

COMMUNITY

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION



Welcoming a New Dean

Wanda S. Pillow has been named as the Dean of both the College of Humanities and the School for Cultural & Social Transformation. Pillow, a professor of gender studies, has been serving as acting Dean of Humanities since October 21, 2024 and will begin working in this new capacity effective immediately.

"Over the last few years, the College of Humanities has experienced remarkable growth in terms of student majors, cutting-edge research by its faculty, and impactful community engagement," says Michael Middleton, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. "Dean Pillow's experience and energy already has and will continue to play a key role in building on these successes while demonstrating the critical role played by the Humanities in students' academic and professional futures."

Pillow is a first-generation student and an award-winning teacher, mentor, and scholar. She earned her doctorate in Educational Policy and Gender Studies from Ohio State University and has been faculty at the University of Utah since 2017. She has a range of leadership experience, having served as Chair of the Gender Studies Division and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in Transform and is committed to mentoring students and emerging scholars. Transform and the College of Humanities welcome Dean Pillow to her new role in our respective institutions and look forward to working alongside her to accomplish the education, research, and social impact missions of both the CoH and Transform.

DEPARTMENT NEWS

CELEBRATING SPRING ACHIEVEMENTS

As the spring semester comes to a close, we take a moment to celebrate the accomplishments that have defined this year for the Department of Communication. From students securing internship opportunities to faculty members being recognized for their impactful, nationally recognized articles, it's been a year filled with growth and recognition. Our courses have inspired fresh perspectives, and the unique opportunities within the department have fostered both personal and professional development. Beyond the classroom, our outreach efforts have strengthened connections with the community, highlighting the value of communication in real-world settings. With the academic year drawing to a close and seeming busier than ever, it is especially important to build in time to pause and reflect. The future of the Communication Department is bright, and we're excited to continue growing together in the years to come!



The InformU Team

Absolute Communication Fall 2024

Absolute Communication

Kevin Bischoff, an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Utah, helped develop *Absolute Communication*, a student-run advertising and PR agency within the Department of Communication. The agency offers students hands-on experience by working on real-world projects with actual business clients, allowing them to gain practical skills and a deeper understanding of the communications industry. Kevin created the agency to complement the department's theoretical courses by providing students with practical, real-world experience working with Utah-based companies.

[READ MORE](#)

Internship Success

Undergraduate Student Jack H. George

As a communication major interested in adventure, action sports, and sustainable outdoor recreation, Jack found a perfect match interning at Western River Expeditions. "This internship has worked very closely with the values that I have and the passions that I follow," he shared.

Jack credits his courses, Mass Communication Law and Public Relations and Campaigns, for preparing him for his role. During his internship, he has experienced challenges like communication barriers with external companies but has learned to remain persistent and patient. One project he has particularly liked working on is forming partnerships with podcasts to enhance the company's outreach.



[READ MORE](#)



USA Today Research Feature

A recent USA Today article features research from our very own Department of Communication scholars. The team's latest publication in the American Journal of Sexuality Education explores the importance of discussing fertility in sex education. We are proud of this impactful work and its recognition in national media! To read more, [click here](#).



John R. Park Debate Society

More Than Just Debate – A Community of Growth

The John R. Park Debate Society is an intercollegiate team that competes in multiple tournaments each year, promoting learning, growth, and excellence. The team participates in three types of debate formats and engages in forensics, helping students develop public speaking and communication skills. As the oldest student organization on campus, they have deep connections with alumni and offer opportunities for scholarships, internships, and travel. Their outreach extends beyond competition, with programs that foster personal and academic growth for all involved.

CRASH COURSE



Course Description

In today's culture, we often consider technology inevitable—we can do nothing to stop it and we shouldn't want to stop it. We are primed to accept cutting-edge AI, popular social media platforms, cute robots, and other technologies because they are part of the natural flow of human innovation. What if we could examine the history of technology and its social and political impact to examine how we have come to accept these ideas—such as “progress” or “innovation”—about technology? How are we being persuaded to accept certain myths about the role technology should play in society? More importantly, how can we think critically about how people have used technology to thwart harm and systems of power simultaneously?

This course is about how we determine what technologies are supposed to do and whether we want technologies to act as they were intended. Students will read texts from science and technology studies, communication, information studies, race and internet scholarship, and other cultural studies scholars. Over the semester, students will learn about technoculture, tech history, and how people live with technologies in their everyday lives (i.e., work, religion, or school). Students will reflect on their use of technology, use course concepts to analyze film, and develop a new technology informed by course material and their social vision.

Meet the Instructor



LaRisa Anderson
Assistant Professor

My goal for this course is to provide students with a broad perspective on the history of technology beyond digital media and artificial intelligence software. With this expansive understanding of technology and technoculture, I hope students will become better-informed consumers, scholars, and communication/media professionals. This course is discussion based because I aim for students to develop a personalized ethical approach to technology.

Course Objectives

I hope students can apply the critical thinking skills they develop in this class to technologies and case studies they may encounter in other courses. This course is also built to guide students toward interdisciplinary research rather than focusing solely on which literature is most relevant (i.e., technology studies). Beyond the classroom, I hope students will likewise apply course concepts to the growing number of technologies changing the workplace—especially surveillance and productivity technologies—and our everyday lives.

Annual Parry D. Sorensen Lecture

Featuring Distinguished Guest Jennifer Napier-Pearce

The Edna Anderson-Taylor Communication Institute is proud to present the upcoming Parry D. Sorensen Distinguished Lecture, featuring guest speaker Jennifer Napier-Pearce. A veteran journalist and strategist, Napier-Pearce has a distinguished career marked by her transformative work in media and government.

This year's lecture will explore how media and civic engagement have evolved amid significant shifts in both fields. Napier-Pearce's extensive experience offers invaluable insights into the intersection of journalism, media transformation, and public service, making her an ideal speaker for the Sorensen Distinguished Lecture Series.

Please join us on Thursday, April 10th, in LNCO 2910, for this incredible event! See page six for full details.



A message for **2025 Graduates**

The University of Utah Commencement and College of Humanities Convocation Ceremonies are one month away! We are so proud of all of your accomplishments and can't wait to see what post-graduate life has in store for you!

We want to make sure you're prepared for this special time Click [here](#) for graduation information

Upcoming Events

April 1st

Tabling Tuesdays: Connect with your Career Coaches and learn more about job and internship opportunities at 12:00 pm in the CTIHB Lobby.

April 9th

Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) Awards Ceremony. Send good luck to your friends who will be attending!

April 10th

Sorenson Distinguished Lecture with Jennifer Napier-Pearce. Student Q and A session from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm in LNCO 2910.

April 14th

How We Belong Now Colloquium Talk at 1:30 pm in LNCO 2910. Learn more [here](#).

THE EDNA ANDERSON-TAYLOR COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE PRESENTS
THE PARRY D. SORENSEN DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

Jennifer Napier-Pearce

Join us for an insightful evening with Jennifer Napier-Pearce, a veteran journalist and strategic communicator. Napier-Pearce's remarkable career spans leadership roles from her time as executive editor of *The Salt Lake Tribune*, where she led the nation's first legacy newspaper transformation to a nonprofit model, to her recent work as senior advisor and director of communications for Utah Governor Spencer Cox and current role as the chief of staff for the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation.

This special event will explore the intersection of journalism, media innovation, and public service, offering valuable lessons for students, alumni, and the broader community.

This event aims to bring together the Communication Institute's initiatives with the Sorensen family's vision for meaningful dialogue about journalism's future.

RSVP Here



Support the
Annual Sorensen
Lecture



APRIL 10, 2025

EDNA ANDERSON-TAYLOR
COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE
LNCO 2910

MODERATED Q&A FOR STUDENTS
12:30-1:15 PM

MODERATED Q&A FOR THE PUBLIC
6:30-8:00 PM