



American
W E E K L Y

School of Communication

What a Year!

2004–2005

A collection of articles featuring
School of Communication faculty, staff, and students
from the *American Weekly*

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Boot camp gets journalism grads into trim for fall

BY SALLY ACHARYA

This isn't Lesley Kipling's first time in boot camp, but her previous experience was somewhat different. That boot camp included sit-ups, grenades, and M16s, and prepared her for a time when, several years into her army career, she'd find herself in a place where some of the people she saw would want to kill her.

Now she's at another boot camp, drilling for a new challenge. The man beside her is an Iraqi who waited last year for soldiers like Kipling to march across his country and, perhaps, fall into range of his news camera.

Capt. Kipling, formerly of the U.S. Army, and Rawand Darwesh of Iraq are both enrolled in a three-week session for incoming graduate students that the syllabus titles Principles and Practices of Journalism but professors and students know as "Boot Camp." The annual introduction to the journalism program is packed with speakers, such as ABC News' Jackie Judd,

and nine-to-five classes marked by something as intimidating to neophyte news hounds as drill sergeants are to green recruits: the implacable deadline.

But today is different, at least for Kipling and Darwesh. They don't have to knock out a story. This time, they *are* the story.

Most of the time, like the other 35 students, from the returned Peace Corps volunteer to the former AIDS hospice worker, Darwesh and Kipling have been pumping out articles at rat-a-tat speed while learning the discipline of putting aside their opinions when they put on their press cards. But for one day, Professors Rose Ann Robertson and Amy Eisman asked them to step out of their roles as reporters and become the topic of their fellow students' next article.

So as their colleagues scribble, they tell their stories.

To Kipling, the U.S. soldiers were "the heroes I lived with every day." To Darwesh, they were liberators. "That big country was a big prison for the people of Iraq," he says.

Darwesh is one of the first 23 Iraqis to be granted a Fulbright to study in the United States after the fall of Saddam. He knew of AU before he won his Fulbright; he had, in fact, interviewed AU professor Carole O'Leary, School of International Service (SIS), for his show on Kurdistan Satellite Television.

Both Darwesh and Kipling cautioned that the media doesn't necessarily reflect the whole picture. To Darwesh, the chaos on the news is no proof of widespread anti-Americanism. Suicide bombing and beheading, he says, "has never been Iraqi culture." He views the insurgents' methods as an indication that the turmoil is led by outsiders, from neighbors threatened by the prospect of democracy to religious zealots with their own ideological agenda.

Relatives in Baghdad report that problems are isolated and have little impact. "The majority of Iraqi people are busy with their daily lives. Yes, there are news and events going on in Iraq," Darwesh says, but the media "puts spice on it before showing it to the world."

Kipling, too, had experiences that caused her to question whether news considerations lead to distortions. In Iraq, where most people can't express nuanced opinions in an English sound byte, it can be easier and more dramatic to run a shot of somebody chanting "I hate Bush," she said.

A student stands to ask a question, like a member of the White House press corps at a presidential news conference. "How do you feel Al-Jazeera has covered the war?"

Kipling related that U.S. soldiers were no longer allowed to talk to Al-Jazeera after a series of incidents in



Courtesy of Lesley Kipling

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which the Arab network would show up at a scene with cameras rolling. Suddenly bombs would go off, and only Al-Jazeera would have the pictures.

Another student stands up with her question. "I think we can all agree that we have to do something about terrorism," she begins with professional tact, and then adds: "The criticism of the Bush tactic is that it's actually increased terrorism."

Weren't there other alternatives? Darwesh jumps right in. "The only option to change in Iraq was military force," he says. "How could an Iraqi opposition have succeeded when they can't speak out?"

As for Kipling, you won't catch her taking on the role of op-ed columnist. "I don't know about other alternatives," she laughs. "That's above my pay grade position."

Their answers will be turned into stories due the next class day. In the slog that is journalism boot camp, Lydell Bridgeford once got out of bed at 5:30 a.m. to finish an assignment, and then wrote on the class blog, "I just need to stay focused and quash any feelings of self-doubt."

"For a split second today, I was actually envious of my former soccer teammates . . . outside running wind sprints in the 90-degree heat," Ashley Froman wrote early in the session "OK, that was a bit of an exaggeration. Truthfully, I think we are all being challenged."

Reflected Joanna Welch after a symposium on Iraq, "Just being around all the powerful and highly intelligent people who attended made my knees turn to jelly and my mind go blank. It took real, deliberate effort to relax and focus on the task at hand: writing an article that captures the essence of the problems and solutions presented."

The pressure of boot camp "is a way to tell them what our standards are," says Robertson, who team-teaches the class with Eisman. "It's a way to introduce them to our expectations. And it's a way to introduce them to Washington."

That goal has become more challenging as security tightens and the Pentagon and congressional venues



Clockwise from upper left: Rawand Darwesh, left, and Lesley Kipling address the class; Darwesh talks with fellow students; Kipling poses in Iraq, lower left.

that once were wide open to AU students have been harder to access. Last year, as student Dena Gudaitis took notes outside the British embassy for a story on a day in the life of Washington, Secret Service agents appeared and confiscated her notes. This year, it took persistent detective work just to ferret out the address of John Kerry's campaign headquarters.

But if journalism in the post-9-11 era can be difficult, Kipling is prepared. She's got a photo of herself to look at when the going gets rough. In

it she's wearing an army helmet, one eye is scratched so badly that a quarter of her face is hidden by an eye-patch, and she's had no chance to scrub off the accumulated grime of Iraq's desert. But she's smiling. If she can smile in that picture, she says, she'll never have much to complain about again.

As for life after graduate school? Capt. Kipling, now a civilian, has conflicting plans. She either wants to be a war correspondent, or never wants to go near another war zone again.

Man on a mission

BY MATT GETTY

While Chris Palmer, AU's new distinguished film producer in residence, has charted a career path of hairpin turns from naval engineering to energy policy, to wildlife filmmaking, and now to AU's School of Communication, his varied life's work has actually grown out of a single mission.

A self-described "late bloomer," Palmer had spent seven years as an engineer in the British Navy when he realized in 1973 that his career required some deliberate rethinking. Following an instinct to give his life shape by putting it into writing, Palmer began crafting what he describes as a "personal mission statement." "It was a way of digging into myself to find what I really wanted to do," he explains. "The writing and the rewriting over time became a form of self-therapy, helping me find what I needed to live a satisfying and inspiring life."

While it covered everything from work to family, this plan for a "satisfying and inspiring life" centered on one major goal. "I found that it was important to me to make a positive difference in the world," says Palmer. "I decided I wanted to make sure that I leave behind a lasting legacy, and everything I've done since really comes from that."

Having come to AU this fall to bring his wildlife documentary expertise to a new generation of filmmakers, Palmer is poised to strengthen an already impressive legacy. In addition to having launched the production arms of the National Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon

Society, he has produced more than 300 hours of nature films for television and large format (IMAX) film, earning two Emmys and an Oscar nomination. Through his film work Palmer has carried out his mission by promoting conservation for a better future. Now, through his teaching and in his efforts to establish SOC's Center for Environmental Filmmaking, he hopes to add to that same mission by passing on strategies for crafting effective and responsible nature documentaries.

"If we don't grab and hold people's attention, they won't watch the film," he explains. "And if no one watches, what is the point of producing it? The challenge is to attract an audience without being irresponsibly sensational."

Beyond offering SOC students an opportunity to work on the films he already has in development, Palmer's presence at AU offers aspiring environmental filmmakers an unparalleled opportunity to learn how to creatively capture nature without disturbing it from a filmmaker who has long struggled to do just that. In the production of the acclaimed IMAX film *Whales*, for instance, Palmer recalls a unique solution to filming whales who were spooked by the bubbles coming from the crew's scuba gear.

"One of our directors, Al Giddings, held the world record for holding his breath underwater," Palmer recalls. "I think it was 11 minutes. So he took the camera down without any gear,



Chris Palmer, AU's new distinguished film producer in residence, takes a moment to pose with longtime friend Ted Turner after presenting him with the "Award of Honor" at a recent Natural Resources Council of America awards banquet.

Courtesy of Chris Palmer

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held his breath and shot for 10 minutes, and then he abandoned it and came up by himself. This camera—in its underwater housing—weighed 270 pounds, and it cost \$500,000. So we all stood on the boat waiting—and hoping—for it to resurface. Those were some tense moments, but sometimes those are the kinds of chances you have to take.”

Taking these kinds of chances seems almost second nature to Palmer. After all, when he abandoned a successful career as an energy policy expert some 20 years ago to produce environmental documentaries for television, he admits, “The only thing I knew about TV was the on-off switch.” What’s more, this outdoor enthusiast who has since swum with dolphins and camped with wolves didn’t even have much experience with nature at the onset of his film career. “This is embarrassing actually,” he explains. “What I’d love to say is, ‘Oh, my dad took me out as a kid, and we went hunting or fishing or bird watching,’ but that just isn’t true.”

When Palmer first penned his personal mission statement, he’d just immigrated to the United States in the midst of the OPEC oil embargo and viewed more progressive energy policies as the key to a better future. Combining his studies in economics at Harvard and engineering at University College London, Palmer remade himself into an authority on energy conservation. After several years working as a congressional energy advisor, a presidential EPA appointee, and the director of energy and the environment at the National Audubon Society, however, he

“The challenge is to attract an audience without being irresponsibly sensational.”

— Chris Palmer

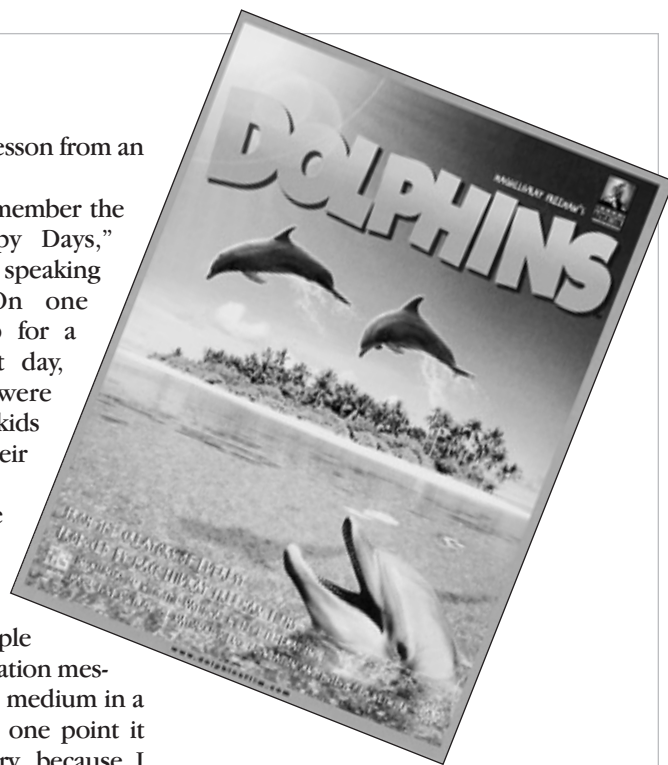
learned a life-changing lesson from an unlikely source.

“Some of you may remember the Fonz on ABC’s *Happy Days*,” Palmer says today when speaking about his career. “On one episode, he signed up for a library card. The next day, libraries everywhere were swamped by millions of kids applying for cards of their own.”

Disillusioned with the traditional strategies for influencing public policy, Palmer followed the Fonz’s example and brought his conservation message to a more powerful medium in a daring leap of faith. “At one point it actually got a little scary, because I realized I was caught in the middle,” Palmer remembers. “I’d sort of given up on energy policy, and I was really out of that loop. So here I was now a struggling filmmaker with a young family . . . There was a point I remember thinking, ‘God, this is risky.’”

Working 20-hour days, Palmer built his knowledge of film and video by contacting one nature film expert after another and never holding back a question that revealed his ignorance. “I asked a lot of questions that might have sounded stupid,” he recalls, “but that’s what you have to do sometimes.” Through this simple, yet tenacious strategy and a bit of what he calls “lucky timing,” Palmer eventually met Ted Turner, starting a friendship that has helped win films about the extinction of the California condor and deforestation in the Pacific Northwest prime-time broadcast on TBS Superstation.

Most recently Palmer has found an even more effective medium for promoting conservation, serving as the executive producer of six IMAX nature films, including *Dolphins*, which is currently showing at the National Museum of Natural History. “I was so tired of spending two years



on a TV production, it coming on at 8:00, and then it’s gone,” he explains. “With IMAX you had six-month runs, and 25 percent of the audience was schoolchildren, which meant you could produce educational materials to go with it.”

Today, as Palmer begins to blend his passions for filmmaking and education, it’s clear that his mission has come a long way since 1973. Yet, while many might wonder at the drastic changes marking the life of this energy expert inspired by *Happy Days* to become a renowned wildlife filmmaker and now a professor, to Palmer, who has continued to revise the life-changing statement he drafted in his early twenties, it’s all part of the same plan. “When I started making films a lot of people thought I’d changed careers, but to me I hadn’t changed at all,” he recalls. “I’d just changed tools.” From that perspective, perhaps AU offers the most powerful tool yet. After all, if Palmer’s teaching influences developing filmmakers whose work influences countless others, there’s no telling how far his mission might go.

Honors students take their campaign expertise to the airwaves

BY SALLY ACHARYA

AU students are an opinionated lot, and it's hardly unusual for them to find ways to insert their thoughts into classroom discussions.

But the students in one honors class this election season aren't just sharing their ideas with their professor and classmates. They're talking to all of Washington, D.C.

Channel 4 regularly films the discussion in the class for broadcast on their newscasts, particularly before and after debates. On one such evening, Channel 4 reporter Julie Carey summed up the class for her viewers. "Some of these students," she told the Washington metro area, "may be the pundits of the future."

At the moment, they're just 20 undergraduates enrolled in a class taught by Leonard Steinhorn, School of

Communication. Called Presidential Campaign 2004: Inside the War Room and the News Room, it had earned such a good reputation when it was taught four years ago, that some 50 students put their names on the waiting list.

Those who got in are studying the 2004 presidential election by analyzing how candidates and their campaign consultants create images, spin the press, and attempt to shape the perceptions of voters.

The students aren't just studying the news; they're making it themselves. The *Baltimore Sun* came to class last week. Channel 4 regularly descends on the classroom with its cameras, cables, and microphones, filming as students such as Rachel O'Connor '05 get up in front of the class (and metro Washington) to provide the latest analysis on how the campaign is being crafted, how it's going, and what will probably come next.

The cameras were rolling only hours before the first debate between presidential candidates John Kerry and George W. Bush. Steinhorn was slated to be on the Fox newscast on Channel 5 that evening to offer his analysis after the debate—but arguably, his students had the tougher job. They had to play the part not only of pundits, but of prophets.

Drawing from a semester's worth of readings and briefings, they speculated on how the campaign so far would impact the choices the candidates would make that night. O'Connor summed up her own observations in a comment that made a perfect sound bite. "The Kerry campaign," she said, "has changed its message from 'Vietnam Vietnam Vietnam' to 'W stands for wrong.'"

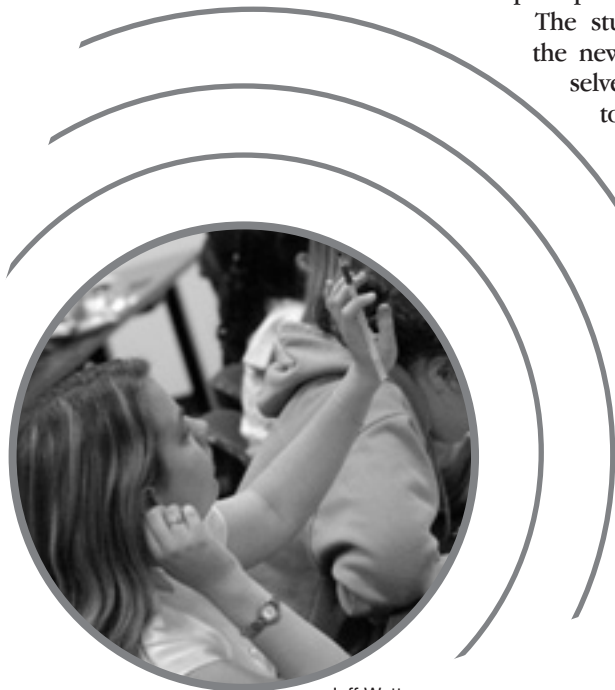
Ian Forbes '05 then suggested that Kerry would "throw the debate in the direction of, 'It was the wrong war in the wrong place, because you didn't go after Osama and you took resources out of Afghanistan.'"

As for Bush, Sarah Holstine '05 said that he would be wisest to stick closely to his script, lest he appear awkward and bumbling. Garrett Moewe '05 predicted that Bush would repeat such themes of proven effectiveness as, "I'll protect the American people every time."

As it turned out, the students were right on target. Score a few points for the AU pundits.

The students have no required textbook. "The only text," Steinhorn says, "is the campaign itself." That translates into a lot of reading (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Slate*, *Salon*), and a lot of time watching talk shows with a critical eye not only for

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content, but for such things as political spin and the moderator's approach.

The preparation shows. Last week, Steinhorn had a question for the class. "The Ohio secretary of state—does anyone know who that is?"

"Blackwell!"

"What's the controversy involved with him right now?"

"Well, there are two controversies," said a student, who went on to talk about Republican politician J. Kenneth Blackwell's strict interpretation of rules on Ohio's provisional ballots and his directive that voter registration cards are valid only if they're printed on a certain stock of paper.

All the students are in the University Honors program, and many are political science majors who signed up for reasons that Moewe summed up by saying, "It was a unique opportunity that happens only once every four years, and I'd heard really good things about the professor. It was a chance to follow the election and talk in an intelligent fashion with people who care about it as much as I do."

The Connecticut political science major is in his senior year, and having impressed his supervisors during an internship, is already working at the Republican Congressional Committee. While there aren't many Republicans in the class, Steinhorn surveyed the students on the waiting list to create as broad a mix of political viewpoints as possible.

As they study everything from speeches to advertisements to debates, these students end up with more than a few ideas about how the candidates are doing, and how they could do it better. Although most in the class plan to vote for Kerry, they've sometimes given the Bush campaign higher marks. "You understand where he stands, whereas with Kerry you don't. And that's scary,"



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commented Daniel Lerner '05 on a Channel 4 segment.

Students write weekly briefing papers of around 700 words on their assigned specialties, such as polls or media spin, and will finish the semester with a paper summing up the campaign.

Steinhorn's goal is to create a classroom where students gather and share so much knowledge that they're experts on almost every aspect of the campaign.

"I'd probably pit this group of students against any reporter in any newsroom in America," he says.

In the anchor desk chatter after one of the class's news appearances, a Channel 4 reporter was heard to muse: "Bright students." Carey nodded on air. "They really are bright and articulate."

What grade each student gets from Steinhorn will remain to be seen. But as campaign analysts, they get an A.

AU journalism professor more than just a TV talking head

BY MIKE UNGER

A third party has garnered significant attention this election season, snatching precious ink and air time from President Bush and Sen. John Kerry.

It isn't Ralph Nader.

More than any other presidential campaign in recent history, the media itself has been thrust into the white-hot glare of its own spotlight. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth ad campaign, CBS News anchor Dan Rather, and Sinclair Broadcasting all have caused major ripples over the past few months, overshadowing at least temporarily the candidates and their messages to the electorate.

When controversy strikes at the heart of the Fourth Estate, the eyes and ears of millions of Americans—and dozens of AU students—turn to Jane Hall. One of the country's preeminent media experts and a School of Communication professor, Hall is a regular panelist on *Fox News Watch*, a weekly roundtable critique of the media that airs Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. on the Fox News Channel.

Needless to say, there's been no shortage of topics on the show this year.

"I've never seen the media be as much a part of the story," Hall said. "I think we're in a new era. Things are coming out of advocacy, talking points from the parties, and I think reporters are trying to figure out how to be objective. I see an awful lot of reporting that looks as if the reporter has been spun."

A cheerful, outgoing native Texan, Hall developed a fascination with politics, civics, and the media early in life.

She grew up in a politically and media savvy household—her father served on the school board in Abilene, Tex., before becoming mayor. After covering Austin city hall for the *Daily*

Texan, her collegiate paper at the University of Texas, she earned a master's degree from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

By age 23, Hall was living in New York writing a column for *TV Guide*. She went on to cover the media for the *Los Angeles Times* for nine years, during which time her coverage of the Disney-ABC deal earned her recognition as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

But Hall always felt that eventually she'd be drawn into academia. In the summer of 1997, while on a leave of absence to adopt her daughter, Emily, she found herself talking to then-AU professor Lewis Wolfson, now a professor emeritus.

"I was interviewing [him] on the phone, and he said, 'You sound as if you'd be interested in teaching.' I said 'Yes, I would.'"

Hall accepted a one-year position and has called AU home ever since.

"[Teaching] gives me a real opportunity to see how young people are experiencing media," she said. "It's energizing to hear what they have to say."

Around the same time producers of a new Fox News show focusing on the media approached Hall, a frequent guest on news programs on several networks, about becoming a regular commentator. For the past six years, she's woken up at dawn every Friday to catch a 7 a.m. flight to New York for a full day of taping the show.

"I'm on there as the former daily journalist slash professor," she said. "We actually like each other, and we actually don't shout. We come at it from a perspective of respecting each other's opinions but disagreeing. I find it feeds into what I'm doing in

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class, and it's great fun."

Fox News Watch's audience has grown to about 2 million, and the show receives roughly 500 e-mails a week. As the so-called "moderate" panelist, Hall receives praise—and criticism—from viewers on both sides of the aisle, according to host Eric Burns.

"I think she has the hardest role on the show because she's a centrist," he said. "The panel was chosen to represent as much of the political spectrum as possible. I don't think of Jane in ideological terms at all. Sometimes she sees the liberal side as valid, sometimes the conservative side. She shows herself to be the most thoughtful member of the panel because she doesn't have this ideological framework to ensconce herself in."

In the current issue of *Columbia Journalism Review*, Hall conducts a Q&A with former Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean. In the interview, Dean contends that his

candidacy was both inflated and burst by the media.

"I think too often a storyline is written about someone and it's really hard to break out of it," Hall said. "Dean's angry, Kerry's aloof, Al Gore misrepresents. I think there's a group thinking that takes over. People get built up. It's a real celebrity approach. We really need to be entertained now, as a culture."

That, in part, has led people to seek out alternative sources of news, she said.

"It's a lot more polarized today. People are watching networks and reading Web sites partially based on whether they think it's their point of view. It's almost like 100 years ago when there was a newspaper for this point of view and a newspaper for that point of view."

When a media controversy erupts, Hall often is the first source journalists turn to for analysis. When reports began to circulate that documents

Dan Rather and CBS News used in a *60 Minutes* report about President Bush's National Guard service could be phoney, the *New York Times*, among others, called.

"Whether President Bush did or did not fulfill his National Guard service, that whole issue has been completely consumed by this issue of, gee, Dan Rather really screwed up," she said. "It's fascinating. The *Boston Globe* did a lot of good reporting on Bush's guard service, but nobody remembers that. They remember the screwup."

Amazingly, Hall is not cynical about the state of contemporary news coverage.

"I'm trying to help the next generation of students learn what are good practices, how do you write, what are ethical decisions you have to make. I tell my students, I'm very idealistic about journalism, in the face of the erosion of confidence that some people in the public have."

American
W E E K L Y

AUGUST 31, 2004

Class of '08 begins AU career

AU welcomed the Class of 2008 last week with bagpipes, drums, and tips on how to make the most of their college experience.

AU President Benjamin Ladner shared some AU statistics: its meteoric rise in the rankings, its tightening selectivity, the top reputation of many programs. Student Confederation president Polson Kanneth '05 told them, "I've had some of the greatest experiences of my life" through AU, drawing applause when he mentioned that AU has raised \$78 million so far in the *AnewAU* campaign. Applause was frequent and enthusiastically partisan as sections of the largely freshman crowd cheered mentions of favorite residence halls, schools, and colleges. Enthusiasm, too, is a quality shared by college professors, said Scholar-Teacher of the Year Pat Aufderheide, School of Communication, in the keynote address. "What they are first and last are learners," she said. But for their learning to have



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meaning, "ultimately they need you. You are their immortality. You are their future."

Former AU student Barry Levinson's *Wag the Dog* embedded in U.S. political landscape

BY MIKE UNGER

Often some of the sharpest observations in American politics originate from those outside the political establishment.

A musician, an actor, or a filmmaker has the ability to, in a fashion unique to those outside the political arena, rattle public consciousness by weighing in with a well-constructed opinion.

Barry Levinson dramatically demonstrated this with his 1997 film, *Wag the Dog*, which he directed and coproduced. The drama, starring Dustin Hoffman and Robert DeNiro, tells the story of a U.S. president embroiled in scandal who with the help of a political spin doctor and Hollywood producer creates a fictional war in the media to distract from his problems at home.

Levinson, who attended AU in the mid-1960s, never imagined that the phrase "Wag the Dog" would become a permanent fixture in the country's

political lexicon. He recently talked with *American Weekly* about the film, his career, and his life.

"I was given the book, which was called *American Hero*," said the director, who grew up in Baltimore. "I wasn't that crazy about it. But Dustin Hoffman and DeNiro thought there was something to it. We had a meeting about it, and I mentioned some of the ideas I was interested in about how you could manipulate the media and create false images. I said that would be intriguing, and they began to respond to those discussions. It evolved into what became *Wag the Dog*."

The movie's profile was boosted by real life events. In 1998, critics accused then president Bill Clinton of

utilizing "Wag the Dog" tactics when he ordered military strikes on terrorist targets in Afghanistan and Sudan—three days after admitting for the first time that he had an inappropriate relationship with Monica Lewinsky.

"The title *Wag the Dog* has become almost a cliché right now in everyday conversation, especially in light of the Iraq offensive," said *Washington Post* film critic Desson Thomson, a 1980 AU graduate. "In the film, a fake war is invented to divert the public from the president's personal foibles, as both Gulf War offensives have, from many points of view, done in a similar way. Many say they're motivated by oil. Whether or not that's true, the movie has provided a metaphor for that kind of argument, and watching it today there are some amazingly timely parallels between the satire then and the satire as it echoes now."

Prior to returning to Washington last month to participate in AU's School of Communication's Political Comedy Film Festival, Levinson reflected on



Barry Levinson, right, and *Washington Post* film critic Desson Thomson '80 spoke during last month's Political Comedy Film Festival, sponsored by SOC.

Iwan Bagus

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the four years he spent at American University, from 1963 to 1967.

"At that point it was known for broadcast journalism, and my interest was radio and television," he said. "I didn't graduate, I couldn't get past the language requirement. I tried Spanish I four times."

Levinson found success in Hollywood. He broke into the business in the 1970s as a writer for the *Carol Burnett Show*, for which he won two Emmys for TV comedy writing. His directorial debut, *Diner*, was a nostalgic coming of age tale set in his beloved hometown of Baltimore, and it earned him an Academy Award nomination for best original screenplay. He won the best director Oscar

in 1988 for *Rain Man* and went on to direct such hits as *Bugsy* and *Sleepers*.

"He has had remarkable success," Thomson said. "I think that he just has a very good sense of story and what makes good comedy, what makes good characters, which seems to be in surprising short supply these days. He does have that instinct. His ultimate trilogy, and his best work I believe, is when he makes personal films about growing up in Baltimore."

While he makes it back to Baltimore "every few months," Levinson, who tired of life in Los Angeles, now calls Connecticut home.

"At a certain point in your life, it starts to become exhausting when everything's about the business," he

said. "It's one thing if you're making a movie, but if you go out to dinner and that's all you hear about, I find it too all-consuming. I like the idea of going to a place where there are people dealing with their lives."

Levinson currently is writing a screenplay based on his novel, *Sixty-Six*. Though not an overtly political person, he is acutely focused on this year's presidential race.

"I'm fascinated by the process and the level of manipulation [of the media] by the parties and the candidates," he said. "We've entered an age where we're selling candidates the same way we sell cereal. It's all packaging."

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W E E K L Y

OCTOBER 26, 2004

Edwards on Blissful memories and pioneering at XM

The silver-tongued sound of morning radio in the person of Bob Edwards '72 held nearly 500 fans rapt in Bender Arena last Friday evening as he guided them through the people and events that have influenced broadcast journalism.

In a pre-show interview the host of *The Bob Edwards Show*, XM Satellite Radio, and former host of NPR's *Morning Edition*, answered *American Weekly*'s queries about whether satellite radio is our future, "It could lose out to the Internet, it's so new, we can't make any predictions," but he's just fine with that adding, "I'm pioneering again. I joined NPR when it was just under three years on air and now, I'm here at XM, which is just three years old."

To a question about whether XM competitor Sirius, which just signed on Howard Stern, had also approached Edwards the answer was, "Yes, but something about the words 'interview show' attracted me to XM." To what it's like to line up your own guests, Edwards said: he'd just finished three interviews yet to air—with Seymour Hirsch, which will air this week, with country music songwriter Billy Joe Shaw, "who's a great songwriter because he's a great storyteller," Edwards commented, and with novelist Tim Robbins, who said fiction writing today is "so down in the dumps; he thinks we need some playfulness in writing," Edwards noted.



Hilary Schwab

Speaking of writing, Edwards mused that if the evening's honoree, Ed Bliss, founder of AU's broadcast journalism program, were with us (Bliss died earlier this year), he would talk about the writing. "The writing never changes, that's what Ed Bliss knew and taught," Edwards said as he headed out to talk with his fans in Bender. —LMCH

SOC students cover presidential campaigns with cell phones

BY MATT GETTY

While most professors would be happy if they could keep cell phones out of the classroom, SOC professor Amy Eisman recently welcomed them into her Media @ the Millennium class as one of the key elements in a syllabus exploring the influence of business, technology, bias, and audience on journalism.

In an experiment launched earlier this month, Cingular Wireless provided the class with eight camera phones that students have been using not to chat with friends, but to cover the 2004 presidential campaigns through the latest tool on the expanding frontier of the Internet—the moblog.

Over the last two years, blogs, which are stripped-down, inexpensive, and easily-updated diary-like Web sites, have gained national attention by exposing questionable reporting in the mainstream media and scooping major newspapers with their coverage of controversial news. As journalists debate whether blogs represent a new tool giving voice to a previously unheard public or a dangerous weapon eroding journalistic standards, the newly emerging moblog—which is shorthand for “mobile blog”—has already taken the power and potential danger of blogs one step further by allowing users to post photographs and text to the Web from anywhere using only a cell phone. Accordingly, students in Eisman’s class, which ponders the

interaction between journalism and innovations ranging from the printing press to the Internet, used the moblog experiment as more than just a chance to play with the latest new reporting gadget.

“We’re not using these phones and the moblog as a new technology and just saying, ‘Isn’t this neat that we can do this,’” Eisman explained. “We’re asking the same questions we ask throughout the class—how does this technology affect journalism and is this journalism?”

To answer these questions students took the phones into the field to capture the presidential campaigns on the ground, posting photos and blurbs to the class’s moblog (americanu.textamerica.com).

With experiences that ranged from interviewing subjects who scoffed at having their picture taken by a cell phone to winning hard-to-get access at the “Vote for Change” concert where the use of cameras, but not cell phones, was restricted, the students found moblogging’s impact on journalism to be mixed. While cell

phones’ portability and slim size might allow professional and amateur reporters to capture moments with a spontaneity traditional cameras often prevent, they concluded, the tool’s possible hidden camera use and the ability to post potentially misleading content pose ethical challenges that will need to be addressed.

“I think all of this stuff is still shaking out,” said Eisman on the role of moblogs in the media. “When new media technologies emerge, they’re like new toys at first and then guidelines and standards gradually emerge. This is an often repeated cycle with technology and journalism, and it’s great for students to get to see that as it happens.”

The chance for AU students to participate in this “shaking out” process originated this summer when Cingular approached SOC professor and journalism director Wendell Cochran to ask AU to participate with 11 other schools in its Wireless Election Connection Program. The program struck Cochran as a natural fit for both Eisman’s class and his own Digital Skills class, which will be using the phones this week and next week to document the days leading up to the election.

“One of the things that makes our School of Communication unique is its commitment to exploring new tools shaping journalism today,” Cochran explained. “Programs like this give students a chance not just to hear about the latest media tools, but to experience them as well.”

SOC film wins prime-time Thanksgiving slot on PBS

BY MATT GETTY

Arts programs in public schools probably don't make most people's lists of things to be thankful for on Thanksgiving. This year, however, PBS and a documentary directed by SOC professor Charlene Gilbert and filmed almost entirely by AU students might change that.

Slotted for 8:00–9:00 p.m., on PBS's national broadcasting schedule for the Nov. 25 holiday (check local listings), the television debut of Gilbert's *Children Will Listen* will bring families giving thanks across the nation the story of a group of public school students' struggle, transformation, and triumph through a unique theatre program.

Born out of a partnership that brought SOC together with the American Film Institute (AFI),

Hallmark Entertainment, and the Broadway Junior division of Music Theatre International, *Children Will Listen* chronicles the work of 143 Washington, D.C., fourth through eighth graders who dove into the world of musical theatre for 10 months to produce and perform an adaptation of the Broadway classic *Into the Woods* at the Kennedy Center in 2002. The result is a film that goes beyond the backstage to make a pow-

erful and personal case for the educational value of the arts in what PBS senior vice president of programming called "inspirational viewing."

"I think what people connect with is the story behind the production," Gilbert explained. "It's not just a backstage documentary, and that's what really moves people—the personal stories of the kids and their families. That's what shows people what's really at stake here, that the role of the arts in schools isn't just about some kid getting on *Star Search*. It's about exciting them, making them feel special, keeping them in school, and making them want to excel in school."

In the fall of 2001, as Music Theater International launched a project enabling local school children to put on the adaptation of Steven Sondheim's classic play, AFI contacted SOC dean Larry Kirkman to see if the school, in participation with



AU film students operate boom mike and camera to capture another moment for *Children Will Listen*, which airs on PBS at 8:00 p.m. on Thanksgiving evening, Nov. 25 (check local listings).

Joetta Andrews/SOC

(see next page)

Hallmark, could create a documentary on the process. Charlene Gilbert, who had recently produced and directed a documentary on African American farmers, seemed like a perfect choice to helm the film. She would, however, have to hit the ground running. "When we said yes to doing the film, they said, 'OK, great. It started yesterday, and here's what's happening tomorrow,'" she recalled.

Fortunately, when Gilbert put out the call for volunteers for the nearly year-long project, SOC film students responded in droves to the rare opportunity for professional film

experience, and the production was staffed and shooting in no time. By the film's wrap, the AU students' contribution was so large, in fact, that Sondheim requested that his "special thanks" credit be removed so that they could be recognized instead.

More than two years later, *Children Will Listen* screened theatrically at the AFI Silverdocs festival in Silver Spring, Md., in June and at the AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival last weekend. Now, having been acquired for broadcast by PBS, the film is poised for what should be its largest audience this Thanksgiving.

Yet, the film's achievements make up only part of its success story. Citing examples, such as an AU student whose experience on the film helped him land a coordinating producer post at Discovery, and a young Sierra Leone refugee who, since his involvement in the theatre program—when he could barely speak English—has gone on to attend the acclaimed Duke Ellington School of Arts, Gilbert has remained focused on the project's more human achievements. "Children Will Listen is truly about launching kids in new directions," she declared.

American
W E E K L Y
NOVEMBER 9, 2004

SOC gives high school students glimpse of college life

Eleven students from the Montgomery County School System got a taste of college life—if only for a few hours—last week during the School of Communication's (SOC) new College 411 Day.

The program included a tour of SOC, the media production center, the American University campus, and a panel discussion with professors and students, in which everything from SAT scores to internships was discussed. The event also included a mock class on media ethics presented by SOC professor Amy Eisman.

According to SOC professor and College 411 organizer Sarah Menke-Fish, sophomores, juniors, and seniors were invited from the schools with the strongest communications programs. Next month, SOC will host kids from the D.C. public schools and in January students from Fairfax County schools will be invited to College 411.

"A lot of [local] students will go to the University of Maryland, so we know they don't necessarily want to go far from home," said Menke-Fish. "I think they just don't



Maryland high school students tour SOC last week as part of College 411 Day. Next month, AU will host students from D.C. area schools.

Jeff Watts

know a lot about AU. They need to be invited and feel welcome on campus—and that's just what we're doing."

Menke-Fish added that the student evaluations from last week's program were extremely positive.

"I think you just have to look at it from a high school kid's point of view. Where is the joy in thinking about college when all you're talking about is tests? This program is about giving them a glimpse of what college is really like and getting them to focus selfishly about what they want in a college," said Menke-Fish. —AF

WCL-SOC study: Legal issues mean untold stories in film world

BY SALLY ACHARYA

The would-be basketball star was turning 18, and the documentary cameras were at his birthday party when something happened that would cost more than \$15,000.

The family sang "Happy Birthday."

For the documentary *Hoop Dreams*, which follows two inner-city Chicago youths from their freshman year of high school to their first year in college, the filmmakers learned a lesson with repercussions not only for documentary makers but for academics. If you want to reproduce a few seconds of a popular song, or a clip of the evening news, or even a shot of someone with a trademark on his baseball cap, you could end up with a choice between paying thousands of dollars for the rights or risking a lawsuit.

In a joint study by the School of Communication (SOC) and Washington College of Law (WCL), AU students and faculty interviewed 45 filmmakers about the impact of copyright restrictions on documentary films. The study was led by SOC's Patricia Aufderheide, Center for Social Media, and WCL's Peter Jaszi, a specialist on copyright law who heads the program on intellectual property and the public interest.

What they found has implications beyond the film world. "I am extremely concerned for the future of academic research," said Joseph Turow of the University of Pennsylvania at a panel last week that launched the study and discussed its findings.

Many younger scholars, Turow said, are coming into the academic ranks with technology skills. They will

increasingly want to create CD-ROMs for their courses and may not be aware of the possible legal repercussions. "I really believe there ought to be laws that say you use a minute from a TV show and 15 seconds from a song, you shouldn't be able to be sued," Turow said.

But as it stands today, that's just what could happen, in spite of the widespread assumption that such uses are permissible. The result is a Catch-22. Artists want to retain control over their intellectual property, and yet those very controls that protect artists can be so restrictive that they keep other work from being created.

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— Joseph Turow

Documentary makers need to use existing images, whether it's a historical photograph or a moment from last week's news, or they simply can't do their jobs. They also need music to set the mood, and often, that means pre-existing music. While a composer can be hired for the job, that brings its own complications and can sometimes be far less desirable. Picture, for instance, a documentary about the 1960s without the music.

All of those images and sounds, however brief, require a lengthy and costly rights clearance process. And those are just the intentional quotes. Whenever documentary cameras roll, radios play in the background, families watch TV, and advertising images flash in the background.

Even songs that might be assumed to be in the public domain, such as "God Bless America," cost money. And just because songs may be available at a public institution, such as the Smithsonian, doesn't mean they're free to the public. Filmmaker Jeffrey Tuchman told the AU audience about a problem in a film he is currently making about the civil rights movement. He wanted to use songs available on a Folkways Records/Smithsonian collection called *Voices of Civil Rights*, but a single minute of a song would cost \$3,500.

The rights clearance process also brings another complication: When footage is requested, it can simply be refused. Fox and NBC News both denied producer Jim Gilliam the rights to include talk-show footage of George W. Bush and Condoleezza Rice in *Uncovered: The War on Iraq*, Gilliam told the audience at AU's law school. For the documentary that

(see next page)

became *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism*, "We were pretty confident they wouldn't let us use any footage," so he taped Fox for 24 hours a day for several months and prepared for a lawsuit.

Fox didn't sue. Gilliam speculates that a previous lawsuit against comedian-author Al Franken had increased sales of his book, and Fox didn't want the publicity. But while Gilliam was willing to work with the prospect of a legal battle hanging over his head, most documentary makers don't have that luxury. They are working on shoestring budgets—or, as Turow said, may work at universities whose deans discourage anything that could bring on a lawsuit.

The result? Some movies don't get made, others can't be reissued or get excluded from whole markets, and small filmmakers are increasingly unable to tackle many subjects from

the civil rights movement to popular culture.

Strange Fruit, a documentary about lynching, used music that couldn't be cleared for home video, so it can't be rented.

The "American Experience" documentary *Ella Fitzgerald—Something to Live For* cost over \$1 million to make, with the music rights eating up about 60 percent of that. If it hadn't been funded by an operation with deep pockets, it couldn't have been made.

The classic documentary on the civil rights movement, *Eyes on the Prize*, can no longer be shown on TV because the filmmakers had only enough money to purchase five years' worth of rights of its archival footage. The five years' license has expired, the company that made the film is gone, and the rights have lapsed.

"Whatever threadbare copies are available in universities around the

country are the only ones that will ever exist. It will cost \$500,000 to re-up all the rights for this film," series producer Jon Else told the AU researchers.

Panelists at last week's launch were Turow, Jaszi, Mike Madison of the University of Pittsburgh Law School, and filmmakers Gilliam, Grace Guggenheim, and Tuchman. "This has been an extraordinary experience," Jaszi said of the interdisciplinary study. "Those of us who work in law tend to work at a very high level of abstraction. [The study] shows the way law actually effects people and the way they do their jobs."

The complete report, "Untold Stories: Creative Consequences of the Rights Clearance Culture for Documentary Film-makers," includes recommendations and is on-line at www.centerforsocialmedia.org/rock/index.htm.



D.C. restaurateur, partner share secrets of success

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Franco Nuschese, the charismatic owner of one of D.C.'s most popular eateries, Café Milano, dished out advice to students during a lecture Thursday, Nov. 18, at the School of Communication.

Nuschese—named one of GQ magazine's "20 most powerful people in Washington" in 2003—spoke to about 30 students from Gemma Puglisi's Communications and Society class, many of whom have entrepreneurial aspirations of their own. The Italian-born Nuschese, who was accompanied by his business partner, Paul Guzzardo, said discipline and passion are the cornerstones of his success.

"I never take anything for granted. Anyone who comes through the door [at Café Milano] should feel special. We make sure everyone, celebrity or not, is taken care of."

Nuschese—whose résumé includes stints at the Playboy Club in London and Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas—has been involved with the restaurant, hotel, and gaming industries since he was a teen. He moved to D.C. in 1991 after Guzzardo asked Nuschese to help him open a new restaurant, Bice.

"I packed up, took a red eye to Washington, dropped my bags, and just got to work," said Nuschese with a warm laugh.

One year later, Nuschese opened his own Italian eatery, Café Milano, on Prospect Street in Georgetown. The restaurant, which started out with 52 seats and has since expanded to accommodate 350 diners, is one of the hangouts of choice for politicians, athletes, and celebrities.

"I remember, Placido Domingo came in once," recalled Nuschese, "and someone on my staff asked, 'How was everything?' And he said, 'Great, but the music is too loud.' So, 48 hours later I created a new room, the Domingo Room." (Diners, by the way, can reserve the Domingo Room, which accommodates 24 to 32 people.)



Jeff Watts

Paul Guzzardo, left, and Franco Nuschese of Café Milano offer advice to SOC students.

Nuschese and Guzzardo—who also own Sette, an Italian restaurant in Dupont Circle—also discussed their newest venture, an eatery in Clarendon, Va. There's only one problem: "We're having trouble with the name," Guzzardo said with a laugh.

He added that suggestions are welcome and can be sent to name@cafemilano.net. "And if we pick your name, we promise you a dinner for four, anything you want, at Café Milano."

At the end of the lecture, the pair took questions from the students. One asked what advice they had for aspiring entrepreneurs.

"You obviously need an idea," said Guzzardo. "You have to turn that idea upside down and play with it from every angle. But beyond that, you have to be willing to take risks, and you have to be passionate about what you're doing."

"And then you hope that you hit it just right. Because if you do, there's nothing better than being your own boss."

Spirit of Santa endures

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Four years ago, while combing through the periodicals at the Library of Congress, W. Joseph Campbell stumbled upon something extraordinary—a piece of journalism history that’s as much a part of the holiday season as candy canes and caroling.

The American University journalism professor had discovered a tearsheet from the Sept. 21, 1897, edition of the *New York Sun*, which featured the iconic editorial “Is There a Santa Claus?” The editorial, which captured the wonder and excitement of the holidays with the famous line, “Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus,” was a Christmas present of sorts for Campbell, a scholar who’s long been fascinated by late nineteenth-century journalism.

In fact, Campbell was at the library that fateful day conducting research for a project about the state of journalism in 1897, which he explains “was an exceptional year, a pivotal moment in the trajectory of the profession.” It was the year, he says, that the *New York Times*’s logo, “All the news that’s fit to print,” moved to the front page; also, 1897 saw the first use of yellow journalism and the first modern use of public relations.

In addition, Campbell says a “clash of paradigms” emerged in 1897. William Randolph Hearst of the *New York Journal* put forth the idea of activist journalism—the notion that newspapers should take action to right wrongs. On the other hand, Adolph Ochs, publisher of the *New York Times*, argued that newspapers

should take an authoritative, detached approach. Ochs, explains Campbell, ultimately prevailed.

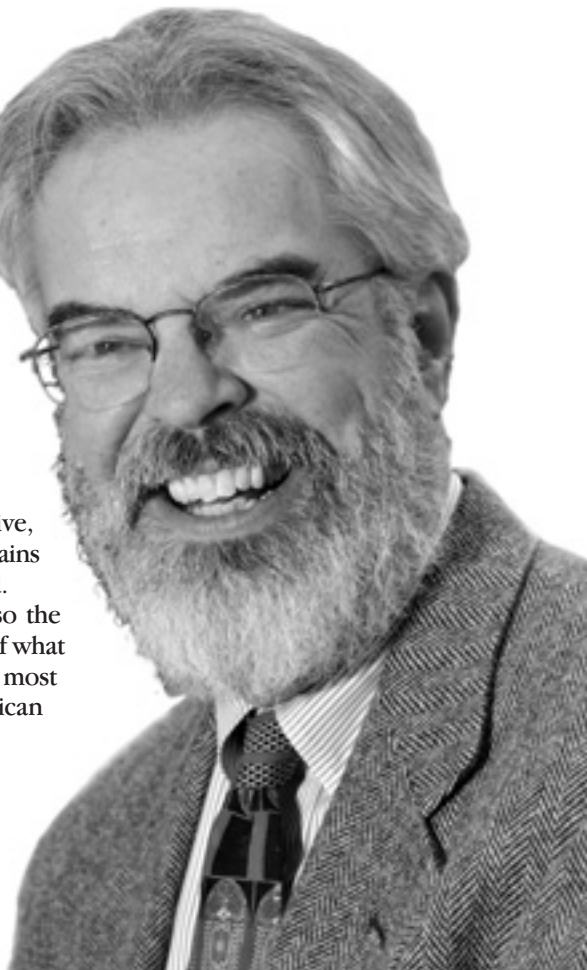
And of course, 1897 was also the year that saw the publication of what has become the most popular, most reprinted editorial in American journalism.

Campbell says he didn’t even know the editorial—which is still reprinted in newspapers across the country at Christmastime—was written in 1897.

However, because the editorial fit within the time line of his study, Campbell began scouring through mountains of microfilm, scanning every December issue of the *Sun* from 1897 until 1949 for the editorial and letters to the editor related to the piece.

“It was one of those painstaking projects that you can only do in Washington, and that takes a lot of time,” says Campbell, who likens the process to piecing together evidence for an investigative journalism story. “I was blessed that the Library of Congress was only a Metro ride away.”

Contrary to popular belief, Campbell’s research indicates that the editorial, written in response to eight-year-old Virginia O’Hanlon’s query



Jeff Watts

about Saint Nick, wasn’t an immediate success when it first hit newsstands in 1897.

He says the *Sun*, which was founded in 1833 and became one of the first successful penny daily newspapers in the country, was hesitant to reprint editorials. Furthermore, the paper didn’t want to promote its journalists, including Francis Church, the writer who penned the editorial, as celebrities or star reporters.

However, in the 1920s the *Sun* began running the magical Christmas essay as a standard feature on its editorial page at Christmastime. (The *Sun* folded in January 1950, though it

(see next page)

was reborn in 2002.) Before then the *Sun* ran the essay sporadically.

Readers were instrumental in keeping the piece alive, says Campbell. "It touched a chord with people. There's something timeless about this editorial. I don't think the *New York Sun* realized it at the time, but readers did.

"Editors don't always have the greatest insights as to what readers find appealing and interesting, and even newsworthy," he continues. "I'm sure there are lessons along those lines with this editorial—listen to your readers, listen to your audience."

In researching the editorial, Campbell also set off for Albany, N.Y., to meet O'Hanlon's eldest grandson. The grandson's collection of clippings and his memories of O'Hanlon were helpful in piecing together the puzzles associated with the editorial, chief among them, the odd timing of the letter. It was published three months prior to Christmas.

According to Campbell, people have speculated that Virginia wrote to the newspaper at the start of the school year to set the record straight after friends told her there was no Santa Claus. "But it was more likely

**"It touched a chord with people.
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— W. Joseph Campbell

that she wrote the letter soon after her birthday in July 1897 because, as a child, she always began wondering after her birthday what she would receive for Christmas," says Campbell. Perhaps, he explains, it was her curiosity about her Christmas presents, even though it was summertime, that set in motion the letter to the *Sun*.

Campbell also proposes that the newspaper may have misplaced or ignored the letter for a few weeks. "Virginia said in interviews that she waited for weeks for the reply to be

published," he says. O'Hanlon even forgot she wrote the letter, which begged, "Please tell me the truth. Is there a Santa Claus?"

The response—which was finally printed on page six of the paper, with no byline, on Sept. 21, 1897—read, in part: "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias."

For his research about "Is There A Santa Claus?" which is part of a book he's penning about the exceptional year of 1897, Campbell won the American Journalism Historian Association's Outstanding Faculty Paper Award this fall. It's the second time Campbell has received the accolade; in 1999 he was honored for his research on the readership of the yellow press. That paper later became a chapter in his 2001 book, *Yellow Journalism*.

Despite his research and award, though, Campbell still can't quite put his finger on the magic underpinning "Is There A Santa Claus."

"It's lyrical, it's nicely written, it's reassuring, and it doesn't talk down to the reader," he says. "It's everyone's best answer to the inevitable childhood question," he says, adding that O'Hanlon's grandson believes the editorial reminds people of their childhood and the glow of Christmases past.

"There is something there that's touched a chord through the generations; it's a rare piece of journalism, as not many stories or editorials can do that," continues Campbell. "Most of it is gone a week or a day later, but this one is an exception."



Ann Ferren Teaching Conference garners record attendance

BY MIKE UNGER

Pat Aufderheide considers herself the poster child for the Ann Ferren Teaching Conference.

As the reigning AU Scholar-Teacher of the Year, Aufderheide delivered the keynote address at Friday's 16th annual conference, sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence. But Aufderheide wasn't always the calm, cool, and collected educator who spoke in front of more than 200 faculty members, the conference's largest turnout ever.

"The biggest problem I had in learning how to teach was fear," said Aufderheide, a SOC professor. "I feared that someone would figure out that I was screwing up. Fifteen years ago I was doing a [wretched] job of communicating with my students. So I took the advice of the deans who told me to seek help at the Ann Ferren Teaching Conference. It turns out there are lots of people who will not look upon me as a failed teacher because I'm looking for help. I think I have the skills now to meet my goals of being a good enough teacher, and I don't think there's anything natural about it."

Aufderheide's tale is music to the ears of John Richardson and Lyn Stallings, the director and associate director, respectively, of the CTE.

"The goal of CTE is to facilitate effective teaching and the conference plays an important role in this by giving faculty a chance to share their experiences and share their ideas on different facets of teaching," Richardson said. "It's an opportunity for faculty to gather and learn from each other about ideas for quality teaching."

Aufderheide was introduced by Provost Neil Kerwin, who spoke about

"Fifteen years ago I was doing a [wretched] job of communicating with my students. So I took the advice of the deans who told me to seek help at the Ann Ferren Teaching Conference."

— Pat Aufderheide

teaching and called Aufderheide a "masterful teacher and fine scholar."

"It has been my position that there is no tension between scholarship and teaching," he said. "Our students tell us that the faculty are deeply engaged in the educational process."

After Aufderheide's remarks, faculty filed into one of nine symposiums, where more than 40 faculty took part in panels. Topics for the early session included civility, interactive learning, integrating international students into the classroom, and feminist pedagogy.

Another topic was using D.C. as a laboratory. Professors encouraged their peers to both bring guest speakers into their classrooms, and bring their students out of the classroom and into Washington's leading institutions.

"On any topic you can think of,



Jeff Watts

SOC professor Pat Aufderheide delivered the keynote address at Friday's teaching conference.

there are literally hundreds of interest groups," said Diane Lowenthal, an American politics professor for Washington Semester who led the discussion.

But the District's resources are not limited to governmental entities. The city is a thriving center for technology and biotech companies as well.

"Washington is a phenomenal place," said David Post, an accounting professor at Kogod. "I've taught at Duke and Chapel Hill, and the resources Washington brings to bear are absolutely incredible."

The later session featured discussions on integrating ethics and learning, teaching writing, teaching outside the box, and outcomes of community-based learning at AU.

Among those in attendance were product development representatives

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from Blackboard, the company that makes the software AU uses for its courses, Richardson said.

Aufderheide, who earned three degrees from the University of Minnesota, said she considers herself a learner more than a teacher.

"The core of our task here is to be perpetual learners," she said. "That's what makes us university professors.

We don't just know a lot, we know how to find things out. We are constantly adding to and changing the living organism that is human knowledge. We do it for ourselves and for the future of our fields of knowledge.

"We're not just intellectual FedEx," Aufderheide said. "Our goal is not just to communicate what we know, it's to communicate the vocation that we're

feeling. We want to give them contexts. We want to give them methods. I see students go from people who have absolutely no questions about my work to students who show up early because they want to discuss what they've seen or what they've read. I work hard at teaching, and I see that they work hard at learning."

American
W E E K L Y

JANUARY 25, 2005

Students learn how to forge a career in New York

BY SALLY ACHARYA

More than 80 students gathered in New York City over winter break—but they came for work, not for the nightlife. They came, specifically, with the hope of working in the Big Apple after graduation. The two days of site visits to employers and networking with AU alumni during the Career Center's annual trip to New York was, for many, a first step toward that goal.

For juniors and seniors, it was a way to scout for jobs and internships and meet AU alumni already working for places like Fox News, MTV, Goldman Sachs, and JP Morgan. For freshmen and sophomores, it was a way to learn what the future holds and how best to plan their next few years so that by the time their diplomas are in hand, they'll have strong résumés in hand as well.

The networking didn't stop at nightfall. On the first evening, they had an intimate dinner with AU alumni, followed by a panel discussion. The second evening brought a networking reception for alumni from the New York Area. They also were mentioned on *Cold Pizza*, the morning show on ESPN.

Most of the students on the trip were undergraduates in the School of Communication and Kogod School of Business, both of which cosponsored the trip. During the day they could visit six of the 18 participating employers, which included Ketchum Public Relations, Goldman Sachs, and Fox News, where a panel of three AU alumni spoke to the group about everything from their own career paths to advice on networking to internships and full-time opportunities.

The Career Center requires students to attend an orientation session, get tips on networking, and have their résumés critiqued before the New York trip. "What we

Most of the students on the trip were undergraduates in the School of Communication and Kogod School of Business, both of which cosponsored the trip.

hope, in general, the students get out of the trip is an understanding of the importance of networking in a job search, and some practice in it," says Jennifer Sullivan, acting director of outreach and marketing at the Career Center. "Students particularly need to practice these skills—which are really life skills, because they're going to need to learn to network for every job they ever land."

It's not just popular with the students. "It's gotten very popular with alums, who are eager to host our students," Sullivan says.

And it's a lot of work for the Career Center, which spends around six months planning the annual event. "It's a lot of work," Sullivan says, "but we have a great time."



Stephanie Schneck '05, center, and Abigail Baram '07, standing right, talk with Jeff Dorta of Universal Pictures during a trip to New York.

Courtesy of Career Center

SOC unveils investigative journalism fellowship

BY MATT GETTY

The School of Communication (SOC) and the Center for Public Integrity recently announced a new fellowship that should, as SOC journalism division director Wendell Cochran put it, “supercharge” the career of one emerging investigative reporter next year.

The American University–Center for Public Integrity Fellowship in Public Service Investigative Journalism will offer a journalist with at least four years experience a full scholarship, a \$2,000 monthly stipend, and the chance to earn a master’s degree while working side by side with the center’s award-winning, best-selling team of investigative reporters next year.

“Investigative journalism is a field where the opportunities for professional development are limited,” said Cochran on the reasoning behind the fellowship. “There are some opportunities like this for journalists later in their career, but we wanted to bring someone in a little earlier and give them the opportunity to work with and learn from some of the best in the business.”

In addition to his or her course load, the fellow will spend 15 hours per week during the academic year and 30 hours per week during the summer pursuing an independent or ongoing investigation under the center’s direction. Since its founding in 1989, the Center for Public Integrity, which serves as a watchdog on public policy issues, has produced more than 275 investigative reports and 14 books that have garnered journalism honors from PEN USA and been named to *The New York Times*’ best-seller list.

According to both SOC and the center, the fellowship solidifies an ongoing relationship. Numerous AU students have interned at the nonprofit, and several AU alumni currently work there. Two years ago, in fact, students in one of Wendell Cochran’s graduate seminars performed much of the public records and campaign finance research that helped Charles Lewis, the center’s founding executive director, write the best-selling book, *The Buying of the President 2004*. “We are so pleased to form a partnership with American University that formalizes a relationship that is already in place,” said Lewis on the fellowship’s announcement. “I doubt that *The*

Buying of the President 2004 would have been written on time and with such great success if it had not been for the AU students.”

Beyond solidifying a relationship between the university and the center and helping launch the career of an emerging investigative journalist, however, the fellowship also aims to make a contribution to the field of journalism itself. “The work that the Center for Public Integrity does is really a lot of what the mainstream news organizations should be doing, but aren’t,” explained Cochran. “So this is really an opportunity to expose the next generation of investigative reporters to the best of what journalism should be.”

Accordingly, for both SOC and the center, the fellowship represents an opportunity to reaffirm journalism’s dedication to public service. As SOC dean Larry Kirkman put it, “It’s not only SOC, the center, and the new fellow who will benefit from this program, but the American public who need and deserve the highest standards in investigative reporting.”



Wendell Cochran, SOC journalism division director, has high hopes for the new fellowship.

Post columnist recalls 30 years of stories, adventures

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Drawing on 30 years of experience, *The Washington Post*'s Richard Leiby dished out career advice and anecdotes to a group of 50 students from the School of Communication last Thursday.

The "Reliable Source" columnist captivated the crowd with his adventures as a war correspondent in Iraq and as a gossip columnist—two beats, he said, "which aren't as different as one might think."

"They both come down to reporting, and carefully fumigating rumor into fact" said Leiby, who's been with the *Post* since 1991. "Whether you're covering gossip or something historic [like the Iraq war], your job is to meet people, befriend them in some way, and get their story."

"I've always written about people because I think stories are best told through people."

Leiby, who had a distinguished tenure as an investigative reporter before taking on the "Reliable Source" last year, described working as a correspondent in Iraq, one month after the fall of Baghdad in 2003. He recalled traveling to an officers' club to look into a rumor that the U.S. was reforming the Iraqi Army.

"There were lots of angry men milling about and since I'm the first American they've seen without a gun, they assume I'm with the government, and that I've come to pay them," Leiby said.

Although Leiby's translator told the crowd he was "just a journalist," they insisted he address them.

"So there I am, a middle-aged journalist who never spent a day of my life in uniform, and I got up on a soapbox

and started giving orders," he explained. "I told them I was a reporter and that I could help them by telling their stories."

"And I call that the day I almost led the Iraqi army," Leiby said with a laugh.

Last fall, Leiby's editors at the *Post* asked if he wanted to return to Iraq for another journalistic tour of duty. He declined.

"At that point it was like, cover parties or be beheaded? What's not to love about the buffet line," Leiby said.

During the 90-minute presentation, Leiby also recounted one of his most interesting interviews. He recalled traveling to a New Jersey nudist colony in 1991 to meet the author of *The Graduate*, Charles Webb.

**“Whether you’re
covering gossip or
something historic [like the
Iraq war], your job is to
meet people, befriend
them in some way,
and get their story.”**

— Richard Leiby



"A journalist is just a reporter with one good suit," mused *Washington Post* columnist Richard Leiby during a lecture last week at SOC's Weschler Theatre.

"He was living there in a very small cottage, and only had about 60-cents to his name," said Leiby, "and I wanted to find out why that would happen."

"It happened because he gave every single cent he made from that movie away. He reassigned the copyright to the Audubon Society because he decided he never wanted to be associated with that thing that had happened once in his life. It wasn't that well-written, it wasn't his best work. But every novel he wrote after that said, 'by Charles Webb, author of *The Graduate*.'"

Leiby said, "it was a story about the purity of art and that's why I liked it." He said it illustrated the idea that—whether you're an author or a reporter—"in the end it isn't about you, it's about the work."

Professors and alumni debate staying power of reality television

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Are reality shows a passing fad or is *The Simple Life* here to stay? That was the question posed to five industry experts, who faced off to debate the issue at the panel "Reality TV on Trial," at the Real Screen Summit in Washington, D.C., last week. Squaring off against reality TV were two School of Communication faculty, Chris Haws and Chris Palmer, director of the Center for Environmental Filmmaking.

Their opponents were AU alumnus Michael Cascio '73, senior vice president of production at the National Geographic Channel, Beth Hoppe, president and CEO of Optomen Productions, and Erik Nelson, president of Creative Differences.

The British-born Palmer and Haws, argued with humor and passion, and in Palmer's case from a father's perspective, railing against reality shows like *Survivor* and *The Apprentice* calling them exploitive and mindless. They argued that reality TV promotes poor values and outrageous behavior, undermines the family unit, and encourages an "every-person-for-himself mentality."

Palmer noted that TV, like a drug, is addictive and "sucks up our time."

"I am the father of three daughters. They don't just watch TV, they marinate in it. I told my daughters that whether Trista finds her man is about as important to me as whether it is cloudy tomorrow in Patagonia. My daughters groan and say I just don't understand," he said.

"I don't want significant chunks of

my daughters' lives absorbed by television, however riveting. And I don't want them accepting, consciously or unconsciously, the values *The Swan* promotes."

Haws argued that because reality TV is so inexpensive to produce, it will have a negative impact on writers and others in the entertainment industry.

Chris Palmer and Chris Haws of the School of Communication faced off against SOC alumni Michael Cascio of the National Geographic Channel.

The genre, he said, cheapens the professional skills and training that the 200 producers, distributors, and programmers attending the debate worked so hard to acquire.

"I have hope for audiences," he said. "My worry is for you."

Making the case for reality TV, Cascio called it "the lifeblood of the industry."

"I firmly believe in the ability of the audience to seek out quality and make sure quality rises to the top. And in the case of reality TV, it does," said Cascio, whose team kicked off the debate.

His team established that not all reality programs, including shows like



Jeff Watts

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My Big, Fat, Obnoxious Fiancé and *Extreme Makeover*, are good. "There are no bad genres, just bad programs," said Hoppe, who was the executive producer of the top-rated PBS reality show, *Frontier House*. However, she added that the genre has created more opportunities than ever for people in the television industry.

Cascio suggested Palmer should listen to his daughters, as they're simply more hip to television trends than their father. "They're the future. They get it."

Next up was the audience, when moderator Gary Lico, president and CEO of CABLEready, asked for their vote on whether or not they believed "reality TV is evil." A show of hands

revealed Cascio's team narrowly won the debate.

"Sorry, looks like you lost again," Lico chuckled at Brits Haws and Palmer, who, in his opening remarks, declared his team hoped to make up for the Revolutionary War by winning the debate.

American
W E E K L Y

MARCH 22, 2005

Prominent SOC alum presents gift, unveils opportunity

BY MATT GETTY

Last Wednesday Emmy-nominated director Adam Friedman '76 presented the School of Communication (SOC) with a \$10,000 gift and floated the idea of developing a partnership that could soon have SOC students profiling killer lions for the Outdoor Life Network.

With a multifaceted career that includes directing and producing music videos, commercials, feature films, and acclaimed documentaries on John Travolta and Kevin Costner for A&E's Biography series, Friedman cited his AU education as the basis for his success. "When people ask me who has influenced my career, I tell them, 'No one changed my life more than [SOC dean] Larry Kirkman [then an SOC professor],'" he said to a crowd of more than 30 SOC students who filled the Media Production

Center for the afternoon gift ceremony. "When I was coming up, everyone in Hollywood was so focused on 'What do you do? Are you an editor? Are you a director? Are you a cameraman? Larry taught us to do everything, so I said 'I do everything.' They laughed at me then, but they don't laugh now."

Interested in helping current students find the same kind of success, Friedman also revealed plans to involve SOC students in an upcoming Outdoor Life Fearless documentary on two infamous lions who killed some 130 people in Africa in the 1890s. Thanking Friedman for his gift and the potential opportunity for students, Kirkman said that the alumnus's continued involvement with SOC "reflects an idea of the school as a laboratory that brings alumni, students, and faculty together to develop the next generation of media production."

Advisor finds love 8,000 miles away

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Even an ocean couldn't keep Jabu Salazar and his new wife, Zodwa, apart.

The couple first met in 1998 when Salazar, a graduate of AU's International Education and Training Program, was serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in South Africa. He approached Zodwa, a math and science teacher, at a high school track and field event.

"Culturally, I was supposed to approach her and say, 'I love you,'" said Salazar of Zodwa, whose name means "the one and only" in Zulu. "A relationship here builds to love, a relationship there has to begin with love. I didn't do that, exactly, but I did express an interest."

From there the relationship slowly blossomed.

"She basically denied me for about three and a half years. But that was more cultural, as well, because if I was really interested, it meant I would keep presenting my case. And if she kept consenting to see me, it meant that she was still considering my pleas," said Salazar with a laugh.

In 2003, when Salazar returned to Zodwa's hometown of Vukuzakhe, Volksrust with a dowry, which symbolized the joining of the two families, the couple became engaged. The two then began planning their wedding, which was to be held in the South African town, about 8,000 miles from Washington, D.C.

"It was just big news. It was big news when I showed up because Peace Corps had never been there before. They thought I'd never come back, so it was big news when I



Jeff Watts

“A relationship here builds to love, a relationship there has to begin with love. I didn't do that, exactly, but I did express an interest.”

— Jabu Salazar

returned to marry one of the locals. It really was the event of the year," said Salazar of their Dec. 4 wedding, which attracted 600 guests.

The couple, who mailed fabric swatches, sketches, and photos back and forth for about six months, planned the wedding entirely over the phone.

They wanted their wedding to be "a celebration of culture." Zodwa wore a strapless white gown with the shield and spear of the Zulu nation embroidered along the bottom, while Salazar wore a traditional Navajo outfit and

headdress to reflect his heritage.

"Somehow it all came together very nicely," he said.

And while a visa mix-up nearly kept the newlyweds from ringing in 2005 together—Zodwa arrived in Washington on Dec. 30, two weeks after Salazar, director of graduate advising at SOC, returned from South Africa—the couple is adjusting nicely to married life.

Zodwa is taking two classes at AU and plans to pursue a master's degree in chemical engineering. Salazar said his wife enjoys life in D.C., with one major exception.

"She hates the cold weather," he laughed.

"She grew up during the apartheid struggle in the '80s, so a lot of her language and framework is 'the struggle.' Life is about human rights and dignity and all that, so she said to me one day, 'Jabu, I will not stand for this cold any longer. It's criminal; it's a human rights offense. Someone must be contacted.' I said, 'OK, I'll get right on that!'"

Shooting the breeze with the deans

BY MIKE UNGER

Sophomore Sarah Tubianski is exploring the possibility of attending law school after she earns her undergraduate degree from AU. At the top of her list of potential schools is a familiar institution just down the street from the campus she now calls home: AU's Washington College of Law (WCL).

Hoping to gain any tidbit of knowledge that could enhance her chances of getting into WCL, Tubianski went straight to the head honcho, Dean Claudio Grossman.

Tubianski and other students had the opportunity to meet and chat with Grossman last month during the third installment of "Dialog with the Dean," a forum that brings students and deans together for informal sessions at McDowell Hall.

The program was started by SOC professor Joseph Campbell, who as AU's faculty member in office residence keeps an office in McDowell.

"Rightly or wrongly, deans do have this reputation of being up on a pedestal," Campbell says. "An important objective of my having my faculty office in McDowell Hall is to encourage informal, outside-the-classroom interactions between faculty and students. Arranging for an opportunity for the deans of the respective schools and colleges to meet separately and informally with students is very much in keeping with that objective."

Throughout this semester, impressive crowds have gathered Wednesday evenings in McDowell's Formal Lounge to chat up Grossman, SIS dean Louis Goodman, and SOC dean Larry Kirkman over pretzels, cookies,

and juice. CAS dean Kay Mussell is scheduled to stop by tomorrow night. The effort is coordinated by McDowell resident director Eric Ratner and his student staff, and it's an opportunity all parties have relished.

"It was an extremely positive experience," Goodman says. "I thought the purpose was for students to get to know deans beyond the formal relationship, so I talked about my relationship with my parents and grandparents. They gave me a sense of history which was important in my personal formation, and I encouraged students to do the same. With my grandparents I could have conversations that took me back more than 100 years. I encouraged [students] to do the same. I think it's important for students to have a sense of how they can lead and begin to take ownership of their own lives."

The chance for students to absorb a dean's personal family stories is one that does not present itself every day. They are, as Campbell says, "very busy people."

Students have taken the opportunity to question the deans on topics ranging from their job responsibilities to their specific opinions of teachers.

"I heard about their favorite courses,



"I had a great time meeting the students. I got some challenging questions about our SOC programs and had the chance to present my vision for the school."

—SOC dean Larry Kirkman

where they wanted to study abroad, their favorite professors," Goodman says. "It was very beneficial."

Kirkman toured the dorm prior to speaking informally with students for about 45 minutes, giving a brief presentation, then hanging around afterwards for more conversation.

"I had a great time meeting the students," he says. "We went to almost every floor. I thought the dorms all had a real vitality. There was real energy to the rooms of the students that I met. The multimedia, the decoration, the use of the lounges on each floor. I think that Professor Campbell's role in providing a doorway into the

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dorms for faculty is tremendously important."

Kirkman's visit led to action. The day after fielding a question from a student on how SOC works with the undergraduate student council, Kirkman contacted the organization.

"We immediately made plans to work with them for a SOC week, the week before the Reel Journalism Festival April 3rd to 10th," he says. "Professor Campbell's created a wonderful meeting ground. I was gratified by the interest and engagement that I had with the students. I got some challenging questions about our SOC programs and had the chance to present my vision for the school. With 1,200 students, it's important to have the opportunity to engage them in these informal and intimate settings.

It gets the word out that I'm accessible, that there's a community discussion that involves students, faculty, and alumni about the future of the school, and that the big ambitions we have for developing the school and moving into McKinley are being played out now and that students can participate."

Grossman fielded primarily questions pertaining to WCL admissions and dished out advice to students hoping to attend law school. With just 295 positions available for the 10,000 people who apply to WCL each year, students were eager to come away with any information that could help them get a leg up.

"Develop your analytical skills," Grossman says. "Study, and read, and be a balanced person with the ability

to write. Don't let your skills erode because you are lazy. When you see a problem there is a solution, because if there is no solution, there is no problem."

Grossman also discussed his role as dean within WCL.

"There are different molds," he says. "I miss sometimes being a normal professor with the time to do certain things. [But] the satisfaction of being able to contribute in the shaping of an exciting institution, so far I feel that satisfaction."

It's an institution Tubianski hopes to one day attend, and her dialogue with the dean provided her with the first step toward reaching that goal.

"It was really interesting," she says. "I learned a lot."

American
W E E K L Y

APRIL 5, 2005

Columbia Journalism Review praises SOC professors' report on war coverage

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

A report by School of Communication professors MJ Bear and Jane Hall examining media coverage during the early months of the Iraq War was praised in a March 17, 2005, article in the *Columbia Journalism Review*.

Writer Paul McLeary lauded Bear and Hall's work as "the first comprehensive attempt to understand the realities that shape war coverage." He also noted that the report, which exposes the self-censorship practiced by many media outlets during the first 15 months of the war, is "a good start in examining how news coming out of Iraq is tailored to reflect not what's going on at ground level, but what editors think the public wants, or needs, to know."

Bear and Hall found that many press outlets used their Internet sites to post material that differed from what was printed in the newspapers or broadcast on TV and the radio. They also found that many outlets self-censored

their reporting of graphic images and grisly details that might repel the public.

More than 200 American and international journalists participated in the anonymous, online survey in September and October 2004.



Courtesy of MJ Bear



Jeff Watts

The man who knew

Veteran correspondent teaches students the tools of a sometimes dangerous trade

BY MIKE UNGER

Trekking through jungles, villages, and cities in Central America as a foreign correspondent, Bill Gentile often dodged bullets as he fired his camera, taking shots to document the reality of the region's bloody wars for readers and viewers back home.

Occasionally, he bore witness as bullets ripped through the flesh of his friends and colleagues. It was an intense stretch of his career, filled with highs and lows more sweeping than the average journalist experiences in a lifetime, but Gentile was transfixed. So naturally, he now dedicates his professional life to ensuring that his students have the same opportunity—to uncover truth in a foreign land, even in the face of very real danger—that he did.

Gentile teaches Foreign Correspondence at the School of Communication, a course designed to train young journalists on the perils, pitfalls, and rewards of working overseas.

"Our job is to give people information that can help them make decisions about their lives, about who represents them, and how their country deals with other countries in the world," he says. "You don't want to encourage anybody to go into a country that's not safe. However, more times than not, a student who aspires to be a foreign correspondent is going to have a much greater chance of getting work in a country that is experiencing difficulty. Essentially, conflict is what journalism is all about."

The course is loosely modeled on one Gentile took in the late 1970s while a graduate student at Ohio University. His professor was a corre-

spondent on the front during World War II, and he set Gentile up with an internship in Mexico City.

"It was supposed to be 10 weeks, but I stayed four years," Gentile says.

"I like sharing my experiences with younger people. In a sense, your students are your legacy. I like the idea of continuing the craft. The craft is not in the best of shape these days. We've crossed the line from information to entertainment. There is such an emphasis on profits and ratings, I don't think there's enough foreign news. This is a most important time for information about the world we live in."

— Bill Gentile



A Pittsburgh native who speaks fluent Spanish, Gentile in 1983 moved to Latin America, where he covered war and conflict in that troubled part of the world as a contract photojournalist for *Newsweek* for eight years.

Gentile came to AU two years ago, recently remarried, looking forward to settling down, and anxious to impart his wisdom and knowledge to those eager to follow in his footsteps.

"I like sharing my experiences with younger people," he says. "In a sense, your students are your legacy. I like the idea of continuing the craft. The craft is not in the best of shape these days. We've crossed the line from information to entertainment. There is such an emphasis on profits and ratings, I don't think there's enough foreign news. This is a most important time for information about the world we live in."

This semester, 28 students are enrolled in the course. About a third

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of those are graduate students and about a third are foreigners, Gentile says, who bring differing perspectives on the world into the classroom.

At the beginning of the semester, each student picks a country and begins to build a "trip file." They must learn the history of their country, gain an understanding of its current events, and come up with ideas for stories, photo essays, or documentaries, depending on their area of study.

"It's a road map," Gentile says. "They've got to make contact with the State Department, with the embassies, with foreign correspondents in the country. AU is the perfect place to have a course like this. We have embassies from around the planet. We have the federal government, we have communities from all over the world."

Gentile also has tapped into the AU global community. He sent out a blast e-mail to AU alumni throughout the world and got responses from people in more than 40 countries who now give the students advice on life as an expatriate.

Nick Hoover is a 24-year-old SOC graduate student in Gentile's class who is focusing on Russia.

"It's been practical and really enlightening," Hoover says. "I feel like I'll come out of it with more tools than when I went in. I talked to a foreign correspondent [in Russia] who told me that a lot of times, there's vodka involved during interviews there. One time he and the guy he interviewed had nine shots of vodka

in an hour and a half. He said that made it hard to write on deadline."

Becoming a foreign correspondent is a highly difficult endeavor. In the ultracompetitive world of overseas journalism, there are only about 1,000 Americans working as foreign correspondents, Gentile says. Plus, as news budgets continue to dwindle, foreign bureaus often are the first to close their doors.

"[My students] have to be good writers regardless if they want to be a correspondent, a documentarian, or a photojournalist. They have to have a good solid backing in a number of journalistic skills aside from writing. They have to have an understanding of history and a burning desire to achieve what they want. A desire made of steel."

Sunday, Gentile's students can get an intimate look at their professor's professional life when the documentaries *The World Is Watching* and *The World Stopped Watching* are shown at 7 p.m. in the Greenberg Theatre as part of SOC's Reel Journalism Film Festival. Gentile's intense approach to his vocation is featured in both movies. It's an attitude his students see firsthand in class twice a week.

"He's very focused," Hoover says. "You can see he really has a passion for journalism, and he really wants to push his students."

For the first time, this summer AU will offer Foreign Correspondence II, in which students travel to their target country and execute the plan they crafted during their semester at AU. Gentile believes both courses

are beneficial to students in many disciplines.

"It's about much more than just being a journalist overseas," he says. "It's important to SIS students and SPA students. Anyone with an interest who cares about the world and has some desire to be involved with it. That's basically what journalism is anyway."

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Photos courtesy of Satomi Kato

SOC staffers eye top of bestseller list

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Christi Boyes and Kristi Plahn-Gjersvold share more than a first name. The School of Communication (SOC) employees are both budding, young writers with similar literary aspirations.

"A Pulitzer," jokes Plahn-Gjersvold, project manager in the office of the dean.

"A *New York Times* bestseller," quips Boyes, assistant director of development and alumni relations.

Boyes and Plahn-Gjersvold, who both came to AU in late 2003, are enrolled in the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program. Boyes, who earned her undergraduate and master's degrees in literature, prefers short fiction, while Plahn-Gjersvold is a poet who hopes to publish an anthology and a series of children's books.

Both were drawn to writing as children and had hoped to make a career out of their creative passion. But, said Boyes, an avid journal writer, "life sort of got in the way; I needed to get a real job!"

Plahn-Gjersvold, who has a 3-year-old son, had wanted to return to school a decade ago, but it wasn't until she arrived at AU that she committed to earning her degree.

"With a career and a family, it's very hard to carve out the time to do this. It requires a lot of discipline," Plahn-Gjersvold said. "It's very easy to let 10 years go by. But at this point, I feel a burning impetus to do it."

Plahn-Gjersvold, who prefers to write in cafes, said she keeps a tape recorder next to her bed so she can take down her ideas when inspiration strikes.

"I may not have time at that moment to write," she said, "but I don't want to lose my thoughts."

Boyes, who likes to listen to music while she writes, often in her neighborhood coffee shop, said she enjoys taking classes at AU because she's forced to meet deadlines.

"I'm a very creative person, and I find writing very therapeutic," she said. "But it's hard to make the time for it. With my classes, I know I have to be productive. I have to write."

The two, who share a Thursday night class, Art of Literary Journalism, agree that the feedback they receive from professors and students is extremely helpful in refining their craft.

"It's great to be surrounded by this community of writers," said Plahn-Gjersvold. "Sometimes you have this feeling—you don't know how to end the piece, or you're not sure about the title. It's very helpful to get input from other people."

Boyes said she's had to learn to take constructive criticism.

"You have to be so resilient and develop a thick skin. Thankfully, everyone in class is very thoughtful; they want to see you become a better writer."

"And if you think about it, that's really the whole point."



“It’s great to be surrounded by this community of writers. Sometimes you have this feeling—you don’t know how to end the piece, or you’re not sure about the title. It’s very helpful to get input from other people.”
— Kristi Plahn-Gjersvold

University names 2005 commencement speakers

BY MATT GETTY

Last week, the Office of the President unveiled the names of four distinguished authorities from the fields of global media production, political journalism, and public service who will address AU graduates and their families at the university's 119th commencement ceremonies, May 8, Sunday, and May 22, Sunday.

Kogod and SOC commencement speaker Judith McHale, president and CEO of Discovery Communications, and CAS commencement speaker Tim Russert, senior vice president and Washington Bureau chief at NBC News, will each receive an honorary doctor of humane letters degree on May 8. Senator Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) will receive the degree of honorary doctor of public service when he speaks at the SIS and SPA commencement ceremony on the same day.

On Sunday, May 22, the Washington College of Law's commencement speaker, Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.), will receive an honorary doctor of laws degree.

Kogod School of Business and School of Communication
Sunday, May 8, 9 a.m.

Judith McHale has been the president of Discovery Communications since 1995. In her ten years directing its development and operations, Discovery Communications has grown from a single cable channel to become a wide-ranging international media and entertainment company operating in more than 160 countries. Under McHale's direction Discovery

Communications has acquired the Travel Channel and launched Animal Planet and the Discovery Health Channel. Additionally, she has expanded the company's retail presence by acquiring the Nature Company and establishing a nationwide chain of 120 Discovery Channel stores.

Committed to creating a positive workplace, McHale launched Discovery Communication's work-life initiative in 1999 to help employees integrate work and family life. Since that time, the company has been selected as a great place to work by *Fortune*, *Health*, and *Washingtonian* magazines, and has been named one of *Working Mother* magazine's 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers for five consecutive years.

College of Arts and Sciences
Sunday, May 8, 1 p.m.

As the managing editor and moderator of *Meet the Press*, a political analyst for *NBC Nightly News*, and a senior vice president and Washington bureau chief at NBC News, **Tim Russert** has interviewed every major figure on the American political scene over the last 15 years. Since taking the reigns of *Meet the Press* in 1991, Russert has helped make the Sunday



Judith McHale

morning interview program the most watched show of its kind in America and the most quoted news program in the world.

In addition to increasing *Meet the Press*'s popularity, Russert's interview skills have earned him the Joan S. Barone Award, the Annenberg Center's Walter Cronkite Award, and the Edward R. Murrow Award for Overall Excellence in Television Journalism.

School of Public Affairs and School of International Service
Sunday, May 8, 4:30 p.m.

Daniel Inouye is the third most senior member of the U.S. Senate. A World War II combat veteran and Medal of Honor recipient, he serves as the ranking democrat on the Senate Defense Appropriations Committee, which strives to improve national security and the quality of life for military personnel.

As a member of the Watergate Committee in the 1970s and as chairman of the Iran-Contra Committee in 1987, Inouye twice drew national

(see next page)

attention through his work probing major political controversies. However, the bulk of his career has been dedicated to a less conspicuous but equally effective fight for the interests of Hawaii's people. Through his bipartisan leadership he has helped craft legislation to build jobs throughout the state, bolster health and human services in rural areas, and expand the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park to protect rare and endangered species.

Washington College of Law Sunday, May 22, 1 p.m.

Maryland Senator **Paul Sarbanes** has represented the people of Maryland for more than 30 years, first as a member of the Maryland House of Delegates and as a district congressman for three terms. Since 1977, the former Rhodes Scholar has served in the United States Senate as the ranking member of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee and as a senior member of the Foreign Relations, Budget, and

Joint Economic Committees.

Shortly after the Enron scandal in 2001, Sarbanes organized a series of hearings that generated a bipartisan bill to reform the accounting industry and restore investor confidence. Signed into law in July 2002, the "Sarbanes-Oxley Act," which holds corporate leaders personally responsible for their company's accounting accuracy, has been called "the most far-reaching reform of American business practices since the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt."

American
W E E K L Y

APRIL 19, 2005

Iraqi Fulbright scholar soaks up American media, culture

For Iraqi Fulbright scholar Rawand Darwesh, the 14 months he's spent in the United States have been "a dream come true."

"I lived my life under Saddam, only dreaming of coming to the U.S. to study," said Darwesh, who's pursuing a master's degree in print journalism at the School of Communication (SOC). "When my plane landed at JFK, it was a historic moment for me."

Darwesh, 30, is one of 25 Iraqi Fulbright scholarship recipients studying at universities across the country after the program's 15-year suspension because of the Iran-Iraq war. Sponsored by the U.S. government in partnership with 150 other nations, the Fulbright program was reinstated in Iraq in 2003, focusing on students interested in journalism, law, economics, public health, education, and the environment.

Darwesh began his academic journey at Indiana University, where he completed English courses, before arriving at AU in August 2004. At SOC, Darwesh, a former reporter with Kurdistan Satellite TV, is learning how to craft news stories in English—his third language—and is exploring online resources. He's working on a project about the war on drugs in Afghanistan and is also researching the drop in enrollment among Middle Eastern students at American universities.

"I am enjoying learning how the educational system in the U.S. works," he said. "That has been one of the most exciting things." Darwesh also plans to learn as much as

possible about the American media and political system, and recent advancements in science and technology before he returns to his native Kurdistan in August. "When I go back, I look forward to speaking about all that I've seen," he said.

Darwesh said he enjoys engaging his classmates in political debates and has even penned several editorials in the *Eagle*, AU's student newspaper.

"I believe that toppling Saddam Hussein was the right decision because the Iraqi people were living in a big prison," said Darwesh, who voted in January's historic Iraqi elections.

"Many of my classmates think I'm pro-Bush," he continued with a laugh. "I respect President Bush; I met with him when I first arrived. But I am more pro-freedom, pro-democracy."

—AF



Jeff Watts

Rawand Darwesh is pursuing his master's degree in print journalism.

The next chapter

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

In classrooms across campus, they've left their mark. For more than 30 years each, five of AU's professors have helped shape generations of young minds by encouraging their curiosity, sharpening their intellect, and applauding their aspirations. And while such work is never finished, this year's retiring faculty are ready to satisfy their own curiosity about the next stage in their lives.

They agree, leaving isn't easy. But, says, Bernard Ross, SPA, public administration, "it's a little easier to leave knowing you've made a difference."

This year's retiring faculty include Valerie French, CAS, history, and Burton Slotnick, CAS, psychology, who left AU in 2004 in order to teach at the University of South Florida. According to Anthony Riley, chair of the psychology department, Slotnick "exemplified scholarship" and established himself as an authority in the field. "Both nationally and internationally, [he is] viewed as one of the best," says Riley.

The three other professors who are retiring this spring shared their future plans with *American Weekly*.

Gary Bulmash Kogod, Accounting

During his 30 years at AU, Gary Bulmash says he's made a lot of friends. "My colleagues, my students, they've all been great," he says. "I will definitely miss the people I've met here." Bulmash taught financial accounting, auditing, and cost and income tax. In addition to serving as

faculty advisor for Beta Gamma Sigma, the business management society, he's also been Kogod's faculty marshal for graduation for the last 25 years.

Fondest Memory: During freshman orientation week in June 1980, Bulmash, then chair of the accounting department, sat next to a young woman in the lunchroom. "I asked her if she was a freshman. She said no, that her brother was. We had a nice chat, then I left," says Bulmash. In September, the woman began working in an administrative position at Kogod, so that she could pursue her master's degree. The two began dating and married the next summer. Two years later, Bulmash was back at orientation. He sat down next to another young woman in the lunchroom. "I asked her if she was a freshman. She said, no that her brother was. And I said, 'You know, the last time I was in this situation, I married the girl!'"

Best Part of the Job: Bulmash says he enjoyed preparing students for the "real-life challenges" they would face in the business world. "Sometimes, you say something in class which you



Glenn Harnden

think is innocuous, and years later, some student tells you it made a great impression on them."

Future Plans: "I'm not hanging up the gloves yet," says Bulmash, who will be teaching accounting at the University of Maryland. "I got my degrees at Maryland, so, in a sense, I'm going back home," he says. "It's funny, I'm leaving a place where I know a lot of students to be the new kid on the block!"

Lasting Impact: "One would be hard pressed to find another faculty member in the Kogod School of Business who has taught as many courses as Gary Bulmash on such diverse subjects at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and has done so with such consistent high quality," says acting Kogod Dean William DeLone.

Glenn Harnden SOC

Harnden, associate dean and visual media professor, has called AU home for 36 years. An independent producer, director, and documentary and educational film writer, Harnden says

(see next page)

he's "been fortunate enough to work with people who are not just colleagues, but friends."

Fondest Memory: Harnden says his "most precious memories" are of students' film projects. "We'd have graduate students doing thesis work, and they would screen a project that was just completely original, powerful, funny, moving, and beautifully executed. They had learned to tell a story through film. Those are the memories I hold closest."

Best Part of the Job: "I've been fortunate to work with two really class-act deans, Sandy Unger and Larry Kirkman," says Harnden. "From them, I learned that administration is a delicate balance of a lot of things. You have to have high standards and disci-

“ We’d have graduate students doing thesis work, and they would screen a project that was just completely original, powerful, funny, moving, and beautifully executed. They had learned to tell a story through film. Those are the memories I hold closest. ”

— Glenn Harnden

pline, but you also have to have understanding and respect." Harnden says he's also learned from his students, who have taught him, "how to appreciate a lot of different kinds of people."

Future Plans: "I've not updated my resume. I'm not looking for another job," says Harnden. Instead, Harnden is following the example of his 3-year-old grandson. "He's teaching me to go out and play." And while he looks forward to days spent gardening, barbecuing, traveling, riding bikes, and playing guitar, Harnden says he's most excited to spend quality time with his wife.

Lasting Impact: For the last 20 years, Harnden has been "the glue holding the School of Communication together," according to Dean Larry Kirkman. "Today we take it for granted that SOC faculty tap into all the resources that Washington offers, but Glenn raised those expectations. He set the standard for experimental and collaborative learning. He showed that critical thinking and analytical skills can be developed in real-world media productions where students learn by doing."

Bernard Ross

SPA, Public Administration

With very few exceptions, Bernie Ross says he's gotten up every morning for the last 38 years and wanted to come to work. "Not many people can say that," he says with a laugh. Ross, whose interests include urban management, city politics, and regional affairs, served as chair of the depart-

ment of public administration for 14 years.

Fondest Memory: In the early '90s, the public administration program was named among the top 10 in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*. "That was something we had been working toward for a good 15 years," says Ross. "After that, the faculty got a different level of respect, both on campus and within their organizations."

Best Part of the Job: Ross says he enjoyed building relationships with students. "As a faculty, we needed to understand that the students were our most important asset. And by making ourselves readily available to them, we could, in fact, put ourselves ahead of other schools."

Future Plans: For two years, Ross has hosted a discussion group for seniors at a community center in Rockville, Md. He says he looks forward to working more with the group of about 30 seniors, who gather to discuss current events. "I watched my mother go into her 90s still yelling at the TV newscasters," Ross says with a laugh. "These people are the same way. They love to share their opinions." Ross also hosts a similar discussion group for young people.

Lasting Impact: According to SPA Dean William LeoGrande, Ross's leadership has left an extraordinary mark on the school. "Bernie Ross was one of a small cohort of key faculty that joined the public administration program in the 1960s and 1970s, and transformed it into one of the leading programs in the nation."

Faculty celebrated during annual awards ceremony

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Twenty-one faculty members were honored for their years of service and commitment to AU during the annual awards dinner, Sunday, April 17, at the Washington College of Law.

According to Provost Neil Kerwin, the award winners, retirees, and 25-year cohort "exemplify the tradition of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service" at AU.

Faculty recognized were:

Scholar-Teacher of the Year

Richard McCann, CAS, Literature

University Faculty Award Recipients

Outstanding Teaching

Robert Blecker, CAS, Economics

Outstanding Teaching in the General Education Program

Catherine Warrick, SPA, Government

Innovative Use of Technology in Teaching

Russell Williams, SOC

Outstanding Scholarship, Research and Other Professional Contributions

James Mittelman, SIS

Outstanding Teaching in an Adjunct Appointment

Nancy Jo Snider, CAS, Performing Arts and **Timothy Titus**, SPA, Government

Outstanding Service to the University Community

W. Joseph Campbell, SOC

University Faculty-Administrator Award for Outstanding Service to the University Community

Catherine Schaeff, CAS, Biology

Outstanding Contributions to Academic Development

Andrew Popper, WCL

Morton Bender Prize

Lucinda Joy Peach, CAS
Philosophy and Religion

Retiring Faculty

Gary Bulmash, Kogod, Accounting

Valerie French, CAS, History

Glenn Harnden, SOC

Bernard Ross, SPA, Public Administration

Burton Slotnick, CAS, Psychology

25 Years of Service Honorees

Albert Cheh, CAS, Chemistry

John Doolittle, SOC

Dolores Koenig, CAS, Anthropology

Bradley Schiller, SPA, Public Administration

Angela Wu, CAS, Computer Science, Audio Technology, and Physics



Hilary Schwab

SOC's W. Joseph Campbell, who won the award for Outstanding Service to the University Community, attended the event with wife, Ann-Marie Regan, an AU alumna.

Visions Festival honors top SOC students

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Though the American Visions Festival is in its 26th year, Larry Kirkman, dean of the School of Communication (SOC), which hosts the student-awards ceremony, called the event new and reenergized.

"That energy comes from all of us, from the mix of SOC students, faculty, and alumni working together. Our vision of a communication laboratory that cuts across the three disciplines is realized in this festival," Kirkman said during the May 5 event.

"It's about honoring the knowledge and the know-how represented in the best student work, setting high expectations for artistic excellence and professional standards, and helping students prepare the strongest portfolios as they go out into the workplace."

Nearly five dozen students were honored during the ceremony, which was expanded this year to include all three divisions of SOC: journalism, public communication, and film and media arts.

A panel of 32 judges, comprising SOC faculty, alumni, and local professionals, sifted through more than 300 entries to determine the winners. The students, whose work included everything from photo essays and motion graphics to in-depth feature stories and screenplays, received cash awards, scholarships, and personal consultations with such successful

SOC alumni as Barry Josephson, who produced *Men in Black*.

The winning films were also screened on Mhz Networks, Washington's independent public television station, in early May.

Winners included Alexandra Mayer-Hohdahl, whose "Billionaires for Bush" took second place in the journalism feature category, and whose piece on immigration reform won first place in the in-depth feature competition. Photography student Alex Garcia picked up eight awards,

including a first place nod for her photo of a school bus accident in Alexandria, Va.

The ceremony was emceed by distinguished film producer in residence Chris Palmer, who offered a comical look at his work as an award-winning IMAX producer and wildlife filmmaker.

"When the camera is switched on, it makes a noise like a chainsaw, causing many wildlife species to flee. Often all that we can capture on film is the distant, fleeing rear-ends of frightened creatures."

Michael Cascio '73, senior vice president of production at the National Geographic Channel, also had the audience of several hundred in stitches during his keynote speech.

"They told me the Visions Festival was SOC's version of the Oscars. So, don't forget to thank your parents, teacher, and, depending on your beliefs, God or your agent."

SOC photography professor Leena Jayaswal, right, presented awards to her students, Leah Jamele, left, and Alex Garcia. Garcia won eight awards for her photographs, including a second-place tie with herself in the Photojournalism Features category.



Satomi Kato

Center for Social Media snags \$1 million grant

BY MIKE UNGER

What will the public media be like as communication continues to expand into the Internet-age? In the many forms we are seeing emerge, including blogging, what will public media behavior mean in those environments?

These are some of the questions American University's Center for Social Media, and its director, School of Communication professor Pat Aufderheide, have been yearning to explore. Now, thanks to a \$1 million grant from the Ford Foundation, the center is poised to further its role as a national leader in exploring issues surrounding public media.

The grant will fund the September launch of the center's Public Media ThinkTank, which will conduct and publish research on new directions in public media, convene meetings of leaders throughout the field, host public events and screenings to showcase the best in public media, and encourage and create demonstration experiments in new public media expression.

"It's a terrific honor and a terrific responsibility," Aufderheide said. "It's a fantastic gift. It means the questions we've been concerned about are questions that are important in the wider world as well. It's an endorsement of the issues that are important."

The center is one of 13 organizations to receive a grant from the Ford Foundation's new initiative, "Global Perspectives in a Digital Age: Transforming Public Service Media." The program will distribute \$50 million over five years to a wide range of public media organizations, ranging from PBS and NPR to California New Media, which works with ethnic and youth media.

"The Center for Social Media provides important research on the state of public media in the United States,"

said Orlando Bagwell, a program manager in the media, arts, and culture unit of the Ford Foundation. "We hope that Ford's grant will allow the center to share this research more widely and to host convenings of public media organizations that will enable them to learn from each other and to participate in shaping the future of the sector."

The Public Media ThinkTank will hire a student fellow and employ several students on a part-time basis, Aufderheide said. Its activities will be integrated into some SOC classrooms, and it will bring in guest speakers and lecturers.

"We've had a remarkable growth since 2001, and we've found that a wide variety of funders have found that the questions we're asking are interesting," Aufderheide said. "This is the largest grant we've received by far, and they intend to renew the grant over time. We're really excited for the whole AU community because something like this doesn't happen because of one person or one center, it happened because the AU community really got behind the center."



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