

Virtual Conferences and Public Health Emergencies: ComSHER in 2020

By Rachel Young, ComSHER Head



The upheaval of 2020 – we should have seen it coming. Lack of investment in public health, scientific research, and social safety nets in the U.S. means we were tragically unprepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. Politicization of science and health created conflicts around mask wearing and other public health policies. Centuries of racist violence and white supremacist systems led to devastating inequities in COVID deaths for Black, indigenous, and other people of color – and to worldwide protests after the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black people at the hands of police.

ComSHER members are already answering crucial questions related to the pandemic. We have an entire research panel devoted to the topic. But we also must reckon with our roles in and responses to the related public health issue, racial injustice. In the institution of academia, there's plenty of evidence of historic and current marginalization and inequity. [Nonwhite scholars are underrepresented in publication, citation, and journal editorship](#). Systemic racism also shapes the research questions that get asked; the rhetoric around “excellence,” “rigor,” and “merit”; the networks that encourage participation in leadership; and the sidelining of research that addresses systemic inequalities.

In ComSHER, we have considered diversity, equity, and inclusion as a primary goal of our last few years, but there's always more work to do.

[In the words of Dr. Natalie Tindall, Chair of the Department of Media and Communication at Lamar University](#), to drive change we must continue to amplify muted voices, expand antiracist resources, and create space for uncomfortable but vital conversation.

At our virtual business meeting on Saturday, August 8, at 6:30 pm PST, we will celebrate our award winners and introduce new officers. We will also make time for discussion of our division's commitment to inclusion, justice, and antiracism in science, health, environment, and risk communication. [Use this form](#) to submit any questions or points of discussion for the meeting anonymously, or to submit resources that may be of interest to our ComSHER colleagues. As a start, I have found [this manifesto on decolonizing curricula](#) and [this paper on developing antiracist research labs](#) useful.

I'm incredibly proud of the work our officers have done in the face of pandemic disruptions. Our vice heads and research co-chairs worked diligently to run the paper competition and plan an exciting research program, including our top paper session at 4:45 pm PST on Saturday, August 8.

We also have five excellent teaching and PF&R panels scheduled. Please plan to attend the annual ComSHER Teaching Award Panel at 5:30 pm PST on Thursday, August 6, to hear from master teachers on engaging students in SHER communication. Also mark your calendars for 3 pm PST on Saturday, August 8. You'll want to be there for a PF&R panel on diversity and inclusion in science communication, co-sponsored by the Minorities and Communication Division.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to have served the division in many capacities for nearly a decade now. I've become a better teacher, researcher, and professional because of what I've learned from our ComSHER officers and members. As I step away in August, I'm certain that Kajsa, Sara, and the rest of our team are committed to continuing the vital work of our division. Looking forward to seeing you all on Zoom very soon.

ComSHER Announces 2019 Article of the Year

By Kajsia E. Dalrymple, Vice-Head



We had an excellent group of nominees for this year's ComSHER Article of the Year Award. The best papers published in 2019 were selected after two rounds of peer review. Many thanks to all of the reviewers – two ComSHER officers and our expert panel of journal editors, full professors, and past ComSHER heads – who helped with this year's process. Thanks also to all those who nominated articles from 2019.

This year's first-place article was "[The role of counterfactual thinking in narrative persuasion: Its impact on patients' adherence to treatment regimen](#)," by Timothy K.F. Fung. The experimental study appeared in *Health Communication* and found that narratives with counterfactual information influence attitudes and behaviors by eliciting anticipated regret and mental simulation.

We hope that you will join us in honoring Dr. Fung and our other top paper award winners at the ComSHER business meeting on Saturday, August 8th from 6:30-8 (PST).

A Record High Year for ComSHER Submissions

By Timothy K. F. Fung and Matthew S. VanDyke, Co-Research Chairs



Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, ComSHER received a record high number of submissions this year. In total, we received 172 extended abstracts and full papers. The fierce competition only allowed us to accept 82 submissions for presentation. Three scholars reviewed each submission—and a big THANK YOU to our reviewers who helped out! Your service and timeliness was much appreciated, particularly given the circumstances under which you reviewed this year. Submissions with the highest standardized scores will be presented in our Division's Top Papers Session. Congratulations to our top paper winners and the Eason Prize winner! Below is the line-up for our top paper session on Saturday, Aug. 8 at 4:45 p.m. (PST). Don't miss it!

Fear, Anticipated Regret, and Efficacy Perceptions for Active Depression Coping*

Soojin Roh, Peking HSBC Business School

**Top Faculty Paper*

"I Just Saw on Twitter that Tom Hanks Has Coronavirus": A Mixed Method Examination of a Theoretical Model of Celebrity Illness Disclosure Effects**

Jessica Myrick, Pennsylvania State

Jessica Willoughby, Washington State

***2nd Place Top Faculty Paper*

Are Productive Scientists More Willing to Participate in Public Engagement?***

Luye Bao, Wisconsin at Madison

Mikhaila Calice, Wisconsin at Madison

Dominique Brossard, Wisconsin at Madison

Dietram Scheufele, Wisconsin at Madison

***3rd Place Top Faculty Paper

Seeking Information About an Emerging Technology: Fairness, Uncertainty, Systematic Processing, and Information Engagement Intentions****

Hang Lu, Michigan

Hwanseok Song, Purdue

Katherine McComas, Cornell

****4th Place Top Faculty Paper

Testing the Efficacy of Carbon Footprint Calculator Messaging on Climate Action: An Emotion-as-Frames Approach*****

Nicholas Eng, Pennsylvania State

Jin Chen, Pennsylvania State

Jason Freeman, Pennsylvania State

Carlina DiRusso, Pennsylvania State

*****Eason Prize Winner

For your reference, the table below includes times, dates, and titles for all ComSHER research sessions at this year's conference.

Thursday August 6, 2020
10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (PDT) <ul style="list-style-type: none">ComSHER Refereed Paper Session: Examining COVID-19 Communication and Information Behaviors (Refereed Paper Session)
1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. (PDT) <ul style="list-style-type: none">CT&M and ComSHER Scholar-to-Scholar Poster Session
Friday August 7, 2020
1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (PDT) <ul style="list-style-type: none">AEJMC Scholar-to-Scholar Poster Session
3:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. (PDT) <ul style="list-style-type: none">ComSHER High Density Refereed Paper Session
Saturday August 8, 2020
4:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. (PDT) <ul style="list-style-type: none">ComSHER Top Paper Session
Sunday August 9, 2020
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (PDT) <ul style="list-style-type: none">ComSHER Refereed Paper Session: Understanding Audiences for Science and Health Risk Information

We want to take this opportunity to thank all reviewers, moderators, and discussants for your voluntary service to the Division this year. Without your support, we could not overcome the unusual challenges and make this year's annual conference work. We greatly appreciate your support and are grateful to have you be part of the ComSHER community.

Once again, thank you! And we look forward to seeing you at this year's virtual conference!

Three teaching-related panels for AEJMC this year

By Jessica Willoughby, Teaching Chair



ComSHER announced the winners of its annual ComSHER Teaching Award. We also have panels co-sponsored with the Political Communication Division and the Mass Communication & Society Division that cover teaching about the environment and politics as well as mentoring and working with graduate students. We look forward to seeing you online.

Best of ComSHER Teaching

Thursday, Aug. 6, 5 to 6:30 p.m. PST

This annual ComSHER Teaching Award session will include presentations by our ComSHER award winners and a discussion of applied learning amid the pandemic. This session is intended for any scholar or practitioner teaching in the areas of science, health, environment and risk communication.

Moderating/presiding:

Jessica Willoughby, Washington State

First Place

Rebecca Ortiz, Syracuse

Second Place

Hollie Smith, Oregon

Guest Presenter

Katherine McComas, Cornell

Teaching about Politics and the Environment Co-sponsored with the Political Communication Division

Friday, Aug. 7, 11:45 to 1:15 p.m. PST

Politics and the environment are important topics that often receive attention in journalism. This session will discuss topics related to teaching about politics and the environment, including conveying information on environmental justice.

Moderating/presiding:

Sojung Kim, George Mason

Panelists

Karen Cannon, California Polytechnic State, San Luis Obispo

Mary Beth Deline, Illinois State

Shupei Yuan, Northern Illinois

Robin Hoecker, DePaul

Sharing the knowledge: Successful strategies for mentoring and working with graduate students Co-sponsored with the Mass Communication & Society Division

Saturday, Aug. 8, 1:15-2:25 p.m. PST

This panel will discuss strategies that faculty members have found useful for mentoring and collaborating with graduate students. Some topics of discussion will include different methods of working with graduate students, the differences in advising, coaching, and mentoring, the challenges of meeting people where they are, and other relevant topics.

Moderating/presiding:

Mo Jones-Jang, Boston College

Panelists:

Francesca Dillman Carpentier, North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Glenn Leshner, Oklahoma

Heidi Hennink-Kaminski, North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Carol Liebler, Syracuse

Mark your calendars for two exciting Personal Freedom & Responsibility panels co-hosted by ComSHER.

By Ashley A. Anderson, PF&R Chair



Session 1: Making Sense of Technology Buzz Words: Automation, Robotics, AI

Friday, 1:30 – 3 p.m. PST

Media Management, Economics and Entrepreneurship and Communicating Science, Health, Environment and Risk Divisions

The media landscape is increasingly shaped by technologies that threaten existing business models and organizational structures. While Silicon Valley has been the driving force behind AI, machine learning, and automation, legacy media have been slower to embrace these new technologies. However, considering the efficiencies in terms of content creation, audience engagement, and audience research afforded by these technologies, executives at legacy media firms are beginning to change their perspectives. The panel brings together experts who explain the reality behind the buzzwords of AI, robotics, automation, etc. Are they just hypes, are they threats or do they provide new exciting business opportunities for media? Successful collaborations to date will be discussed as well as the opportunities for media firms to engage audiences and advertisers. In addition, some focus will be placed on future challenges that will face media managers as they grapple with the negative impacts of automation and the misconceptions that their employees may have of AI and machine learning.

Panelists:

- Sabine Baumann, Jade
- John Bohannon, AI Primer
- Sylvia Chan-Olmsted, Florida
- Kaiping Chen, Wisconsin-Madison
- Alex Hanna, Google

Session 2: Addressing Diversity and Inclusion in the Practice and Scholarship of Science Communication

Saturday, August 8, 3 – 4:30 p.m. PST

Communicating Science, Health Environment and Risk and Minorities and Communication Divisions

Contemporary approaches to science communication prioritize bidirectional communication and understanding audiences, and broadening participation and engagement with scientific issues. A key component of this is championing a diversity of perspectives in the creation and interpretation of messages. This panel addresses ideas around justice and equity and inclusion through examination of practice and scholarship of science communication related to minorities and underserved communities. It will address how we define inclusion in the science communication context and how science communicators can broaden participation and engagement to reach underserved communities.

The topic of this panel should appeal to many attendees who regularly participate in research and teaching related to inclusion and diversity. It will also reach those who are newly engaged in such topics, or hoping to broaden their work to be more inclusive.

Panelists:

- Troy Elias, Oregon
- Mónica Feliú-Mójer, Ciencia Puerto Rico
- María Len-Ríos, Georgia
- Sunshine Menezes, Rhode Island

ComSHER Funds Conference Fees for 10 Graduate Student Members

By Rachel Young, ComSHER Head

When the AEJMC 2020 conference went virtual in response to the pandemic, ComSHER officers faced a question – what to do with the money earmarked for our planned social in San Francisco? This year we spent our social funds to pay the conference registration fees for 10 impressive grad student members who'll be presenting at ComSHER paper and poster sessions. Please read their bios below, check out their research at the conference, and congratulate them at our business meeting.



Robyn Adams is a third-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Advertising & Public Relations in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences at Michigan State University. Her research sits at the intersection of health

disparities, health and risk-related messaging, and interpersonal communication. She seeks to improve health access and health information utilizing multiple approaches and perspectives from communication theory, critical discourse, and psychophysiology.



Luye Bao is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Life Sciences Communication at UW-Madison. Her research interests focus on scientists' and publics' attitudes towards controversial science, as well as communications between scientists and the public

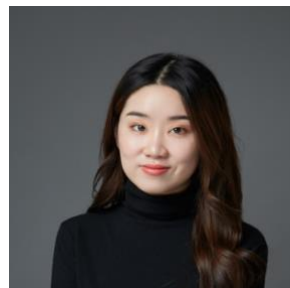
surrounding these issues.



Junhan Chen is a doctoral student at University of Maryland College Park. Her research interests include social norm influence on health behaviors and the use of AR/VR technology in health and risk context.



Deborah J. Danuser is a doctoral student in the Department of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research centers on cultures' perception, representation and communication of science and scientists in different mediated texts, with a special focus on gender issues.



Zhuling Liu is a doctoral student in the Department of Communication at the University at Buffalo. She conducts research on how risk perception, emotion, and social trust influence behaviors related to environmental and

health topics.



Won-Ki Moon is a doctoral student in the Stan Richards School of Advertising and Public Relations at The University of Texas at Austin. His primary research involves the impacts of emerging media on human decision making and judgment in terms of risk, science, health, and environmental communication



Hoa Nguyen is a PhD Candidate at Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, where he also works as a teaching assistant in Media Literacy, Journalism Leadership, and Audience Metrics. He

researches mainstream media versus digital media, audience metrics, risk communication, climate change in the news, media literacy and media history. His work also covers the power of journalism professionalism and education in the digital age.



Alex Olshansky is a doctoral student in the department of Media and Communication at Texas Tech University. His research investigates how cultural values, worldviews, and prior attitudes toward science influence perceptions of science information, as well as how people

cognitively process science misinformation and conspiracy theories.



Hongjie Tang is a graduate student at Sun-Yat sen University, with research interests including health communication, persuasion, social media health promotion and risk communication.



Jody CS. Wong is a second-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Communication at the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York. Her areas of research include the psychology of social

technologies, risk, and science communication, where she is particularly interested in people's emotional responses to media frames and its impact on information processing.