ALEX P. LEITH

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GitHub: github.com/apleith
ORCID: 0000-0003-1310-6763

Associate Professor, Mass Communications, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Associate Professor (Tenured 2025) — Director, SIM Lab @ SIUE

Department of Mass Communications, College of Arts & Sciences, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE), Edwardsville, IL — Aug 2025–present

Assistant Professor (Tenure-track)

Department of Mass Communications, College of Arts & Sciences, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE), Edwardsville, IL — Aug 2019–Jul 2025

Additional Academic & Teaching Appointments

Adjunct Instructor

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) — Aug–Dec 2011
St. Louis College of Pharmacy — Aug 2011–May 2012
McKendree University — Jan–May 2012

Graduate Training / Graduate Appointments

Graduate Assistant — Michigan State University — Sep 2012–May 2017
Graduate Assistant — Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) — Aug 2010–May 2011

Professional Experience (pre-academic)

Marketing Manager — Brigham Young University–Idaho (Rexburg, ID) — Aug 2008–Aug 2009

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Information and Media (Media and Information)

Michigan State University, 2019
Dissertation: Gameplay livestreaming: Agents of gamespace
Committee: Rabindra Ratan (Chair), Casey O'Donnell, Morgan Ellithorpe, Brandon Van Der Heide

Master of Arts, Speech Communication (Interpersonal Communication)

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, 2011
Thesis: I know what you did last night: Exploring parasocial Facebook relationships. *Committee:* Jocelyn DeGroot-Brown (Chair), Alicia Alexander, E. Duff Wrobbel.

Bachelor of Arts, Communication (Public Relations)

Brigham Young University – Idaho, 2009
Clusters: English and Philosophy

PUBLICATIONS

Leith, A.P., Lim, C., Foxman, M., Beyea, D., & Jeong, D.C. (2025). Stress and coping in VRChat: A mixed-method case study of the use of VRChat as a coping tool during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports,* 20(100843). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2025.100843

Douzek, D., Foxman, M., Lim, C., & Leith, A.P. (2025). Balancing fun and professionalism in game development: the dark and light side of play in virtual meetings. *Frontiers in Communication, 10*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1609776

Ratan, R. A., Lin, Q., Lim, C., Park, R., Lover, A., Han, E., Jang, D., Leith, A. P., Bailenson, J. N. (2025). Time matters in VR: Students benefit from longer VR class duration, but certain outcomes decline after 45 minutes, with large individual variance. *Computers & Education, 14*(3), 466-477. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2025.105328

Lim, C., Leith, A. P., Ratan, R., & Bouzek, D. (2025). Meeting needs: How social interaction anxiety, zoom fatigue, relatedness, and demographics predict virtual meeting feature preferences. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports, 18*, 100673. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2025.100673

Lim, C., Ratan, R., Foxman, M., Beyea, D., Jeong, D., & Leith, A. P. (2025). Examining attitudes about the virtual workplace: Associations between Zoom fatigue, Impression management, and virtual meeting adoption intent. *PLOS One.* https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0312354

Beyea, D., Lim, C., Lover, A., Foxman, M., Ratan, R., & Leith, A. P. (2025). Zoom fatigue in review: A meta-analytical examination of videoconferencing fatigue's antecedents. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports, 17*(100571). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2024.100571

Foxman, M., Beyea, D., Leith, A.P., Ratan, R. A., Chen, V. H. H., & Klebig, B. (2022). Beyond genre: Classifying virtual reality experiences. *IEEE Transactions on Games, 14*(3), 466-477. https://doi.org/10.1109/TG.2021.3119521

Leith, A. P., & Gheen, E. (2022). Twitch in the time of quarantine: The role of engagement in needs fulfillment. *Psychology of Popular Media, 11*(3), 275-280. https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000372

Leith, A. P. (2021). Parasocial cues: The ubiquity of parasocial relationships on Twitch. *Communication Monographs, 88*(1), 111-129. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2020.1868544

Ratan, R. A., Fordham, J., Leith, A. P., & Williams, D. (2019). Women keep it real: Avatar gender choice in League of Legends. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 22*, 254-257. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2018.0302

DeGroot, J. M., & Leith, A. P. (2018). R.I.P. Kutner: Parasocial grief following the death of a television character. *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying, 77*, 199-216. https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222815600450

Leith, A. P., Ratan, R. A., & Wohn, D. Y. (2016). The (de-)evolution of evolution games: Analyzing the accuracy of evolution depiction in video games. *Journal of Science Education and Technology, 25*, 655-664. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-016-9620-x

EDITORIALS

Beyea, D., Foxman, M., Ratan, R., Klebig, B., Leith, A. P., & Chen, V. H. H. (2025). Metaverse-mediated communication: A call for theory-driven XR research [Editorial]. *Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications, 37*(2), 61–63. https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000465

FUNDING

External Funding

External Funding [Pending]

NSF Future CoRe (HCC), PI. *Distributed AI Agents for Scalable Interaction Modeling and Feedback Aggregation in Technical Learning.* $496,521; 06/2026–05/2030; Effort: 2|2|2|2|1 PM; Place: SIUE.

Wellcome (University of Zambia), Co-Investigator— SIUE Lead. *AI- and IoT-Driven Innovations for Malaria and Insect Vector Surveillance and Control: A Global Collaborative Initiative and Multidisciplinary Approach to Combat Malaria and Agricultural Pests in Zambia.* $800,044; 01/2026–12/2030; Effort: 3 PM/yr; Place: UNZA.

NSF Collaborative Research, PI (SIUE site). *Improving Equity and Wellbeing in Virtual Classrooms via AI-enhanced Avatars.* $49,999; 05/2025–05/2028; Effort: 3|2|2|2 PM; Place: SIUE.

Internal Funding

Leith, A. P. (2023-2024). OER Adoption, Adaptation, and Implementation Incentive Program. $6,088

Leith, A.P. (2021-2022). New Faculty Incentive Program. $2,000

OPEN-SOURCE SOFTWARE & DATASETS

Open-Source Software

Mass Communications Careers Dashboard (2025–present) — Creator & Maintainer

SvelteKit-based interactive dashboard mapping mass comm careers; visualizes occupations, state wages, required technologies, and SIUE-aligned recommended courses by track. Retrieved from https://github.com/SIM-Lab-SIUE/mc-careers-dashboard

Open WebUI Launcher for Local LLMs (2025–present) — Creator & Maintainer

Beginner-friendly launcher that automates local LLM setup (Open WebUI/Ollama), hardware checks, and safe classroom defaults for instructor-guided use. Retrieved from https://github.com/apleith/open-webui-launcher

mccoursepack (R package) (2025–present) — Author & Maintainer

Course delivery package for MC 451/501: weekly content pulls, Quarto templates (PDF-first), reproducible assignments, and update checks. Retrieved from https://github.com/SIM-Lab-SIUE/mccoursepack

Research Datasets (restricted access; ToS/IRB governed)

Twitch Chat Logs (Dec 17, 2018–Jan 17, 2019) — Python collection

Scope: 117,943 channels; 6,564,307 unique viewers/chatters; 321,189,309 messages (2-minute category polling).

Access: Restricted (platform ToS/IRB). Documentation available.

VRChat Tweets (Jan 16, 2014–May 25, 2023) — R/academictwitteR

Scope: 1,434,367 original English-language tweets mentioning "VRChat" (retweets excluded).

Access: Restricted (platform ToS/IRB). Documentation available.

Remote Work Tweets (April 2020 & April 2021) — R/academictwitteR

Scope: 1,409,966 tweets from 887,888 unique users (2020: 971,268 tweets; 659,321 users; 2021: 438,698 tweets; 274,013 users).

Access: Restricted (platform ToS/IRB). Documentation available.

BOOKS & OER

Reviewed Book

Leith, A. P. (2024). *Quantitative research in mass communications: R and RStudio*. Bookdown. https://bookdown.org/alex_leith/mc451/

Book Chapters

Fordham, J., Leith, A. P., & Ratan. R. A. (2017). League of Legends: Summoning a league of their own. In J. Banks, R. Mejia, & A. Adams (Eds.), *100 greatest video game franchises* (pp. 102-104). London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Leith, A. P., & Fordham, J. (2017). Assassin's Creed: Leap of faith through historiophoty In J. Banks, R. Mejia, & A. Adams (Eds.), *100 greatest video game franchises* (pp. 11-12). London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Leith, A. P., & Ratan, R. A. (2017). Super Smash Bros.: Fight with the one that brung ya. In J. Banks, R. Mejia, & A. Adams (Eds.), *100 greatest video game franchises* (pp. 178-180). London: Rowman & Littlefield.

REFEREED PROCEEDINGS

Lim, C., Leith, A.P., Foxman, M., Ratan, R., Klebig, B. (2025, January) The Hyperpersonal Model of Communication in virtual meetings: Exploring the roles of fatigue, social interaction anxiety, muting, and avatar use in meeting engagement. *Proceedings of the 58th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*.

Milik, O., Jang, D., Foxman, M., Klebig, B., Beyea, D., Leith, A. P., Ratan, R. (2024, November). Focusing on virtual groups. A method for focus group interviews in XR/VR group settings. To be published in *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research, 2024*.

Foxman, M., Bouzek. D., Lim, C., Ratan, R., Klebig, B., Leith, A.P., & Beyea, D. (2024, July) Making a virtual playground: Values-based game design in meeting platforms. *2024: Abstract Proceedings of DiGRA 2024 Conference: Playgrounds*.

Lim, C., Foxman, M., Leith, A.P., Meshi, D., Ratan, R. (2024, July) Wanting playfulness to counter fatigue from virtual meetings: Associations with social interaction anxiety and workaholism. *2024: Abstract Proceedings of DiGRA 2024 Conference: Playgrounds*.

Foxman, M., Bouzek, D., Ratan, R. A., & Leith, A. (2023, June). Virtually Limited: Boundaries of Play in Virtual Reality Production. *2023: Abstract Proceedings of DiGRA 2023 Conference: Limits and Margins of Games*.

Leith, A., Foxman, M., Onuche, M., Ratan, R., & Lim, C. (2023, June). Mixed Feelings and Realities: Joyful to Nauseating Sentiments about VR on Twitter. 2023: Abstract Proceedings of DiGRA 2023 Conference: Limits and Margins of Games.

Foxman, M., Leith, A. P., Beyea, D., Klebig, B., Chen, V. H. H., & Ratan, R. (2020, November). Virtual reality genres: Comparing preferences in immersive experiences and games. In *CHI PLAY '20: Extended Abstracts of the 2020 Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play* (pp. 237-241). ACM Digital Library. https://doi.org/10.1145/3383668.3419881

Leith, A. P. (2019, October). Playing games for others: Constructing a gameplay livestreaming taxonomy. In R. Ratan, B. Winn, & E. LaPensée (Eds.), *Proceedings of Meaningful Play 2018* (pp. 372-379). ETC Press. https://doi.org/10.1184/R1/9995969

INVITED TALKS

Leith, A. P., Freberg, K., Wall, M., & Dalton, S. (2020, May). *How to teach digital and social media marketing well.* Panel presented at the Midwest Digital Marketing Conference. St. Louis, MO.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

Leith, A. P., Lim, C., Foxman, M., Beyea, D., & Jeong, D. (2025, June). *Stress and Coping in VRChat: A Mixed-Method Case Study of the Use of VRChat as a Coping Tool During the COVID-19 Pandemic.* Paper to be presented at the International Communication Association 75th Annual Conference. Denver, CO.

Leith, A. P., Foxman, M., Lim, C., & Beyea, D. (2025, June). What ASD finds in VRChat: The potential for VR to address the communication barriers faced by individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Paper to be presented at the International Communication Association 75th Annual Conference. Denver, CO.

Mlikik, O., Ratan, R., Chen, V., Swati, S., Foxman, M., Leith, A. P. (2025, June). *Looking Beyond Meet Space: Presenting a Research Platform in VRChat.* Paper to be presented at the International Communication Association 75th Annual Conference. Denver, CO.

Beyea, D., Lim, C., Lover, A., Foxman, M., Ratan, R., & Leith, A.P. (2024, June). *Zoom fatigue? A meta-analytical examination of research on the antecedents of videoconferencing fatigue.* Paper presented at the International Communication Association 74th Annual Conference. Gold Coast, QLD.

Foxman, M., Bouzek, D., Lim, C., & Leith, A.P. (2024, June). *Playing from home: Identity, cohesion, and communication for remote game makers.* Paper presented at the International Communication Association 74th Annual Conference. Gold Coast, QLD.

Lim, C., Foxman, M., Ratan, R., Beyea, D., Jeong, D., & Leith, A.P. (2024, June). Touch-up my Zoom fatigue: Positive attitudes about online meeting platforms are negatively associated with virtual meeting fatigue and positively associated with using impression management features. Paper presented at the International Communication Association 74th Annual Conference. Gold Coast, QLD.

Foxman, M., Leith, A.P., Ratan, R., Bouzek, D. (2023, May). *Playfully Virtual: Finding Authentic Communication in Videoconferencing and Online Meetings.* Paper presented at the International Communication Association 73rd Annual Conference. Toronto, ON.

Leith, A.P., Foxman, M., Onuche, M., Bouzek, D. (2023, May). *Diffusion of gratification: The reception of VR as a modality for remote work and meetings.* Paper presented at the International Communication Association 73rd Annual Conference. Toronto, ON.

Leith, A.P., Foxman, M., Ratan, R., & Lim, C. (2023, May). *Feelings for meetings: A sentiment analysis of videoconferencing platforms a year apart.* Paper presented at the International Communication Association 73rd Annual Conference. Toronto, ON.

Foxman, M., Leith, A. P., Sulzdorf-Liszkiewicz, A., Beyea, D., Klebig, B., Graciano, L., Bouzek, D., & Ratan, R. A. (2022, October). *Playing at work: Finding and designing play into virtual meetings.* Presented at the 2022 International Conference on Meaningful Play. East Lansing, MI.

Foxman, M., Beyea, D. G., Leith, A. P., Ratan, R. A. Chen, V. H. H., Klebig, B. (2021, May). *Hardly just hardware: Understanding games and genres in virtual reality experiences.* Presented at the International Communication Association 71st Annual Conference. [Virtual].

Leith, A. P., & Baker, S. (2020, November). *Cmonbruh, trihard: Using machine-learning to identify racial harassment in Twitch chat messages for Black and White streamers.* Presented at the National Communication Association 106th Annual Convention. Indianapolis, IN [Virtual].

Leith, A. P. (2020, May). *Communicating closeness: Verbal immediacy as a predictor of parasocial relationships on Twitch.* Presented at the International Communication Association 70th Annual Conference. Gold Coast, AUS [Virtual].

Leith, A. P. (2020, May). *When watching isn't enough: Human agents and their influence of gameplay and gamespace through synchronous chat.* Presented at the International Communication Association 70th Annual Conference. Gold Coast, AUS [Virtual].

Leith, A. P. (2019, August). *The affective messaging of gameplay livestream viewers*. Presented at the 2019 Digital Games and Research Association Conference. Kyoto, Japan.

Leith, A. P. (2018, October). *Giving you your space: Examining gamespace expandability*. Presented at the 2018 International Academic Conference on Meaningful Play. East Lansing, MI.

Leith, A. P. (2015, November). *Busking on a digital pitch: Investigating Internet-based gameplay broadcasting*. Paper to be presented at the National Communication Association 101st Annual Convention. Las Vegas, NV.

Leith, A. P. (2015, November). *Understanding the implications of uses and gratifications in gameplay viewing*. Paper to be presented at the National Communication Association 101st Annual Convention. Las Vegas, NV.

Rabindra, R. A., Fordham, J., Leith, A. P., Williams, D., & Kennedy, T. (2015, May). *Identity salience in avatar choice motivation*. Paper to be presented at the Gaming Bodies Preconference of the International Communication Association 65th Annual Conference. San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Boehmer, J. H., & Leith, A. P. (2015, March). *Tweeting the World Cup: Soccer teams' use of dialogic communication during the 2014 World Cup*. Presented at The Eighth Summit on Communication and Sport. Charlotte, NC.

Leith, A. P. (2014, November). *Learning to play: Academic impacts of digital gameplay among disadvantaged African American students*. Presented at the National Communication Association 100th Annual Conference. Chicago, IL.

Huang, T. K., Cotton, S. R., & Leith, A. P. (2014, May). *The impact of emotional costs on students' IT use and academic performance in the context of computer integration*. Presented at the Digital Divide Preconference of the International Communication Association 64th Annual Conference. Seattle, WA.

Leith, A. P. (2013, June). *A more accessible celebrity: A case for parasocial interactions with YouTube personalities and communities*. Presented at International Association of Media and Communication Research 2013 Conference. Dublin, Ireland.

Leith, A. P., Ratan, R. A., & Wohn, D. Y. (2013, June). *The (de-)evolution of evolution games: Analyzing the accuracy of evolution depiction in video games*. Presented at International Communication Association 63rd Annual Conference.

DeGroot, J. M., & Leith, A. P. (2011, November). R.I.P. Kutner: Parasocial relationships and grieving the death of a television character. Presented at National Communication Association 97th Annual Convention.

Leith, A. P. (2011, November). The games we play. Presented at National Communication Association 97th Annual Convention.

Thesis & Dissertation

Leith, A. P. (2019*). Gameplay livestreaming: Human agents of gamespace and their parasocial relationships*. (Doctoral dissertation). Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Leith, A. P. (2011*). I know what you did last night: Exploring parasocial Facebook relationships*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Edwardsville, Illinois.

COURSES TAUGHT

Assistant Professor

Dept. of Mass Communications, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
MC 590: Independent Study in Mass Communications (Fall 2020)
MC 501: Research Methods for Mass Communications (Fall 2024)
MC 471: Special Topics in Mass Media: Introduction to Data Analytics in Journalism and Mass Communications (Fall 2019)

MC 471: Special Topics in Mass Media: Social Media Analytics (Spring 2024)
MC 451: Research Methods in Mass Media (Spring 2021, Spring 2022 – Spring 2024)
MC 422: Strategic Media Writing (Fall 2025-Spring 2026)
MC 327: Design and Writing for the World Wide Web (Fall 2019 – Spring 2023, Spring 2024)
MC 323: Digital Publishing and Design (Spring 2023 – Fall 2023)
FST 101: Succeeding & Engaging at SIUE (Fall 2023)

Teaching Assistant

Dept. of Media & Information, Michigan State University
COM 803: Intro to Quantitative Research Methods (Fall 2011)
TC 401: Social Media in Society (Fall 2013)
TC 401: Science Fiction, Communication, and Technology (Spring 2013 – Fall 2013)
MI 201: Introduction to Media and Information Technologies and Industries (Spring 2016 – Fall 2016)
MI 101: Understanding Media (Spring 2015 – Spring 2017)
Department of Speech Communication, Southern Illinois University
SPC 103: Interpersonal Communication (Fall 2010, Spring 2011)

Adjunct Instructor

Division of Humanities, McKendree University
JRN 372: Web and Print Publication Design (Spring 2012)
Department of Liberal Arts, St. Louis College of Pharmacy
EN 3100: Professional Communication (Fall 2011 – Spring 2012)
Department of Speech Communication, Southern Illinois University
SPC 105: Public Speaking (Fall 2011)
SPC 103: Interpersonal Communication (Fall 2010 – Fall 2011)

Committees

- Rachel Berg, Master's Project, Member (Spring 2021)
- Abdurrahman Celik, Thesis, Member (Summer 2023 – Summer 2024)
- Hope Chulka, Comprehensive Exam, Member (Spring 2024)
- Magdalene Emonvuon, Master's Project, Member (Summer 2024 - Fall 2024)
- Maria Gomez Torne, Master's Project, Member (Fall 2024 – Spring 2025)
- Andrew Heaslet, Master's Thesis, Member (Summer 2024 – Fall 2024)
- Kain Henson, Master's Project, Member (Fall 2021 – Summer 2022)
- Lenny Escarlet Montano Claure, Graduate Exam, Member (Spring 2021)
- Michelle Poneleit, Master's Project, Chair (Fall 2025 – Present)
- Stephanie Schrage, Senior Assignment, Supervisor (Spring 2020)
- Gabriel Simpson, Master's Project, Member (Fall 2024 – Spring 2025)
- Ashlyn Smith, Master's Project, Member (Fall 2021 – Summer 2022)
- Thomas Yancey, Senior Assignment, Supervisor (Fall 2021 – Spring 2022)

SERVICE

Departmental

- ACEJMC Reaccreditation, Member (Fall 2022 – Fall 2023)
- Library, Liasian (August 2020 - Spring 2024)
- Mass Communications Week, Chair (Spring 2021 - Spring 2023)
- Website Committee, Member (Fall 2021 – Summer 2024)
- Technology Committee, Chair (Spring 2024 – Summer 2024)

College

- Program Review Member, International Studies (Fall 2023)

University

- Search Committee Member, School of Engineering Dean Search (Spring 2026 – Present)
- Search Committee Member, Director of Student Financial Aid (Spring 2020 – Fall 2020)
- Task Force Member, Engagement in Asynchronous Classes (Summer 2020)
- Reviewer, Cougar Guide (Spring 2020)
- Discord Server, Program Coordinator (Fall 2023 - Summer 2024)

Academia

Reviewer

Journals
- Communication and Sports
- Communication Monograph
- Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking
- Death & Dying
- Games & Culture
- Information & Management
- International Journal of Communication
- Mass Communication & Society
- Media Psychology
- Psychology of Popular Media
- Technology, Mind, & Behavior

Conferences
- Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems
- Computer-Human Interaction in Play
- Digital Games Research Association
- Global Fusion
- Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences
- International Communication Association
- Meaningful Play
- Meaningful XR
- National Communication Association

Leadership

Journals
- Journal of Media Psychology, Special Issue Co-Editor (Summer 2024)

Conferences
- Global Fusion, Co-Planner (Spring 2020 – Fall 2020)
- International Communication Association, Game Studies Student & Early Career Representative (Spring 2022 – Summer 2024)
- Meaningful XR, Co-Planner (Fall 2023 – Summer 2024)

Public

- Triad Debate Tournament, Judge (Spring 2020)
- Fort Collins Debate Tournament, Judge (Spring 2022)