Communication Studies Students Create The Ridge Report

By Cieara Moore

What happens when you have two students who want to gain more professional experience before leaving college and don’t mind putting in some long hours to get it?

The answer is: The Ridge Report.

The Ridge Report is a part newscast, part university publicity video that features a sampling of campus activities and newsworthy events. Newscasts typically last less than five minutes and are entirely student-based and student-produced.

Anna Hoffmann, one of the co-creators on The Ridge Report, said the goal of The Ridge Report is to produce one episode each month this semester, with the optimism of producing them twice a month next fall. The ideas behind this operation include being able to understand all aspects of production as well as being able to handle it with a hands-on approach. Ultimately, the goal is to create a final product with professional appeal, Hoffmann said.

Some people might think that a few-minute newscast wouldn’t take that long to create. However, it actually takes a considerable amount of time and effort. This is why this

Continued on page 2

Staying Productive this Summer from the Comfort of Home

By Amanda Galster

For the first time ever, all five of the communication studies classes offered for Summer 2011 will be online-based. The convenience of taking online classes attracts students anywhere from athletes to stay at home moms to vacationing students.

Students can expect the same conversation dominated lessons out of Dr. Kalen Churcher this Summer. Media Writing and Stereotyping in the Media will maintain a reliance on class discussions through the popular social networking site, Facebook. Churcher also uses Blackboard to complement discussions. The smaller class sizes in the summer give the perfect opportunity to test out the efficiency of social networking sites to promote interactions between professors and students.

Churcher might even experiment with Skype during her virtual office hours.

The courses are not just for Communication Studies students, either. Stereotyping in the Media is a popular cultural diversity course and Media Writing counts toward the writing minor.

Dr. Doug Tewksbury's Writing for the Web and Special Topics: Critical Approaches to Advertising and Consumer Culture courses tackle their online settings in a different fashion. Taking a step away from Facebook, Tewksbury transforms Wiki accounts into virtual classrooms. Students will have equal access to the Wiki account and are encouraged to update the home page, in addition to their individual journals. Although he misses the face to face interaction, he believes the Wiki will promote an equal level of mediation.

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opportunity is such a great experience.
Sarah Kim is also a big part of this production project and the project’s other co-creator. Kim is interested in pursuing broadcasting after school and definitely feels The Ridge Report is preparing her for that.
The idea of this creation came about after Kim and Hoffmann both completed internships that provided them with some production experience. That inspired them to gain more.
Both women believe that practical and hands-on experience is beneficial for learning all aspects of broadcasting, production and really any film industry.
“Students should join the Ridge Report because it’s a great way to get hands-on experience, and a step into what it’s really like in actual studios,” Kim said. “It’s also an easy way to meet new people.”
Niagara University recently received a full High Definition update within its television studio, and students have the opportunity to learn how to use it outside of the traditional classroom setting.
“Because our studio is fully HD and we use industry standard software (Final Cut Pro) for editing, we have great tools for students to gain experience in the studio and editing lab outside of classroom time,” Hoffmann explained. “This will allow for a more specialized and individualized focus for students in the aspects of production that they are most interested in.
“The hope is that with this extra opportunity more students can be prepared for the real world with stronger professional broadcasting and production experience.”
Dr. Mark Barner, chairperson of the Communication Studies Department, considers himself an adviser to this operation. He, along with Brian Rock, the university’s multimedia production specialist, provide any guidance if needed. Beyond that, Barner stresses that The Ridge Report is totally organized and produced by students. This gives students an opportunity to expand their resume and gain valuable lessons along the way.
The Ridge Report involves coming up with the stories to cover, actually writing the stories, organizing, getting permission for certain portions, meetings with Niagara University’s legal counsel to ensure the understanding of laws and copyrights and then finally production.
Barner recommends any student get involved because not only is it a good skill to have, but it also teaches a lot of the things that go along with broadcasting and production as well.
Rock lives by the theory that practice makes perfect. In order to differentiate yourself from someone else, you’ve got to get out there and actually do the extra work to gain experience, he said.
“Along with internship opportunities, The Ridge Report is a great way to advance your communication knowledge and skills,” he explained, adding that students also gain credibility for having published work before they graduate.
A variety of jobs are available and students learn how to work well together as a team.
In addition to learning technical skills, there is also opportunity to exercise leadership and organizational skills.
“One people get into the real world, a large part of landing a job is how comfortable they are with the technology,” Hoffmann said. “The Ridge Report is simply one way that NU can help students gain those skills.
“We planned the format and execution meticulously last semester so that we would have a good template to go by. We are now moving on to expanding this newscast and incorporating any interested students on campus, especially Communication Studies majors.”
Ridge Report episodes can be found on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/PurpleEagle1. Interested students can contact Hoffmann or Kim at ahoffman@mail.niagara.edu or sarahyissle@gmail.com, respectively.
On Tuesday, March 8, Dr. Kelly Poniatowski, assistant professor of Communications at Elizabethtown College, will present the lecture *You're Not Allowed Body Checking in Women's Hockey*, which focuses on the United States and Canadian 2006 Olympic women's hockey games. The lecture, based on an article to be published later this spring, examines how nationality, as well as masculinity and femininity, are expressed in the media commentaries about women's sport.

Poniatowski is a guest of the Communication Studies Department and is being hosted by Dr. Kalen Churcher’s Media & Culture class. The lecture is open to all students.

“Because Dr. Poniatowski’s topic is so interdisciplinary, we’ve opened the talk up to anyone,” said Churcher, an assistant professor. “I could easily see students interested in women’s studies, international issues, or sports in general finding this lecture interesting.”

Poniatowski spent eight years in the sports industry in both customer service and ticketing. She worked for the former Johnstown Chiefs (East Coast Hockey League), the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Washington Capitals. She also worked game days for such teams as the Washington Redskins and Philadelphia Eagles.

Poniatowski has spent more than five years studying gender, race and nationality constructions as they pertain to ice hockey and media coverage. Her research largely relies on textual analyses and ethnographic research methods, and has appeared in such journals as *Women in Sport and Physical Activity*.

Specifically, Poniatowsksi is interested in both Olympic hockey and how commentators portray the athletes in their reporting.

“Sports serve as a platform to magnify cultural norms about gender, race and nationality,” Poniatowski said. “Oftentimes women’s sports are marginalized by the media, deeming them less important than their male counterpart. Stereotypes of race are also prevalent in sports media coverage, reinforcing the notion that blacks are deviant, sexually promiscuous or natural athletes rather than hard workers.

“By studying the interaction of gender, race and nationality within sports, we can come to better understand the larger social and political implications of the world around us.”

Poniatowski is a graduate of Penn State University. Elizabethtown College is a small, liberal arts college near Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Poniatowski’s lecture is scheduled from 12:40 to 2 p.m. in Bisgrove 350/351.
WNIA Looks for Members to fill Leadership Positions

By Tiffany Hyman

Interested in radio?
Like music?
Perhaps you’d rather chat about sports or the latest celebrity gossip?
The Niagara University radio station, WNIA, has several open management and disc jockey positions for fall 2011, according to Geoff Redick, current general manager of the station and club member for three years.

Positions, including general manager, assistant general manager, business and promotions marketing director, production manager and programming manager, will be available in September, but the application process begins now. Most of the station’s senior management is graduating, so there is ample opportunity to get involved.

“You have to be a good people person (for the general manager position),” Redick said, adding that leadership and motivational skills are also important.

The assistant general makes sure everything is running smoothly and confirms appointments of featured guests and speakers. The business and promotions marketing director brainstorms improvements and promotes bands and guests.

“Their position is important in the community,” Redick said.

The production manager creates commercials for the station, and the programming manager controls the schedule, which must be balanced so that two show times do not overlap.

Fred Heuer, faculty adviser for WNIA and assistant vice-president for marketing, said working with the radio station is a good way to “get involved” and “meet many new, fun people.”

NU students, faculty and community members can gain experience in broadcasting, radio station marketing, production management and event planning. It also helps to build up a portfolio and in certain cases, internship credit.

“Any student of any major is welcomed to join,” Heuer said. Thus far, more than 50 students have joined the club.

So, just what can students talk about on WNIA?

WNIA is located in the lower level of the Gallagher Center.
For more information, visit http://wnia.niagara.edu or call 286-7315.

Anyone interested in more information on the positions can contact Geoff Redick at gredick@mail.niagara.edu.

According to Heuer, the station has an open-format meaning that hosts can talk about topics of their choice. Some hot topics from last semester include a general talk show format, jazz shows, a love line and even a favorite, celebrity gossip show.

Senior Rianne Farrugia tackled celebrity gossip talk. She and co-host Emily Brillanti chatted about celebrity fashion trends from the bold, the beautiful and the ugly. Farrugia said having a show was “a lot of fun.”
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SARAH KIM (PROGRAMMING MANAGER)  303-827-4679  SARAHYISSLE@GMAIL.COM
Senior Heather Backlas monitors the studio during a recent taping of *The Ridge Report*. The multi-minute telecast allows students to gain valuable professional experience.

Sophomore Stacey Czerwinski serves as floor manager during one of *The Ridge Report* tapings.

Anna Hoffmann (foreground) and Heather Backlas work together to ensure *Ridge Report* taping runs smoothly.
The Ridge Report is a student-produced telecast that provides campus news by students and for students. The program endeavors to cover Niagara University topics and happenings that are of interest to students, including previews and reviews of concerts, theatre performances and sporting events as well as service learning and fundraising opportunities.

The telecast was developed by Anna Hoffmann and Sarah Kim.

Anna Hoffmann and Geoff Redick take a break from professionalism to show their “goofer” sides.

Sarah Kim waits for taping of The Ridge Report to begin. Kim and fellow student Anna Hoffmann, created The Ridge Report to gain more professional experience.
The CMS Department's annual spring Media Awareness event is changing direction and expanding its scope this year. Media Awareness Week will take place from March 29 through the 31, and it will feature a variety of guest speakers, panels, screenings and presentations. The main event this year will be a music industry panel on how popular music and popular culture intersect. The panel will feature several speakers including Arman Petri, a sound recording engineer who has worked with the Goo Goo Dolls; Ken Culton, a professor of the sociology of music and an experienced drummer; and Chenjerai Kumanyika, a nationally recorded rapper. In addition to the music industry panel, Media Awareness Week will feature an alumni panel of recent NU graduates who will share their experiences in grad school or getting into various industries. There will also be an industry panel with professionals from the radio, TV, public relations and print media who will talk about their respective industries and how to break into them.

“Most people take media for granted and don't really critically look at it. Media Awareness week is an opportunity for us to change that.”

- Dr. Mark Barner, Associate Professor of Communication Studies

The original idea was... to engage the whole campus in media literacy,” said Dr. Brian Murphy, associate professor of Communication Studies and Media Awareness Week planner. “Now we see it as an opportunity to engage our students in understanding the opportunities available in the industry, too.”

This year, NU will also host a screening of Carvin Eison's documentary, Shadows of the Lynching Tree. Eison is a Communication Studies professor at Brockport University and will be present for the screening. More information on the documentary, including a trailer, is available on his website www.shadowsofthelynchingtree.com. Shadows of the Lynching Tree is being sponsored by the Communication Studies Department, Modern Languages Department, and the Multicultural International Student Affairs office. The Communication Studies Department is going to continue to involve its majors in displaying and talking about their work during Media Awareness Week. The week will maintain the tradition of hosting a PSA contest that NU students and local high schools and colleges can participate in and win cash prizes for.

Furthermore, students that present their research at the RIT conference will likely be giving short presentations on their research and findings in conjunction with the PSA contest. The annual media literacy poster display will also continue and feature posters from Dr. Kalen Churcher's Media Law course.

There are several reasons for this expansion of Media Awareness Day into a whole week and a variety of panels. "Outside of Communications majors, not a lot of attention is paid to media,” Dr. Mark Barner said. “Most people take media for granted and don’t really critically look at it. Media Awareness week is an opportunity for us to change that.”

Murphy also maintains that having several events over several different days will allow for more attendance from people outside the department.

Finally, Dr. Barner says he hopes that Media Awareness Week will spread beyond the NU campus. "We want it to be more of a community event, so we invite and welcome anyone from the local community to attend.”

A calendar of Media Awareness Week events, times and locations is available on page 10.

Carvin Eison has received national recognition for his work through ImageWordSound llc, including two NYS Emmy nominations, a 25th anniversary Classic Gold Telly, four bronze Tellys, the Award of Excellence from the Broadcast Education Association, gold and silver medals at the Houston International Film and Video Festival and several additional honors and awards.

Mr. Eison has nearly forty years experience directing feature-length video, series television and commercial production for a wide array of corporate and not-for-profit clients, including the Dupont Corporation and Eastman Kodak. Since 1978, Eison has been the videographer for Garth Fagan Dance, and has toured internationally with the company.

Bio taken from www.shadowsofthelynchingtree.com
Niagara University’s student newspaper may be without its regular editor-in-chief this semester, but senior Ashley Shufelt has jumped in as interim-editor and is determined to keep improving *The Index.*

While Editor Lauren Merrick is studying abroad this semester, Shufelt has moved temporarily into the top position at *The Index,* where she hopes to gain experience for her future career goal of international journalist.

“I really enjoy writing about world issues and informing people about things they don't always hear about,” Shufelt said.

Faculty adviser, Josh Maloni, has complete confidence that Shufelt will strive to continue making the paper for university students.

“Not having Lauren around for the spring semester is an incredible loss for the Index, but it’s also an incredible opportunity for her to study abroad,” Maloni said. “We fully support her decision, and look forward to working with her again next semester. In the meantime, we’re extremely fortunate to have Ashley step in as editor-in-chief. She has proven herself to be a diligent, capable and talented writer, page designer and leader.”

Believe it or not, Shufelt did not always know that she would one day be a writer.

“As a freshman, I started out as a marketing major, but then about two years ago, I decided to take a Communications course.”

As many college students do, she found an unexpected interest in something else. She immediately discovered her passion for media writing. Currently, she enjoys writing about various organizations on campus, such as MISA, as well as taking on the challenge of writing about some of the more difficult assignments.

Shufelt has definite goals she’d like to accomplish this semester.

“What *The Index* really needs right now is not only student involvement, but for everyone to have a new view of what we are doing,” she said.

*Index* staff members are working hard to find out what students want to read about by using surveys and polls.

The best part about being the editor is the learning experience, Shufelt said, not only for herself, but also for all of the aspiring writers.

She enjoys reading the different writing styles of new writers and making corrections in order to teach them along the way.

Getting the word out to students about the new and improved *Index* is going to be the most challenging part about being the editor this semester, Shufelt said.

“Another thing that might be difficult is recruiting new writers,” she continued. “A lot of our writers are graduating and we will have four open spots next semester for new writers and their ideas.

“One thing a lot of people don’t realize is that if they enjoy writing, even if it has nothing to do with their major, they can still write for *The Index.*”

Shufelt has done a commendable job so far with the paper, Maloni said.

“Ashley shows incredible dedication to her work, and to providing NU students with the most up-to-date and relevant campus information,” he said. “She’s a real asset to the college.”

Anyone interested in writing for the student newspaper can email Shufelt at theniagaraindex@yahoo.com. The newspaper will specifically need layout, Web, and business/marketing editors for the fall semester.
I would like to thank all the contributors that made this issue of the *CMS Review* possible. Thanks to writers, old and new, for devoting your time to support the newsletter. I hope you continue to submit articles and photographs for future issues!

Please spread the word to other majors and minors about the great opportunity that writing for the *CMS Review* provides for fine-tuning your journalism skills and gaining recognition through publication.

Remember to look for more information coming out regarding this year’s Media Awareness Week. The CMS department has expanded upon the program and it is looking to be a fantastic event!

- Emily Kaufman, ’13

For more information about NU’s Communication Studies Department, visit our Facebook group [Niagara University Department of Communication Studies](https://www.facebook.com/NiagaraUniversityDepartmentofCommunicationStudies) for event announcements and updates on our active students!

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**MEDIA AWARENESS SCHEDULE**

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| **Day**   | **Industry Panel.**
Hear what working professionals have to say about the current state of the industry and how they broke into their profession. (12:40 to 2 p.m.) Bisgrove 351 | **Recent Alum Panel.**
Recent Communication Studies graduates will hold an informal discussion on job hunting and offer helpful tips for current students. The alumni will also answer student questions. (11:15 a.m. to 12:10 p.m.) Bisgrove 351 | **Music Industry Panel.**
Discussion will be held with Arman Petri, Ken Culton, Chenjerai Kumanyika, addressing how pop music and pop culture intersect. (12:40 to 2 p.m.) Castellani Museum |
| **Evening** | **Annual Public Service Announcement competition.**
NU and local high school students compete in a video PSA contest. Prizes will be awarded to the winners. Refreshments will be served. (6:30 to 8 p.m.) Dunleavy 127 | **Film Screening.**
A screening of Carvin Eison’s documentary *Shadows of the Lynching Tree.*
Refreshments will be served (6:30 to 8 p.m.) Dunleavy 127 | |

Sara Kim, co-founder of the Ridge Report, works on editing footage for the second episode during post-production.

Ridge Report co-founder, Anna Hoffmann, works hard in the studio to shoot and direct the episodes.
From teaching, to producing, to management, Kenneth James has done a lot on the media industry. This semester, he’s bringing his expertise to Niagara University as the new Writing for TV and Film instructor for the Communication Studies Department.

James is a part-time instructor at NU while he works towards his Ph.D. in English at University at Buffalo. He received his Master of Fine Arts degree in film and media arts from Temple University in Philadelphia and worked in television for many years before coming to Buffalo.

He has also taught classes in film aesthetics, film history, history of western drama, crime fiction and film noir, media theory, and screenwriting. In addition to teaching at NU, James also teaches two screenwriting for animation classes at Villa Maria College in Buffalo.

“You can tell he is very interested in and loves what he is teaching, and that makes me interested in learning more,” said junior communication studies major Sam Goodwin.

James’ love for the media has taken him many places, and he has worked in many different areas of the media including being a director, editor, videographer and producer. He also managed a public access station on the coast of Maine. While working in these fields, he also taught on the side and found that he really enjoyed it.

The more he found himself teaching, the less he was working in production.

“I just love teaching screenwriting,” James said, adding he also enjoys the hands-on working involved in editing at TB.

James likes the one-on-one interaction with students, as well as helping students open their eyes to how their exposure to media is structured. He also enjoys helping them transform how they see mass media.

“Professor James is an engaging professor,” said junior communication studies major Amy Harvey. “He stimulates class discussion and interest in the topics that we’re learning about.”

Writing for TV and Film instructor Kenneth James, discusses the "three-act structure" with his class.

Having such a diverse background, James has a lot of advice to give to students who want to go into the media field. He stresses to “always have more than one skill to offer.”

In college, James proved himself as a writer. When he got a job at a small production company, they knew he could write and that he knew about the technology used. Once he had the job as a writer, they let him produce and direct.

“Each new job allowed me to learn more skills,” he continued.

Another piece of advice is to start off small. All of the companies James worked for were smaller, and at a small company, you can easily get assigned the bigger jobs, he said. That way you are “a big fish in a small pond.”