

# Panoply

Spring 2023/Issue 32

## What's Inside

### New hire:

Dr. Ryan Cheek joins ETC at Missouri S&T



### New course:

Dr. Eric Bryan introduces Pragmatics of Discourse

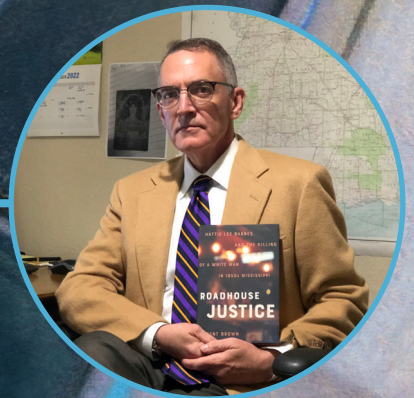


### New programs:

Intensive English joins ETC, plus updates to the intensive advising program

### New book:

Dr. Trent Brown's *Roadhouse Justice* explores racial biases and America's justice system in the 1950s





# A Letter From the Chair

Dr. Swenson  
in Jerusalem,  
2019



AS I WRITE THIS NOTE, I remember that it will not reach its intended readers—you—for several months from now. Imagining the future is something that many great writers, from Thomas More to Margaret Atwood, have performed for us as a sort of magic trick to help us to contemplate not only the possibilities of our lives but how those are built upon our past and present. Given recent history, so full of unpredicted and unpredictable surprises, I'm wary of speaking as if from the future. But let me say a few things about the present and recent past in the Humanities and Social Sciences building at Missouri S&T. 2022 has been an exciting and busy year for the English & Technical Communication Department, as the pages of *Panoply* will attest.

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Ryan Cheek to our ranks, a specialist in political technical communication who has published work on political campaigns, superheroes and masculinity, and the rhetoric of the CDC's preparedness campaign. Dr. Cheek is an experienced and awarded university teacher who will contribute to our growing speech and media studies focus in the department; he is offering a course in video design and editing this spring, which I'm sure will be very popular.

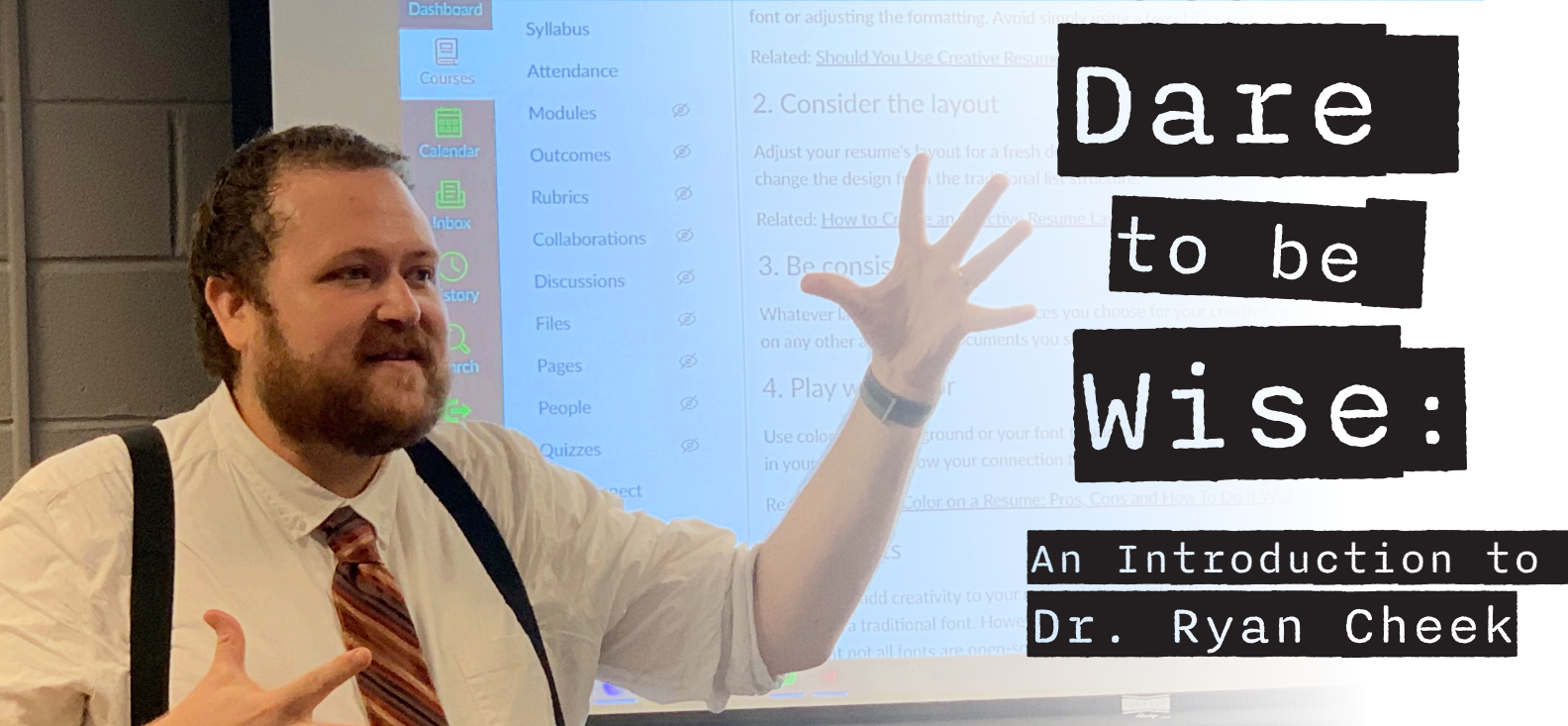
Dr. Trent Brown published a new book, *Roadhouse Justice*, about a self-defense killing in 1950s Mississippi. Dr. Eric Bryan, our medievalist and Old Norse/Old English scholar, was promoted to full professor in 2022, and our linguistic specialist, Dr. Sarah Hercula, received tenure and promotion. Dr. Josselyn Larson, who specializes in composition pedagogy, has been named Director of Foundational Speech and Composition in the department, and has also moved over to the tenure-track in recognition of and in order to promote her scholarship. And Dr. Thu Tran of the university's Intensive English Program has joined us on the top floor of HSS in order to contribute to our ESL program.

You'll see other faculty and student news in this edition of *Panoply*, including profiles of alums and current students, upcoming events in the department and on campus, and the teaching and research we're pursuing. We're excited to share all of this news with you and hope that you'll return the favor by sharing your news with us—via email or Facebook or LinkedIn or visits to the department. Let us hear from you!

Meanwhile, best wishes for a happy 2023, even if we can't quite predict what it will bring. In the words of the great science fiction writer, Ursula K. Le Guin:

"The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty: not knowing what comes next."





DR. RYAN CHEEK JOINED the ETC department as an assistant professor of technical communication in Fall 2022. During his first semester, he taught ENGL/TCH COM 2560 Technical Marketing Communication and TCH COM 5620 Research Methods in Technical Communication. This semester, he is teaching a brand-new course, TCH COM 3001 Video Design and Editing, which he is helping to develop for the department.

Originally from Salt Lake City, Cheek earned his Ph.D. in Technical Communication and Rhetoric from Utah State University. His research has been focused on political communication technologies, techne of gender, and the technical rhetoric of apocalypse. “A big part of my training was as a debate coach,” he said. “It led me to academia, research, and teaching.” His love of forensics partly explains his fascination with rhetoric.

The young scholar’s interest in political communication technologies was inspired by the innovative campaigns of folks like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez. This

interest is evident in his publications such as “Political Technical Communication and Ideographic Communication Design in a Pre-Digital Congressional Campaign” (2020) and “Making a Case for Political Technical Communication” (2022).

A humanitarian at heart, Cheek is looking forward to continuing research that will improve the human condition. Guided by personal and institutional ethics, he hopes to collaborate with students on research projects related to politics, gender, and apocalyptic rhetoric in technical communication. Apocalyptic rhetoric is the appeal to the end of days, so prevalent in current political communication.

Cheek is thrilled to be a part of the S&T community. So far, he is incredibly happy with his home department. “The people in this department are awesome. There’s a really friendly, caring vibe, but also a rigorous intellectual vibe.” He and his family have been exploring the area. Rolla’s welcoming community and Missouri’s natural beauty have helped his family settle into their new home.

Cheek’s favorite quotation is “Sapere aude.” He picked it up from Kant who was quoting Horace. It can be translated loosely as “Dare to be wise.”



# Amruta Ranade: Teaching Tech Com on YouTube



**Amruta Ranade**  
7.79K subscribers

**SUBSCRIBE**

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AFTER GRADUATION FROM Missouri S&T, Amruta Ranade (MS, TCH COM SP17) was swiftly offered the position of Senior Technical Writer at Cockroach Labs, an open-source database company founded by three former Google employees in New York City. Her first year in the Big Apple was lived with the wide-eyed wonder of a newcomer. As she became more settled in her new city, novelty turned to routine, and Ranade sought to fill her time with a stimulating hobby. But what hobby to choose?

At the time, she “was already an avid YouTube watcher,” but “wished that there was a content creator focusing on technical writing.” Further, she was previously a Graduate Teaching Assistant during her studies at Missouri S&T. “I like teaching and I missed that, so [creating a YouTube channel] would be another way of teaching technical communication to a wider audience.” Wasting no time, Ranade decided to become the very content creator she wanted to see and pointed the camera towards herself.

What began in 2018 as a humble hobby has now grown into an influential YouTube channel on technical communication. Ranade’s channel has over 7,500 subscribers and 300,000 views from around the globe. Her content is especially popular with audiences in the USA and her native country, India. The channel has been a flexible platform, growing and changing alongside Ranade’s own career and the

needs of her viewers. These viewers, more often than not, are newcomers to the field of technical communication.

Her videos such as What Do Technical Writers Do? and Technical Writing Beginners: Advice and Resources have aided a great many people considering jumping into a technical writing career. More advanced viewers will find videos such as I Tried Learning SQL in 24 Hours a challenging deep dive into the technics of technical writing. Ranade said she aims to create content that meets tech writers “where they are.” No matter where one is in their technical communication career, they are certain to find a useful and practical video on her channel.

It is no accident that Ranade’s videos are clear, engaging, and informative. Her skillset in technical communication ideally maps to the skillset required to create successful instructional videos – themselves a facet of technical communication. When creating a video, Ranade said she considers questions such as “Who is my audience? What do I want my audience to take away from a video? How should I structure the video’s content?”

After about three years as a senior technical writer, Ranade changed her role at Cockroach Labs to that of a developer advocate. Like technical writers, developer advocates must understand and support the needs of their users. Unlike many technical writers, they also directly assist users (developers) of a technology by engaging them through chat rooms, Twitter threads, and yes, YouTube videos.







# Distance Learning: The New Old Normal

Since Fall 2011, S&T has been delivering its technical communication graduate programs online to students around the country.

WHEN THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC closed campuses in spring 2020, students and teachers had to navigate remote learning and hope they would be allowed back to the classroom when school resumed in the fall. For some students, however, it was just another day in their academic career.

Since Missouri S&T's graduate programs in technical communication were expanded to include distance education in 2011, there have been an average of three students enrolled in the distance programs each year. There are varying reasons students choose to pursue graduate studies online as opposed to in a traditional classroom. Chief among them is flexibility.

Part of that flexibility at S&T is being able to obtain a graduate certificate in professional communication (formerly technical communication) and then apply the credits toward a master's degree in technical communication. Both programs allow students to complete the coursework wholly online and never visit the physical campus in Rolla.

For students who are furthering their education later in life, this flexibility can make all the difference. Chris Caruthers, who completed the graduate certificate in May 2014, said he chose the distance option because he had family and job responsibilities that wouldn't allow him to pursue the certificate full time on campus.



*Michele Pace was already an experienced distance learner before the pandemic.*

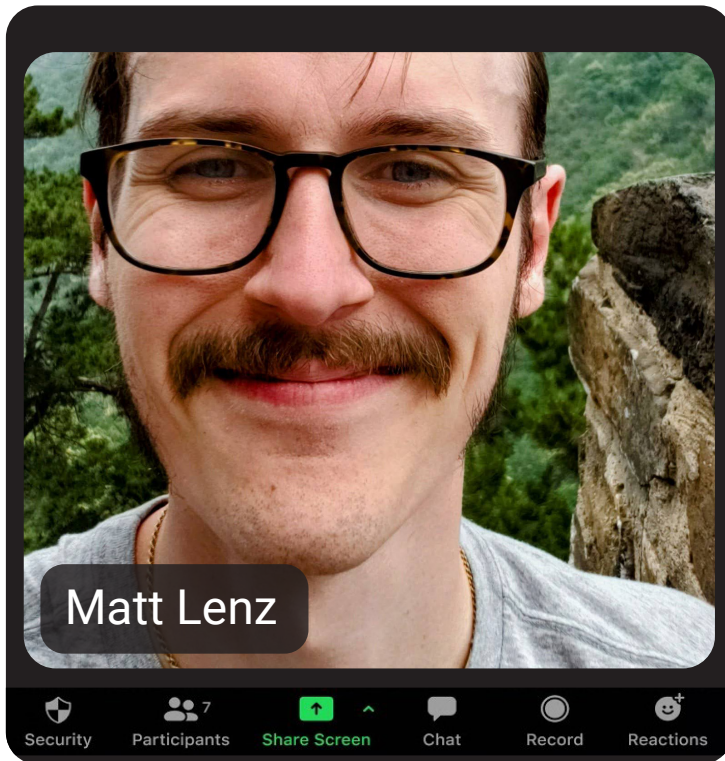
Another reason for choosing a distance program is not being able to find a similar program in the local area. Nyana Evans, who is currently pursuing the graduate certificate, is located in Brooklyn, New York, and was unable to find a program locally that would fit her schedule. When asked why she chose Missouri S&T, she said, "MS&T has a certificate program in tech com where many schools do not even have a course."

Additionally, being able to take online courses at night is convenient for non-traditional students who work full-time during the day. Chris Williams, who completed the graduate certificate in May 2021, started the program fifteen years after completing his undergraduate degree and was able to take one course each semester to fit his schooling around full-time employment.

Michele Pace, who is currently in the master's program, is also an older student and a veteran of distance education, having obtained her undergrad in 2013 after 8 years of part-time distance classes. When she wanted to go back for her graduate degree, attending classes the same way was only natural. Aside from the availability of the program online, the other reason she said she chose Missouri S&T was because of its affordability: \$600 per credit hour.

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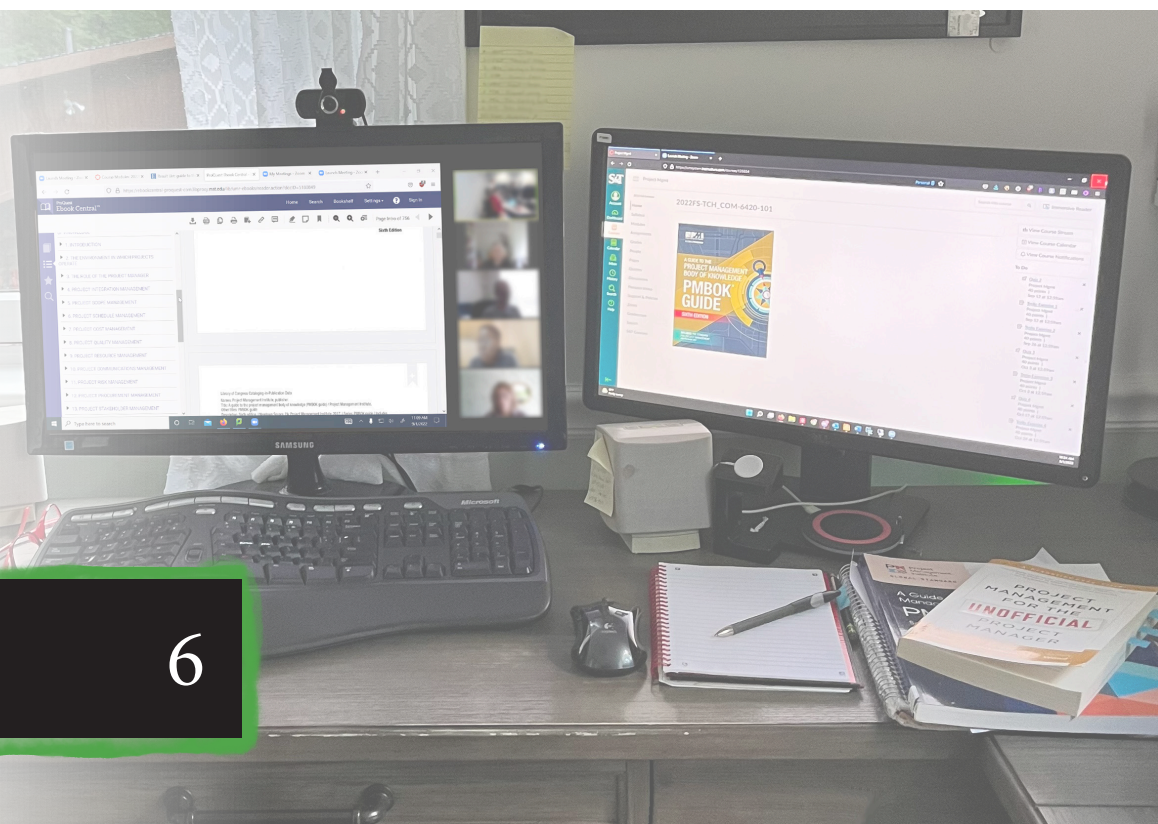


*Like many students, Matt Lenz adapted to distance learning during the pandemic.*

Some students chose the distance program as a direct result of the pandemic. Matt Lenz, who completed the certificate portion of the master's program last May, specifically chose the distance program because of the pandemic. He was already familiar with Missouri S&T as an in-state resident, and said that since his undergrad is in English, "Tech Com seemed like a logical continuation of my studies while also making me more professionally appealing and employable." He has also decided to go for the master's degree as a distance student.

Remote learning is not just another side effect of the pandemic; it has been around in some form for many years. Some students may take advantage of it for their entire academic career, others may choose it only for continuing education later in life, while still others may choose to mix it with traditional learning. Whatever the student's particular requirements are for obtaining a degree, distance learning is available to help meet them.

Remote learning is not just another side effect of the pandemic.





# Celebrations of Nations

## and the Technical Communicator

CELEBRATION OF NATIONS IS AN annual event hosted by the S&T student body with participation from the city of Rolla. Since its inception in 2010, the celebration has had strong support from the students and people of Rolla, with the exception of the year 2020, when many events around the world were canceled to help curb the pandemic.

Technical communication scholar Godwin Agboka notes that we are all “cultural actors who construct our identities and negotiate systems of knowledge and meaning that come to play during intercultural contacts.” S&T’s Celebration of Nations offers many opportunities for intercultural contacts. It is a heterogeneous cultural experience that seeks to showcase diversity, unity in oneness, and oneness in our community. Such events remind us that the world we live in is a global village.

Charnise Anderson, a graduate student in technical communication, is pleased to see the S&T community promote diversity and tolerance. “Appreciation of diversity is important to the ETC department because we have a variety of people from different backgrounds,” Anderson said. “It is also crucial to technical communicators because our practice requires us to adapt content for diverse audiences.” Events such as the Celebration of Nations contribute to the development of a necessary mindfulness.

Fredrick Sunkpal is a new international student from Ghana, and for the first time, witnessing an event like this gives him a sense of belonging. He said, “As an international student, the Celebration of Nations gives me the platform to

represent my country and my culture through music, food, and attire. I had the opportunity to bond with people from other cultures.” Fredrick enjoyed tasting different foods from around the world. For him, the event resonated with the sense of “one campus, one community, and one world.”

For Iveren Akula, also a graduate student in technical communication, the Celebration of Nations was an opportunity to learn new things and make new friends. “I love to connect and network with people from various cultures and backgrounds.” She believes “the future in terms of diversity is as colorful and bright as the different attires of the varying nationalities.”

Indeed, diversity is a crucial part of our lives today, and it only takes tolerance and acceptance to live in harmony to make the world a better place.



*From left to right: Felix Nyikwagh, Frederick Sunkpal, Iveren Akula, Ernest Oteng, Vivian Asigri, and Jude Enete at Celebration of Nations on September 24*



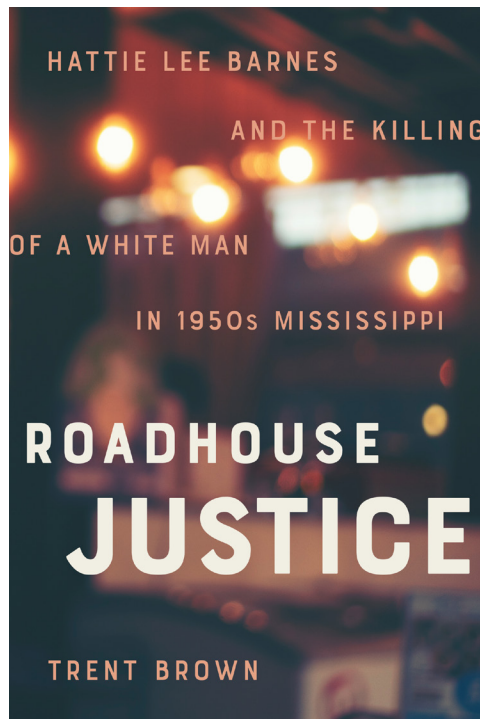
# New Book Examines a Case of Racially Distorted Justice in 1950s America

DR. TRENT BROWN IS THE AUTHOR of *Roadhouse Justice: Hattie Lee Barnes and the Killing of a White Man in 1950s Mississippi* (2022), an in-depth study of a case in which a young Black woman, defending herself from probable sexual assault, killed a young white man and was put on trial for murder and acquitted, but her difficulties continued for some time after that. We interviewed Brown about his latest monograph from Louisiana State University Press.

## **What did Hattie Lee Barnes do and why is it important?**

Hattie Lee Barnes was a young Black Mississippi woman. In 1951, she killed a white man from a prominent family. That shooting placed her in grave peril. The Mississippi legal system took Black on white crime seriously. Barnes stood trial for murder and was acquitted. That fact itself led me to want to know more about the case. The story is complex. Before Barnes was tried, she survived an assassination attempt. She testified at the trials of the two men who tried to kill her. She also survived months of legal and extra-legal interrogation and detention.

Through her own determination and the assistance of a diligent attorney and reporter, she survived. This book attempts to explain how that happened. Her story shows the unpredictable nature of Jim Crow justice, a system in which personal connections and



power mattered a great deal. The 1951 timing of the case was also highly important. A decade or so earlier, a woman like Barnes might have been disposed of—and I use the term deliberately—without much of a trace. Just a few years later, when the social revolution of the civil rights movement was becoming apparent to all Mississippians, the legal system might have decided to railroad Barnes to make an example of her. But in the early 1950s, her own efforts—and those of her advocates—allowed her eventually to escape the hands of Mississippi justice.

## **You imply that Barnes might have died in the electric chair if Defense Attorney Joe Pigott and Reporter Charles Gordon had not taken a sincere interest in her case. How and why did they help Barnes?**

Joe Pigott was a young attorney, only twenty-six years old. Mississippi had no public defender system in that era. He was appointed by the court to defend Barnes. For that work, he received \$75. Under the circumstances, some attorneys might have advised Barnes to plea to a lesser charge to try to avoid the death penalty.

Instead, Pigott saw that Barnes should not have been charged with murder in the first place. She was simply defending herself. What is striking about Pigott is that in this era of intense prejudice, he had the courage and the clarity to see the issue not through the lens of race, but instead as a matter of right and wrong.

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Reporter Charles Gordon knew a good story when he saw one. He also had a keen sympathy for the underdog. He insisted that local people know what was happening to Barnes. He wrote thousands of words as the story developed, kept it on the front page of the paper, and even persuaded his newspaper's publisher to write strong editorials on behalf of Barnes.

Hattie Lee Barnes was a strong woman. But without the work of Pigott and Gordon, it is easy to imagine her coming to a grim end. In the Deep South in that era, people were sent to prison or the electric chair for less than Barnes did.

**How and why did the powerful Craft family try to change the narrative about Richard Lamar Craft's death, and why did their effort ultimately fail?**

Lamar Craft was shot to death while climbing into the window of a closed beer joint. He clearly intended to sexually assault Hattie Lee Barnes. Craft's father was mortified by the circumstances of his son's death. He began to work immediately to cast the blame on someone other than Barnes.

Edd Craft and his attorney pressured Barnes, trying to make her say that Rob Lee, the bar owner and a white man, shot Lamar Craft. When he failed to persuade local authorities that Lee was the guilty party, he filed suit against a life insurance company. That lawsuit was not really about money. Instead, Edd Craft wanted a public forum—a courtroom, in this case—in which he could tell a story of his son's death that did not feature Barnes as the shooter.

The Crafts worked to “clear the good name” of their son, as they would have seen their efforts. He was shot under unsavory circum-

stances, they admitted. But they did not want his attempted assault of Barnes, a Black woman, to be the public story.

They failed in these attempts because Barnes resisted these pressures to change her story to suit the Crafts. Also, the life insurance company saw the lawsuit as a matter of business. They had no interest in anyone's hurt feelings.

**You are a white man born in Pike County, Mississippi, where the killing of Craft occurred. How is your account of Barnes' story “inflected through the lens of a white person” (p. 178)? Does your training as a historian help you to avoid or minimize such inflections?**

The story of Barnes is inflected through the lens of white people in several senses. In the first place, she was enmeshed in the Mississippi legal system, a process and structure that was by design forbidding to her. Every person of authority that she encountered—from the sheriff to the attorneys to the juries and judges—were white men. Even when we have her own words, as in the case of newspaper interviews or court proceedings, Barnes was speaking to white men. I do not doubt that her words in those sources were correctly recorded, but Barnes was well aware, as were all Black Mississippians, of the prudence of carefully considering one's words in those contexts.

In writing this book, I was fortunate to have access to many hundreds of pages of legal documents and many thousands of words written by reporter Charles Gordon. My challenge as a historian was to understand the uses and the limitations of these sources. My experience in writing about Mississippi in the late twentieth century helped me, I hope, to read these sources with a careful eye. But I also know that Barnes's own thoughts, character, and personality are not contained in the files of a Mississippi county courthouse.

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**Mississippi Justice, Jim Crow Justice, Roadhouse Justice — are they all synonyms for injustice in this case? Why did you choose the title you did?**

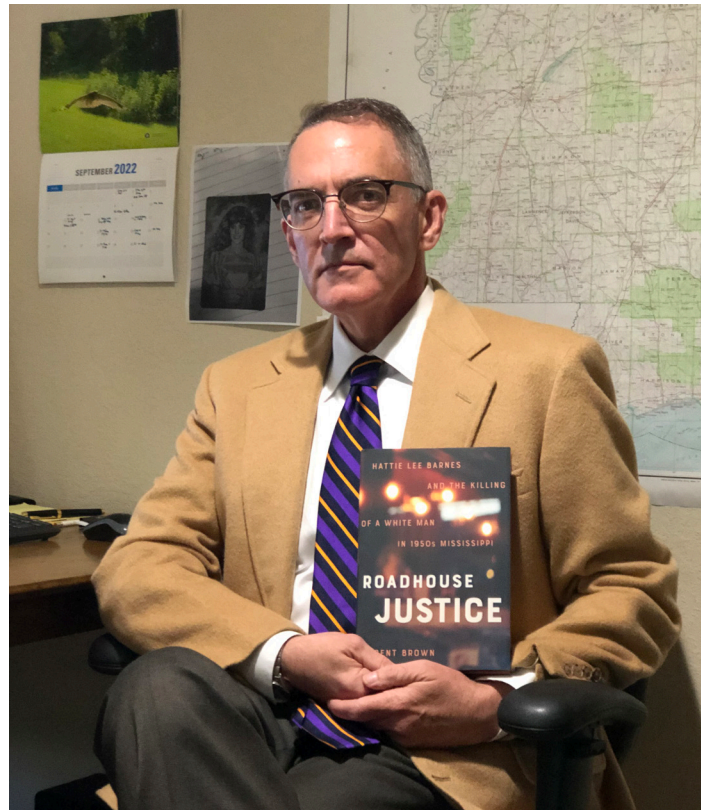
Events of this story occurred about seventy years ago. Still, some people in the area do remember the story, if not Barnes herself. The families of Joe Pigott and Charles Gordon are rightly proud of the work that those men did on Barnes's behalf. To the degree that the story is remembered, it is recalled as an example of justice being achieved despite the Jim Crow context of the era.

What I have tried to do here, however, is to suggest that the Barnes saga says as much about injustice as it does about justice. Yes, Barnes was acquitted. She eventually did leave Mississippi as a free woman. But it was a very close thing. In a just system, Barnes would not have needed the intervention of well-placed white men such as Pigott and Gordon to secure her freedom. The Mississippi legal system was chancy and capricious. Barnes no doubt valued the advocacy of Pigott and Gordon, but she, like other Black Mississippians, obviously would have preferred a social order built upon fairer lines.

The book's title, I should say, comes from LSU Press. I have never been any good with book titles. Here, I think they did a great job with both the title and the cover design.

**How does this study fit into the larger body of your work, past, present, and future?**

*Roadhouse Justice* is my sixth book. I have written almost exclusively about Mississippi. I suppose that I have tried for a long time to understand the place where I grew up. Beyond the



**"Barnes no doubt valued the advocacy of Pigott and Gordon, but she, like other Black Mississippians, obviously would have preferred a social order built upon fairer lines."**

personal connection, however, I think that I see in these stories connections with broader issues that have engaged and will continue to engage historians. Americans are periodically reminded, as we have been in recent years, that issues of race and racism are not matters on which the books have been closed, but instead are living, vital concerns. In these southern stories, I have also been interested in the ways that gender, sexuality, and social class shape and complicate our understandings of race.

This book grew directly from my last book, *Murder in McComb*. In 1971, Joe Pigott, by then a district attorney, prosecuted a police officer for the murder of a twelve-year-old girl. Late in his career, Pigott gave an interview in which he expressed regret for not winning a conviction in that case. He also spoke with satisfaction of his work on the Barnes case. I knew then that I wanted to know more about that story.



## ETC Professor Participates in Summer Research Institute at Oxford

**This summer, Dr. Kristine Swenson had the opportunity to conduct archival research in the University of Oxford's world-class libraries.**

EVERY SUMMER IN JULY, the halls and libraries of the University of Oxford welcome a troupe of visiting faculty from around the world, sent as delegates by their home institutions for a week of research. The Summer Research Institute, hosted by Oxford's Harris Manchester College, gives its attendees the opportunity to use a vast collection of books and other resources with the expert assistance of university librarians.

This summer, Dr. Kristine Swenson, department chair of ETC, made the 4,000-mile trip as Missouri S&T's visiting academic in Oxford. "This is the first time I've had an opportunity like this, though I've traveled to England, Scotland, France, Italy, and Israel in previous years to conduct research at archives or to participate in conferences," said Swenson, who is the third representative from Missouri S&T to attend, after Dr. Michael Bruening and Dr. Kathleen Sheppard from the department of history and political science.

The process of visiting begins with scholars submitting research proposals as part of a campus-wide evaluation of applicants. After one proposal is selected, the chosen representative works remotely with the library staff in Oxford to develop a research plan tailored to the library's holdings. This assistance continues in Oxford as the librarians guide the academic through the often-overwhelming trove of materials and facilities that are suddenly at their disposal. The atmosphere is focused and scholastic: "They put us up and feed us and we have some social events and some professional

information events," Swenson said, "but mostly the purpose of the week is to give us space to conduct research in the amazing libraries in Oxford."

Swenson's work at the Summer Research Institute began with an article that she was already developing about Dr. Lydia Fowler, a female physician, reformer, and suffragist, who spent time in Britain in the 1860s, practicing, lecturing, and publishing. The libraries at Oxford own transcripts of Fowler's lectures that are unavailable online or in the United States; access to those transcripts allowed Swenson to expand sections of her article.

The work on Fowler began to grow into a new research question regarding alternative medicine. With access to the Tate's Library of Protestant Dissent, Swenson explored this topic and laid the groundwork for a new article examining alternative medicine as it relates to temperance, anti-vaccination, and gut health. Within a mere week at Oxford, the seeds of a new project were planted.

Of course, the limited time available to the researchers comes with a sacrifice; so much of the week is spent in study that little time is left to explore the rest of Oxford. However, Swenson was able to find some time to visit Oxford's Ashmolean Museum and go punting on a tributary of the Thames. While she could have extended her trip to London for more research after her week in Oxford, a busy summer ultimately called her back to Missouri S&T.

The Summer Research Institute may only last a week, but it leaves a powerful impression. Commenting on her experience, Swenson said, "It was honestly amazing. Absolutely the best academic experience I've had."



# A New Home for S&T's Intensive English Program:

The IEP is now part of the ETC department.

THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDYING abroad is a testament to strength and the pursuit of happiness. This is especially true for English language learners who, through their efforts to learn a new language, embody tenacity and dedication to academic achievement. Not only do they face the hardships that come with higher education, but they do so while adapting to cultural shifts and new forms of communication.

Fortunately for students at Missouri S&T, there is support in the area of language proficiency. Since its creation in December 1993 with the admission of students from Turkey, the Intensive English Program (IEP) has assisted international students and community members from over 70 countries in achieving the proficiency level required for their studies and has promoted effective transition to academic programs at the university. Current IEP students hail from Afghanistan, China, Ethiopia, Mexico, Kuwait, and Taiwan.

The program has undergone a transition of its own, moving from International Affairs (IA) to English and Technical Communication (ETC). The IA was dissolved on September 1, 2022. According to an announcement sent to the campus, the reorganization was prompted by “the changing nature of international outreach and current trends.” As a result, all units and roles that previously reported to Dr. Jeanie Hofer, former Vice Provost of International Affairs, now report to departments that are more closely aligned to their functions. Within the IEP program itself, classes have been reorganized, effective January 2023.

Dr. Thu Tran has been the Program Administrator for the IEP since 2012. He commented on what the move means for the program and its students. “International students will continue to receive support regarding improving their English language proficiency. This mainly affects the program’s reporting structure. I do hope to gain more administrative support.”

Tran believes the move will strengthen “the program by giving [IEP] students more opportunities to interact with students and faculty of the English department. Collaboration between English-language learners and English majors will be smoother, and the IEP will receive more support from the faculty in the department.”

This latest development is not the first step towards integration of the program into campus academic life. In 2021, classes in the program were moved from the Southwestern Bell Cultural Center, where they had historically been taught, to main campus buildings. Classes which were scheduled directly through the IEP can now be registered for through the registrar. These changes all served to establish the IEP as an instructional unit rather than a support division. With cultural and linguistic barriers at play, bringing English-language learners closer to other members of the campus community is a tremendous benefit for their social and linguistic development.



*Dr. Tran (far right) with his 2019 IEP class*



# Parenthood and Graduate School: finding work-life balance

as a parent  
and a GTA

ALL COLLEGE STUDENTS, whether they are undergraduates or graduates, can agree that school is not without its challenges. College life comes with more personal freedom, but it also comes with more responsibility to find a balance between your personal life and schoolwork, such as attending class, completing assignments on time, studying for tests and exams, taking care of oneself, and participating in events.

Imagine dealing with all these challenges while being a parent and teaching courses as a graduate teaching assistant (GTA). Vivian Asigri and Priscilla Owusu-Danquah, both graduate students in the ETC department, are GTAs and parents.

The mother of two, Asigri was pregnant with her third child during the second half of the Fall 2021 semester and all through the spring 2022 semester. She successfully rounded up the semester with the birth of a baby girl. In her own words, “With discipline, focus and determination, anything is possible.”

*“I am always the first person to wake up in the morning and the last person to go to bed in my house.”*

*-Priscilla Owusu-Danquah*



*Owusu-Danquah  
and her children at the bus stop*

Asigri highlighted the importance of having a strong support network. She acknowledged the support she gets not only from friends and

family members but also from members of the ETC faculty—from constant checkups and words of encouragement to deadline extensions on assignments.

According to Asigiri, “Setting priorities helps to keep me motivated, lowers my stress level, and prevents procrastination. I set my priorities by determining what task is important and urgent,

*Continued on page 14*



## Parenthood and Graduate School, continued

important but not urgent, and urgent but not important. And I make sure to complete the different tasks I have in this order.”

Managing time as a student, teacher, and parent is one of Asigri’s toughest challenges. She uses school resources such the calendar creator on Joe’sS to create a weekly agenda and to set reminders. She also uses Google calendars to keep track of daily obligations and activities. Improving her time management skills has increased her productivity and efficiency.



*Vivian Asigri, pictured above, graduated in December 2022 as a mother of three.*

“With discipline, focus, and determination, anything is possible.”

—Vivian Asigri



*Owusu-Danquah and her children wait for the bus together.*

Owusu-Danquah is the mother of four, and her daily routine keeps her busy from morning to night. “I am always the first person to wake up in the morning and the last person to go to bed in my house. My husband and I get the kids ready for school with their breakfast packs. Then I take them to the bus stop and make sure they get on the bus. Then I come back home to make sure lunch and dinner are ready.”

Owusu-Danquah has developed a system for communicating with her family when she is away from home. “I leave cute sticky notes telling each child what they must do when they get back from school.” After the family is taken care of, it is time for her to get ready for school and walk to campus. “I attend classes and teach classes as well. Most times I go to the library to do my assignments.” She stays at school until her work is done.

Having a strong support system is crucial. She appreciates the support she receives from her husband and children. “Their support enables me to balance the demands of my personal and professional life.” She is also grateful to the ETC faculty for their understanding and support.

# To Intern or Not to Intern?

Four ETC Students Share Their Experiences and Perspectives

ETC STUDENTS OFTEN ASK whether they should do an internship. To help students answer this question, we interviewed four current students who have completed internships within the last year. The four students had various jobs at different companies, but all the jobs involved technical communication in some way.



Kevin is an ETC undergraduate who started his studies as an engineering major before switching to technical communication and linguistics. He is considering getting a master's degree in business administration after graduation because that is where his interests lie.

Last summer, Kevin completed an internship with the Bellerive Country Club. He has held summer jobs with them since he was sixteen, performing various roles according to the club's needs. He approached the club's general manager about a possible internship in technical communication, and a role was created for him in the facilities department, which encompasses maintenance and housekeeping. Kevin helped management with scheduling and wrote a standard operating procedure (SOP) for the porter position.

In the SOP, Kevin defined the duties of the porter's position to include such activities as leaf blowing, window cleaning, setting out chairs for special events, and extracting carpets. The

SOP included, for example, detailed instructions for using cleaning products, along with photographs. "Creating the SOP," Kevin said, "was a fun project. It was different from anything I had done before." Kevin credited ETC courses in technical writing and document design for preparing him to create a technical document.

Half of Kevin's summer was spent scheduling weekly meetings with the managers to discuss upcoming events. There were times when he felt he was doing busy work and not learning as much as he would like to. But he understood that not all the work could be educational all the time. The key was to be patient, keep a positive attitude, and do the work that needed to be done.

During his internship over the summer, Kevin made industry contacts with general managers from other golf courses and through club members who are executives and lawyers. He believes the connections he made can lead to opportunities in the future. In the meantime, he has another internship lined up with the country club next summer in a managerial role.



Lara had an internship this summer with Ozark Actors Theatre (OAT). She drafted sections of their new policies and procedures manual, completed and submitted grant applications, and performed other technical writing. Initially looking at a part-time job for the summer with OAT, Lara was encouraged by her advisor,

*Continued on page 16*



## Intern, continued

Dr. Ed Malone, to investigate whether the job might be structured to fulfill the requirements of the department's internship course, TCH COM 4085. OAT agreed to do so. That part-time job turned into a valuable internship.

With four years of previous grant writing experience, she was looking for an opportunity to expand into related types of technical writing. She said that the strategic planning needs of the theater and the policy writing allowed her to do just that.

"Doing this internship was definitely the right choice for me. Balancing work and school can be very hard, and being able to make progress on both simultaneously for several hours each week made it that much easier." Lara gained experience with filesharing and synchronous document editing—skills that are transferable.

Lara's internship was on location, and though she was used to doing her technical writing

from home, she discovered that working at the theater had technical advantages. She said you can never predict everything that will happen in a workplace.

According to Lara, students should not let the fear of the unknown stop them from learning something new, and an internship is a great way

to learn something new. It is also a great way to make industry contacts. She intends to follow up with a connection she made over the summer—a person who has experience with for-profit grants and government grants. "Cultivating the skills and experience needed for these subtypes of technical writing could open up many possibilities for me," she said.

**"Try to get the internship. It doesn't matter if they say no, at least you tried, but if they say yes, you can go get that valuable experience and knowledge."**

**- Annmarie Tyson**



A star on the S&T track team, Annmarie is a technical communication graduate student interested in general communication and presentations, which she describes as being on the "calmer side" of technical communication.

Annmarie applied for an internship with Tyson Foods during the virtual career fair in 2020 because of the funny connection with her name. Since then, she has had three internship seasons with them, and she already has an offer of full-time employment starting after her graduation in May 2023.

Even though Tyson Foods wasn't looking for someone in technical communication, Annmarie wasn't discouraged. She used her communication skills to explain what a technical communicator does, and the recruiter said, "Oh yeah, we can put you anywhere with those skills."

Annmarie worked as an analyst in the IT finance department but was able to fill in as a project manager for a few weeks while the primary project manager was out of the office. "It's funny because I took Dr. Wright's project management course after the internship, and it was like, 'Wow, I wish I had had this beforehand.'" The internship experience gave her insights into the coursework that she would not have had otherwise.

As a student success coach on campus, Annmarie frequently tells students to go to the career fair, talk to recruiters, and apply for jobs. She said the experience you get from the interview is beneficial even if you don't get hired. "Try to get the internship. It doesn't matter if they say no, at least you tried, but if they say yes, you can go get that valuable experience and knowledge."

*Continued on page 17*



The Graduate Track Pathway (GTP) program allows an undergraduate student to take up to 9 credit hours in their final year and double-count those hours toward the BS and MS in technical communication. Juliette Okel was a GTP student who graduated with the BS in May 2022 and started the MS in August 2022 with 6 graduate credits under her belt. Currently an MS student, she is also working on certifications in project management and engineering management.

During her time at S&T, Juliette has had two internships and a co-op. Her first internship was with LeNgineer, a small minority-owned space and defense company, as a proposal writer. She found the company on LinkedIn, applied for the internship, and accepted it even though it was unpaid. Juliette said she learned a lot during her time with LeNgineer by working with subject-matter experts who would tell her what she needed to know for the proposals she would write.

Her second internship was with Edge Impulse, a software engineering firm, as a federal sales writer and project manager. This was her first paid internship. She wrote marketing literature focused on the military's and federal government's use of artificial intelligence. She also managed some of the writing projects and was the point of contact. The position was remote,

but she often traveled to California during her internship, which she said was a real test of her time management skills because she was also attending classes full-time.

While working at Edge Impulse, Juliette met people from Konya Mining and was recruited to be their project manager and is now working with them full-time.

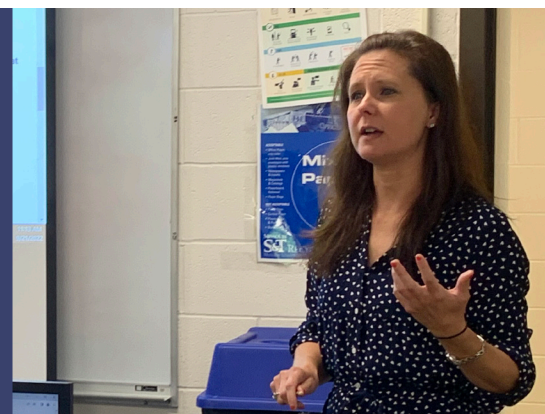
During her undergraduate education, Juliette also participated in S&T's cooperative education program (co-op). A co-op is usually longer than an internship—for example, 8 or 9 months rather than just 3 months in the summer. Her co-op was with a company called Leidos, for whom she worked as a technical editor in the health and engineering branch.

Juliette said she was inspired to take multiple internships by a friend who graduated from the aerospace engineering program. He took six years to graduate because he had various co-ops and internships. Although it took him longer to graduate than some of his classmates, he got to know his career field better and had three or four years of industry experience when he finally graduated.

She also wishes students knew they don't need to rush through their time at S&T. With each internship and co-op she did, she discovered what parts of technical communication she liked and didn't like. She also learned what kind of company she wants to work for. "Internships teach you where you want to go before you have to commit."

Juliette's advice for anyone considering an internship is to join LinkedIn, attend events and network, and attend the career fairs. She recommends practicing your interview skills and asking others to review your resume multiple times before you use it.





DR. JOSSALYN LARSON AND Professor Elizabeth Roberson have created an intensive advising program for students struggling in ETC courses. The program works by allowing ETC professors to refer struggling students to an intensive advisor, who can then help each student develop and execute a personalized academic recovery plan.

By the end of the program's first semester (FS21), more than half (58.5%) of participants had raised their grade from the D/F/W range to a C or better. "The program was successful because faculty was involved," Larson explained. "The person who was an intermediary between the student and professor was a faculty member."

Larson and Roberson observed that, even though course professors are willing to help struggling students, the students often find it easier to be open about their difficulties with an intermediary who has no influence over their grade. "Some students confided that they were too embarrassed at times to approach their professors and admit they needed help," Roberson said. They were more comfortable with a different ETC faculty member.

Intensive advisors have subject-matter knowledge and familiarity with courses, instructors, and assignments, and a portion of the program's success can be attributed to their expertise.

Larson and Roberson want to make intensive advising available to more students in ETC courses. Even though program participants in Spring 2022 saw improvement, the total number of F's in ETC courses went up between midterms and finals. This was probably because many students did not start seriously struggling until late in the semester and missed their chance to get a referral from their professors.

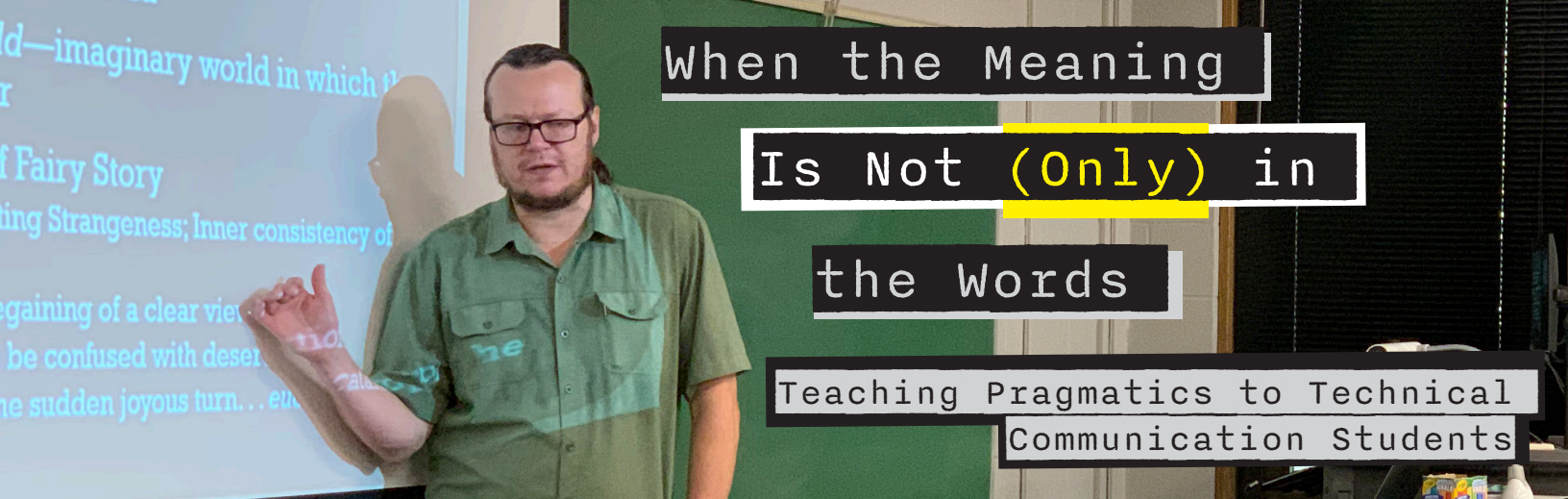
To address this scenario, the Fall 2022 version of the program asked professors to check their rosters for struggling students during weeks 3, 6, 9, and 12 so that more students will receive a referral and be offered help before it is too late.

As the program continues to develop, Larson and Roberson hope to develop new intensive advising strategies specifically for weeks 9 through 12. They will also continue to refine the program as they collect data on its effectiveness throughout 2023.

In Fall 2022, Larson and Roberson started a second initiative involving GTA-embedded tutors. As part of their work as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), several graduate students in technical communication were assigned to tutor individual struggling students.

The hope is that this second method of providing department-specific personalized help will prove just as effective as intensive advising by faculty members and easier for other departments to adapt and maintain. "We are hoping we can create a model that can be adapted by departments across the campus," Larson said.





When the Meaning

Is Not (Only) in

the Words

Teaching Pragmatics to Technical  
Communication Students

IN SPRING 2022, DR. ERIC BRYAN taught a new course, TCH COM 5001 Pragmatics of Discourse, that combined the fields of linguistics and technical communication. A seasoned course designer, Bryan started from scratch with a topic he felt passionate about, transforming it into “palatable useful segments of information and experiences for the students.”

Pragmatics is the study of language use in context, usually involving analysis of verbal exchanges. Linguists have long recognized that spoken or written words often do not match up with the communicator’s intended meaning. An example would be a sarcastic remark. The meaning could be taken literally by someone for whom English is a second language or by someone on the autism spectrum – or by anyone else for that matter. Ideally, though, the audience for the remark would understand its intended meaning from the context of the verbal exchange.

**“It’s not like learning a language and teaching people a vocabulary... It’s much more like teaching people the mechanisms for how they walk down the street or the physics behind jumping on a trampoline.”**

**- Dr. Bryan**

As Bryan explained, “We all do pragmatics every single day. Every time we open our mouths, we’re using a finely tuned instrument [our brain] that understands pragmatics very very well. It’s so integrated into our use of language that it is very difficult to describe and articulate the mechanisms of pragmatics.” He added that, in his experience, the only way students, or in fact other researchers, can understand these concepts is by experiencing them.

He said that the most challenging aspect of designing and teaching the new course was devising ways for the students to experience the concepts. “It’s not like learning a language and teaching people a vocabulary and then they know the vocabulary and that’s it. It’s much more like teaching people the mechanisms for how they walk down the street or the physics behind jumping on a trampoline. If they can’t draw a connection between a concept and the thing that they do every day, there’s no hope they’ll understand it.”

Toward this end, he showed clips from a Harry Potter film and an episode of The Big Bang Theory as well as videos of people playing the dozens (a game frequently played in African and African American communities in which two contestants participate in insulting one another until one of them gives up) and children on the autism spectrum participating in a study of language understanding. These audiovisual



## Pragmatics, continued

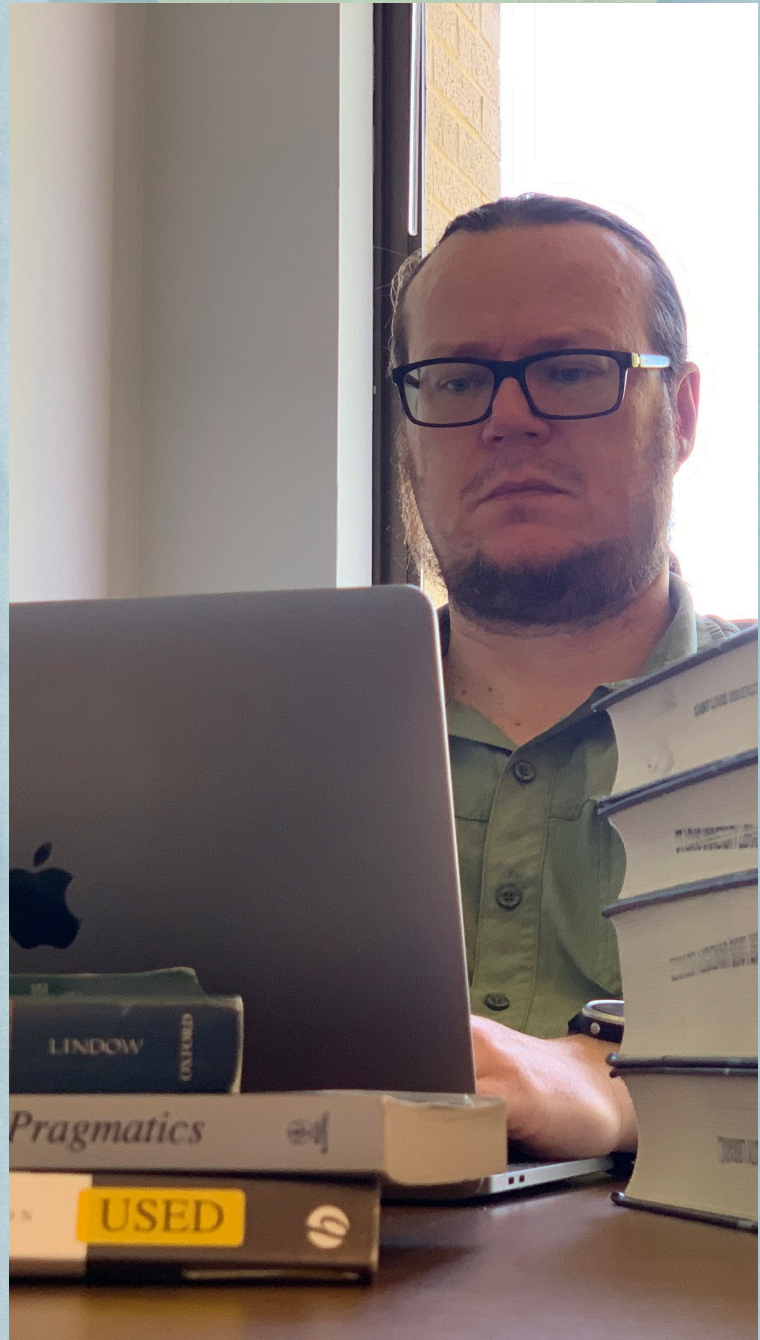
examples offered opportunities for students to evaluate verbal and physical communication in relation to the communicator's intended meaning.

The class also discussed written examples of pragmatics from historical and contemporary sources and read articles from scholarly journals in linguistics and technical communication. For example, the students analyzed examples of pragmatics in Norse sagas and read Godwin Agboka's "Liberating Intercultural Technical Communication from 'Large Culture' Ideologies: Constructing Culture Discursively."

The final projects completed by both the undergraduate and graduate students were interest driven, and though both groups made the connection between pragmatics and technical communication, the graduate students produced projects that showed deeper understanding of the connection. Graduate students explored topics of cultural awareness, inclusivity, accessibility, and readability in relation to modern technical communication. Although the importance of pragmatics to technical communication has been well established in the published scholarship, Bryan found it very encouraging that the students came to the same conclusion through their own projects.

He believes the course was successful and looks forward to teaching it again. "It was an incredible challenge. I loved it honestly. It was really fun to work with the students to make those connections to the content in the course."

"It was an incredible challenge.  
I loved it honestly."





DR. DAVID YOUNG IS A SUCCESSFUL Missouri S&T alumnus who has worked in both academia (at Georgia Tech University) and industry (at Amazon). He began his journey in Rolla as a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering (2006–2010) and left as a Master of Science in Technical Communication (2010–2013). During his master's program, he taught English 160 Technical Writing (now English 3560) as a GTA, and he combined his knowledge of technical communication, classical rhetoric, and chemical engineering in his thesis *Lexis in Chemical Engineering Discourse*.

After his studies at S&T, Young moved to Texas Tech University, where he obtained a PhD in Technical Communication and Rhetoric (2017). From there, he went to Georgia Tech as an assistant professor (2018–2021). He was the only tech com faculty member in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication for about three years. It was up to him to develop the tech com program he envisioned for Georgia Tech. His aim was to equip students with necessary rhetorical skills before they graduated. As a junior faculty, he helped define and support the goals of the program, until the second year of COVID-19 pandemic.

Young made the decision to move to Amazon as a Senior Technical Editor for Amazon Diagnostics. “It was the right time, the right place,” he said. Amazon hired him for this remote job within 2 to 3 weeks of application. His primary function was “to edit documents to align with the standards and purpose of the company before sending them out the door.” With his knowledge of XML and Python, he also provided IT support to his team.

Curiosity, passion, and smart work led to his current role: As a Senior Program Manager, Young manages a team of three technical writers, supporting the documentation efforts for Amazon Pharmaceuticals. He is charged with removing any obstacles to the team's work and ensuring a smooth working environment for the team.

Because of his study of rhetoric, Young is now “very deliberate in how he delivers messages,” and this skill has helped him handle challenges in the industry. “As a technical writing team, we have certain priorities that are important to us: efficiency and scale, but these are not priorities to some other stakeholders.” When facing this recurring problem, Young seeks the right moment to speak to each stakeholder individually and puts rhetorical appeals into practice. For him, this method has always worked like magic, and he recommends it to others.

Even as an industry practitioner, Young still has the passion to teach and help students who wish to improve their technical writing skills. He may one day return to a teaching position in academia. A guiding principle for him through his education and career has been “to follow wherever your curiosity leads.”

For students who might be interested in internships at Amazon, Young noted how competitive it is. He advised students to apply, but not to limit their applications or hopes to Amazon alone because there is a very large world outside Amazon also available to them. He also mentioned that “to prepare for success, treat all your works, even in school, as portfolio materials.”

For technical communication students, Young gave the following advice: “Be relentless in your advocacy for audiences/end users. That is what we do.”



# Student Organizations in the ETC Department

*Prospective employers expect students to be involved in student organizations, where they can develop leadership skills, people skills, and professionalism.*

IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS, student organizations are vital as they enable extended communication outside of the classroom. A sense of community, the development of soft skills, the ability to work in a team, leadership abilities, and access to opportunities are just a few of the advantages of joining these organizations. The speech and debate team, the S&T chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, the S&T chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, and the literary magazine Southwinds are student organizations affiliated with the ETC department. Students from any department are always encouraged to join these organizations to have a well-rounded educational experience.

## **The Speech and Debate Team**

Well established on campus but new to our department, the speech and debate team is an organization dedicated to building students' confidence and speaking skills. It allows its members a platform to express their ideas about current events in our world today and opens avenues for networking during contests. Kendrea James, an assistant teaching professor of speech and media studies and the organization's faculty advisor, received her master's degree from Northeastern State University and has won multiple state and national debate championships.

Why should a student join the speech and debate team? Professor James explains the reasons eloquently: "Competing on the speech and debate team opens so many doors for students and allows them to experience many benefits that they otherwise would miss out on. Meeting students from all over the country broadens our worldview and fosters networking that lasts a lifetime. What I love most about it is that it allows students a place to voice what they think matters, what they want to change in the world. So many students who compete are actually advocating for something much bigger than themselves. It's a wonderful thing to watch students from all over the country come together. These students may not agree on everything, but they are compassionate, supportive, and encouraging."

Not to be deterred by the COVID-19 pandemic, the team held meetings and participated in debate competitions via zoom in 2020 and participated in a couple more in 2022. Any student interested in joining the team should contact Professor James by email at jamesken@umsystem.edu

## **The Society for Technical Communication**

The S&T student chapter of the international Society for Technical Communication is a group of students dedicated to the improvement of technical communication as well as the continued development of its members. Through participation in planned events held all year long such as seminars, conferences, and workshops, the organization offers its members the chance to advance their professional abilities. Dr. Ed Malone, a professor with expertise in technical editing, international technical communication, and the history of technical communication, serves as the organization's advisor.

The chapter hosted an inaugural meeting in 2022 to inform interested students about its principles, goals, and opportunities. Attendees



for the new academic year. In September 2022, chapter members participated in Miner Mingle, a reverse career fair in which departments and student organizations greet visiting representatives of companies.

According to Chapter President Iveren Akula, the Society for Technical Communication “offers opportunities for connecting and networking with like-minded individuals and top industry influencers.” Students may attend the regional STC conference in Springfield in April or the international summit in Atlanta in May. Other chapter officers include Tammy Korte as vice president, Felix Nyikwagh as public relations officer, Summer Potter as secretary, and Frederick Sunkpal as treasurer—all ETC graduate students.

The STC chapter welcomes not only graduate and undergraduate students of all majors but also professional technical communicators and other non-students to become members. Anyone interested in joining may contact Dr. Malone (malonee@mst.edu) or Iveren Akula (iaacvd@mst.edu)

### **Sigma Tau Delta**

The S&T chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the national English honor society, is a student organization that promotes reading and all facets of the English discipline on campus through activities like book discussions, book-movie pairings, weekly readings of short stories, live readings at which money is raised for charities, and the “brown bag” series, a chapter tradition where various professors’ humanities research is highlighted and discussed.

In 2022, Sigma Tau Delta sponsored “Spring Fling with a Book,” at which students received wrapped books as gifts. The chapter also started a book club, which entails completing brief readings and having discussions about them each month.

Dr. Kathryn Dolan, an associate professor with specialty in nineteenth-century American literature, food studies, global studies, and sustainability, serves as the organization’s faculty advisor. In Fall 2022, ETC major Jacob Ott was the president; Keillyn Johnson, a major in applied mathematics as well as ETC, was the vice president; and ETC majors Cindy Wilson and Keegan Hammond were treasurer and secretary, respectively. Last but not the least, Aamir Iqbal, a mining engineering major, was the organization’s student council (STUCO) representative.

Students interested in becoming a part of this organization should contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Dolan (dolankc@mst.edu); the chapter president, Jacob Ott (jromby@mst.edu), or the assistant president, Keillyn Johnson (krj9gq@umsystem.edu).

### **Southwinds**

The goal of Southwinds is to foster an understanding of culture and respect for art inside and around the university. Mathew Goldberg, an associate teaching professor who established and oversees the ETC’s creative writing minor, serves as the organization’s advisor.

Southwinds was initially just a literary magazine, but it has now grown into a community for sharing photography, visual arts, crafts, sculptures, metal works, and other such things. One of Southwinds’ main goals is to bridge the gap between the arts and sciences. Toward this end, the staff and faculty advisor are pursuing a collaboration with Dr. Karen Head, Missouri S&T’s Director of Arts & Innovation.

Any student from any department is eligible to join the organization and work on the magazine. Interested students may contact the faculty advisor, Professor Goldberg (goldbergmr@mst.edu), or the organization’s president, Andreas Ellinas (ape687@mst.edu).each month.



## Role Changes in Department

*Several members of the department assumed new roles at the beginning of the Fall 2022 semester.*

**DANIEL REARDON**, associate professor, is S&T's Interim Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education. He was formerly Associate Chair of ETC. The associate chair's role has been dissolved.



**JOSSALYN LARSON**, associate teaching professor, is Director of Foundational Speech and Composition in ETC. This new position subsumed the old position of Composition Director.



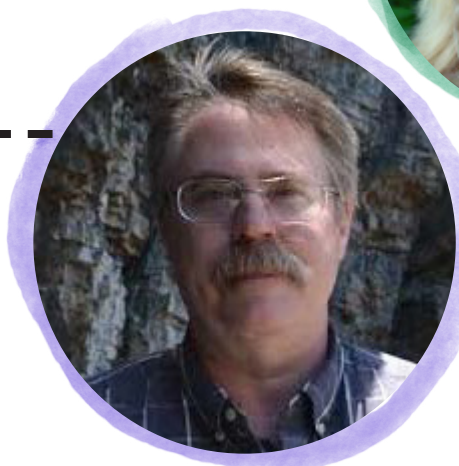
**KATHLEEN DROWNE**, professor, is Special Assistant to the Provost. She was Interim Dean of the College of Arts, Science, and Education (CASE).



**KATHYRN NORTHCUT**, professor, is Assistant Chair for Undergraduate Studies in ETC. She was formerly S&T's Vice Provost of Academic Support.



**ED MALONE**, professor, is Assistant Chair for Graduate Studies in ETC.





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