

TBD: TO BE DISCOVERED

A Newsletter from the Department of Communication and Media Studies

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History of the Department

By Braden Jones

Classes first began at Arkansas Tech University in 1910. These classes were held with an emphasis on agriculture and domestic science, however, soon after many other areas were adopted. In the early 1920s, speech and drama were just beginning to be seen as a part of campus life at ATU. In the 1923 addition of the *Agricola*, ATU's yearbook, there is a photo of the Debating Society. The 1925 edition of the yearbook includes photos of the university's Drama Club members.

During the 1930s, the "Masquers" was recognized as an on-campus student organization. This club was made up of 15 students who presented several one-act plays, and two full-length plays annually.

The departments of speech and drama were established separately during the early years of ATU. Journalism courses made their first appearance during the 1958-59 catalog year. These courses consisted of six hours of news writing, six hours of news editing, and three hours of advanced composition.

In 1968, drama and speech were combined to create the Department of Speech and Drama. Journalism was added in 1972, forming the Department of Speech, Theatre, and Journalism. This name was later changed to Communication and Journalism in 2014, and in 2022, renamed to Communication and Media Studies.

Students have been a driving factor of our department since its implementation in the early 1920s. The student newspaper, the *Ark Tech*, was established in 1923. It was considered to be a part of Student Services until it was adopted into our department in 2008.

In 1946, owners of the AM radio license KXRJ approached ATU about leasing space in what is now Williamson Hall, to establish a student-led radio station. Tech received a \$ 75-a-month rental fee which led to the creation of ATU's radios station that can be listened to at 91.9 FM. The station's first location was held in Witherspoon until it was moved into its current location in the Center for Energy Studies.

In February of 1974, Tech students originated "Analysis" as the first newscast to be presented by the television news class. In November of 1974, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare gave ATU an \$8,053 grant under Title VI of the higher education act to connect the TV network to Witherspoon, McEver, and Crabaugh buildings. The TV station was moved from McEver to the newly constructed Crabaugh building. It is currently held in the Center for Energy Studies.



Speech Theatre & Journalism L-R Dr. Robert Bolen, Norma Bolen, Kate Braugh, John Gale (Dept Head) Dr Ardith Morris, Tommy Mumert, Dr. Van Tyson, Faye Hawks. Not pictured Dr. Patricia Parker and Charles Ellis.



Speech, Theatre & Journalism

Front, from left) Dr. Harvey Norton, Tommy Mumert, Kate Braugh (Middle) Dr. Ardith Morris, Dr. Robert Bolen, Dr. Shelly Keeler, Dr. Van Tyson, Dr. Diane Vocate (Back) Dr. Tom Vaughn, Dr. Richard Knight, Anthony Caton, Dr. Seok Kang Photo by David Briley



Tech Debators challenge topics

The Arkansas Tech Debating Team involvement in competition goes back to the 1920s. The team has participated in all four of the intercollegiate tournaments on a national basis. The team has won the state tournament every year since 1970. Members are (From left) Debbie Ballard, Adrienne Johnson, Kristin Johnson, Leah Johnson, Leah Johnson, Tonya Doss, Cheyenne Henschen, Alisa Hancock

Where Are We Going?

The department has recently launched a social media initiative designed to advertise to prospective students and connect those already in the department.

"We have been working to include faculty spotlight posts that allow students to learn more about the professors' personal and professional lives in the department. We also would love to feature students' accomplishments, experiences in the classroom, and any activities they have been a part of. We encourage students and professors to share pictures and stories with us!"

Dr. Alexis Johnson, associate professor of communication

"I teach Social Media Influencing, which takes an academic approach to this emerging field. My students learn how to build and maintain online communities and how to create and market digital content across multiple platforms. Students have used the skills learned in this class to monetize their work and to promote their online personas. I'm excited about the possibilities this field affords our students."

Professor Frances Roberson, assistant professor of theatre, technical theatre director and director of theatre

Journalism Day

By Elli White

Thirty students from Dardanelle and Lamar High Schools Took a trip to campus to participate in our department's second annual Journalism Day. The event was held on Tuesday, Oct. 11, and students were greeted with breakfast and a surprise appearance from Jerry II. After a formal welcome and talk with guest speaker Hunter Paige, students were broken up into two groups and sent to speak with many different organizations within the department, including SPJ, PRSSA, Arka Tech and Tech TV. Students also had the opportunity to ask questions about college life while bonding over freshly grilled hot dogs. The event was received well among students, and SPJ is looking forward to hosting this event next year!



SPJ Silent Bake Auction Success

By Professor Megan Toland, assistant professor of journalism and SPJ faculty advisor

SPJ held its first silent auction in October. The SPJ members baked the desserts. The silent auction was set up in the Energy Center lobby for two days. We had support from students, faculty and staff members and family members of the students.

Each semester, SPJ hosts a fundraiser and the silent auction was the chosen idea for the fall. Once a year we go on, what we call, an industry tour – where we visit a TV station, a public relations firm and a print entity. This semester we plan to visit KARK, the Sells Agency and Arkansas Business. The profits from this fundraiser will help fund our industry tour by paying for transportation and the lunch for students.



"We just wrapped three consecutive sold-out shows of "The Crucible." The cast and crew performed at a professional level and wowed the audience all three nights. The show was reviewed by a Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival respondent,



who was extremely impressed with the show and praised all aspects of it, particularly the set design, the acting, and the stage management. Faith Spencer was an incredible director, and I'm extremely proud of her for taking on a tough show with a huge cast. We are looking forward to building off the momentum of this show and continuing to do great work in our program."

Professor Frances Roberson, assistant professor of theatre, technical theatre director and director of theatre

Upcoming Events

The Department of Communication and Media Studies department potluck will be held Nov. 15 from 4-6 p.m. in the Energy Center.

Students from SPJ and PRSSA will be participating in the RSO Game Night hosted by ATU Live! Nov. 8 at 7 p.m. in the Hull Student Union.

PRSSA will be hosting guest speaker Melissa Williams Nov. 8 at 1 p.m. in RPL 334.