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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 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 specializing in 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 several research tools such as the iMotions biometric research platform, which allows faculty and students to examine physiological responses to games. Other recent additions include a virtual reality system that aids faculty and students in investigating 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 and features several methodological traditions. It fosters discussions among faculty and students about a variety of research topics in communication.

In 2011, the Dr. Melvin L. DeFleur Distinguished Lecture Series was established. Each year two distinguished scholars from outside 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.
As the new CRC Director, I am humbled and honored to be stepping into the role formerly held by co-Directors Dr. Mina Tsay-Vogel and Dr. James Cummings and prior to them, Dr. Michael Elasmor. Today, with people more dependent upon media than ever before, the importance of studying mediated communication has intensified. The world is fighting a viral pandemic, political extremism and polarization are on the rise, and new technologies and platforms are emerging at an unprecedented rate. This is all happening against what the World Health Organization has declared an infodemic – “deliberate attempts to disseminate wrong information to undermine the public health response and advance alternative agendas of groups or individuals.” The United States’ Surgeon General has issued a similar advisory, warning against misinformation.

After 18 months of a pandemic-driven hiatus, the CRC is rebooting and ready to provide our fellows with access to the latest biometric technology, social media listening tools, statistical software, and state-of-the-art facilities. Lindsy Goldberg joins us as our new Lab and Research Manager, helping to coordinate our lecture events, administer workshops, and provide other activities for our fellows – some of which may also be of interest to journalists, policy makers, and other visitors – as well as assist with facility and equipment rental inquiries.

First established in 1959 with Dr. Edward J. Robinson at the helm, early CRC research focused on the effects of television and comics. These were common areas of study in the growing field of mass communication research as there was great concern in the U.S. with what these new media (of the day) were doing to our youth and how these media were gratifying the needs of audiences. CRC fellows still produce research on television – in the effects tradition as well as from political economic perspectives and alternate paradigms – and on comics (the stand-up kind). But we also address emerging media technologies while identifying opportunities to improve civic engagement, media literacy, and prosocial uses of and representations in media. And given the current state of affairs, many of our fellows are also researching varying aspects of truth and misinformation.

As a new academic year begins, I welcome back our fellows as they continue to embark upon advancing theory and methods in addressing society’s communication challenges. For visitors, I invite you to look to the work of our CRC fellows for informative insights on battling misinformation and other efforts to conduct communication research for social good.
WHATS NEW AT THE CRC

MPLUS
Statistical Analysis Software

SYNTHEISIO
AI-Enabled Consumer Intelligence/Social Media Listening Software

The CRC has a number of tools and media devices available to faculty and student researchers.
NEW CRC FELLOWS

DR. CHRIS CHAO SU
Assistant Professor, Emerging Media Studies

Chris Chao Su joins BU from the Peoples’ Internet Project in the Department of Communication at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, where he was a postdoctoral researcher. His research focuses on media audiences online, social media analytics, and mobile media use and consumption. Broadly speaking, his research explores how media audiences take shape in an increasingly fragmented digital media environment using computational methods. His work draws upon social network analysis, media sociology and typically involves the analysis of data from audience measurement services. His work has been published in the Journal of Communication, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, New Media & Society, Computers in Human Behavior, and International Journal of Communication.

DR. YI GRACE JI
Assistant Professor in the Department of Mass Communication, Advertising, and Public Relations

Yi Grace Ji’s research primarily focused on stakeholder engagement in the contexts of social media communication, corporate social responsibility and advocacy, and entrepreneurial communication. Ji received over 10 top paper and research awards and recognitions from national and international communication associations and conferences. Ji was named Page Legacy Scholar twice by the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication. She is the advisory committee member of the International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRRC).

DR. ROSALYNN VASQUEZ
Assistant Professor, Public Relations

Rosalyynn Vasquez joins COM with more than 15 years of public relations industry experience in corporate, agency, and nonprofit leadership roles. Her research focuses on sustainability communications, corporate social advocacy, and diversity in public relations. She was selected as a 2019 climate change communications scholar from the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies and is a 2020 recipient of the Page/Johnson Legacy Grant to study organizational listening and corporate advocacy.
The Communication Research Colloquium Series at Boston University was established in October 2009. This series consists of monthly research presentations that highlight current and original research of faculty in the College of Communication. 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.

Understanding Publics’ Perceptions of and Responses to Corporate Misconduct

Dr. Arunima Krishna
Assistant Professor, Public Relations
September 2021

Allegations of corporate misconduct often have long-term effects not only on the corporations in question, but also on those corporations’ internal and external publics. Dr. Arunima Krishna will discuss a program of research that examines different publics’ cognitive, affective, perceptual, and behavioral reactions to corporate misconduct, and how organizations can mitigate the negative impact of such allegations.

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Follow our hashtag #COMCOLLOQUIUM on Twitter and Facebook @BUCOMResearch
Local newspapers can hold back the rising tide of political division in America by turning away from the partisan battles in Washington and focusing their opinion page on local issues. When a local newspaper in California dropped national politics from its opinion page, the resulting space filled with local writers and issues. We use a pre-registered analysis plan to show that after this quasi-experiment, politically engaged people did not feel as far apart from members of the opposing party, compared to those in a similar community whose newspaper did not change. While it may not cure all of the imbalances and inequities in opinion journalism, an opinion page that ignores national politics could help local newspapers push back against political polarization.
In an era of growing social fragmentation, deteriorating trust, and information disorder, social media platforms add fuel to the fire and offer little hope in fostering understanding, deliberation, and real human connection. Even our in-person civic forums such as town halls and open meetings also fall short as civic spaces, attracting the “usual voices” of the same committed activists in what are often symbolic, yet ineffective efforts to capture real community input. Through a growing network of collaborators, we envision bringing people and technology together to strengthen democracy by creating the Local Voices Network (LVN), a new kind of social dialogue network. Our aim is to combine the depth and nuance of in-person dialogue with the power and scale of digital social networks to foster listening, empathy, and trust across divides. In this talk, Dr. Roy will provide an overview of the LVN system, highlight some case studies, and sketch research and deployment plans.

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LOOKING AHEAD

Brandwatch and Synthesio Training

Please email Lindsy (lindsyg@bu.edu) if you are interested in receiving training for either of these. We are trying to get these scheduled ASAP, potentially over intersession, if folks would be able to make it.

iMotions Biometric Research Workshops for students, faculty and staff

The CRC is pleased to be re-launching this exciting opportunity for students and fellows to receive training on conducting experiments using our biometric devices. An overview of the devices can be found in the CRC Resource Guide and Lindsy will be distributing further details in early February.

CO575 Applied Research Opportunity for Undergraduates

Undergraduate students who are interested in research will soon be able to earn their CO575 professional experience credit through participating in Lindsy’s pilot studies using iMotions biometric equipment. Further details to follow, but if you have any undergraduate students or advisees who have inquired about research opportunities, please contact Lindsy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring 2022 CRC Colloquium Speakers

February: Dr. Lei Guo
March: Dr. Chris Chao Su
April: Dr. King-wa Fu

Spring 2022 DeFleur Distinguished Lecture:

Dr. Meredith Clark, Northeastern University
Date, time and location TBA
PAPERS


BOOKS


NOTE: This book become available in 2021.

Book Chapters


IN PRESS


MEDIA APPEARANCES

September 19, 2021: The Boston Globe “With real estate, what you see is what you get. Well…”
Quotes from Dr. Michelle Amazeen

October 27, 2021: Los Angeles Times “Tech workers are no longer afraid to go public. Here’s how they found their voices”
Quotes from Dr. Arunima Krishna

November 16, 2021: USA Today “The Wheel of Time’ and the quest to find the next ‘Game of Thrones’-sized fantasy hit”
Quotes from Dr. Charlotte Howell

November 16, 2021: CNBC’s Make It “Disinformation is stifling conversation about climate change, new research says– these 4 tips can help”
Quotes from Dr. Arunima Krishna

November 23, 2021: The Boston Globe “Meet Conor Pewarski, Boston’s first gentleman. If you haven’t heard of him, he’s probably OK with that”
Quotes from Dr. Tammy Vigil

INVITED TALKS


Tsay-Vogel, M. (2021, October). Inducing pleasure and meaning among audiences: Biometric indicators of the enjoyment and appreciation of media messages. To be presented in the College of Information and Communications, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS


AWARDS

**Top Student Paper, Second Place in Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's Newspaper and Online News Division. 2021.**


**Boston University East Asia Studies Career Development Professorship**

Dr. Chris Chao Su
CRC STAFF

LINDSY GOLDBERG, M.A.
Lab & Research Manager

Research Interests: College radio, audience engagement in public media, psychophysiological responses to popular music, media economics

JENNA VIGRE
Social Media Specialist

Research Interests: Environmental communication, psychological and social impacts of advertisements