Gray conducts research in Alaska

Dr. Jonathan Gray was moved by a striking comment about popular culture contributing to the demise of the environment which prompted him to conduct environmental rhetoric research nearly 16 years ago. Gray defines environmental rhetoric research as “ways that the communication discipline addresses issues of sustainability, resource management, and other environmental concerns.” His definition refers to the way we discuss our relationship with the environment and the way we argue about policies reflected in our environment.

“Dr. Gray’s research brings a unique contribution to our department and to the interdisciplinary environmental studies program on campus,” says department Chair Dr. Nathan Stucky. Gray’s interest is captured by the ways in which art and science fuse together to tackle environmental concerns. He is also interested in rhetorical analysis of nature writing, which is a project that led him to the Wrangell Mountain Center in McCarthy, Alaska. In support of this project, Gray spent time with some well-known authors such as Scott Russell Sanders and Robert Michael Pyle, and focused on what nature writing can do to bring awareness to environmental issues.

Gray also spent a significant amount of time in Alaska doing research with the Wrangell Mountain Center, which is a Center dedicated to environmental education. Active in Alaska since 2006, Gray has been conducting preliminary research by being involved in participant observation with the Center. The Center has a writer’s workshop which Gray has participated in for two summers now.

“I hope my work continues to reveal the deep connections between nourishing our aesthetic sensibilities and maintaining sustainable relationships with our supporting environments,” says Gray. “Sites like the Wrangell Mountain Center inspire me because they demonstrate integrations of pedagogy, rhetoric, and performance in the name of raising awareness of environmental issues and fostering ecological consciousness.”

Daughton is passionate about non-violent communication

Six years ago, Dr. Suzanne Daughton was inspired by the book Non-Violent Communication: The Language of Life and began her pursuit for more information on non-violent communication (NVC). According to Daughton, a consistent principle of NVC is that “we are always trying to get our needs met and we all share universal human needs like love, companionship, affection, and touch.” NVC also points out that many people do not communicate their feelings adequately and instead try to reach their goals in ways that are unlikely to succeed. She explains that statements such as “What’s wrong with you? Why don’t you do this?” make meeting one’s own needs difficult for others.

Daughton has attended numerous training sessions on NVC and has completed six years of what she calls “lived research.” The training she recently attended focused on “facilitating the nonviolent communication dance floors.” She began her lived research by reading books and soaking in the material while working with family members. Daughton’s excitement about NVC led her to other NVC outlets. She teaches SPCM 261 (Small Group Communication) through a NVC lens, which presents students with a different perspective of group communication.

Ashlyn Hegg, a senior who is taking Daughton’s class, says, “This course has really taught me how to focus on relationships, both professional and personal. It feels more like a family than like a class, and this is because of who Dr. Daughton is and the way in which she teaches NVC.”

Although conflict is common, Daughton maintains that one doesn’t need to reconstruct one’s conflict communication methods for NVC to have a significant effect on their life. A splash of NVC can strengthen existing relationships and even help form new ones.
Dr. Rachel Alicia Griffin joined the department in fall 2008 and is a faculty member in Intercultural Communication. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Denver in Human Communication Studies, and her master’s degree from Central Michigan University. Her research interests span critical race theory, Black Feminist Thought, Black masculinity, performance, sport, and gendered violence. All of her current work speaks to notions of power, privilege, and voice which she has presented at national conferences, keynote addresses, and diversity training sessions.

Most recently, Griffin delivered a keynote address at the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault Conference titled “Envisioning Change/Embodying Praxis: A Call for Even More Critical Consciousness in the Movement Against Gender Violence”; had a manuscript titled “Yes We Can”, “Yes We Did”, but No We Haven’t: Marking a Moment While Remembering Reality” accepted for publication in a special issue of Reflections dedicated to social justice; and is working on a manuscript titled “Gendered Violence and the Black Female Body: The Public Pedagogy of ‘Crazy’ Mike Tyson.”

Beyond the walls of academia, Griffin loves to take in provocative performances, make jewelry, and travel.

Dr. Ross Singer joined the department in fall 2008, and is a faculty member in Organizational Communication and Rhetoric and Philosophy of Communication. He received his Ph.D. from Bowling Green State University, and his master’s degree from Central Michigan University. Singer is a rhetorical scholar whose research promotes alternatives to institutional practices guided by the popular ideal of post-political consensus. Drawing upon his upbringing on a family farm and his advocacy for an organic agro-food system, Singer primarily studies these practices within environmental, agricultural, and rural discourses in the United States.

Singer’s current projects include essays on the USDA People’s Garden Initiative, anti-corporate rhetoric in the activist film Super Size Me, and free market-based persuasion in popular environmental literature. In a broader, secondary line of scholarship, Singer researches discourses of consensus in political rhetoric. A forthcoming article in Southern Communication Journal titled “Framing of Elite Corruption and Rhetorical Containment of Reform in the Boeing-Air Force Tanker Controversy” is an example of his work in this area.

Dr. Dr. Miriam Sobre-Denton joined the faculty in fall 2009, and teaches primarily in the area of Intercultural Communication. She earned her Ph.D. in Intercultural Communication from Arizona State University. Her dissertation focused on cross-cultural adaptation and international student retention. Sobre-Denton completed her master’s degree at the University of Texas at Austin, where she studied Speech Communication with a focus in language and culture. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Puget Sound, where she majored in English. She is a proud member of the National Communication Association and Phi Kappa Phi.

Regarding her future plans at SIUC, she says, “I would like to start an Intercultural Communication study abroad program. Learning about culture shock in a classroom is totally different than experiencing it first-hand. Not only would students learn about culture shock, but also the culture of another country as well.” Sobre-Denton hails from Texas and is proud of it. She is also a huge San Antonio Spurs fan. Her other interests include running, cooking, outdoor activities, and traveling.

Dr. Satoshi Toyosaki received his Ph.D. from SIUC in 2005 with a focus in Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication. He earned his master’s degree from Central Missouri University and his bachelor’s degree from Eastern Illinois University. Toyosaki joined the faculty in fall 2008, and teaches courses in Intercultural Communication and Research Methods. He has previous teaching experience from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, where he taught for three years.

Toyosaki is glad to be back at Southern. He is a member of the National Communication Association and the Central States Communication Association, where he served as the chair for the Intercultural Interest Group last year.

Toyosaki’s research has appeared in journals such as the International Journal of Communication, Cultural Studies <-> Critical Methodologies, International and Intercultural Communication Annual, International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, and the Journal of Intercultural Communication Research. Outside of the classroom, Toyosaki enjoys jogging and “hanging out” with his dog, Ayame.
Defenbaugh wins awards

Dr. Nicole Defenbaugh (Ph.D., ’07) received the Outstanding Dissertation Award in 2007 from the International Center for Qualitative Inquiry for her dissertation titled “Sites of Discovery: A Narrative Journey of the IBD Body.” Her exceptional writing skills also landed her the 2009 Ellis-Bochner Autoethnography & Personal Narrative Award from the National Communication Association Ethnography Division. Defenbaugh also wrote and recorded an inspirational video on ulcerative colitis, a type of inflammatory bowel disease that affects the large intestine and rectum. This won her a national essay award from the UCSuccess organization (view this heartfelt video at ucsuccess.org).

Although many people would say Defenbaugh is very successful, she is reluctant to use the word “successful” and says she is simply bringing awareness to an issue. We wish her much success in her future endeavors.

Zach is back!

Zach Sapienza (B.S., ’99; M.S., ’05) is an alumnus who has returned to his alma mater. Sapienza completed his undergraduate degree in Organizational Communication in 1999, and a graduate degree with a focus in Public Relations in 2005. As an undergraduate student, Sapienza was a part of the Debate Team that won the National Championship in 1995. As a graduate student, he continued his work with the Debate Team, served as Assistant Debate Coach and assisted in recruiting high school students for the team from across the United States.

In fall 2009, Sapienza started in the position of Director of Off-Campus Events and Chapter Development for the SIU Alumni Association. As part of his new position, Sapienza has several responsibilities such as working with current students, alumni, and coordinating SIU alumni events across the nation. Before returning to SIUC, Sapienza worked for the Chicago Sun-Times News Group and Oasis Marketing Group.

Williams teaches non-violence and progressive masculinities

Dr. Derrick Williams (Ph.D., ’09) is dedicated to promoting non-violence among students and faculty at SIUC and in the Carbondale community. He continues his work as Violence Prevention Coordinator with SIUC’s Wellness Center, a position he started working in while he was a doctoral student. Williams is also the leader and founder of the Progressive Masculinities Mentors group in Carbondale. The group has weekly meetings on Thursdays called Raising Awareness Progressively (RAP) sessions, where those attending discuss issues such as gender equality, relationship violence, and how to fight cultural stereotypes. The group also works with a middle school, and members mentor young men on how not to be violent through weekly activities. Since its start in 2007, the group has continued to grow and has been recognized as a positive force in the community. It currently has 40 members. Williams encourages people to get involved and attended weekly sessions.

ALUMNI UPDATES

Jason Branch (M.S., ’05) lives in San Francisco and is working as a product case manager for the company Genentech.

John Burklow (B.S., ’80) is in the top communications/public affairs position at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md. He works with a $26 million budget and has been in this position for the last six years.

Frank Caltabiano (Ph.D., ’76) retired from full-time teaching in 2005 and still lives in Mesa, Ariz. He is currently lecturing ministry and substitute teaching in the Mesa Public Schools System.

Pamela Christian (Ph.D., ’00) is an Associate Professor and Graduate Advisor in the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Texas, Austin. Her recent accomplishments include productions with the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Alley Theatre, Actors Repertory of Texas, Focus Films, Mutiny Films and Screen Gems.

Bill Cozzie (B.S., ’09) has his first post-graduation job, and is a Jr. Account Executive with Tukaiz Digital Media, Marketing and Advertising located just west of Chicago.

Cara Day (B.S., ’86) worked production on 51 Minds and VH-1’s “Rock of Love” reality dating show. She also performed in “Lincoln: Prelude to the Presidency,” a WILL-TV (PBS) documentary which premiered in Feb. 2009.

(continued on page 5)
Antonio Cannon is a senior specializing in Public Relations, and he has an interesting story. Out of 10,000 contestants, he won the Sean John Faces of the Future contest. This occurrence launched his modeling career. However, Cannon has not let his recent fame deter him from his academic goals. In a recent interview, he said, “Modeling is not everything. I know there are more things to life. Even before winning Sean John, I actually knew who I was as a person. Even after becoming a professional model, my main focus is school.” In addition to appearing in Sean John advertisements, he has also appeared in Ebony/Jet and GQ magazine.

Meagan Oestry is a senior, specializing in Performance Studies. She is the chair of NCASC (National Communication Association Student Club), an organization that gives students an opportunity to network and participate in volunteer work. Last semester, as chair, she participated in the “Cookies, Coffee, and Conversation” event, where the faculty and students socialized and discussed the types of classes the faculty were instructing. Oestry, along with other NCASC members, also hosted a résumé building workshop last semester. After graduating in the spring, she hopes to continue her education in graduate school in Texas, but she is applying to other schools as well.

Michelle Restivo, a senior specializing in Intercultural, Interpersonal, and Organizational Communication with a minor in Psychology, has an amazing list of accomplishments. Restivo is passionate about philanthropy and working in the community, which has helped her receive numerous scholarships, such as the SIUC Inspiring Women scholarship, for her drive to positively impact others. Currently, Restivo is on the Marketing Committee and in the Student Auxiliary Group for the Inspiring Women organization. “It is my way of giving back to an organization that has allowed me to pursue my goals and has motivated me to become a better woman,” Restivo says.

Since Restivo has been at SIUC she has been on the Dean’s List, and has worked for the Speech Communication Undergraduate Committee, Relay For Life, the SIUC Leadership Council, the Poshard Foundation for Abused Children, and Saluki Advocates. More recently, she volunteered at the St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital “Up ’Til Dawn” event. She also raised money with others for a class project to pay for surgery and health care expenses for Rosie Gordon, a young girl who was attacked by a dog in Murphysboro, Ill. Restivo has also been the president of our PRSSA chapter for the last two years.

Edward Saba is a senior, specializing in Interpersonal Communication and Intercultural Communication with a minor in Philosophy. He has had a significant amount of involvement with the media. His involvement in a group project resulted in a front page spot in the Lifestyles section of the Sentinel newspaper in Bluford, Ill. In September, he volunteered for WSIU Radio, answering phones and taking donations during their fundraiser. Saba is also a member of PRSSA and attributes much of his involvement with the media to the organization. He participated in the annual Haunted Trail fundraiser for PRSSA, and helped the organization generate local coverage for the event. After graduation, Saba hopes to have a job in human resources in Chicago.

Sarah Thometz is a senior, specializing in Public Relations with a minor in Marketing. After her sophomore year in college, Thometz traveled to France to study abroad during the summer session. During her intercultural journey, she earned nine credits towards her minor. In conjunction with learning more about her minor, she also developed an understanding of the French culture. She enrolled in a class that focused on culture, in which students discussed what they were learning outside of the classroom. She traveled with five other students, spent two weekends in Paris, and has lasting memories of her learning experience.

Ashley Watkins is a senior specializing in Public Relations. Outside of class, she is busy applying the skills she has learned. Watkins conducts public relations for Kevin Lucas Orchestra (KLO), a band that was recently up for five Grammy categories (Lucas is an SIUC Music Department alum). In 2008, KLO won the “College Radio Breakthrough Artists of the Year” award at the London New Music Awards. Watkins writes press releases for the band that are distributed all over the US and in Europe, does photography and creates videos for their web site, and has developed a media kit as well.

In addition to her work with the band, Watkins creates and manages the web site for Carbondale’s own Quatro’s restaurant. According to her, the public relations aspect of the site involves “supporting Carbondale community events – we don’t just use the page to get people to ‘come and eat.’” Watkins would like to work as an in-house publicist in the future.
The fall 2009 Student Speakers Forum, “Creeping, Tweeting, Texting: Is Social Networking an Academic Advantage or Constant Distraction?” took place on November 17, 2009, in the Lesar Law Auditorium. The growing presence of social networking websites such as Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter can be seen and felt on the news, on campus, and in our everyday interpersonal interactions. As these technologies become increasingly available, so do new possibilities for communication. Six students were selected to present speeches addressing the consequences of social networking in their lives. Reginald Whiten, Ryan Dosier, Joselyn Artiega, Gregory Summers, Loran Luehr, and Haley Bock made the final program for the event. After the selected panel of speakers presented their speeches, the floor was opened for impromptu speeches given by the audience. There were over 150 people in attendance.

**GRADUATE STUDENTS REMAIN INVOLVED IN SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS PROJECTS**

The graduate students had their hands full in 2009 with many services and programs. They banded together with others to form The VDAY Task Force, which is a national movement to stop violence against women. This year they’re planning the presentation of *The Vagina Monologues*, a performance which brings attention to the abusive crimes committed against women. *The Vagina Monologues*, along with other productions associated with The VDAY Task Force, are contributing funds to the local Women’s Center.

Doctoral student Jenn Freitag expresses her excitement when she says, “It’s a really fun show and it raises a lot of awareness and then it benefits The Women’s Center.” Dr. Joan McDermott, Women’s Studies Director and faculty advisor for The VDAY Task Force, states, “The V-DAY Task Force was developed by students so that there would be some continuity and stability in the annual productions of *The Vagina Monologues*.”

The Women’s Center is the only rape crisis service available for women in southern Illinois. The nonprofit organization is working to improve the lives of women throughout southern Illinois, and The VDAY Task Force is a valuable contributor.

In addition to the above, doctoral students Jim Pete and Liz Pete were heavily involved in campaign work for Barack Obama’s presidential campaign. More locally, they have been consulting and doing advocacy work for local politicians. Doctoral student Craig Engstrom has been volunteering his services as a business plan advisor for the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (see www.pep.org). His work includes providing feedback on business plans created by soon-to-be-paroled inmates which aids in the long-term goal of preparing them for the workplace.

**SPEAKERS FORUM**

John Hess (B.S.,’77) lives in Roland, Okla., and is office manager for Aetna Federal Credit Union.

Stephen K. Hunt (Ph.D., ‘98) is an Associate Professor and Associate Director of the School of Communication at Illinois State University. This year, he is serving as First Vice-President of the Central States Communication Association.

Kevin Krasney (B.S., ’02) currently owns Cole’s Appliance and Furniture Company in Chicago, a business that has been in his family for 62 years. He is also the Chicago director for PMD Promotion, a media distribution company for the entertainment industry.

Merritt McCarthy (nee Dumstorff) (B.S., ’91) is currently the Charitable Donations Manager for the St. Louis Rams. She lives in St. Louis with her husband Ned and three-year-old daughter Lucy.

Judith Mullen (B.S., ’81) is a painter/sculptor and lives in Wheaton, Ill. Her work may be viewed at www.JudithMullen.com.

Kathleen Spring (M.S., ’96) is currently enrolled in the University of Alabama’s online MLIS program. She has also been working at Linfield College’s Nicholson Library since 2003.

Ashley Jeanette Tate-Little (B.S., ’09) has her first job after graduation with the College of Lake County in Grayslake, Ill. She is working in the human resources office and assisting with human relations and communication.

Carolyn Torpe (nee Sykes) (B.S., ’72) has spent 30 years in education, 27 of which she was a middle school teacher of English and Literature. For the last five years, she has been working as a high school guidance counselor.

Valerie Weilmuenster (B.S., ’00) lives in Lexington, Ky., and is a compliance officer at First National Bank of Lexington.
Cybernetic Fruit, September 24-26, 2009

Written and Directed by Shauna MacDonald & Nico Wood.

Cybernetic Fruit was a posthuman fairytale about a young cyborg named Red and her best friend Twenty Ounce. MacDonald expresses her excitement for the performance when she says, “The show featured a whole host of colorful beings and chance encounters, and was truly a collaborative process.” This collaborative effort was a comedy that encouraged its audience members to question their attitude towards humanity.

The Carnival, October 29-31, 2009 (Double Bill)

Directed by Rick Jones

Director Rick Jones describes the performance: “The Carnival was a 45-minute journey through a carnival that seems to have gone wrong.” The show was developed in four weeks through a process called “viewpoints,” which is a technique centered on dance and movement. This short journey incorporated the art of body movement, music, and lights to give the audience an insight into humanity.

Tending the Crocodile, October 29-31, 2009 (Double Bill)

Written and Directed by Nichole Nicholson, Co-Directed by Sam Sloan

This performance centered on stories of Adult Children of Alcoholics and the research conducted about this phenomenon. Tending the Crocodile sought to explore new possibilities for telling these stories. This show explored the stories of Adult Children of Alcoholics by incorporating a movement-based performance style.

Miles Away From “The Cool,” December 3-5, 2009

Written and Performed by Chris McRae, Directed by Aubrey Huber

Miles Away From “The Cool” combined research about Miles Davis including music and stories. McRae says, “The show used the ideas in the autobiography of Miles Davis as a framework for thinking about and developing performances.” Using ideas from Miles Davis’s autobiography, this one-man performance artfully brought to light the local importance of Miles Davis.

MEET LAURA, JAY AND BRENDALeft to right: Laura Sims, Jay Lewis & Brenda Prell

Laura Sims, Jay Lewis, and Brenda Prell are integral to the smooth running of this department. They each play a different and valuable role within our community.

Sims has been with the department for 11 years working as an office administrator and assistant to the Chair, Dr. Nathan Stucky. When asked what she does in the department, Sims said everything, from payroll to scheduling. Lewis has been an advisor with the department for 12 years. He advises students not only on their course requirements, but also on how to be more self-sufficient. He also attends open houses for recruitment purposes and completes student paperwork for graduation. Prell, who runs the front office and keeps the department organized, will have been with the department for nine years in December.

Lewis enjoys the office and independent work. “I enjoy getting to know students, whereas in Liberal Arts it’s much larger and you’re lucky if you see a student twice,” he says. Sims feels this is the best department she has worked in. “I enjoy the people and the democratic environment. It’s a fair place with a lot of respect,” she says. Prell enjoys the department because everyone meshes well and people are down to earth. “The people in the department are wonderful and they are like my second family,” she says.

Both Sims and Lewis noted that finding their jobs in the department happened by just being in the right place at the right time. Lewis was already an advisor in the College of Liberal Arts when the position in Speech Communication/Theatre opened up, and he volunteered for it. Sims became a part of the department after being promoted within the university system. Prell also joined the department through promotion. “I found this to be a natural fit since I have been in the same career since the 1980s,” Prell says.

The department would not be the same place without the contributions of Sims, Prell and Lewis.
Greetings from the Department Chair

One of the privileges of my position is to see much of the fine work that goes on in this department day-by-day. This issue of Speak Easy brings you a sample set of highlights from across a spectrum of undergraduate, graduate student and faculty activities. Of course, it is no surprise that the national and state economies have put pressure on university budgets. So, while we are not immune to the economic storms blowing across the country, we continue to keep our promise to educate our students in the best ways we know. Our faculty maintains excellent levels of productivity in research and creative activity. I’m frequently in a position to meet with students who express gratitude for the excellence of our teachers. Perhaps one recent student note to one of our faculty members can serve as an example: “I have learned so much from you, both about being a good scholar and a good person. You are such a wonderful role model to me. Thank you for all that you have taught me. Your classes and our discussions have enriched my life, and I will continue to value your feedback, ideas, and advice in the future.” We cherish the mentoring relationships our faculty establishes with students because we know this is one of the ways we make a positive difference in their lives and in the world. —Nathan Stucky
For more information about the department, check our website at http://speechcommunication.siuc.edu

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Current employment? Promotions? Comments? Other News? (Please send a photo too.)

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