



# COMMentary

December 2011 | Volume 2 | Issue 4

## A conversation with David Letterman and Rachel Maddow



Submitted By:  
Bobby Ellis

David Letterman, Rachel Maddow and Dr. Gora discussed topics like Penn State and drinking.

By Nathan Erwin  
Student

On December 2nd, 2011, David Letterman made his scheduled return back to his alma mater, Ball State University, to host an enlightening conversation with Rachel Maddow. This event was a part of the David Letterman Distinguished Professional Lecture and Workshop Series. This series began in 2009 and has welcomed various guests such as Ted Koppel and Biz Stone who have given lectures and advice to Ball State students. Those who were fortunate enough to get a ticket witnessed a compelling conversation and learned more about Rachel Maddow.

Who is Rachel Maddow? Maddow was born on April 1, 1973 in Castro Valley California. She grew up in a very conservative home, but realized as a teenager that liberalism fit her best, in part because of her sexual orientation

(www.askmen.com). She graduated from Stanford University, became a Rhodes Scholar and eventually graduated from Oxford where she earned her Doctorate in Philosophy (www.msnbc.msn.com). She worked for regional television stations until receiving national attention as a host of Air America Radio. In August 2008, she landed her night time program *The Rachel Maddow Show*. Her show became the highest rated program in MSNBC's history (www.msnbc.msn.com). She is also the very first openly gay anchor on television. As an anchor, Maddow discusses current events, political news, and gay rights activism.

The conversation between Letterman and Maddow quickly became a conversation between Dave, Maddow, and our very own Dr. Jo Ann Gora, Ball State University President. Gora's appearance was

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## From student to attorney: Pursuing a legal career



Submitted Photo

**LEFT TO RIGHT**— Adrienne Rines (B'07) and Victoria (Anderson) Leigh (B'08) are both pursuing legal careers.

By Beth Messner  
Associate Professor

When Adrienne Rines (B'07) and Victoria (Anderson) Leigh (B'08) arrived at Ball State University, they had a lot in common. Both were transfer students, both became Communication Studies majors, and both graduated with honors. Through their common experiences and coursework, they developed a strong friendship that helped them endure the challenges associated with pursuit of yet another common bond - - a desire to become a lawyer.

Adrienne's interest in a legal career developed early. Her hometown (Portland, Indiana) was a county seat, so there were lots of lawyers who had offices on the town square. She admired the respect they garnered, their influence, and their contributions to the community. Adrienne's interest in the law did wane a bit dur-

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**BRANDON BUMSTEAD (M'11)** is a first year PhD student at Wayne State University studying Rhetoric/Critical and Cultural Studies.

**SASHA DYKES-WILSON (B'10)** recently gave the keynote address at Muncie's Annual Volunteer Awards Dinner for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate).

**SARAH ROBERTS (BS'08)** has recently completed a two-year commitment to the Peace Corps. As part of her assignment in the Dominican Republic, she taught entrepreneurship to youth, helped organize small businesses, and developed a community recreational area.

**DOMINIC SCHIFERL (B'10)** currently is teaching English to students in South Korea.

**PAUL SOMMER (BS'09; M'11)** is a first year PhD student at Texas A&M University studying Organizational Communication.

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If you are an alumnus of the Department of Communication Studies and would like to contribute information about yourself for a future issue of COMMENTARY, please contact Glen Stamp at: [gstamp@bsu.edu](mailto:gstamp@bsu.edu) or Beth Messner at: [bmessner@bsu.edu](mailto:bmessner@bsu.edu).

Please note the year you graduated and whether you received a Bachelor's or Master's degree, and any information about current employment, involvement in the community, awards/honors, or other life events that you wish to share.

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### Editor's Note

Alumni notes are based on information received from the Alumni Association and individual e-mails. The Department of Communication Studies apologizes for any omissions or changes that have occurred since receiving this information.

## Reading for diversity

By Tynesia Ross  
Graduate Assistant

The first meeting of the CCIM Diversity Book Club took place November 9th in the Letterman Building. Geared toward faculty and graduate students, and created by the CCIM Diversity Interest Group, this book club marks the beginning of what promises to be an enriching tradition for the college.

According to Assistant Professor Kristen McCauliff, the purpose of the CCIM Diversity Book Club was two fold. "The first purpose was to increase a sense of community among the college. But on the second level, I think it was content related." McCauliff explains the importance in sharing one common text that acts as a way of building and strengthening the CCIM community.

*Teaching Community: A Pedagogy Of Hope* was the book chosen by the CCIM Diversity Interest Group to kick off the fall semester. The goal for the book club is to meet one or two times a semester while encouraging a discussion that flows organically.

"This book was about pedagogical diversity. Bringing not only diverse ways of teaching but also as a teacher, being aware of diversity in a variety of ways," said McCauliff.

Next semester, CCIM faculty and graduate students are invited to read *Understanding and Engaging Under-Resourced College Students* by Karen A. Becker, et al. Based on the popular book, *Framework for Understanding Poverty*, this book has been described as a powerful tool for improving retention and graduation rates for students from impoverished backgrounds. CCIM's Diversity Interest Group hopes that "the book will provide us with a new frame-

work from which to design effective instruction for all students."

The first meeting for the spring semester will take place February 29th, 4-5 p.m., in LB 270. While the books are not provided, there are two ways in which CCIM has made them easily accessible: there are ten books that can be checked out from the CCIM office and the Ball State book store orders copies of the books so that it can be purchased on campus.

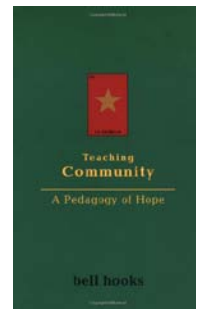
Joining the book club allows the opportunity to get to know college peers and to find like-minded graduate students and faculty who value diverse pedagogy and have a commitment to diversity. In particular, McCauliff states, "There is also something to be said for staying current on your reading and challenging your thinking so that we do not become set in our ways. I think that it's beneficial to do things like this so that we remember that we still have a lot to learn as well."

Because of the value found in CCIM's Diversity Book Club, other departments are starting to implement their own book clubs in hopes of reaping the benefits of this program.

So, if you are interested in getting to know other faculty and graduate students within the CCIM college, while also experiencing and gaining the benefits of sharing knowledge, pick up your copy of the book and jump in on the discussion this February.

### FIND OUT MORE:

Students and faculty interested in participating in the book club can contact Kristen McCauliff at [klmccauliff@bsu.edu](mailto:klmccauliff@bsu.edu).



# WINTER PHOTO GALLERY



**A squirrel playing in the snow.**



**Bridge by the Health Center.**



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**  
From the Comm Office Staff



**Snow on trees by Teacher's College.**



**Pine tree by Lafollette.**



**Holiday lights covered in snow.**



**A holiday wreath in the Atrium.**



**Footprints leaving a trail in the snow.**



# Working toward a brighter tomorrow

By Nathan Erwin  
Student

For most Communication Studies students, there are a plethora of issues and struggles to overcome like speeches, papers and group projects. While these are noteworthy, in Niccole Fortunato's case, they are nothing compared to her daily struggle with Cystic Fibrosis.

Niccole Fortunato is a senior Public Communication major who was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis when she was 14 years old in 2004. For those who may not know, Cystic Fibrosis is "an inherited chronic disease that affects the lungs and digestive system. It is a defective gene and its protein product causes the body to produce thick, sticky mucus that clogs the lungs and leads to life-threatening lung infections" ([www.cff.org](http://www.cff.org)). The average life expectancy for someone diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis is 30 years of age; however, that statistic is not stopping Niccole from achieving her goals.

Niccole is an active member of the

Individual Events speech team and has been for the past three years. Through her public speaking, she has taken it upon herself to help spread awareness about this unfortunate and rarely discussed disease. "I decided since it is my senior year it was a great time to spread awareness to people in the speech community." One of her competitive speeches focuses on a new treatment program that provides "higher levels of lung function, weight gain, and less risk of lung infection."

Niccole's goal is to spread awareness about her disease, not seek sympathy. As she states, "My ultimate goal is to help others with CF that feel the way I felt when I was first diagnosed. I would love to one day go to different places and educate people about CF, talk about my journey with the disease..." Two of the places that Niccole wishes to visit and share her story are either Australia

or London via a study abroad experience.

If you are interested in learning more about the disease, or would like to donate to research for Cystic Fibrosis, you can visit the Cystic Fibrosis website at [www.cff.org](http://www.cff.org). We can all learn from Niccole that while the cards may be stacked against us, giving up is never the option. Instead, we should carry on and bring hope to future generations.



Submitted Photo  
**SPREADING AWARENESS—** Niccole was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis when she was 14 years old.

## Graduate students experience NCA

By Tynesia Ross  
Graduate Assistant

The 97th Annual National Communication Association (NCA) Convention was held in New Orleans, Louisiana from November 17th-20th this year. While many may believe that this convention is solely for focusing on the academic study of communication, there are many other reasons for attending this event.

Graduate student Leland Fecher attended NCA in order to look at PhD programs and to listen to speakers within the field, while Megan Burkett didn't have any set goals and just wanted to be open to the experience.

Burkett explains, "I attended without any set goals. I wanted to be open to the experience but expected to meet people researching some of my same areas of interest. Almost every person I interacted with was conducting fascinat-

ing research. The "no goals" philosophy allowed me to be open to all experiences and conversations."

Aside from the "no goals" philosophy, Burkett had the opportunity to participate in a panel composed of graduate students with fellow graduate student Robin Phelps.

"The panel was composed as a forum for graduate teaching assistants to share experiences about teaching the introductory communication course. Some of the topics discussed included tactics for success, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvements," said Burkett.

Attending such a prestigious convention with so many experts in the field may be intimidating for a first timer.

Even though this was Fecher's first time at NCA, he never felt overwhelmed



Submitted Photo  
**NIGHT ON THE TOWN —** (From right to left) Megan Burkett, Robin Phelps and Jessica Choquette experience the nightlife and cuisine that New Orleans has to offer.

or intimidated because he took things at his own pace. "I made a decision to not only see the panels that intrigued me, but also to explore the amazing city in which I was located. When I needed a break from NCA, there was a city. When I needed a break from the city, there was NCA!"

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Burkett's first experience at NCA left her feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. "It is a challenge discussing the field of communication research with individuals outside of the discipline." But on the other hand, Burkett enjoyed being surrounded by hundreds of people who shared her passion. She felt "like a kid in a candy store."

Since the convention was located in New Orleans, the location provided the opportunity for many attendees to explore the historic city.

Burkett experienced the city with two other graduate students. "I ate seafood everyday, watched dueling pianos on Bourbon Street, attended the French Market, and got a taste of a NOLA Hurricane. The sights are very comparable to what we see in the media. I plan on going back with my family some day."

This was Fecher's first time in New Orleans. His favorite location was a place called the *Saloon* where he was able to see blues guitarist Bryan Lee perform with his band every night. Fecher also enjoyed the food.

"I also loved the food and ate delights such as soft-shell crab, alligator, crawdads, escargot, raw oysters, and muffuletta (olive salad

on a hot ham and cheese sandwich). It was a truly amazing food experience!"

Although they had different reasons for attending NCA, Fecher and Burkett both enjoyed their experiences and agreed that it is a valuable convention for faculty and students to attend.

"People should go because traveling is always a great way to experience life and NCA is the perfect melting pot of research ideas, teaching resources, networking, and professional development that would benefit any student or faculty of the Communication Studies department," said Fecher.

Burkett agrees, "NCA is not for everyone. It can be extremely helpful in learning about PhD programs and finding researchers with your same interests. I would strongly suggest going if you want to raise your knowledge of a particular theory or construct. Panels, presentations, and division meetings provide a central place for further understanding and connectivity."

#### FIND OUT MORE:

For more information, check out NCA's website: [www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org).

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Submitted Photo

**NIGHT ON THE TOWN** — BSU faculty including Glen Stamp, Michael Bauer, Nicole Johnson, Michael O'Hara and Beth Messner enjoy a meal in historic New Orleans.



## BUCKET SPEECH | results

By Kathy Denker  
Assistant Professor

With 30 registered participants and over \$350 donated to charity, the 3rd semester of the COMM 210 Bucket Speech competition was a success!

Participants had the opportunity to first present their speeches to a panel of three judges in the preliminary round, and then the top scorer in each room moved on to the final round.

We had six judges in the final round, and six very talented speakers. But in the end, we had to pick a winner, and the results are:

**Berkley Connor**, speaking on behalf of the Muncie Civic Theater was the winner,

2nd place, **Erin James**

3rd place, **Tucker Olson**

4th place, **Charlotte Sipe**

5th place, **Olivia Wade**

6th place, **Emily Atkinson**

Please congratulate these students if you see them around.



# BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

#### COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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and Media Building, Room 351  
2000 W. University Avenue  
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**Hours:** 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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## ALUMNI PROFILE | continued from page 1

ing college when she discovered a talent for and achieved some success in the field of sales. However, a chance meeting with the Dean of the Ohio Northern University College of Law during a Ball State Career Fair, rejuvenated her enthusiasm. As she explains it, while she “enjoyed sales and made good money . . . it wouldn’t be as challenging or interesting in the long term” as her original career goal. So, when Adrienne finished her Bachelor’s degree, she joined the student body at Ohio Northern University College of Law. She graduated with her Juris Doctorate in May 2011 and currently is studying to take the Indiana Bar Exam.

Victoria followed a different path to law school. She initially wanted to become a doctor, but had difficulty with some of the science courses. She sampled several other majors before transferring to Ball State and finally finding a home in the Dept. of Communication Studies. Victoria decided to apply to law school in part because of the encouragement of friends and family. It seemed a good fit given her interest in working with people and skills in research and communication. Victoria

attended Indiana University School of Law and also graduated with her Juris Doctorate in May 2011. She passed the Arkansas Bar Exam and currently is a Law Clerk for the Pulaski County Circuit Court in Little Rock, Arkansas.

While Adrienne and Victoria are good friends, their decision to study at two different law schools illustrates the importance of selecting a school that addresses each student’s unique needs. For Adrienne, it was important to find a school that didn’t have a lot of distractions so that she could really focus on her studies. She also sought something closer to home that could provide a more intimate atmosphere. The small Ohio Northern campus, located in rural Ada, Ohio, was the perfect fit. Victoria also chose a school that was near family, but one whose urban campus provided for a wealth of networking opportunities, exposure to a variety of different perspectives on the law, and a more active social life. Victoria also recommends that prospective law school students consider the type of lawyer they want to be when choosing schools. For example, if you wish to practice in a

large city at a big firm, it is wise to attend law school in that city. Doing so allows students to network and become familiar with the firms that could hire them in the future.

The successful completion of law school depends on the possession and integration of many skill sets. One of the most important for Victoria was her ability to manage time. In her words, this allowed her to “drill into a subject” and really focus. She also credits her experience on the debate team with her research skills. Not only were these skills essential to successfully completing her coursework, but they also allowed her the special opportunity to serve as a research assistant for two of her professors. In this capacity, she researched cases, wrote briefs and abstracts, and helped the professors address questions posed by students. She considered this one of the most rewarding experiences that she had in law school.

Adrienne also found that skills honed in her communication studies classes were very important. In particular, her abilities to read and think critically and to

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## FEED MY SHEEP



Submitted Photo

Interns Cassie Janus and Erinn Bunger worked for Feed My Sheep this past Thanksgiving. Feed My Sheep is a Muncie community organization founded in 1996 that is currently led by three organizers, including Dr. Peggy Fisher. Feed My Sheep provides an entire meal, as well as a bag of groceries, to individuals in need and those who can not afford a meal on Thanksgiving.

## LETTERMAN | continued from page 1

encouraged by Letterman and added to the overall effect of the show.

The first topic discussed was the recent child molestation case at Penn State University. Gora explained how situations such as these are handled, from an insider’s perspective. This proved to be enlightening for the audience and really broke the ice for the remainder of the program. Other topics included current events and political ideologies. The trio even discussed drinking, which served as a very entertaining topic of discussion.

Overall, Rachel Maddow and David Letterman were informative, honest, and revealing. It was evident that Maddow respects the communication process deeply because she encourages all who believe in something to use their communication skills to

take action. For example, Maddow told the audience about her experiences growing up as a gay teenager and how it eventually drove her to assist the movement against segregating inmates in Alabama prisons just because they had HIV. Maddow stated that our students’ generation is vital to bettering our country. She encouraged students to avoid pointing out the faults of one another, but to instead, strengthen and encourage one another.

The conversation between these two television icons was enough to encourage any Communication Studies major to become an activist for issues they truly believe in. “It is our time to make a difference,” said Maddow. She encouraged us to use our time wisely.

write well were essential to her efforts. She also noted that her skills in persuasion and public speaking were called upon frequently. Adrienne put these skills to good use when completing her class in Alternative Dispute Resolution. This course required students to examine and help mediate actual cases. Students examined police reports and then worked with the parties in dispute to help them resolve their problems without going to court. Through this process, she learned a lot about people and different approaches to resolution.

Both women look forward to their careers in the law, but warn that law school is not for the faint of heart. The hard work begins at the undergraduate level - admission to most law schools requires a very high undergraduate GPA and high LSAT scores. Adrienne advises, "don't wait until your senior year to start working toward this [difficult] exam." The challenges don't subside once the admission process is hurdled. During the first of their three years in law school, both women saw many classmates succumb to the tremendous pressure and heavy workload. Adrienne noted that her first year was frightening and made her doubt her abilities. Victo-

ria observed that the process prompted her to mature very quickly.

Once law school students complete their degrees, the bar exam remains to be conquered. Each state conducts its own bar exam, so graduates take the exam in the state in which they plan to practice law. This 2-3 day exam requires students to write numerous lengthy essays and answer hundreds of multiple choice questions over both state and federal law. Study for the exam requires months of devoted preparation.

Adrienne and Victoria consider the hard work well worth it. Once Adrienne passes the bar exam, she hopes to practice corporate law and is especially interested in entertainment and intellectual property law. Her dream job would entail moving to California and helping musicians and other artists protect their interests in their creative endeavors. By contrast, Victoria hopes to practice civil law in a large firm. She is particularly interested in contract law, tort law, and real estate law. To make herself more marketable to large firms, she has just begun an MBA program. Both women's futures look promising!



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# Events



## DECEMBER

SATURDAY | 10

**The Delaware Country Foster Children's Holiday Party (the philanthropic project sponsored by Lambda Pi Eta)**  
BSU, TBA

SUNDAY | 11

**End of the semester gathering for the Individual Events Team**  
BSU, TBA

MONDAY | 12

**Last meeting day for regular classes**

TUESDAY-SATURDAY | 13-17

**Final Examination Period**

THURSDAY | 15

**Annual Comm. Studies "Seasonal Peace" Carry-In Lunch Gathering**, Dept. of Communication Studies  
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM, LB 356

SATURDAY | 17

**December Commencement**, Residence halls close at 6 PM.

## JANUARY

SATURDAY/SUNDAY | 14-15

**Miami University Swing Tournament (iE)**  
OXFORD, OH

SUNDAY | 29TH

**17th Annual Jack Beyerl Lecture**  
1:30 PM, Student Center (Cardinal Hall)

SUNDAY | 29TH

**Lambda Pi Eta Mid-Winter Appreciation Dinner**  
BSU, TBA

## FEBRUARY

SUNDAY | 29TH

**David Letterman Distinguished Speaker**  
Jennings Bryant  
7:30 PM, PRUIS HALL

### COMMENTARY

DECEMBER 2011  
VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

#### | Editor and design |

Tynesia Ross, Graduate Assistant

#### | Advisors |

Glen Stamp, Department Chair  
Beth Messner, Associate Professor

COMmentary is published monthly for the faculty, students and alumni of the Ball State University Department of Communication Studies. Any comments or suggestions should be directed to: [bsucommstudies@gmail.com](mailto:bsucommstudies@gmail.com)

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## NCA PARTICIPATION | faculty and students

The 2011 National Communication Association Convention was held in New Orleans, Louisiana from Nov. 17-20. The theme of this year's convention was "Voice" -- a theme designed to call attention to the power of voices that "reflect the multiplicity of views, ideologies, and experiences" represented

by members of NCA (NCA Convention Program, 2011, p. 5).

In addition to balmy weather, plenty of wonderful cuisine, and the Bourbon Street nightlight, Communication Studies faculty and students participated in a number of convention panels. Their contributions included:

### MICHAEL BAUER:

- An Introduction to College Public Forum, *Presenter (Pi Kappa Delta)*
- Argumentation and Debate as a Means to Develop Voice and Engagement in Our Students, *Presenter (Argumentation and Forensics Division)*

### MEGAN BURKETT:

- Horton Heard A Who, Can You? Voices from GTAs on Teaching Practices in the Basic Course, *Presenter (Basic Course Division)*

### JESSICA CHOQUETTE:

- Dismissal of the Juarez Femicide: Media Framing Analysis, *Presenter (Feminist and Women's Studies Division)*

### KATHY DENKER:

- Talkin' 'bout a Revolution: Giving Voice to Feminism's Empowering Role in the Lives of Women, *Panel Chair (Feminist and Women's Studies Division)*
- Finding Balance in Service-Learning: Effectively Harmonizing Instructor, Student, and Community Voice, *Presenter (Convention Theme Group)*
- Beakers, Biorhythms and Bytes: Advancing Women's Voices in Technology and Science, *Panel Chair (Feminist and Women's Studies Division)*
- Promoting a Culture of Scholarship and Professional Development in MA

Programs: Developing the Voice of Our Graduate Students, *Panel Chair (Master's Education Section)*

- Master's Education Town Hall Meeting: Continuing Issues in Master's Only Communication Programs, *Presenter (Master's Education Section)*

### MICHAEL HOLMES:

- Voices of Negotiation, *Presenter (Convention Theme Group)*
- Not Just Social Networking: Self and Other in Online Communication, *Respondent (Human Communication and Technology Division)*

### NICOLE JOHNSON:

- Embracing the Diversity of Voices: Mechanisms for Pedagogical Inclusiveness in a Fragmented Debate Community, *Co-Author with Mike Bergmaier (Top Paper Panel, Argumentation and Forensics Division)*

### ROBIN PHELPS:

- Horton Heard A Who, Can You? Voices from GTAs on Teaching Practices in the Basic Course, *Presenter (Basic Course Division)*

### KELLY STEDMAN:

- Finding Balance in Service-Learning: Effectively Harmonizing Instructor, Student, and Community Voice, *Presenter (Convention Theme Group)*

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Content, photos and calendar events can be sent to:  
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