Research is an integral part of faculty and student activities at Boston University. Researchers at COM use the most advanced theory and methods to examine communication phenomena. Addressing both theoretical and applied problems through a range of quantitative and qualitative perspectives, faculty and students engage in the most cutting-edge developments in communication research that provide an extraordinarily fertile ground for innovation and science.

The CRC was established in 1959 and reorganized in 1994. The CRC pioneered the use of television as a research tool, conducting systematic analyses on the effects of television on children and measuring political opinions and voting intentions. This early beginning led the CRC to develop a specialty in survey research methodology.

Today, the CRC has 40 research fellows who specialize in topics including: advertising, critical cultural studies, health communication, human-computer interaction, international communication, journalism studies, media entertainment, political communication, and public relations.

The CRC has recently updated a number of research tools such as the iMotions biometric research platform, which allows faculty and students to examine physiological responses to media (e.g., websites, ads, television programs, and video games). Other recent additions include a virtual reality system which aids faculty and students to investigate issues related to psychological presence, empathy, and immersive storytelling.

In 2009, the CRC established the Communication Research Colloquium Series consisting of monthly research presentations that highlight current and original research of faculty in COM. This forum provides an intellectual exchange of ideas and perspectives, features scholarship in several methodological traditions, and fosters discussions among faculty and students about a variety of research topics in the field of communication.

In 2011, the Dr. Melvin L. DeFleur Distinguished Lecture Series was established. Each year two distinguished scholars from outside of the university are invited to share their outstanding scholarship, expertise, and experience with the BU community. In recognition of the pioneering and inspirational contributions of Dr. Melvin L. DeFleur to the field of mass communication research and his service as a venerable and inexhaustible member of the CRC, the faculty members named this series in his honor.
# Table of Contents

- About the CRC ................................................................. 2
- Letter from the Co-Directors ........................................ 4
- New CRC Fellows .......................................................... 5
- Technology Updates ...................................................... 6
- Fall 2019 CRC Colloquia ............................................... 7
- Fall 2019 Distinguished Lecture .................................... 8
- Spring 2020 Distinguished Lecturer Announcement ........ 8
- Honors & Awards .......................................................... 9
- Media Appearances ...................................................... 10
- Publications ................................................................. 11
- Conference Presentations ............................................ 13
- Invited Talks ............................................................... 15
- CRC Staff ................................................................. 16
We had a very busy beginning to the 2019-2020 academic year in the CRC! First, we welcomed five new CRC research fellows: Dr. Margaret McLaughlin (Distinguished Visiting Research Scholar), Dr. Kelsey Prena (Assistant Professor, Division of Emerging Media Studies), Dr. Rui Wang (Visiting Assistant Professor, Division of Emerging Media Studies), Sejin Paik (doctoral student, Division of Emerging Media Studies), and Briana Trifiro (doctoral student, Division of Emerging Media Studies).

This past semester, Susie Blair, the CRC Lab & Research Manager, launched a successful series of iMotions training workshops. These workshops, open to the entire COM community, provided attendees with a hands-on introduction to the eye-tracking, galvanic skin response (GSR), and facial expression analysis (FEA) modules of the iMotions platform. Further workshops, including new sessions covering electroencephalography (EEG) tools and data analysis and mobile eye tracking, are expected for this coming Spring.

Relatedly, the CRC upgraded its iMotions data collection laptops so as to assist in the reliable display of high quality media stimuli and collection of biometric data. Other technology updates this semester emphasized mobility, with the CRC adding a pair of Tobi Pro mobile eye-tracking glasses and the wireless Oculus Quest virtual reality system (which does not require tethering to a high-end processor).

The CRC also had a productive semester of onsite and online data collection via the COM SONA research pool. In total, 23 studies were conducted, recruiting 555 participants from 34 different COM courses to participate in 2309 study sessions.

We would also like to thank our graduate student staff for their commitment to the Center this semester. Brittany Brown (M.A. student in Mass Communications) helped with all manner of onsite duties required to keep facilities and technology ready for research purposes. Our Event Specialist, Anran Xie (M.S. student in Journalism) helped coordinate CRC events and produce and archive video and audio recordings of these research talks. Our Digital Marketing Specialist, Maryam Alhabroosh (M.S. student in Advertising) assisted in the promotion of CRC research events as well as fellows’ publications and other accomplishments via our social media channels. We’re tremendously appreciative of all of their efforts this Fall.

Additionally, we would like to warmly congratulate Dr. Melvin L. DeFleur, a former Professor of Communication at Boston University, for being posthumously honored with the Distinguished Service to Research Award at this year’s AEJMC conference in Toronto, Canada. Dr. DeFleur made groundbreaking contributions to mass communication research, and his legacy remains at the heart of our research center through the CRC Distinguished Lecture Series.

With the semester coming to an end, we wish everyone a wonderful, relaxing holiday season, in anticipation of another productive semester of research this Spring!
Dr. Rui Wang is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Emerging Media Studies. He uses computational methods, such as big data and social network analysis, to test social science. His research interests include international communication, strategic communication, and political communication. He received his Ph.D. degree in Mass Communication from Louisiana State University. He has been a journalist and worked for China National Radio in Beijing, China.

Dr. Margaret L. McLaughlin is Professor of Communication at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California and has joined COM as a Distinguished Visiting Research Scholar. She is a former president of the International Communication Association, founding co-editor of Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, and a former editor of Communication Yearbook and Communication Monographs. She currently serves on the editorial boards of Discourse and Communication, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Discourse Studies, and Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly.

Sejin Paik is a doctoral student in the Division of Emerging Media Studies. She received her Master’s in Computational & Multimedia Journalism at Stanford University and Bachelor’s in International Studies at Emory University. She has worked at Google, where she helped launch an AI-driven news platform for a worldwide audience. She has been a local news reporter in the Bay Area and Atlanta, Georgia. She also worked in marketing at KBS, a national broadcast company in Seoul, South Korea. Sejin’s research lies at the intersection of media, technology and democracy. She is interested in understanding the political and cultural effects of media dissemination through different communication channels and exploring the ethical questions that arise from new media technologies.

Dr. Kelsey Prena joins COM with a Ph.D. in Communication Science with a minor in Neuroscience from Indiana University. She is interested in the neurological changes that occur during video gaming, and how these changes influence learning and memory. The goal of her research is to use these changes to facilitate memory formation in children with learning impairments. Mechanisms that she is currently working to understand relate to neurological deficits in people with Down syndrome. While at Michigan State University, she received her B.A. (2012) and M.A. (2014) in Communication. Her M.A. thesis focused on identifying video game trends in children with Down syndrome.

Briana Trifiro is a PhD student in the Division of Emerging Media Studies. She received both her Bachelor’s degree and Master’s degree in Communication from Bryant University. Prior to her time at BU, Briana worked extensively in the media industry as an Executive Producer and Interim Executive Director at her local community television station. Her research interests focus on the individual and societal impacts of social media use. She is primarily interested in the ways in which social media platforms impact the ways in which individuals perceive themselves, as well as the world around them. Her most recent research analyzes the impact of social media usage patterns on individuals’ self-esteem and emotional well-being.

Dr. Rui Wang
UPGRADED IMOTIONS DATA COLLECTION LAPTOPS

In order to accommodate studies that involve extensive web browsing and high-res video stimuli, the CRC has upgraded two of our computers designated for iMotions data analysis. We now have two Lenovo P52 ThinkPad laptops, which are equipped with a 17.3” display, NVIDIA Quadro graphics, and 6 TB of storage and 128 GB of memory. These upgrades will ensure that iMotions stimuli load clearly, quickly, and without interruption during data collection.

OCULUS QUEST

Earlier this year, the CRC acquired an Oculus Quest to facilitate our continued Virtual Reality research. This all-in-one VR system allows for mobile, wire-free use via the Oculus mobile app. Insight tracking reflects the user movements within the VR environment without the need for external tracking devices, and a beyond-room scaling system allows for seamless use in rooms of any size.

MOBILE EYE TRACKING GLASSES

With generous assistance from the College of Communication, the CRC now has one pair of Tobii Pro Glasses 2, a wearable, mobile eye tracking device compatible with the iMotions eye tracking glasses module. This device is ideal for gathering information about visual attention in real-world, dynamic environments.
Dr. Margaret McLaughlin’s talk focused on family caregiver use of communication technologies (such as motion-detecting webcams and GPS-enabled smartwatches) to better care for their loved ones with disorders including Alzheimer’s disease, Lewy body dementia, and frontotemporal dementia.

Dr. Kelsey Prena discussed the ways in which video gaming can cause short- and long-term improvements to certain forms of memory, including her own findings that indicate the behavioral and neurological evidence for these changes.

Based on her years of field research with Syrian refugees, NGOs, and volunteers, Dr. Dana Janbek discussed the ways in which information and communication technologies, especially cellphones, are used during refugees’ migration journeys and while navigating displacement to overcome “information precarity.”

Dr. James Katz shared findings from a collaborative research project on public perceptions of AI, including the results of a U.S. attitude survey conducted in 2019. This project’s aim, he said, is to help build better policy by analyzing how the public perceives AI.

Dr. Margaret McLaughlin’s talk focused on family caregiver use of communication technologies (such as motion-detecting webcams and GPS-enabled smartwatches) to better care for their loved ones with disorders including Alzheimer’s disease, Lewy body dementia, and frontotemporal dementia.

Based on her years of field research with Syrian refugees, NGOs, and volunteers, Dr. Dana Janbek discussed the ways in which information and communication technologies, especially cellphones, are used during refugees’ migration journeys and while navigating displacement to overcome “information precarity.”

Dr. Kelsey Prena discussed the ways in which video gaming can cause short- and long-term improvements to certain forms of memory, including her own findings that indicate the behavioral and neurological evidence for these changes.

Dr. James Katz shared findings from a collaborative research project on public perceptions of AI, including the results of a U.S. attitude survey conducted in 2019. This project’s aim, he said, is to help build better policy by analyzing how the public perceives AI.
On Wednesday, October 23 the CRC was fortunate to host Dr. Pippa Norris as our Fall 2019 Distinguished Lecturer. A comparative political scientist, Dr. Norris visited BU from Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government to share her research on institutional trust.

The College of Communication annually invites two distinguished scholars from outside to share their outstanding scholarship, expertise, and experience with the BU community. In recognition of the pioneering and inspirational contributions of Dr. Melvin L. DeFleur to the field of mass communication research and his service as a venerable and inexhaustible member of COM’s Communication Research Center, the faculty members of the CRC have named this series in his honor.

Dr. Norris's extensive political communication research explores predictors of institutional trust (or distrust) among citizens of countries across the world. More information about her work can be found at trustgov.net.

---

### Announcing our Spring 2020 Distinguished Lecture

**Thursday, March 19**
**3:30pm — 4:30pm**
**BU Morse Auditorium**

We are excited to welcome Dr. Deen Freelon (Associate Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s School of Media and Journalism) to campus as our Spring 2020 Distinguished Lecturer.

Considered an expert on computational communication science, Deen Freelon’s research interests lie in the changing relationships between technology and politics, and encompass the study of social media and other digital communications with political applications. In his most recent work, he has been looking at social media-enabled social movements, especially Black Lives Matter and Russian social media interference in the 2016 US presidential elections. He has extensive experience in computational methods for social science research, including text preprocessing, computational description, network analysis, machine learning, and open-source research software development.
Dr. Melvin DeFleur, a former professor of communication at Boston University and renowned communications scholar, was posthumously awarded the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)’s Eleanor Blum Distinguished Service to Research Award.

Dr. DeFleur conducted pioneering academic research in the communication field, authoring over a dozen books—including the widely-cited textbook “Theories of Mass Communication,” which has been translated in 10 languages. At Boston University, he served as both a faculty member and chair of COM’s Mass Communication, Advertising, and Public Relations department. In 2011, the Communication Research Center created the Dr. Melvin DeFleur Distinguished Lecture Series, a tribute to his groundbreaking contributions to mass communication research and his valued membership at the CRC.

LSU Manship School of Communication Professor Peggy DeFleur accepted the award on behalf of her late husband at the AEJMC conference in August.

In February, Dr. Arunima Krishna was awarded $4,000 by Boston University’s Human Resources Policy Institute to fund data collection for her research titled, “Understanding Employees’ Perceptual and Behavioral Reactions to Organizational Misconduct.”

A paper co-authored by Dr. Krishna, Dr. Donald Wright, and Dr. Ray Kotcher, Curriculum rebuilding in public relations: A multi managerial-level analysis of PR practitioners’ expectations of PR graduates, was awarded Third Place, Top Teaching Papers in the Public Relations Division at this year’s AEJMC conference.

Dr. Deborah Jaramillo’s book The Television Code: Regulating the Screen to Safeguard the Industry was a finalist for the Robert Wall Memorial Award by the Theatre Library Association (September 2019).
Dr. Michelle Amazeen was quoted in The New Scientist (Facebook’s fact-checking process is too opaque to know if it’s working, July 2019), on Yahoo News (Social networks face quandary on politics in misinformation fight, October 2019; Twitter to ban political ads worldwide on its platform, October 2019), and on Bloomberg Opinion (Fact-Checkers Need to Stick to the Facts, November 2019).

Dr. Dana Janbek was quoted in The Republican-American (Refugees finding a home in Waterbury, September 2019) and commented on the Alexei Saab terrorism case on Boston25 News.

Dr. Lei Guo and Dr. Chris Wells were featured in part five of BU Today’s “Big Data, Big Impact” series (What you Read and Watch is Changing Media Forever, July 2019).

Dr. Tammy Vigil was featured on Inside Edition (Melania Trump’s Coat on 9/11 Looked Like Plane Flying Into Towers, Critics Say, September 2019) and an excerpt from her book Melania and Michelle: First Ladies in a New Era was published in The Daily Beast (Michelle and Melania’s Shared Hell: The Role of First Lady, September 2019).
**Journalism & Truth in an Age of Social Media**

Dr. James E. Katz and Kate Mays (Editors)
August 2019

Truth qualities of journalism are under intense scrutiny in today’s world. Journalistic scandals have eroded public confidence in mainstream media while pioneering news media compete to satisfy the public’s appetite for news. Still worse is the specter of “fake news” that looms over media and political systems that underpin everything from social stability to global governance.

This volume aims to illuminate the contentious media landscape to help journalism students, scholars, and professionals understand contemporary conditions and arm them to deal with a spectrum of new developments ranging from technology and politics to best practices.

Fake news is among the greatest of these concerns, and can encompass everything from sarcastic or ironic humor to bot-generated, made-up stories. It can also include the pernicious transmission of selected, biased facts, the use of incomplete or misleadingly selective framing of stories, and photographs that editorially convey certain characteristics. This edited volume contextualizes the current “fake news problem.” Yet it also offers a larger perspective on what seems to be uniquely modern, computer-driven problems. We must remember that we have lived with the problem of people having to identify, characterize, and communicate the truth about the world around them for millennia.

**Divine Programming: Negotiating Christianity in American Dramatic Television Production 1996-2016**

Dr. Charlotte E. Howell (Author)
April 2020 (Forthcoming)

From the mid-90s to the present, television drama with religious content has come to reflect the growing cultural divide between white middle-America and concentrated urban elites. As author Charlotte E. Howell argues in this book, by 2016, television narratives of white Christianity had become entirely disconnected from the religion they were meant to represent. Programming labeled “family-friendly” became a euphemism for white, middlebrow America, and developing audience niches became increasingly significant to serial dramatic television.

Utilizing original case studies and interviews, Divine Programming investigates the development, writing, producing, marketing, and positioning of key series including 7th Heaven, Friday Night Lights, Rectify, Supernatural, Jane the Virgin, Daredevil, and Preacher.
JOURNAL ARTICLES


OTHER


**AEJMC 2019**


**NCA 2019**

**Krishna, A.** (2019, November). Understanding the differences between climate change deniers and believers’ knowledge, media use, and trust in related institutions. Presented at the 105th Annual Convention of the National Communication Association, Baltimore, Maryland.


**OTHER**

**Liu, S., Guo, L., Mays, K., Betke, M., & Wijaya, D.** (2019, November). Detecting frames in news headlines and its application to analyzing news framing trends surrounding U.S. gun violence. Presented at the Annual Conference on Computational Natural Language Learning, Hong Kong.

**Oppliger, P.** (2019, June). The Dark Side of Stand-Up: Case Studies of Tig Notaro and Maria. Presented at the Conference of the International Society for Humor Studies, University of Texas, Austin.
Invited Talks

Dr. James Katz traveled to Qatar in September to present a lecture about his research at Northwestern University’s Doha campus.

In addition to a televised interview, he gave lectures to students, met with faculty, and addressed the "Past, present and future of the mobile revolution" as part of the NU-Q speakers series.

In November, Li Zhang presented his research on the roles of social bots and computational political communication in media coverage of the 2016 presidential election at the Hariri Institute for Computing and Computation Science & Engineering. Zhang and the rest of the Institute’s Graduate Student Fellows shared their research in a “lightning talk” format.

Andersen, B. (2019, August). Find a method: Choosing the right user experience research approach. Invited talk presented at Ancenstry.com


CRC Staff

SUSIE BLAIR
Lab & Research Manager

MARYAM ALHALBROOSH
Digital Marketing Specialist

BRITTANY BROWN
Graduate Staff

ANRAN XIE
Events Specialist

CONTACT US

Staff Hours:
Monday — Friday
9am — 5pm

Email:
crc_admin-l@bu.edu

Phone:
617-358-1300

GRADUATE STAFF