadership are all getting funding for research on the Mars mission, just like the engineers getting NASA funding to develop engines or space suits. This work can give more credibility to our research in the eyes of all researchers, not just those studying the social sciences.”



From left: Noshir Contractor,  
Lindsay Larson,  
Leslie DeChurch



## AN **AGENT-BASED MODEL** TO GUIDE CREW COMPOSITION



“We have information on cognition, interpersonal relations, who is emerging as a good leader,” she adds, “and we can see how those networks form and which patterns lead to performance.”

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### **Applications—and Implications—Closer to Home**

There is always a chance that this manned journey to Mars will not happen. NASA may scrap the plans or instead ramp up their robotics program. DeChurch is prepared for this possibility but remains undeterred in her research mission.

“It helps us understand a lot of the teamwork problems we face on Earth,” she says. “It does so by pushing the bounds of science.”

Contractor’s predictive models will help missions in the immediate future. DeChurch’s research on multiteam systems has broad earthbound implications for international networks.

“If we can work on this case, where crew members have the

most dysfunctional fault lines in terms of culture and expertise, and where they face extreme conditions of communication delays, isolation, and confinement in a threatening environment,” she says, “that can help a lot of multinational organizations work better.” The findings will also apply to scientific collectives, where hierarchies and differences in belief systems or politics can interfere with team dynamics.

In fact, any complicated, high-stakes interteam mission could profit from the important basic coping strategies emerging from DeChurch’s research. In one HERA crew they studied, a team member was singled out as functioning poorly in times of stress—because she didn’t use humor to alleviate the tension.

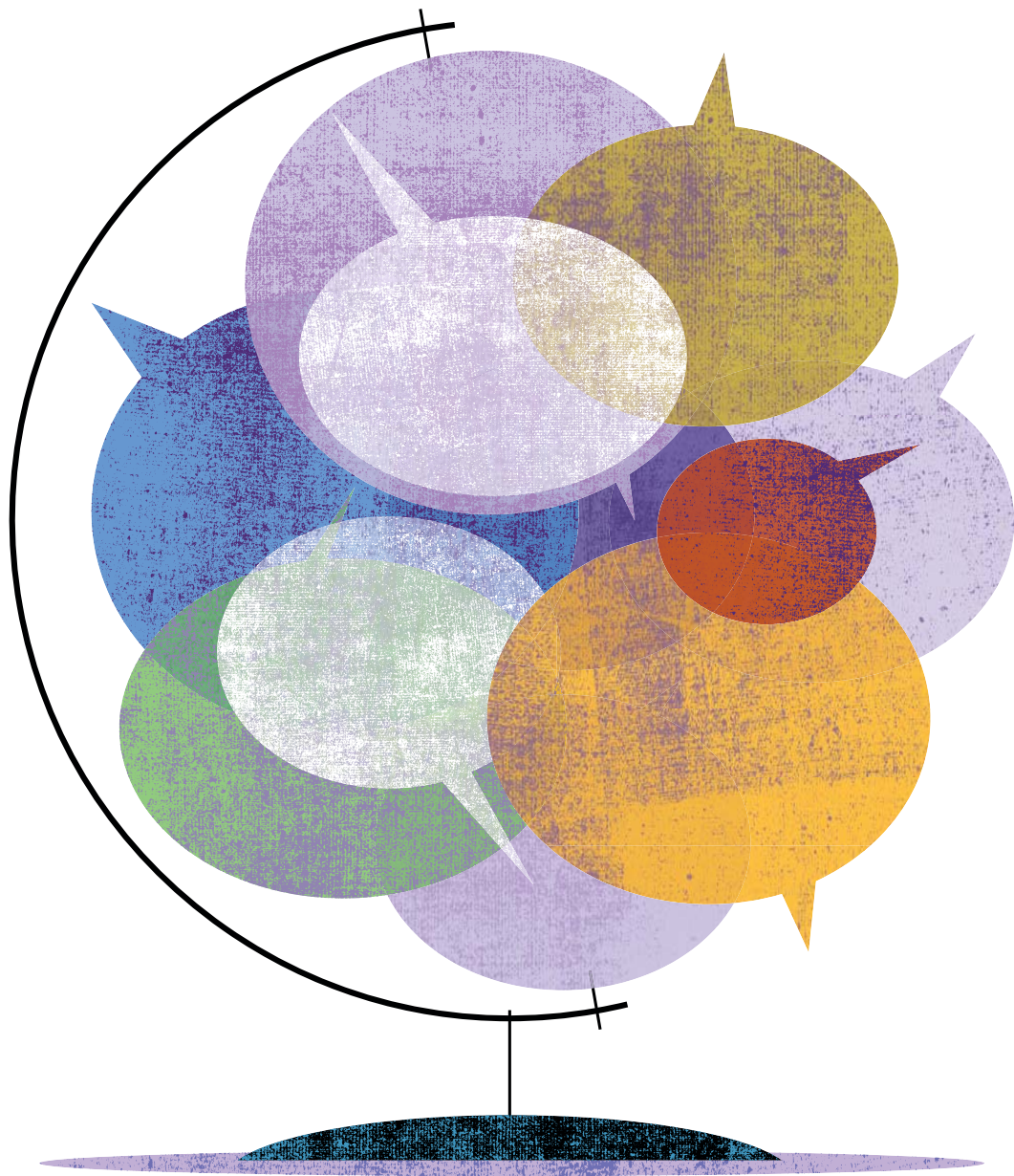
“This shows you the kinds of traits that wouldn’t be in NASA’s initial selection system,” she says. “If you’re going to live and work together in a tiny capsule for two-and-a-half years under life-threatening conditions, something as simple as that might really change the social climate.”

And, consequently, help get the team safely back home.

# EXPLORING THE NEXT FRONTIER

DIGITAL MEDIA MODULE STUDENTS CONFRONT THE FUTURE NOW

*by Cara Lockwood*





As human social systems move deeper into the digital realm, questions surrounding their impact intensify. How are social media, smartphones, and rapidly evolving computation and data-aggregation technologies changing the way we interact with our world and each other? How are they helping improve our lives? Poised to lead the digital charge, students throughout the School of Communication are exploring digital media's influence through an innovative, computationally rich, and research-heavy program: the digital media module.

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**J**eremy Birnholtz (C96), associate professor of communication studies, is uniquely equipped to coordinate the digital media module. A regular fixture in Silicon Valley, he is also a grant-funded researcher specializing in social media and its uses and implications. The communication technology course he teaches in the module focuses partly on how we communicate through social media—how being connected all the time affects this communication—and partly on what happens when technology connects large groups of people. Marrying in- and out-of-class work to give students depth and focus, the module has never been more important, says Birnholtz.

“We hear a lot of talk about how these kids have grown up with technology and know everything about it, and while it’s true they know how to use it, they don’t always know how to think about it,” says Birnholtz. “Technology might change quickly, but people change slowly. People might be using these new mediums, but their motivations are the same.”

Birnholtz’s demanding module aims to help students understand that technology is not objective—that users should proceed into the digital abyss with caution. Google, for instance, builds in a lot of biases; and of course, Facebook came under

fire in the recent presidential election for encouraging people to stay in ideological bubbles that reinforce their views.

“We’re getting to the point where objectivity is just a myth,” says Birnholtz. “All of this technology is built on algorithms, which are often built to generate advertising revenue, and algorithms can have biases that reflect the data they process and how they process it. What we all need to do as consumers is become more critical. When TV came out, with all its flat, wide shots, many viewers assumed they were watching reality, but that was not true. We eventually learned that, and it changed the way we watch TV as well as the way we watch movies. We’re starting to get to the point where algorithms are the same way. We just have to be savvier consumers.”

Students in the digital media module not only learn how to be savvier consumers but also learn how to innovate and how to think about building new technologies for the future.



“Technology might change quickly, but people change slowly. People might be using these new mediums, but their motivations are the same.” —Jeremy Birnholtz



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### Keeping Connected

Senior Yoko Kohmoto worked with other undergraduates in the module to develop a social media platform for high schoolers looking to connect with same-aged and like-minded students. “I worked with a team to develop a prototype for a web app, kind of like LinkedIn for high school students,” she says, “for connecting with people in other grades and asking for advice about school or post-high school plans.” The app would help students plan better and also network among others their same age.

Kohmoto said the module has opened her eyes to the larger digital world and given her new ways to think about the social media platforms she uses every day, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. “I’ve been surprised at how much I’ve had to learn about,” she said, “from design to communication to building communities to measurements, and even more.”

Kohmoto hopes to work for a tech company after graduation and expects that technology will continue to have a seismic influence on generations to come. “Growing up, I called my grandparents in Japan with a telephone and exchanged fax messages with them,” she says. “Now, however, I can see their faces in real time through FaceTime or Skype or show my mom what I’m up to through Snapchat. My hope for the future of technology is for humans to continue to be able to interact in new ways, especially for people who can’t communicate face to face because of location, finances, or some other reason. I hope that technology continues to bring us together.”

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### Researching How We Use Technology

Justine Yucesan, a senior communication studies major who works in Birnholtz’s Social Media Lab, is studying how algorithms work and affect the way we view Facebook, Twitter, and even such dating apps as Tinder. One of her recent projects

involved collaborating with a graduate student to create a dating app that tests how people sort through the information.

“We collected data on users to determine whether distance or the number of mutual friends or whether they were online right then would affect their attractiveness to the user,” she says. Alluding to an iconic Tinder feature, she adds, “We were asking, ‘Would these factors affect whether they swiped right or left?’” She is currently running through the data and cannot yet make a determination about the results.

Yucesan says the module has opened her eyes to the many ways she might work in technology when she graduates. “The most surprising thing I’ve learned is that I could bridge this whole world between communication, design, and social behavior with all these things I thought were unrelated, like developing new technologies and how technology works.”

...

### Design and Purpose

Prarthana Gupta, who graduated in December, says she uses technology every day to keep track of events in her calendar, pay bills on her bank apps, and even take notes on Google Keep. A research project she completed for the module looked at how people used the Fitbit app, which helps users track daily activity.

“I was able to undertake a yearlong research process that was essentially divided into three phases: exploratory, research, and design recommendations,” she says. “I was able to carry out a survey, to use contextual inquiries and other human-computer-interaction research techniques, and finally to use the data analysis from the survey and interview sessions to provide design recommendations.”

Aspiring to a career in marketing or advertising, Gupta says that the module prepared her for the modern workforce. “Digital media is most definitely a brand of knowledge essential for success,” she says. “Whatever the industry might be and





From left:  
Yoko Kohmoto, Justine Yucesan,  
Prarthana Gupta, Marissa Pederson,  
Sam Mandlsohn

“Going digital must serve a purpose, and knowing when and when not to utilize it helps tremendously in the marketing world.” —Marissa Pederson

whatever role you might play in it, you are interacting with a consumer, and your consumer is interacting with some form of digital media. It is essential to understand not only the media but also the subtle nuances of the consumer’s interaction with digital.”

...

### Seeing What We Want to See

Marissa Pederson, who graduated from Northwestern in 2015, says the most surprising thing she learned in the module was how people see technology through a very personal lens.

“People see what they want to see,” says Pederson, who went on to earn her master’s degree in integrated marketing communications at Northwestern’s Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications and is currently the marketing intern for Major League Baseball’s Minnesota Twins. “While the internet can be used to learn about new ideas and perspectives, we tend to only view content that aligns with our current beliefs and interests. This also applies to the way we talk to others using technology. On social media sites, we tend to continue interacting with people we commonly connect with in person, while our acquaintances stay acquaintances.”

For one of her projects in the module, Pederson studied how people self-diagnose themselves using the internet and how nonprofits use social media to improve the lives of their

primary beneficiaries. The research and her time in the module have given her a unique edge in her chosen field of marketing.

“Digital is the way of the future and the language that the coming generations will speak,” she says. “It is important that we understand both how different groups interact with the current digital options and how they would ideally want to interact with digital media in a perfect world. Going digital must serve a purpose, and knowing when and when not to utilize it helps tremendously in the marketing world.”

...

### Going Live

Sam Mandlsohn, a senior who transferred to the School of Communication specifically to get involved in the digital media module, has worked on a number of fascinating projects, from researching live-streaming video platforms such as Facebook Live and Periscope to working as a manager at the Web Use Project, a lab focusing on how people use the web and how this might contribute to social inequity.

“I’ve taken so many great classes in the module and worked on so many fascinating projects, such as looking at mining and analyzing Twitter data, examining collaboration dynamics in online communities, and exploring problems around algorithmic biases,” says Mandlsohn. “The module has given me a critical lens to analyze digital media. It’s really how people use and interact with technology that determines its impact.”

Mandlsohn said being a communication studies major can seem broad, but the module provides a “framework to explore and assess the key issues of today and of the future within a community of like-minded individuals, both students and faculty.

“Personally,” he adds, “I’ve been interested in technology since a young age, but this gives me the tools to prepare myself for the industry and to critically think about the larger implications of technology in society.”

# KEEPING IT REAL

FUTURE GAME DESIGNERS ON THE LEADING EDGE OF VIRTUAL REALITY

*by Cara Lockwood*





One bright January morning, radio/television/film assistant professor Özge Samanci is teaching her students the importance of setting a scene. After drawing a cube that is then projected onto a screen at the front of the class, she does something unexpected: She steps into the cube.

• • •

**T**his is the magic of virtual reality, or just another day in the media arts and game design module, where students learn how to create complete three-dimensional virtual realities—possibly the future of video gaming, movie watching, and our interactions with entertainment and news.

“What you’re seeing here, many other students don’t get to see,” Samanci tells her class. “It’s a new medium we’re only just beginning to understand. We’ll be drawing in 360 degrees, in three dimensions, on a canvas that’s only limited by your imagination. So explore and experiment with the affordances and limitations of this environment.”

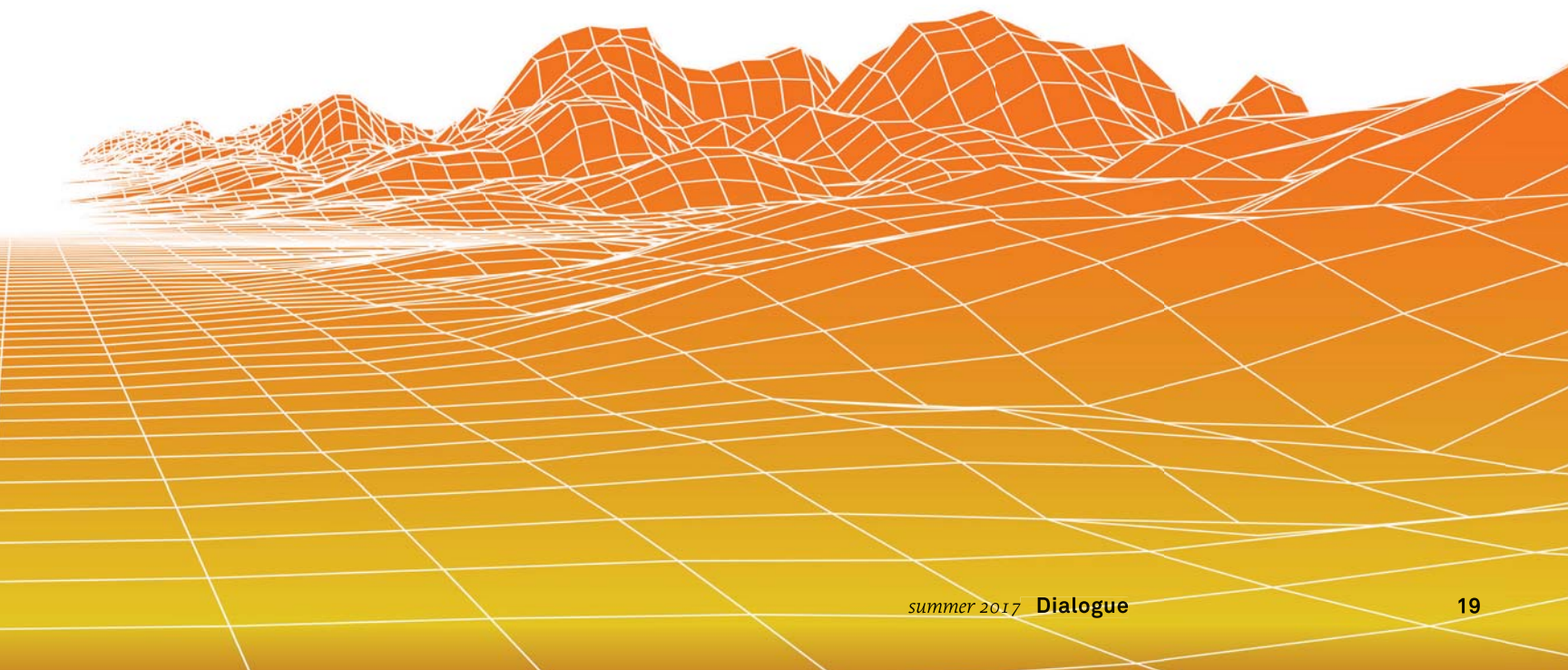
Samanci developed the course to introduce this technology—not yet common in Northwestern’s curriculum—to students in the media arts and game design module and thereby help them develop a creative edge. The module tasks students with building virtual realities that include a “surprise” element. Their pieces are then recorded and saved for playback on a two-dimensional screen.

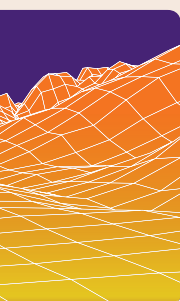


“This is going to be a unique portfolio piece,” says Kate Kowalski, a radio/television/film senior who took the class. “We’re all creating something unique, something that will set us apart.”

Chris Landy, also a radio/television/film senior, relishes the opportunities to work with cutting-edge technology. “The School of Communication has really given me a skillset, a toolbox of skills that I can take into the real world and market,” he says. “When I came to campus, I set out on a quest to discover how to work with cool new mediums, and I’m so glad I’ve been exposed to virtual reality. There are so many different applications for it, and I think it’s going to be the future of entertainment.”

During class, Samanci wears the equipment’s visor over her eyes, immersing herself in the experience while the class watches what she does on an oversize monitor. She points at the virtual menu, and suddenly a backdrop from Marvel’s *Dr. Strange* changes the entirety of her three-dimensional space. Instantly she’s inside a movie where she can create her own characters. Students then come forward to take their turns at the device, building different universes and using tools to create animated fire or an underwater landscape.





Samanci discusses with her class how augmented-reality games like *Pokemon Go* allow players to interact with their actual environments in new and surprising ways, which might also have a place in future entertainment. “One day in the next 40 years we might even have contact lenses that change the way we see the world,” she says.

Gabriel Caskey, the school’s audiovisual systems engineer for information technology, installed and helps run the HTC Vive virtual reality system in Samanci’s classroom. Calling it the best model currently on the market, he says, “It has the most sensors, the widest play area, and intuitively designed controls.”

Garage are working with HTC Vive as a launching point for business ideas. A medical student is using it to model three-dimensional bone structures and map aneurysms; another student is creating programs that might “stage” an empty house. One day, says Kaufman, we might wear a virtual reality headset to “walk through” a home we want to buy.

Samanci does caution students about putting too much faith in an emerging technology. Virtual reality is amazing, yes, but there could be unforeseen limits to its applications.

“With any new technology, we don’t know how it will be adopted in the future,” she says. “Google Glass was supposed to change our world, but then some people didn’t like the idea of

“It’s not too far-fetched to imagine a time in the near future when this technology could be used for immersive training, scene reconstruction for legal proceedings, and even medical therapy.”

—Gabriel Caskey

Although the technology is still in its infancy, he said that some companies are already using it for such practical applications as architecture and stage design (see page 2). “I also think it’s not too far-fetched to imagine a time in the near future when this technology could be used for immersive training, scene reconstruction for legal proceedings, and even medical therapy,” adds Caskey.

The equipment in Samanci’s class is the same model used at the Garage, Northwestern’s 1,100-square-foot tech innovation space for students hoping to launch their own businesses. “To build the future, you have to understand the future. Augmented and virtual reality will play a larger part in our lives,” says Garage director Melissa Kaufman. “Students need to see where the technology is now so they can guess where it will be going.”

Kaufman reports that several Northwestern students in the

being recorded without their knowledge. Virtual reality can be a very lonely and isolating experience, and you’re very vulnerable as well, because when the headphones are on, you can’t see or hear your environment. But right now, this is the novelty, and we’re just discovering what we can do with this technology, so it’s important to learn.”

Students, however, see only the upsides to a new technology that might have endless possibilities in changing how we interact with the world around us.

“I’m looking forward to a time when you can watch a basketball game from courtside,” says Jonny Wang, a radio/television/film junior who took the class. “Or maybe even watch it from the top of the backboard, or sit on the basket. Think of all the possibilities of how this could change the way we watch sports, or the way we watch anything.”

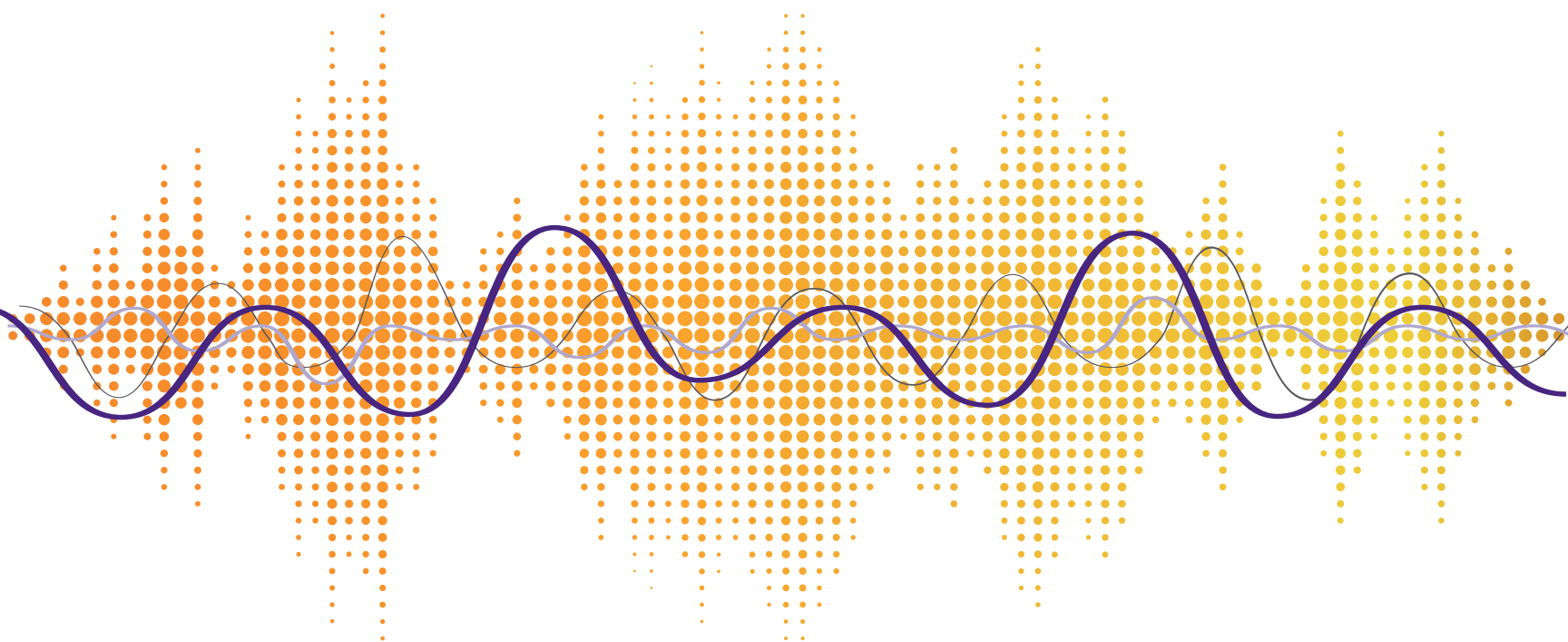


# USING VIRTUAL REALITY TO IMPROVE HEARING

A NEW SOUND ROOM AT THE CENTER FOR AUDIOLOGY, SPEECH, LANGUAGE,  
AND LEARNING IS CHANGING THE WAY WE TREAT HEARING DISABILITIES

*by Cara Lockwood*

For anyone suffering from hearing loss, sitting in a crowded restaurant surrounded by boisterous conversation can be a wholly unpleasant experience. Amid ambient noise and multidirectional sounds, hearing aids often prove ineffectual, leaving the wearer feeling frustrated and isolated.



Clinicians have typically tried to calibrate a hearing aid based on their own experience, often with mixed results. Even if extensively researched, such a calculation is still just an educated guess and might not take into account the acoustics of a particular space or the movement of people around the listener, says Sumitrajit Dhar, chair of the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

The Center for Audiology, Speech, Language, and Learning—the School of Communication’s innovative clinic—plans to change that with the Virtual Sound Room, or ViSoR. Equipped with 16 microphones, 33 speakers, 4 subwoofers, and a large video screen, the state-of-the-art space is designed to improve the hearing outcomes of the center’s patients.

**“This mixture of diffusion, absorption, and reflection makes the fictionalized environment more realistic than what is otherwise possible in anechoic rooms.”**  
—Sumitrajit Dhar

“The immersive environment... allows real-time, ecologically valid interactions,” says a paper that Dhar and colleagues presented last year at the 22nd annual International Congress on Acoustics in Buenos Aires. “Designed as a regular room, as



opposed to a speaker sphere, the room allows the creation of everyday listening environments such as a living room, a restaurant, or a concert hall. The motivation behind the creation of the environment was to enable real-world adjustments to amplification and assistive hearing devices and to evaluate complex auditory capabilities such as tracking-panning audio and localization in a three-dimensional space.”

The 242-square-foot room can hold up to ten people, though only about two or three typically use it at one time. It was designed as a freestanding pod with double-stud and multilayer drywall construction to provide isolation from surrounding noise. Other sound-attenuation features include remote fans, lined ductwork, and slow air velocities to reduce any external influences on the environment.

“This mixture of diffusion, absorption, and reflection makes the fictionalized environment more realistic than what is otherwise possible in anechoic rooms, which require a large number of loudspeaker channels,” Dhar writes. “The diffusive/reflective zones in this room help to enable the creation of phantom sources between loudspeakers, contributing to the realism.”

Constellation by Meyer Sound installed ViSoR’s active acoustic system, which for maximum realism includes speakers in the walls, near the floor, and on the ceiling. The room’s microphones pick up its ambient acoustics to help measure reverberation time—the time required for sound to decay into inaudibility.



# VIRTUAL TRAINING IN THE **SIMLAB**

## **The groundbreaking Lambert Family Simulation Lab**

in the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders helps audiology and speech-language-pathology students try their hands at diagnosis and treatment—without actually seeing human patients.

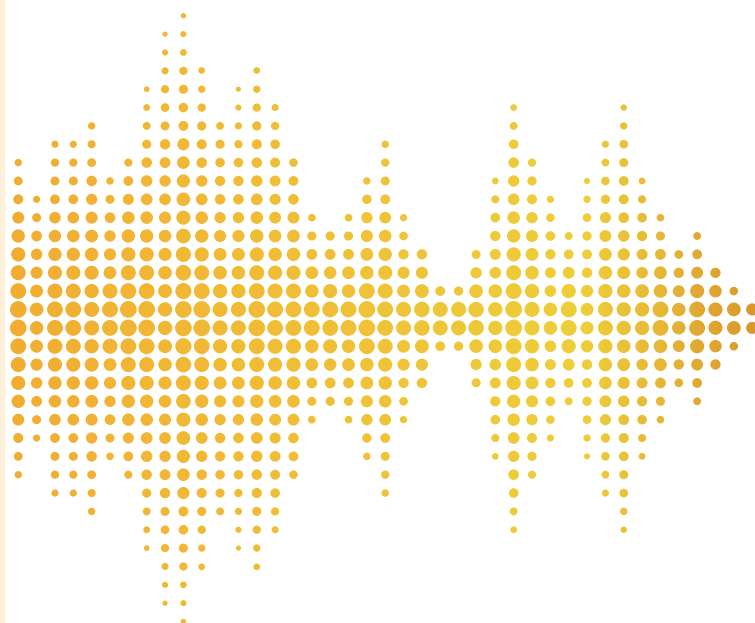
“The simulation lab offers our students cutting-edge experiences in clinical development,” says Stacy Kaplan, director of the department’s master’s program in speech, language, and learning. “The simulation units and materials provide our students with opportunities for hands-on practice of both foundational and complex patient care concepts before they even enter their externships. It has become an invaluable space for our students to develop the skills needed to provide the highest level of care.”

Made possible by a generous gift from Bill and Sheila Lambert, the SimLab is one of the only labs of its kind in an audiology or speech-language-pathology program. Using the lab’s computerized mannequins (a life-sized man and a baby), students can practice diagnosing and treating conditions they’ll see when they begin their clinical training with real patients. Kaplan says that the mannequins—controlled by iPads and computers—can be set to display any number of problems, from a sudden drop in blood pressure to chronic hearing issues.

“The students recognize the important role the simulation lab plays in their development, and they feel incredibly well prepared for their clinical work,” says Kaplan. “We’re so grateful to the Lambert family for their donation. This really sets our program apart, giving students rare and exceptional opportunities to learn.”



**Clinical lecturer Leigh Cohen  
demonstrating an oral mechanism  
exam on the SimLab’s  
infant mannequin**



Dhar says that because users can move around the room, ViSoR is uniquely capable of helping them improve hearing through their devices. The space is engineered using SpaceMap-integrated multichannel panning to ensure that directional sound sources from a variety of locations influence the experience realistically. This maximizes the sweet spot so listeners don’t have to stay in a critical listening position.

The room can also help hearing-aid users who complain about their own voice sounding hollow; they can test out adjustments to their hearing aids in real time and gauge improvements.

The computers and software that control ViSoR’s sound presentation are completely customizable. Several faculty and graduate students underwent extensive training in programming the room’s unique acoustic environments when it first came online. Students in the new master’s program in sound arts and industries are currently taking a course at ViSoR and designing soundscapes for scientific and artistic purposes.

“There’s great potential both to help patients and to further audiology research,” says Dhar. “We’re only just getting started with ViSoR’s many possibilities.”



## Black Lives, Black Words reaches Northwestern

From a poignant scene about a mother braiding her daughter's hair to a sometimes-comical exchange between an artist and a cynical buyer, *Black Lives, Black Words* offered inclusive, representative, and necessary perspectives to the audience in a crowded Ethel M. Barber Theater on February 27.

Consisting of student-written 10-minute plays, the show offered a variety of viewpoints and authentic characters, all designed to answer the question "Do black lives matter?"

"This began with *Black Lives, Black Words* in Chicago in 2015 as an initiative so that diverse performers and artists could have a mirror to see themselves reflected with greater diversity, greater accuracy, and greater frequency," says Aaron Todd Douglas, a Department of Theatre lecturer who also performed in and wrote for *Black Lives, Black Words* in Chicago. The venture has since expanded to Minneapolis, Baltimore, Cleveland, and even London as part of the *Black Lives, Black Words* International Project.

This was the first time *Black Lives, Black Words* had collaborated with students. The show began with an a cappella performance of the musician Solange's "Don't Touch My Hair" and then transitioned into the first 10-minute play, "A Letter to a Lost Friend," about a poignant letter recounting a hurtful blackface incident and how thoughtlessness and aggressive ignorance harm a friendship. "Half the thoughts in my head are about the color of my skin," says student actress Devyn Johnson during the piece.

The show also featured work written by students Mary Ann Anane, Kori Alston, Amira Danan, Catherine Davidson, Chloe Noelle Fourte, Elliot Sagay, and Allie Woodson. The production was emceed by communication studies assistant professor Aymar Jean Christian and coorganized by senior theatre lecturer Laura Schellhardt. She and Douglas hope to make it an annual event.

"The thing we were really thrilled about was the community that formed around this production," says Schellhardt. "Some of our writers and actors might have shared classes but didn't really know each other before this. We also had audience members from Evanston Township High School and the Evanston community, as we made a direct push to get them on campus. It was just wonderful to see the community that built up around this event."

## Conference honors Hugo Gregory

On March 10 the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders welcomed alumni, faculty, and industry professionals for its third annual CSD Connect conference. Specialists, researchers, and clinicians from inside and outside the Northwestern community presented and discussed their work on stuttering, in honor of groundbreaking speech pathology professor Hugo Gregory.

Author or editor of six books about stuttering and fluency, Gregory was a speech and language pathology professor at Northwestern from 1962 to 1993. He mentored hundreds of Northwestern students, some of whom came to the March conference to share what they've learned in their careers.

"Every year, we have an alumni conference so we can reconnect with our alumni community and thank our community partners," said speech-language pathologist Denise Eisenhauer, director of speech-language services at the Center for Audiology, Speech, Language, and Learning. "This year we wanted to focus on fluency and honor Hugo's legacy, showing how he's influenced so many clinicians."

Also in attendance was Gregory's 91-year-old widow, Carolyn Gregory; the two met at Northwestern in 1952. Six alumni and former faculty gave presentations for the 130 attendees. They spent a day discussing their research and how the basic principles taught by Gregory informed their work and practice. An evening group then met to discuss next steps for continuing to improve care as well as honor Gregory's legacy.

One of the conference organizers and speakers, alumna Kristin Chmela, works with patients at the Chmela Fluency Center in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. Cofounder of Camp Shout Out, a residential summer camp where kids work directly with fluency clinicians, she has made children's fluency the focus of her career.

"It was truly an extraordinary event," said Chmela. "It was a wonderful opportunity to come together and reflect on Hugo Gregory's work and what his mentoring meant to all of us. He was truly a differential thinker, one who believed in combining a number of different therapies and approaches to customize therapy for his patients."



## Predicting the hits

Baseball has sabermetrics, politics has Nate Silver, and arts markets may soon be looking to **Ágnes Horvát**. Thanks to her, the time may come when uncertainty about green-lighting films, box office draws, and award shows gives way to predictable outcomes.

"The holy grail is you can predict in advance whether a project is going to be successful or not," says Horvát, an assistant professor of communication studies.

Using computer science, physics, and social theory, Horvát studies complex networks, mostly in the spheres of arts and culture. In mining rich, freely available online data and building computational models, she and her students work to predict how future events—such as a big-budget film's opening weekend—may shake out.

Each Google, Amazon, or IMDb search leaves a data trail. In following those crumbs of information, researchers can trace users' online behavior. When enough patterns are analyzed against history, future outcomes become more calculable. These studies are not intended to siphon the fun out of Oscar pools but instead to give some measure of security to those investing in a creative endeavor, whether an indie film or a major motion picture.

"You can argue whether these tools are accurate enough to base your investments on them," she says, "but they are general enough to give us insights into how cultural markets work and to foster skills in how to make data-driven inferences."

Human behavior, though, can be wildly unpredictable, and arts markets don't always follow expectations. As Horvát notes, a dozen publishers rejected author J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* before one finally accepted it. And we all know how that ended.

Yet data of this sort is still relatively young—most originating in the early 2000s—so as time goes by, the models Horvát and her students create and use become more informed and reliable.

"My goal is to train data detectives," she says of her students, "who are able to



see beyond the potential technical hurdles and use analytic problem solving and communication of data stories creatively throughout their future endeavors."

In Horvát's course Culture and Arts Analytics, undergraduates and master of science in leadership for creative enterprises students delve into crowdsourced and social media data to explore this species of fact-backed prognostication using regression models, network analysis, and machine learning. The class focuses more on understanding concepts than on technology—user-friendly interfaces from such data giants as Google and IBM reduce the intimidation factor by several pegs. The science is new, the

data is young, and the predictions are far from perfect (just ask Nate Silver after the 2016 presidential election), but the framework holds great promise.

"The key challenge is to ask the right questions," she says. "For instance, can we predict box office revenues for the starting week, or can we predict the Oscars? How early can we tell, and how accurate are our predictions?"

Horvát's own research history demonstrates the field's promise. After receiving her PhD at Germany's University

of Heidelberg, she pursued postdoctoral research at the Northwestern Institute on Complex Systems. Using the 185 million data items in the Internet Movie Database, Horvát and a research assistant built computational models that could sift through crowdsourced references to determine the three most influential movies of all time. She concluded that they are *King Kong*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Star Wars, Episode 4: A New Hope*. Complex systems, then, need not be restricted to inaccessible topics.

This is the message she wants her students to embrace: big data and computational social science are not the great and powerful Oz. They can have more heart—and art.

## Performance studies accolades

Two Northwestern performance studies scholars have recently received high honors in their field. Doctoral candidate Didier Morelli was awarded the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Dissertation Fellowship for his research into experimental performance, architectural functionalism, and the reconfiguration of urban space in New York and Los Angeles in the 1970s and early 1980s. Jennifer Tyburczy (GC09) won the Lambda Literary Foundation's Best Book Award for LGBTQ Studies for her *Sex Museums: The Politics and Performance of Display* (University of Chicago Press, 2016). The book originated as her doctoral dissertation in performance studies at Northwestern.

## A Northwestern tradition, an alumni connection, and a trip of a lifetime

In March the cast and select crew from the 75th annual Dolphin Show traveled to Bosnia-Herzegovina for 10 days of performances and student-led workshops. The trip was catalyzed by Elizabeth Blumenthal (C92), the assistant cultural affairs officer with the US Embassy in Sarajevo.

“More than 20 years after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the three main ethnic groups in the country still live largely divided, and cultural diplomacy is one tool we use to try to address this issue,” says Blumenthal—who as a theatre major performed in the Dolphin Show, America’s largest student-produced musical. “We were looking for a way to bring people from diverse ethnic groups together around a shared, positive cultural experience, and really, what is more positive than an American musical?”

While the country boasts a vibrant arts scene, musical theatre productions are rare, and she and colleagues knew they wanted to share this uniquely American cultural tradition. Blumenthal said that *Little Shop of Horrors* was on their short list because of its broad appeal and small cast, and when she heard that it was the Dolphin Show’s 2017 production, “It was icing on the cake.”

The embassy led the 15 students on the sold-out four-city tour, interspersed with sightseeing excursions. Despite some cultural differences (audiences rarely clapped or moved from their seats at intermission), the connection between the artists and theatergoers was profound.

“One woman stood to ‘show her respect’ for us, and another said, ‘It was a great honor to see this musical,’” says business producer



and 2017 graduate Janie Dickerson. “These people were being exposed to the genre for the first time, and we gave them that experience. That was so moving for us.”

Dickerson adds that the students learned a great deal about touring a show, traveling abroad, and the power of musical theatre. Blumenthal said the tour opened doors to institutions the embassy had trouble reaching in the past.

“Cultural exchanges are one of the best tools we have as diplomats,” says Blumenthal. “Bringing people together face to face in a nonpolitical space breaks down barriers and builds trust. For some audience members, the cast talkback was their first live interaction with an American, and in my opinion, that person-to-person diplomacy is the best kind.”

## New Northwestern facility opens in Qatar



student and faculty videos. Other highlights include two 150-person lecture halls, a two-story research library, and an in-house museum, the Media Majlis at Northwestern University in Qatar.

The new building is certified as LEED Gold by the US Green Building Council, which identifies buildings that are resource efficient and environmentally friendly.

Northwestern’s Qatar campus, offering programs by the School of Communication and the Medill School, has moved into its new 515,000-square-foot building in Doha. Designed by internationally renowned architect Antoine Predock, the four-story building combines contemporary design with cutting-edge technology. Inspired by the region’s desert landscape, the structure embodies subtle elements that evoke Qatari culture, climate, and location.

With a black box theater, film screening rooms, and a sound effects studio, the building is one of the largest and most advanced academic communication facilities in the world. It also includes the most technologically advanced filming equipment and editing programs for the production of high-quality films, documentaries, and news shows, along with an interactive newsroom with live newswires and a fully equipped control room.

The building’s main forum features a three-stories-tall multimedia screen with grids allowing for multiple displays—including international news channels, visiting lectures, and



## Illustrious visitors

The School of Communication welcomed a spate of creative heavy hitters in the winter and spring quarters, including Mara Brock Akil (J92), showrunner and cocreator of the forthcoming superhero series *Black Lightning*; Hollywood agent Jeff Jacobs (C85, MSJ87); actor, singer, and *Sesame Street* master puppeteer Stephanie D'Abruzzo (C93); Joe Chappelle (GC86), director for *The Wire* and *Chicago Fire*; famed filmmaker and 2016–17 Wirtz Visiting Artist Sam Raimi; documentary filmmaker and 2017 Hoffman Visiting Professor Kirsten Johnson; Tony Award–winning actor-singer and 2017 Hope Abelson Artist Karen Olivo; and, for a panel on late-night comedy, *Late Night with Seth Meyers* writer Jenny Hagel (GC09), *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* writer Jen Spyra (GC12), *Jimmy Kimmel Live* executive producer Jill Leiderman (C93), and *Saturday Night Live* and *The Simpsons* writer-director Rob Cohen. Participating in the May 12 writers panel, Leiderman observed, “Northwestern is such an amazing launching pad.” With a continual influx of such high-profile visitors, it’s no wonder why.



Documentary filmmaker Kirsten Johnson (center, front row) after her May master class, joined by students, faculty, and staff from the MFA program in documentary media

Clockwise from below left:  
Joe Chappelle, Mara Brock Akil, Jeff Jacobs,  
Stephanie D'Abruzzo, Jen Spyra, Jill Leiderman





From left: A scene from *Brown Girls*; communication junior Julian Sanchez, Stephen Cone, and actor Cole Doman; Cindy Gold (right) in *My Fair Lady*

**Pablo Boczkowski** (PhD, Cornell University) coedited the book *Remaking the News: Essays on the Future of Journalism Scholarship in the Digital Age*, published by MIT Press.

**Thomas Bradshaw** (MFA, Brooklyn College) won the prestigious PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award in the category of emerging American playwright. PEN Awards honor writers and translators for exceptional literary works.

**Aymar Jean Christian** (PhD, University of Pennsylvania) was awarded a Provost Grant for Innovation in Diversity and Equity. His art and television platform hosted the acclaimed web series *Brown Girls*, the rights to which were sold to HBO in the spring. Christian's first academic article on the platform was published in the *International Journal of Communication*.

**Rives Collins** (MFA, Arizona State University) won the National Storytelling Network's Oracle Award for Distinguished National Service, presented in Kansas City in July. Collins will receive the American Alliance for Theater Educators' Johnny Saldaña Outstanding Professor of Theatre Education Award in

August in New Orleans. In May he received the school's Clarence Simon Teaching Award.

**Stephen Cone** (BA, University of South Carolina) has completed the feature film *Princess Cyd*, which was shot in Chicago last fall and recently received its world premiere at the Maryland Film Festival before screenings in the prestigious BAMcinemaFest and Frameline festivals. The film has been positively featured in *Salon*, *Artforum*, *Village Voice*, *Brooklyn* magazine, and *Metro US*, among others. Produced by alumni Grace Hahn (C16) and Madison Ginsberg (C15), *Princess Cyd* stars Jessie Pinnick (C16) and drew on the talents of numerous other alumni and students. Cone also recently directed the music video for Trey Pearson's song "Silver Horizon." Featuring current student Julian Sanchez, the project was produced by Grace Hahn with cinematography by Jason Chiu (C09) and crew assistance by students Katie Adler, Thomas Molash, Megan Ballew, and David Brown. The video's positive press included features in *Teen Vogue*, the *Advocate*, *Out*, *Buzzfeed*, and *Huffington Post*, with the song achieving anthemic status after Pearson, a fixture on the Christian music scene, came out as gay.

**Tracy Davis** (PhD, University of Warwick) was a visiting fellow at the John Rylands Research Institute at England's University of Manchester and for two weeks was a visiting professor at the University of Malta. In spring quarter she resumed her Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship at Germany's University of Cologne. She is general editor for the six-volume series *The Cultural History of Theatre*, to be published in September by Bloomsbury Press (UK).

**Zayd Dohrn** (MFA, New York University) won the Horton Foote Award last fall and recently received the Edgerton Foundation New Play Award for *The Profane*, which premiered at New York's Playwrights Horizons on April 9.

**Shawn Douglass** (MFA, University of Missouri–Kansas City) played Ed Devery this past spring in *Born Yesterday* with Chicago's Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, where he is an artistic associate.

**Dilip Gaonkar** was among the 22 writers, scholars, and artists awarded a 2017–18 Berlin Prize from the American Academy in Berlin. Gaonkar's winning research explores the anxiety Western culture and non-Western intellectuals have

harbored toward collective political agency. The prize is awarded annually to US-based scholars who represent the highest standards of excellence in their fields; winners receive a semester-long fellowship at the academy.



**Elizabeth Gerber** (PhD, Stanford University) has published several papers recently through her Delta Lab, including one coauthored with assistant professor Aaron Shaw and technology and social behavior doctoral student Yongsong Kim. Gerber was instrumental in the creation of a new undergraduate immersion program for students at Northwestern's San Francisco space, where she taught the courses Communication Design and Service Design. The latter involved a partnership with Facebook and Matter.cv and was inspired by faculty colleague Pablo Boczkowski's media





fact-checking research. With Haoqi Zhang of the McCormick School of Engineering, Gerber continues to develop and disseminate a “pair research” tool to foster communication and collaboration across campus. This initiative won the 2016 Office of the Provost Award for digital learning and project funding. In 2016 Gerber was named one of Impact Design Hub’s 40 under 40, which recognizes the brightest young minds designing for social good. She was awarded a Provost Grant for Innovation in Diversity and Equity.

**Erik Gernand** (MFA, Northwestern University) led a University Teaching Roundtable in April. Sponsored by the Office of the Provost and hosted by the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching, the roundtables are led by University Teaching Award winners.

**Cindy Gold** (MFA, Alabama Shakespeare Festival) played Mrs. Pearce in Lyric Opera of Chicago’s production of *My Fair Lady* this spring..

**Ágnes Horvát** (PhD, Heidelberg University) gave a keynote address in July at the International Conference on Computational Social Science in Cologne, Germany.



**E. Patrick Johnson** (PhD, Louisiana State University) was named a finalist for the Lambda Literary Awards, which celebrate achievements in LGBTQ literature. Johnson was selected in the LGBTQ anthology category for his book *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*. He was one of two inaugural recipients of the Provost Award for Faculty Excellence in Diversity and Equity, as announced in January.

**Laura Kipnis** (MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design) was featured in reviews, interviews, and book excerpts in the *New York Times Book Review*, NPR, *New Yorker.com*, *Mother Jones*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and elsewhere in connection with the April publication of her new book *Unwanted Advances: Sexual Politics Comes to Campus* by HarperCollins.



### A prominent Chicago voice

Senior theatre lecturer **Melissa Foster** (above left) was an invited panelist and presenter in February’s Chicago Voices symposium at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Representing musical theatre, Foster cotaught a master class with noted soprano Renée Fleming and was a part of the panel discussion “The Healthy Voice in the 21st Century.” The master class was live-streamed, and excerpts will be used in a forthcoming PBS documentary. The symposium’s other master class presenters included Tony Award winner and Evanston native Jesse Mueller; School of Communication juniors Rachel Guth and Lucia Godinez were among the student participants. “Our professors are very much out in the world, and these connections and contacts don’t stop when students graduate,” Foster says of such professional interactions. “To be able to boast about that as well as our academic strength here is incredible.”

**Nina Kraus** (PhD, Northwestern University) uncovered a groundbreaking biomarker that links concussions with the brain’s electrical reactions to sounds. Through analysis of brain response to the pitch of a speaker’s voice, she and fellow researchers were able to identify with 90 percent accuracy children who had recently been concussed and with 95 percent

accuracy children who had not. The implications are that sound processing in the brain may be the most accurate diagnostic tool for mild traumatic brain injury. Kraus is partnering with Northwestern Athletics to study how football players may experience changes in brain functioning even after recovering from a concussion. She also delivered the annual Thewis Lecture at the University of Rhode Island.

## The Kennedy Center connection

Three School of Communication faculty members have recently been recognized by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, for their contributions to the creative arts and sciences.



**Nina Kraus** (left), Hugh Knowles Chair in the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders as well as professor of neurobiology and physiology and of otolaryngology, was featured with the National Symphony Orchestra in June at the center's two-day "Sound Health in Concert: Music and the Mind." Kraus shared segments with acclaimed soprano Renée Fleming and National Institutes of Health director Francis Collins. She also led a 90-minute talk on music and childhood development.

On the heels of their participation in the Kennedy Center's 2016 New Visions/New Voices program, senior theatre lecturer **Laura Schellhardt** and associate theatre professor **Rives Collins** will return to Washington in June 2018 to open their previously workshopped play *Ever in the Glades*. The play will also be a part of the Wirtz Center's 2017–18 mainstage season. And at the center in February, the pair will debut their specially commissioned theatre-for-young-audiences show *Digging Up Dessa*, about a young adventure seeker coming to terms with trauma and the legacy of a forgotten female scientist.

**Bruce Lambert** (PhD, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) has received three new grants since September: two to prevent wrong-drug and wrong-patient errors, and the third to redesign the audiogram, the standard but incomprehensible way that hearing loss information is presented to patients.

**Viorica Marian** (PhD, Cornell University) and the Northwestern Bilingualism Laboratory hosted a workshop on bilingualism in collaboration with colleagues from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and the Arctic University of Norway. The workshop aimed to increase understanding of the consequences of bilingualism in the two nations. This work was also highlighted at Norway's

2016 Transatlantic Forum, organized by the University of Chicago, the Norwegian Embassy, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, and the Research Council of Norway. Marian additionally presented her research on bilingualism at the 2016 International Symposium on Cognition and Neuroscience in Singapore and the 2016 Brain Awareness Week at Lake Forest College.

**Hamid Naficy** (PhD, UCLA) curated the poster exhibition *Salaam Cinema! 50 Years of Iranian Movie Posters*, culled from his own Iranian movie poster collection. The first American exhibition devoted solely to the art of Iranian cinema posters, it was featured in the Block Museum of Art's

Alsdorf Gallery from September 17 to December 11. In conjunction with the exhibition, Naficy organized the film series "Iranian Cinephilia: From Filmfarsi to Art House Cinema" and the symposium "Lucid Figurations: Iranian Movie Poster Art/Film Art." Both featured prominent speakers and guests, including Iran's foremost female director, Rakhshan Banietemad.

**Miriam Petty** (PhD, Emory University) won the Society for Cinema and Media Studies' Best First Book Award for *Stealing the Show: African American Performers and Audiences in 1930s Hollywood*. The work was also a finalist for the 2017 Krazna-Krausz Book Award. Additionally, she received the school's 2017 Galbut Outstanding Faculty Award.

**Anne Marie Piper** (PhD, University of California, San Diego) was awarded a Provost Grant for Innovation in Diversity and Equity.



**Dassia N. Posner** (PhD, Tufts University) is the dramaturgical translator for a newly published edition of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* as adapted by Tracy Letts (TCG and Samuel French, 2016). She presented material from her book *The Director's Prism: E. T. A. Hoffmann and the Russian Theatrical Avant-Garde* (Northwestern University Press, 2016) in Prague at an international symposium on Konstantin Stanislavski, organized by Rose Bruford College's Stanislavski Centre, the theatre faculty of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts, the Czech National Theatre, and the University of California, Riverside.

**Ramón Rivera-Servera** (PhD, University of Texas–Austin) was appointed to the board of directors of the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, the nation's leading nonprofit organization exclusively dedicated to the promotion, advancement, development, and cultivation of Latino arts. He is part of a research team awarded a Humanities without Walls grant for the project "Latino Arts, Placemaking, and Sustainability in the Midwest." Based at the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities





## Sniadecki wins Guggenheim

J.P. Sniadecki, assistant professor of radio/television/film and acclaimed documentary filmmaker, is among the 2017 recipients of the Guggenheim Fellowship. Sniadecki has researched and made films in the United

States and China, and his works have been added to the permanent collections of New York's and San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art. He uses the camera's lens to explore

collective experience, sensory ethnography, and the possibilities of cinema. Sniadecki's films include *People's Park* (2012), *The Iron Ministry* (2014), and *El Mar La Mar* (2017), which has won acclaim on the festival circuit and received the Berlin International Film Festival's prestigious Caligari Award.

This year the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation awarded 173 Guggenheim Fellowships to a diverse group of scholars, artists, and scientists chosen from almost 3,000 applicants. The fellowship gives the winner the opportunity to work on a special project for a year. Sniadecki is the radio/television/film department's sixth Guggenheim fellow; the previous recipients are Thomas Bradshaw, Rebecca Gilman, Laura Kipnis, Eric Patrick, and Lynn Spigel.

at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the HWW consortium is funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and includes 15 universities in the Midwest and beyond.

**Billy Siegenfeld** (MA, NYU) travels to Barcelona this summer with Leah Nobers, a member of his Jump Rhythm Jazz Project, to perform as well as teach a Jump Rhythm workshop. The company performed on May 13 as part of the Bienen School of Music's Kids Fare series.



**Shayna Silverstein** (PhD, University of Chicago) was awarded the 2017 Woodrow Wilson Career Enhancement Fellowship, which seeks to increase the presence of minority junior faculty members

and other faculty members committed to eradicating racial disparities in core fields in the arts and humanities. The fellowship is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and supports its mission of strengthening, promoting, and defending the contributions of the humanities and the arts to the welfare of diverse and democratic societies. Silverstein additionally won the Buffett Institute for Global Studies' Manuscript Revision Conference Award to support her book project *Performing Dabke: Popular Culture and Identity in Syria*. The conference's central theme is the relationship between popular culture and the nation-state in the modern Middle East.

**Jacob Smith** (PhD, Indiana University) and **Neil Verma** (PhD, University of Chicago) won the 2017 Krazna-Krausz Book Award as coeditors of *Anatomy of Sound: Norman Corwin and Media Authorship*. The prestigious award typically celebrates excellence in photography and moving-image publishing; this was the first time a book about radio was so honored.

**J.P. Sniadecki** (PhD, Harvard University) delivered a keynote address at Concordia University in March. His new film *El Mar La Mar* received its US premiere at the San Francisco International Film Festival in April.



**Elizabeth Son** (PhD, Yale University) was awarded the Florence Howe Award for Feminist Scholarship by the Women's Caucus for the Modern Languages, an allied organization of the Modern Language Association. The annual award recognizes two outstanding essays by feminist scholars, one from the field of English and one from the field of foreign languages. Son received the foreign-languages award for her article "Korean Trojan Women: Performing Wartime Sexual Violence," published in the fall 2016 issue of *Asian Theatre Journal*.

**David Tolchinsky** (MFA, USC) wrote the screenplay for the short film *The Coming of Age*, which won the Silver Award in the *Los Angeles Film Review's* Independent Film Awards and has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Box Office's menu of films.

**Debra Tolchinsky** (MFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago) was named a 2017–18 fellow by Northwestern's Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities. The fellowship allows for reduced course loads so that faculty may develop interdisciplinary research projects. Tolchinsky's project is the documentary feature film *True Memories and Other Falsehoods*.

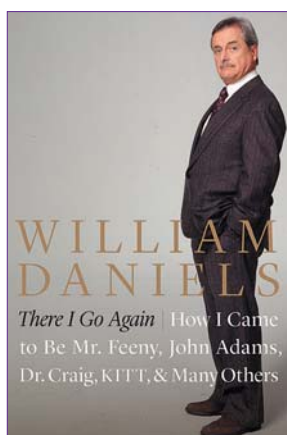
**Ellen Wartella** (PhD, University of Minnesota) delivered the May commencement address at St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. The school houses the prestigious Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media, where Wartella was the inaugural senior fellow.

## Funny business

Listing the “50 Funniest People Right Now” in May, *Rolling Stone* highlighted Northwestern’s outsized presence in the world of comedy. The roster includes **Julia Louis-Dreyfus (C83, H07)** in the “top-tier” category, **Seth Meyers (C96, H17)** and **Stephen Colbert (C87, H11)** as “late-night guys,” and **Billy Eichner (C00)** as half of a “power couple” with his *Difficult People* costar Julie Klausner.

Class notes are selected from stories of alumni featured in the media as identified by the University’s Office of Alumni Relations and Development and updates sent to Dialogue by mail or by email at [dialogue@northwestern.edu](mailto:dialogue@northwestern.edu).

### 1950s



**William Daniels (C50)** has written the memoir *There I Go Again: How I Came to Be Mr. Feeny, John Adams, Dr. Craig, KITT, and Many Others*, published in March by Potomac Books.

**Elizabeth Carrow-Woolfolk (GC55)** and her husband, Robert, made the largest-ever donation received to date by Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio: \$1 million to strengthen and expand its Harry Jersig Speech-Language-Hearing Center, in addition to an undisclosed estate gift.

### 1960s

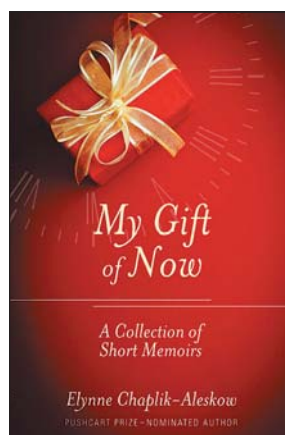


**Sherry Lansing (C66, H95)** is the subject of a new book by veteran Hollywood Reporter writer Stephen Galloway. *Leading Lady: Sherry Lansing and the Making of a Hollywood Groundbreaker* was published in April by Crown Archetype.

**Alan Wade (C68, GC81)** is retiring from his theatre professorship at George Washington University.

### 1970s

**Elynne Chaplik-Aleskow (GC71)**, Chicago’s first female television general manager as founding general manager of WYCC-TV/PBS, distinguished professor emeritus of Wright College, and a Pushcart Prize–nominated author whose work is featured in over 30 anthologies, has written *My Gift of Now*, a collection of short memoirs. Published by



Mill City Press, it was named one of *Conversation* magazine’s “25 Most Inspirational Books.”

**Paula Scrofano (C72)** and **John Reeger (C72)** are costarring this summer in the Pulitzer Prize–winning play *The Gin Game* at Drury Lane Theatre in Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois.

**Robert Mason (C75)**, president of Mason Law, is one of two North Carolina elder law attorneys named to the 2017 edition of *North Carolina Super Lawyers*.

**Ruth Cohen Chodak (Colby) (C76)**, former senior vice president of business development and chief strategy officer at Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox, Illinois, was promoted to CEO in April.

### 1980s



**Michael Greif (C81)** received a Tony Award nomination for best director for *Dear Evan Hansen*, which won the Tony for best musical. Greif received the Drama League Founders Award for Excellence in Directing.

**Megan Mullally (C81)** and her husband, Nick Offerman, acquired the movie rights to the novel *Lincoln in the Bardo*, which explores the aftermath of the death of Abraham Lincoln’s 11-year-old son. Mullally will reprise her role as the boozy, snarky Karen this fall in the much-anticipated reboot of the sitcom *Will & Grace*.

**John Logan (C83)** is writing the book for *Superhero*, one of three new musicals selected for development through the prestigious Eugene O’Neill Theater Center’s National Music Theater Center Conference.

**Julia Louis-Dreyfus (C83, H07)** is star and executive producer of the hit HBO series *Veep*, which received a Peabody Award for entertainment programming. The awards honor people and works that “represent the most compelling and empowering stories released in electronic media” of the previous year.

**Douglas Heil (GC84)** is a professor in the radio-TV-film department at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, where he has won the UW System Board of Regents Teaching Excellence Award and the UW-Oshkosh Distinguished Teaching Award. His book *The Art of Stereography* was published by McFarland Books. He produced and wrote the theme song for the independent feature film *Another Yesterday*, currently in postproduction.

**Dermot Mulroney (C85)** has been cast in the forthcoming feature film *The Mountain Between Us*, starring Idris Elba and Kate Winslet. Additionally, Mulroney played cello on the soundtrack of *Rogue One*, which was released in December.





A scene from the Wirtz Center's May production of *Stick Fly*



**David Schwimmer (C88)**, one of the founders of Chicago's Lookingglass Theatre Company, will direct the play *Plantation!* for the company's 2017–18 season. **David Catlin (C88)**, **David Kersnar (C88, GC08)**, **Heidi Stillman (C89)**, and **Louise Lamson (C96)** are among the other alumni involved in Lookingglass productions next season.

**Jason Cohen (C89)** coauthored the book *This Is the Noise That Keeps Me Awake* with the band Garbage. It was released in July by Akashic Books.

#### 1990s

*Stick Fly* by **Lydia Diamond (C92)** was produced last spring at Northwestern's Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts.



**Radha Subramanyam (GC92, GC96)**, iHeartMedia's president of insights, research, and data analytics, was a 2017 Cynopsis Top Women in Digital Awards honoree. Presented in March, the awards honor excellence in digital content, marketing, advertising, and social media.

**David Carlyon (GC93)** wrote *The Education of a Circus Clown: Mentors, Audiences, Mistakes* (Palgrave Macmillan), which details his experience as a clown with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The book won the Circus Historical Society's award for best circus book of 2016.

**Brian d'Arcy James (C93)** reprised his role as King George in Broadway's *Hamilton*, a role

he originated when the musical debuted off-Broadway at the Public Theater. James plays an FBI agent in the upcoming film *The Silent Man*, the story of a whistleblower involved in the Watergate scandal.



**Jason Moore (C93)** is directing *Superhero*, one of three new musicals selected for development through the prestigious Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Music Theater Center Conference. He is also directing the forthcoming musical about the life of Cher.

**Nicole C. Hollway (C96)**, former leader of Forward Through Ferguson, joined the administration of St. Louis mayor Lyda Krewson in April. She directs the mayor's racial equity and priority initiatives.



Brian d'Arcy James addressing students in May 2016



**Kamilah Danette Willams-Kemp (C96)**, Northwestern Mutual's vice president of disability and long-term care product management, was recognized as one of *Black Enterprise's* 2017 Most Powerful Women in Business.



**Kate Baldwin (C97)** was nominated for a Tony Award as featured actress in a musical for her performance as Irene Molloy in *Hello, Dolly!* Baldwin was also nominated for a Drama Desk Award in the equivalent category.

**Zach Braff (C97)** directed the feature film *Going in Style*, starring Morgan Freeman, Michael Caine, Alan Arkin, and **Ann-Margret (C63)**.

**Andy J. Fife (C99)**, owner and principal of Fife Consulting, joined Encore Medical Group as its chief strategy officer.

**Kerri Ann McClimen (GC99)** was named communications director for Niman Ranch, a producer of humanely and sustainably raised beef, pork, and lamb.

**Scott Shallenbarger (GC99)**, director of theater arts at Highland Park High School in Highland Park, Illinois, was the recipient of the Highland Park Community Foundation's 2017 Golden Apple Award. The award recognizes outstanding teachers in the district.



David Anderson and Aimee Garcia on the film set of *After the Reality*

### 2000s

**David Anderson (C00)** wrote and directed his first feature film, *After the Reality*, released in April by Sony Pictures' The Orchard. Also involved with the film were cast member **Aimee Garcia (J00)**, **Anna Christopher (C02)** as the set's still photographer, **Tim Gillis (C01)** heading second-unit photography, and **Matt Bradford (C00)** as an extra in many scenes and assistant with script notes.

**Billy Eichner (C00)** has been cast in the seventh season of FX's *American Horror Story*. Eichner adds this to his work on TruTV's *Billy on the Street* and Hulu's *Difficult People*.

**Gabrielle Neimand (C00)** is the head of TV/digital content at Mojo Films, helmed by director-producer Gary Fleder.

**Kristen Schaal (C00)** stars as the voice of Edith in the animated film *Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie*, released in June.

**Aurin Squire (C01)** is a writer for the series *This Is Us*, which was nominated for a Writers Guild of America Award in the new-series category.

**Jordan Horowitz (C02)** was coexecutive producer of the film *La La Land*, which won numerous honors at the Golden Globes (including best musical or comedy motion picture), Critics' Choice Awards (including best picture), Screen Actors Guild Awards, and BAFTAs (including best film). The movie was nominated for the best picture Academy Award and won six Oscars.

**Roshni Nadar Malhotra (C03, KSM08)**—the executive director and CEO of HCL Corporation, director of HCL Technologies, and trustee of the Shiv Nadar Foundation—received Babson College's Lewis Institute 2017 Community Changemaker Award in March. The award recognizes efforts to create positive change.

**Anthony Williams (C08)** is a top-five finalist for Project Greenlight's Reel Fear Horror Contest with his pitch for his film *Wither*. The winner will be announced on August 1 and will receive a \$300,000 budget to make the feature film.



Jordan Horowitz with senior theatre lecturer Mary Poole



## 2010s

**Greg Porper (C12)** created the series *Worst Birthday Ever*, which he sold to The CW network. Porper wrote, directed, and produced all 10 episodes, which are now available on The CW's digital platform CW Seed and its free app.

**Courtney O'Neill (GC13)** won the Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award in May. The award recognizes Chicago-area theatrical designers.

**Anna Baryshnikov (C14)** played a breakout role in the 2017 Academy Award-winning film *Manchester by the Sea*. Her Chicago-set sitcom *Superior Donuts* was recently renewed for a second season.

**Jessica Ann McLeod (GC14)**, a director and teacher specializing in new American stories, is the recipient of the 2016–17 Michael Maggio Fellowship for Chicago-based directors.

**Laura Shouse (GC16)** was named a full-time artistic associate at Northlight Theatre in Skokie, Illinois.



## NUEA West

On March 29 NUEA West presented “Fame: A Storytelling Event,” the most recent iteration of its popular Storytelling series. This event featured performances by **Daniel Boddicker (C10)**, **Roni Geva (C02)**, **Naomi Grossman (C97)**, **Mackenzie Horras (C07)**, **Lisa Kaminir (C82)**, **Claire Partin (C85)**, **David Rodwin (GBSM)**, **Jennifer Schuster (C02)**, **Tim Smight (J75)**, and **Diana Theobald (C08)**.

Also that month, NUEA West offered two joint events with the NU Club of LA. A March 12 group outing to *Fun Home* featured discount tickets and a postshow talkback with members of the cast, including **Kate Shindle (C99)**. On March 1 the two groups cosponsored a Dance Marathon Trivia Night Fundraiser.



## NUEA East

In the past few months, NUEA East organized two “writeathon” volunteer events with the children’s theatre and arts education organization Story Pirates; sponsored a Cinema Club screening of the documentary *I Am Not Your Negro*; and continued its monthly series of networking “First Friday” bar nights. In early April the group hosted a panel on producing for theatre with **Tom Casserly (C11)**, **Sally Lindel (C15)**, and **Lucas McMahon (C12)**, moderated by **James Daniel (C10)**.

NUEA East hosted its East Arts festival on June 4. Part visual gallery, part film screening, part performance space for dance, comedy, and music, the festival celebrated the accomplishments of New York City arts alumni.

**Craig Sager (C73)**, the wildly outfitted longtime sideline reporter and recent Sports Broadcasting Hall of Fame inductee, died December 15 at age 65 after battling acute myeloid leukemia. Sager was well known for his informed, professional courtside interviews during NBA games and for enduring playful ribbing for his wardrobe choices. He started his career in sports radio in Sarasota, Florida, then went on to a series of small-market cities before eventually landing at CNN and Turner Broadcasting. Respected as a tireless, agile reporter across numerous sports, Sager was best known for his sideline reporting for *The NBA on TNT*, for which he received a 2012 Sports Emmy Award nomination. He posthumously received the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Curt Gowdy Media Award. Reared in Batavia, Illinois, Sager showed his love of sports as a student at Northwestern, where he wore the Willie the Wildcat mascot costume for three of his four years. He is survived by his wife and five children.



**Martha Lavey (C79, G86, GC94, H10)**, former artistic director of Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company, died in Chicago on April 25 at age 60. During her 20 years with the company, Lavey oversaw the production of hundreds of plays and transferred dozens more to Broadway and abroad, including Tracy Letts's Tony Award-winning *August: Osage County*. She doubled the size of the ensemble and promoted engagement with younger artists and audiences, elevating Steppenwolf's reputation as a leading force in new-work development and cementing Chicago's standing as a world-class center for bold, experimental theatre. Under her leadership Steppenwolf received the National Medal of the Arts (the only one presented to a theater), the Illinois Arts Legend Award, and 9 of the company's 12 Tonys. Lavey herself won the Sarah Siddons Award, a Northwestern Alumni Merit Award, and an Alumnae Award, along with numerous accolades from local and national enterprises. Also acclaimed for her many acting roles both at Steppenwolf and beyond, she was the company's first female artistic director.



**Eleanor Coon Briggs**, the only daughter of philanthropist Owen L. Coon (WCAS1915, PSL1919) and Alice Wright Coon (C1917), died at age 96 on April 29 in Pueblo, Colorado. She was an original member of the Owen L. Coon Foundation, established by her father in 1946. A lifelong supporter of Northwestern's School of Communication, she was also active as a visiting member of the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences in the 1980s and '90s. Briggs often attributed her father's business success to his Northwestern education and in particular to his mentoring by debate professor Clarion DeWitt Hardy, in whose name Coon established the Hardy Scholarship Program (which continues today) in 1935. With her support the Owen L. Coon Foundation established four endowed chairs, including the School of Communication's Owen L. Coon Professorship of Argumentation and Debate, and over the years made other substantial gifts to the University. Eleanor is survived by her daughters Mary Ellen Segall, Jean Latka, and Theresa Fessenden; her son, Richard (WCAS69, PSL77); seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her husband, William A Briggs, and two brothers—former Owen L. Coon Foundation president Harry H. Coon and Owen L. Coon Jr.



**Elizabeth K. Mount (C39)** on March 5 at age 99 in Branford, Connecticut

**Eileen Gross (C42)** on March 31 at age 95 in Kansas City, Missouri

**Emily Jonas Hill (C49, GC52)** on March 31 at age 90 in Chicago

**A. Rae Price (C49)** on March 12 at age 89 in Kansas City, Missouri

**Patricia B. Georgouses (C50)** on March 26 at age 88 in Evanston

**Marjorie Cameron Kontos (C52)** on May 21 at age 86 in Sterling, Illinois

**Ruby M. Newton (C52)** on February 22 at age 90 in Coral Springs, Florida

**John C. Trimble (GC52, CG66)** on January 10 at age 88 in Tampa, Florida

**Ann Allen Stillman (C53)** on April 22 at age 85 in New Hartford, New York

**Mary Althoff (C54)** on April 16 at age 85 in Greenville, South Carolina

**Hubert T. Spiva (C54)** on April 30 at age 84 in Pacific Palisades, California



**Paul R. Bury (GC55)** on  
March 13 at age 91 in Rock  
Hill, South Carolina

**John E. Young (C55)** on April 3  
at age 84 in Libertyville, Illinois

**Mary Ann Nevitt (C58)** on  
March 10, 2017 at age 80 in  
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

**Anthony J. Mulac (C59)** on  
March 8 at age 79 in Santa  
Barbara, California

**Roberta M. Rice (C59)** on  
April 2 at age 79 in Phoenix

**Ellen St. Clair (C64)** on May 19  
at age 74 in Mt. Vernon, Ohio

**Elisabeth Dresser Stewart  
(C65)** on April 6 in Jefferson  
Township, New Jersey

**Karen G. Meyer (GC71)** on  
April 23 age 69 in Danbury,  
Connecticut

**James Franklin Stewart  
(GC76)** on May 19 at age 65  
in Los Angeles

**John W. Bergan (C88)** on  
April 30 at age 54 in San  
Francisco

## A bridge to London

Each year during Northwestern's spring break, School of Communication students travel to London to visit leading-edge media companies, network with alumni, and spend evenings enjoying the city's inimitable art scene. The Global Media and Communications Seminar, cosponsored by the London School of Economics and Northwestern's Center for Global Culture and Communication, is unique among international academic travel programs in that it provides each student with a memorable, educationally rich experience that is fully funded. Last March, generous support from friends of the school enabled 18 students and 4 faculty and staff members to experience the seminar. Prominent among those friends are **Bruce (KSM86) and Melissa Spohler**.

Parents of two children attending the University, the Spohlers wanted to contribute to a program that would reinforce the exceptional Northwestern classroom experience with outside professional development.

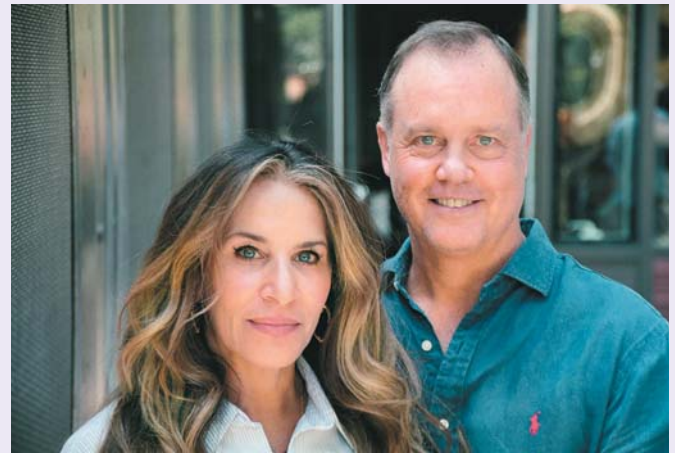
"This is a great way to help students transition from the University to the real world through interacting with business professionals engaged in various fields of communication," says Bruce, the cofounder and a managing partner of New York City-based Solar Capital. "We love the idea of students exploring their interests, in the classroom and beyond," says Melissa, a freelance producer. "This is our goal."

And it is very much the framework of the program, which begins as a winter-quarter seminar class covering many of the professionals and sites that students will visit abroad over break. The experience is facilitated by the School's Office of External Programs, Internships, and Career Services, an innovative unit designed to seamlessly usher students from the University to professional success. Experiential learning and professionally driven curricula are the cornerstone of the School of Communication's pedagogical strategy, and occasions like this have the power to change the course of a student's life.

"That ability to cross-pollinate, to be exposed to a peer group that is so passionate, opens so many different doors," says Bruce. "Northwestern makes these opportunities accessible."

Financial assistance is a crucial element, since the expense would conceivably deter many from participating. Thanks to the Spohlers, it does not.

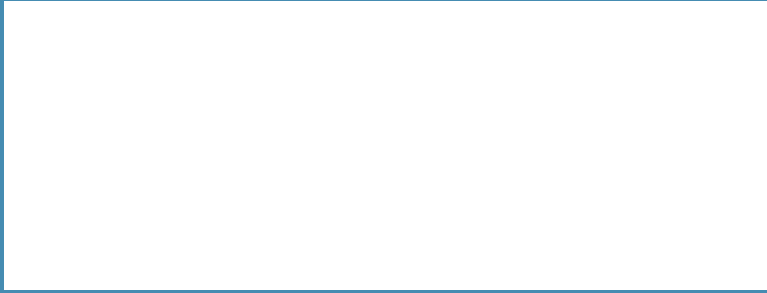
"Many students in our group have never had the financial means to travel overseas," says Neil Verma, assistant professor of radio/television/film and one of the 2016 trip's faculty participants. "This program might be more meaningful in impact than anything else I do as an educator."





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