

Whitney Gent

Assistant Professor, Rhetoric & Civic Engagement
University of Nebraska Omaha

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CONTACT INFORMATION

University of Nebraska Omaha
School of Communication
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Omaha, NE 68182
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EDUCATION

Ph.D., Rhetoric, Politics, & Culture (May 2018)

Department of Communication Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI

Dissertation: “The Rhetorical Circulation of the Housing First Model in the United States”

Committee: Robert Asen (Chair), Jenell Johnson, Sara McKinnon, Karma Chávez, &
Kurt Paulsen

M.A., Communication & Culture (May 2009)

Department of Communication & Culture, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

Concentrations: Rhetoric & Public Culture, Performance & Ethnography

B.A., Speech Communication (May 2006)

Drury University, Springfield, MO

With honors, *summa cum laude*

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2019 – Present.

Assistant Professor (fixed term), Minnesota State University, Mankato, 2018–2019.

Lecturer, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2017-2018.

Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2013-2015.

Associate Instructor, Indiana University – Bloomington, 2007-2009.

AWARDS & HONORS

Stephen E. Lucas Debut Publication Award, National Communication Association, 2018.

Fall 2017 Honored Instructor, University Housing (student-nominated), University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2017.

Mellon-Wisconsin Summer Fellowship, The Graduate School, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2017.

University Fellowship, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012-2013 and 2016-2017.

Graduate Research Fellow, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2014-2017.

Elizabeth Warner Risser Fellowship, Department of Communication Arts, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2016.

Research Travel Award, The Graduate School, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2015.

Dissertation Research Grant, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2015.

Top Student Debut Paper, Eastern Communication Association, 2014.

Frankenberger Memorial Fund Research Scholarship, Department of Communication Arts, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2013.

Virginia L. Gunderson Award for the top faculty-nominated paper written by a graduate student in the Department of Communication & Culture, Indiana University, 2009.

Outstanding Achievement in Speech Communication Award, Drury University, 2005.

PUBLICATIONS

“‘Not in My Back Yard’: Democratic Rhetorics in Spatial Gatekeeping.” (forthcoming) *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*.

“A Mystery Approach to Criticism.” (2020) *Communication Teacher*. Available online. doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2020.1800771

“Validity and the Art of Rhetorical Criticism.” (2020) *Annals of the International Communication Association* Vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 201-209. Co-authored with Emily Sauter and Daniel Cronn-Mills.

“Reconsidering Symbolic Use: A Situational Model of the Use of Research Evidence in Polarised Legislative Hearings.” (2019) *Evidence & Policy* Vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 525-541. Co-authored with Robert Asen.

“‘Expensive’ People: Consumer Citizenship and the Construction of Neoliberal Publics.” (2018) *Communication and the Public* Vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 190-204.

“Tokenism and Cultural (Mis)Recognition in ‘The Man with the Golden Voice.’” (2017) *Howard Journal of Communications* Vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 217-233. (lead article)

“When Homelessness Becomes a ‘Luxury’: Neutrality as an Obstacle to Counterpublic Rights Claims.” (2017) *Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. 103, no. 3, pp. 230-250.

Book Reviews

Review of *Homeless Advocacy and the Rhetorical Construction of the Civic Home* by Melanie Loehwing. (2020) *Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. 106, no. 3, pp. 368-371.

Review of *The Presidents and the Poor: America Battles Poverty, 1964-2017* by Lawrence J. McAndrews. (2019) *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 301-302.

Review of *Distant Publics: Development Rhetoric and the Subject of Crisis* by Jenny Rice. (2014) *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* Vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 358-361.

Review of *Queer Youth Suicide, Culture and Identity: Unliveable Lives?* by Rob Cover. (2014) *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* Vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 216-218.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“‘Chronic’ Homelessness: Medicalizing an Economic Problem,” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2020, Virtual.

“Women’s Lives at an Economic Crossroads: Rhetoricians Engage Recent Bestsellers on Poverty,” Panelist at National Communication Association Convention, November 2020, Virtual.

“The Words Belong to All of Us’: Homelessness and Freedom of Information in *The Public*.” Presentation at Rhetoric Society of America Conference, May 2020, Portland, OR. (Accepted, Conference Canceled due to COVID-19)

“Not Charity, but ‘Business’: Shifting Modes of Pedestrian Exchange.” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2019, Baltimore, MD.

“Housing First: An LGBTQ-blind Approach to Homelessness.” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2019, Baltimore, MD.

“‘Make Change Here’: Panhandling Re-directs in U.S. Tourism Districts.” Presentation at Popular Culture Association Conference, April 2019, Washington, DC.

“‘Passing’ Policy: A Rhetorical Survival Strategy.” Presentation at Rhetoric Society of America Conference, May 2018, Minneapolis, MN.

“The Prospect of Rhetoric in a Neoliberal Age.” Panelist at Rhetoric Society of America Conference, May 2018, Minneapolis, MN.

“‘This is the Way the Money’s Flowing’: Materiality and Rhetoricity in Public Policymaking.” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2017, Dallas, TX.

“American Life at the Economic Margins: Rhetoricians Engage Recent Bestsellers on Poverty.” Panelist at National Communication Association Convention, November 2017, Dallas, TX.

“Creating a Buzz: Translating Research for Public Consumption.” Panelist at Central States Communication Association Convention, March 2017, Minneapolis, MN.

“We Don’t Need Their Permission: Public Advocacy Without the Public.” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2016, Philadelphia, PA.

“When Homelessness Becomes a ‘Luxury’: Neutrality as an Obstacle to Counterpublic Rights Claims.” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2016, Philadelphia, PA.

“Strategic Plans in Presidential Policymaking.” Presentation at Rhetoric Society of America Conference, May 2016, Atlanta, GA.

“The Public and Its Other: Secrecy as a Boon to Democracy.” Presentation at University of Wisconsin Rhetoric Symposium, April 2016, Madison, WI.

“The Image Event that Wasn’t: The Kansas City Cheese Protest of 1983.” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2015, Las Vegas, NV.

“The Rags to Riches Tale of ‘The Man with the Golden Voice’: Reading Tokenism as an Intercultural Encounter.” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2015, Las Vegas, NV.

“Focusing on Rights: A Mixed Methods Approach to Studying Rights Arguments in the Public Sphere.” Presentation at the NCA/AFA Summer Conference on Argumentation, July 2015, Alta, UT.

“Making Homelessness a National Issue: A Convergence of Performance and Rhetoric in Mitch Snyder’s 1980 Congressional Testimony.” Presentation at Central States Communication Association Convention, April 2015, Madison, WI.

“100 Years of Interactions: Deliberation Within and Beyond Communication, Part II.” Panelist at National Communication Association Convention, November 2014, Chicago, IL.

“Innocence as an Inventional Resource: Documenting Undocumented Latin@ Homelessness.” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2014, Chicago, IL.

“Still a Tiger: Agency, Sovereignty, and Economic Terrorism in Ireland’s Response to the Global Housing Crises.” Presentation at National Communication Association Convention, November 2014, Chicago, IL.

“Mormons and Gays: Disidentification as a Rhetorical Strategy for (Re)negotiating Religious Identity.” Presentation at Rhetoric Society of America Conference, May 2014, San Antonio, TX.

“Taking Back the Land: Making Space for Democratic Versions of ‘Home.’” Presentation at Rhetoric Society of America Conference, May 2014, San Antonio, TX.

“A Losing Battle: Jimmy Carter as a ‘War-Time’ President in ‘Energy and the Crisis of Confidence.’” Presentation at Eastern Communication Association Convention, April 2014, Providence, RI.

“Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty: Where We Stand 50 Years Later.” Presentation at Eastern Communication Association Convention, April 2014, Providence, RI.

“Inocente y La Llorona: The Rhetorical Impact of Race and Motherhood in a Tale of Homeless Undocumented Immigrant Youth.” Presentation at University of Wisconsin Rhetoric Symposium, April 2014, Madison, WI.

“Rhetoricians in Space: A Consideration of Different Rhetorical Approaches to Space.” Roundtable discussion at University of Wisconsin Rhetoric Symposium, April 2014, Madison, WI.

“A Tradition of Engaged Criticism: Rhetoric, Politics and Culture in Communication Arts.” Presentation at University of Wisconsin Rhetoric Symposium, April 2013, Madison, WI.

“The Right Tool for the Job: Spreading the Word About Human Rights Using Social Media.” Presentation at National Forum on the Human Right to Housing, June 2011, Washington, DC.

“Advancing Your Message: How to Talk About Homelessness.” Presentation at National Conference on Ending Homelessness, July 2010, Washington, DC.

INVITED TALKS WITH HONORARIA

“Why It Matters How We Talk About Homelessness,” Workplace Diversity Series, Wisconsin Historical Society, March 2017, Madison, WI.

“Visual Rhetoric, Representation, and Housing First,” W350: Advanced Expository Writing – The Rhetoric of Home and Citizenship, Indiana University, February 2016, Bloomington, IN.

OTHER INVITED TALKS

“Public Policy Rhetoric and *The King’s Speech*.” Invited speaker at Coastal Carolina University, March 2018, Conway, SC.

“Cloak and Dagger Tactics”: NIMBYism and *Parrhēsia* in Processes of Public Engagement,” Presentation at Rhetoric, Politics, & Culture Colloquium, Department of Communication Arts, March 2016, Madison, WI.

“The Personal is Professional: A Brownbag Discussion about the Connection between Work and Life in Academia.” Panelist, University of Wisconsin RSA Chapter Event, October 2015, Madison, WI.

“Homelessness 101.” Invited speaker at Covenant Christian School, May 2015, South Bend, IN.

“Pedagogy Brownbag: Intersections Between Communication Arts & Composition/Rhetoric.” Panelist, University of Wisconsin RSA Chapter Event, March 2015, Madison, WI.

“*Inocente*, Arts Education, & Representations of Homelessness.” Panelist at Project Create DC, March 2015, Washington, DC.

“Innocence as an Inventional Resource: Documenting Undocumented Latin@ Homelessness,” Presentation at Rhetoric, Politics, & Culture Colloquium, Department of Communication Arts, April 2014, Madison, WI.

“The Man in the Trash Bag Shirt: Homelessness as a National, Local, and Individual Crisis.” Invited talk as part of National Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week, November 2010, Bloomington, IN.

“Pedestrians v. Panhandlers: A Discursive Negotiation of Public Space.” Presentation at Virginia Gunderson Colloquium, Department of Communication and Culture, October 2009, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

GUEST LECTURES

“Analyzing Texts – *Hillbilly Elegy*,” CA360 – Rhetoric, Politics, & Culture, September 2017, University of Wisconsin – Madison.

“Arguments People Make Against Human Rights,” EDPOL150 – Human Rights and Education, November 2016, University of Wisconsin – Madison.

“Counterpublics,” CA260 – Communication and Human Behavior, November 2015, University of Wisconsin – Madison.

“Using Color to Express Nationhood, Race, and Innocence,” W201 – Writing About Color, September 2014, University of Wisconsin – Madison.

“Audience and Delivery,” CA262 – Theory & Practice of Argumentation & Debate, November 2013 and April 2014, University of Wisconsin – Madison.

RESEARCH POSITIONS

Project Assistant, “Trust in Research, Trust in Relationships: How State Legislators Acquire and Use Research in Deliberation.” Funded by the William T. Grant Foundation, Principal Investigators: Robert Asen & Karen Bogenschneider, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2015-2016.

Assisted with project design.

Conducted face to face interviews with Wisconsin state legislators.

Edited transcripts from legislator interviews and processed data for analysis.

Research Assistant to Robert Asen, Department of Communication Arts, 2013-2016.

Indexed and copy-edited Asen’s book, *Democracy, Deliberation and Education*.

Researched and catalogued local newspaper coverage of state budget debates about education.

Reviewed research in multiple disciplines regarding research use in decision making.

Prepared transcripts of state legislative hearings and school board hearings.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

CMST 2100: Intro to Communication Theory, University of Nebraska Omaha, Fall 2020

JMC 3350: Media Communication Research, University of Nebraska Omaha, Fall 2019 - Present

CMST 2120: Argumentation & Debate, Instructor, University of Nebraska Omaha, Fall 2019 – Present

CMST 4110/8115 Rhetorical Theory & Criticism, University of Nebraska Omaha, Spring 2020

CMST 306: Communication Research Methods, Instructor, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Spring 2019.

CMST 101W: Interpersonal Communication, Instructor, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Spring 2019.

CMST102: Public Speaking, Instructor, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Fall 2018, Spring 2019. For this course, I also supervised the department's Public Speaking graduate teaching assistants.

CMST310: Performance of Literature, Instructor, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Fall 2018

CMST301: Approaches and Perspectives in Communication, Instructor, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Fall 2018

CA260: Communication and Human Behavior, Lecturer, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Fall 2017, Spring 2018.

CA976: Rhetorical Criticism, Course Graduate Assistant, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Fall 2017.

CA260: Communication and Human Behavior, Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Fall 2014, Spring 2015.

CA262: Theory & Practice of Argumentation & Debate, Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Fall 2013, Spring 2014.

C223: Business and Professional Communication, Associate Instructor, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, Fall 2008, Spring 2009.

C121: Public Speaking, Indiana University, Associate Instructor, Bloomington, IN, Fall 2007, Spring 2008.

SERVICE

Disciplinary

Member, Awards Committee, Rhetoric and Communication Theory Division, National Communication Association, 2019 – Present.

Reviewer, National Communication Association Convention. Economics, Communication and Society Division, 2018, 2019, 2020

Reviewer, National Communication Association Convention. Rhetorical and Communication Theory Division, 2018, 2020.

Reviewer, National Communication Association Convention. Critical Cultural Studies Division, 2016, 2018, 2019.

Reviewer, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 2018, 2019.

Reviewer, *Howard Journal of Communications*, 2015, 2016.

Reviewer, National Communication Association Convention. Public Address Division, 2015.

Conference planner, University of Wisconsin Rhetoric Symposium: “Wisconsin as Site, Method, & Object of Rhetorical Studies,” Madison, WI, April 2013.

Departmental

Current committee membership:

Chair, Faculty Advisory Committee, School of Communication, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2020 – Present.

Member, Graduate Curriculum Committee, School of Communication, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2020 – Present.

Member, Graduate Committee, School of Communication, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2019 – Present.

Member, Communication Studies Committee, School of Communication, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2019 – Present.

Past departmental service:

Member, Committee to Restructure CMST 2120 – Argumentation & Debate, University of Nebraska Omaha, 2020.

Reviewer, Master's Thesis and Project Awards, School of Communication, University of Nebraska Omaha, Fall 2019.

Library Liaison, Department of Communication Studies, Minnesota State University, Mankato, 2018 – 2019.

Department Activities Committee, Department of Communication Studies, Minnesota State University, Mankato, 2018 – 2019.

Creator and Convener, Current Journals Reading Group for graduate students and faculty in the Department of Communication Arts, University of Wisconsin – Madison, 2016 – 2018.

Volunteer, community debate series hosted by faculty in the Department of Communication Arts, University of Wisconsin – Madison, January 2015 & March 2015.

Administrator, Rhetorically Speaking blog committee, 2013-2016.

Creator, Rhetorically Speaking, a rhetoric blog featuring commentary by University of Wisconsin graduate students and faculty, 2013.

Community

Volunteer Communication Consultant, Partners for Affordable Housing, Mankato, MN, 2018 – 2019.

Member, Board of Directors, Operation Welcome Home, a grassroots homeless advocacy organization in Madison, WI, 2018.

Volunteer, Operation Welcome Home, Madison, WI, 2016 – 2018.

Volunteer, Nehemiah Center for Urban Leadership Development, Madison, WI, 2016 – 2018.

Volunteer, The Road Home Dane County, Madison, WI, 2014 – 2017.

Volunteer, Project Bubbles, a homeless services project in Madison, WI, 2016 – 2017.

Substitute host, A Public Affair, talk radio show on 89.9 FM WORT community radio, Madison, WI, 2014 – 2016.

Vice President, Board of Directors at The Shine Initiative, a homeless services non-profit organization in Madison, WI, 2013 – 2015.

OTHER WRITING

Blog posts on *Rhetorically Speaking*:

“What Were They Thinking?: Selling Rocket Mortgage in a Post-2008 Economy,” February 9, 2016, <http://rhetoric.commarts.wisc.edu/?p=352>

“States of Emergency,” November 5, 2015, <http://rhetoric.commarts.wisc.edu/?p=328>

“Rhetoric and Sense-making in the Death of Tony Robinson,” March 10, 2015, <http://rhetoric.commarts.wisc.edu/?p=252>

“Seeking ‘Compassionate Disruption’ on Oahu,” November 7, 2015, <http://rhetoric.commarts.wisc.edu/?p=221>

“Making People Count: Thoughts on Homelessness, Statistics, and Communication Ethics,” February 26, 2014, <http://rhetoric.commarts.wisc.edu/?p=111>

“‘Flipping the Script’ on Panhandling,” November 2, 2013, <http://rhetoric.commarts.wisc.edu/?p=11>

MEDIA

[“A Conversation about Rhetoric and Inequality in Omaha,”](#) June 30, 2020, KMTV News 3 Now.

[“Rhetorical Strategies Leaders Can Use to Ease Concerns in Times of Crisis,”](#) April 2, 2020, University Communications, University of Nebraska Omaha.

Hosted the following episodes on community radio show A Public Affair (89.9 FM, WORT):

[“Dr. Jessy Ohl Explains the ‘Boring Rhetoric’ of Drones,”](#) August 24, 2016.

[“Fandoms Guiding Civic Engagement in the General Election,”](#) March 23, 2016.

[“Homelessness at the National & Local Levels,”](#) May 20, 2015.

[“Social Change Through the Arts,”](#) May 14, 2015.

[“MMSD Behavior Education Plan,”](#) December 17, 2014.

Guest on Rhetorical Questions Podcast:

[“Impossible Things](#) (bonus short),” August 2, 2016,

[“Episode 11: Lessons in Fear,”](#) July 21, 2016.

TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS

Race Equity Institute, STEM TRAIL Center, University of Nebraska, Omaha, March 2021
(Accepted)

Microaggression Awareness Program, Center for Faculty Excellence, University of Nebraska, Omaha, October 2020.

REACH Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training, University of Nebraska, Omaha, December 2019.

“Public Humanities,” Rhetoric Society of America Summer Institute, College Park, MD, June 2019.

“Relentless Curiosity,” UW – Madison Teaching Academy, Madison, WI, October 2017.

Mass Communication Teaching Colloquium, UW – Madison, Madison, WI, January 2017 – May 2017

“Interventions to Reduce Racial Bias,” The UW – Madison Graduate School, Madison, WI, February 2017.

Midwest Winter Workshop, Iowa City, IA, January 2017.

“Art and Play in the Classroom,” UW Rhetoric Society of America chapter, Madison, WI, March 2016.

“Solving Social Problems Through Communication Research,” National Communication Association Doctoral Honors Seminar, Columbia, MO, July 2015.

“Rhetoric and Economics,” Rhetoric Society of America Summer Institute, Madison, WI, June 2015.

“Poverty 101: A Workshop in Teaching Poverty and Inequality Courses at the College Level,” Institute for Research on Poverty, Madison, WI, May 2015.

Midwest Winter Workshop, Evanston, IL, January 2015

“Rethinking Effective Learning and Teaching Engagement,” UW – Madison Teaching Academy, Madison, WI, January 2014.

Midwest Winter Workshop, Champaign-Urbana, IL, January 2014.

“Placemaking: Rhetorical Studies and Critical Geography,” Rhetoric Society of America Summer Institute, Lawrence, KS, June 2013.

Midwest Winter Workshop, Bloomington, IN, January 2013.

Midwest Winter Workshop, Bloomington, IN, January 2008.

NON-ACADEMIC WORK

Director of Communications, Polymer Engineering Center, University of Wisconsin – Madison, Madison, WI, 2016 – 2017.

Provided public speaking consulting, proofreading, and writing for a lab in the mechanical engineering department. Coordinated visiting scholars and undergraduate research assistants. Managed funds for an international professional organization.

Development Consultant, Project Create, Washington, DC, 2012.

Served as a short-term fundraising and communication consultant for this organization that serves homeless youth with arts education programming.

Development & Communications Director, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, Washington, DC, 2009-2011.

Responsible for all fundraising, internal communication, and public and media relations for this national-level policy organization addressing homelessness and poverty.

Director of Development, Shalom Community Center, Bloomington, IN, 2008-2009.

Served as this homeless services agency’s first-ever development director on a half time basis. Responsible for the organization’s public and media relations.