

# Meeman Matters

Newsletter of the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media

April 2019

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## Documentary examines issues, activism in Memphis



PHOTO BY WILL SUGGS

**Journalism student Caleb Suggs interviews professor Otis Sanford as part of the documentary Once More at the River: From MLK to BLM. The film premiered in January 2019.**

**BY WILLIAM SUGGS**

The documentary film "Once More At The River: From MLK to BLM," which examined activism in Memphis since the Civil Rights Movement, premiered on Jan. 22 to a full house at the UofM's UC Theatre.

Roxane Coche, the film's director and one of its producers, said the idea for the documentary came in 2016 upon the realization that the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination was approaching.

"Social justice and civil rights are such an important topic that I decided to pitch the idea for a full-length documentary instead of a single class," Coche said.

Coche talked to the National Civil Rights

Museum and found colleagues to collaborate at the UofM. They included journalism professor Joe Hayden and Department of History chair Aram Goudsouzian. "Everything happened pretty quickly," Coche said. She decided on the theme in late 2016, and by early February 2017, the group had submitted its first grant proposal.

Faculty and students of the University of Memphis' departments of Journalism and Strategic Media and History helped produce the film, which also received a grant and support from organizations including the National Civil Rights Museum and Humanities Tennessee.

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# Department again gets top marks with reaccreditation

In late April, I flew to Chicago for the meeting of the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. The accrediting council reviewed the report of a four-person site team, which visited our campus in January. After spending four days examining our faculty, students, budget and facilities, Professor Joe Foote, the site-team leader, concluded that our department was “playing in the big league.” The council affirmed the site-team’s finding that our undergraduate programs were in full compliance on all nine standards and voted for our reaccreditation. The Department of Journalism and Strategic Media has been accredited by ACEJMC since 1971 and undergoes a reaccreditation process every six years.

I appreciate the reviewers’ affirmation of what I already know: we have a talented, hard-working and dedicated faculty leading dynamic programs that are graduating excellent media professionals equipped for success in their jobs. As part of our assessment, we measure student outcomes. Each semester we ask outside professionals to review the portfolios of our graduating seniors. We survey recent graduates about job placement and perceptions of how prepared they are for their media positions.

As part of program assessment, we also survey internship supervisors to learn how well the students are prepared for their work. Our students are getting excellent internships in Memphis and throughout the nation. This year our students have had great internships in Memphis (for example, AutoZone, International Paper, Commercial Appeal, ALSAC/St. Jude) and beyond Memphis (including Chicago, New York, Spain and Cambodia). For many students, these internships turn into permanent positions.

**David Arant, Ph.D.**

*Chair,  
Journalism and  
Strategic Media*

After measuring many indicators of learning outcomes, the faculty reviews them each year to see how well our curriculum is preparing our students for the media professions. When we discover weaknesses, we implement curricular changes to strengthen our programs.

In addition to ACEJMC accreditation of all three majors, our public relations program undergoes a separate examination as part of its Public Relations Society of America certification. In February a two-person PRSA site team spent three days with our public relations faculty and students. The University of Memphis is one of only a few public relations programs that has earned both ACEJMC accreditation and PRSA certification.

Two of our professors, assistant chair Sandy Utt and internship coordinator Matthew Haught, led the yearlong self-study of our undergraduate programs that yielded in a 200-page analysis of all aspects of our undergraduate programs. I am grateful for their leadership of our assessment program.

After teaching for 35 years at the University of Memphis, Dr. Utt is retiring this semester. Her dedication to the department and to the advertising program are without equal. We will miss her. The only good thing about her departure is that we have hired an excellent replacement to teach advertising for us, Joel Nichols. I’ve asked Dr. Haught to assume that Dr. Utt’s role as assistant chair. David Arant is chair of the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media.

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### Retiring Sandra Utt gets name on ad award

In honor of the decades of service to the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, Sandra Utt was honored with the naming of an award in her name.

Utt, who is retiring in spring 2019, is now the namesake for the Outstanding Advertising Student award, which is given each spring to the best student in the advertising major. The award is now the Dr. Sandra Utt Outstanding Advertising Student Award.

### Students take awards for online news reporting

Six UofM journalism students were honored for their online multimedia reporting work on April 27 in Nashville as part of the 2018 Tennessee AP College Contest.

Recognized as finalists were Alex Talley and Maisa Jabi for "March to the Polls: Activists Focus Energies on November's Midterm Ballot" in the online multimedia package category. In the online investigative/in-depth reporting category were Jurnee Taylor and Collins Peebles for "With Few Options, Homeless Women in Memphis Struggle with Lack of Shelter." As top online multimedia journalists were Bailey Clark and Kim Rix for "Memphis Skaters Look for a Way to Bring Creativity Back to the Sport."

### 2 advertising students earn national honors

Jennifer Nichols and Cynthia Castor, two advertising seniors, were honored Feb. 13 at American Advertising Federation's "Building Bridges for Our Future Luncheon" at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City.

Sponsored by the AAF, the Most Promising Multicultural Students program recognizes the top 50 advertising students in the country.

## AEJMC SOUTHEAST COLLOQUIUM

### Grad student takes high honor at conference; two others present

Three graduate journalism students were recognized on March 8 at the 2019 AEJMC Southeast Colloquium in Columbia, South Carolina, for their research work, and one student took a top award at the conference.

Garrett Pilgrim was recognized for submitting the top student research paper in the Visual Communication Division. He presented his research paper titled "Holy Smokies! Information Design, Humor, and Trail Safety."

The paper examined the role humor can play in creating informational graphics to educate people about how to safely enjoy national parks.

Also presenting research was Jordyn Howell. Howell presented her research paper titled "Out of the Shadows: Female Representation in 'Shadow of the Tomb Raider.'" The research examined how the main character Laura Croft of the new Tomb Raider video game is portrayed much differently than in earlier games.

The third student, Will Suggs, presented his research paper "Come Wind or High Waters: Re-imagining Hurricane Reorganization." The research offered some new insights into graphic



**UofM graduate student Garrett Pilgrim is recognized for his research by the University of South Carolina's Tom Reichert at the AEJMC Southeast Colloquium on March 8.**

designs on how to convey the seriousness of hurricane warnings.

Also participating in the conference at the University of South Carolina were faculty members Matt Haught and Tom Hrach. Haught presented research about visual communication degree capstones and Hrach presented work from his book about the Kerner Commission report.

The UofM will host the same regional research event on March 19 to 21, 2020.

### Top journalist joins UofM reporting institute

Award-winning Memphis journalist David Waters joined the staff of the Institute for Public Service Reporting on March 1 as assistant director.

Waters, 60, joins the institute after a 35-year career in journalism mostly at The Com-



**WATERS**

mercial Appeal.

The Institute was started in 2018 to provide independent investigative reporting and in-depth explanatory journalism on issues of importance while also providing hands-on training to UofM students.

Waters work, along with the work of the rest of the Institute, is published in The Daily Memphian, an online news publication.

# Awards event recognizes top scholars, students, future media professionals

The annual JRSM Awards event attracted about 150 people to the Penny Hardaway Athletics Hall of Fame Building on April 17 and featured awards top scholars and students in the department.

Recognized as top scholars were Paul D'Ambrosio and Dana Cooper as outstanding graduate students; Jennifer Nichols and Cynthia Castor as the Dr. Sandra Utt Outstanding Advertising Students; Kix Patterson and Ally Cool as the outstanding creative mass media students; Catherine Levasseur and Nick Lingerfelt as the Otis Sanford Outstanding Journalism Students; Regina Hayes as outstanding Memphis public relations student; Hannah Fanning as outstanding online public relations student; Ryan Woods as outstanding Lambuth public relations student.

Recognized for student leadership were Julia Mendez as American Advertising Federation Student Chapter Leadership Award; Nick Lingerfelt as The Daily Helmsman Editor-in-Chief Spring 2019; Morgan Perkins as Meeman 901 Strategies Leadership 2018-19; Kimberly Rodriguez as NABJ Ida B. Wells Award for Outstanding Leadership 2019; Kasha Austin as PRSSA Memphis Leadership 2019; and Caleb Suggs as Tiger News Leadership.

Achievement awards went to Caleb Suggs for the CCFA Dean's Academic Achievement Award; Dana Cooper for the Graduate Dean's Creative Achievement Award; Cynthia Castor and Jennifer Nichols for the AAF Most Promising Multicultural Student; William Sanders for 1st place Elinor Kelley Grusin Excellence in Writing Award; Reagan Andrews for 2nd place Elinor Kelley Grusin Writing Award; Anna Turman for 3rd place Elinor Grusin Writing Award; Catherine Levasseur for 1st place Marc Perrusquia Investigative Journalism Award; Nick Lingerfelt for 2nd place Marc Perrusquia Investigative Journalism Award; Raven Cope land for 3rd place Marc Perrusquia



PHOTOS BY CURT HART

**Sandra Utt recognizes Cynthia Castor with the Dr. Sandra Utt Outstanding Advertising Student award after giving the same award to Jennifer Nichols.**



**Catherine Levasseur is recognized by Joe Hayden with the Lurene Kelley Video Story Award.**

Investigative Journalism Award; Caleb Suggs for 1st place Lurene Kelley Video Story Award; Catherine Levasseur for 2nd place Lurene Kelley Video Story Award; William Sanders for 3rd place Lurene Kelley Video Story Award; Chelcee Arnold for Public Relations Textbook Award 2019; Haley Wildridge for best press release and best long feature; Sara Owens for best case study and best visual PR; Ashley Shaller for internship work.

Other awards went to Dakota Smith for The Saul Brown Press-Scimitar Award For Outstanding Photojournalism; William Sanders for The Saul Brown Press-Scimitar Award For Outstanding Newspaper Reporting & Editing; Jacob Rice for Nathan Josel Memorial Fund for journalistic

creativity; Julia Gerber for outstanding web designer; Hira Qureshi and Reagan Andrews, honorable mention outstanding web designer; Logan Peterson for outstanding multimedia storyteller; Lydian Kennin and Pauline Kopf for honorable mention outstanding multimedia storyteller; Ally Cool for Outstanding Media designer of the year; Saira Sikandar, Logan Peterson, Keely Grady and Corrine Baldwin for honorable mention outstanding media designer; Chelcee Arnold for PR Rookie of the Year Memphis; Madison Michael for PR Rookie of the Year Lambuth; Julia Baker for Journalism Rookie of the Year; Jasmine Abuan for Advertising Rookie of the Year; Jacob Simmons for Creative Mass Media Rookie of the Year; Elizabeth Porter for Ron Spielberger Advertising Creative Achievement Award and outstanding researcher; Kirtland Jenkins for Outstanding Media Plan; Walter Whitsett for Outstanding Experiential Marketing; Nuha Abdelwahab, Nikalen Billington and Ahsiahna Ford for best logo; Cole Creasy and Madelyn Fraser for Best Print Advertising; Fariza Mayores for Best Outdoor Advertising; Shyla Harrah for Best Outdoor Advertising runner-up; John Watkins, Jennifer Nichols and Julia Mendez for Best Ad Campaign; John Watkins for best copy writing.

Student media awards went to Sabrina Davis for The Daily Helmsman Reporting Newshound Award; Blake Fussell for The Daily Helmsman Best News Reporting; Louis Aser for the The Daily Helmsman Reporting Best Feature Writing Award; Liaudwin Seaberry Jr. for The Daily Helmsman Best Newcomer Award; Jessica Holmes and Amber Dean for the Tiger News - Outstanding Dedication Award; Ryan Coleman for the Tiger News - Broadcast Achievement Award; other Tiger News awards went to William Suggs, Morgan Perkins, Ayanina Washington, Ben Sawyers, Sabrina Davis, Erin Cooper, Matthew Burnham, Lauren Wright, Tyler Bennett, Joshua Vinson, Zack Boyd and Raven Moore.

# Q&A: WUMR great student media option for real journalism at UofM

While most journalism students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media focus their attention on student media such as The Daily Helmsman and Tiger News, there is another option.

Zack Boyd, journalism student who graduated in the spring semester, took a different path in his UofM academic career. Boyd, 25, spent his time working at the campus radio station, WUMR 92 FM, and currently serves as the sports director.

Boyd started working at the station in fall 2013 working as an on-air personality and also volunteered his time helping out the station, which is located on the ground floor of the Theatre Building.

Boyd talked about his time working there and how the station benefits journalism students.

**Q: What got you involved with the radio station?**

A: "(A classmate) told me, 'Yeah, we've got a radio station on campus that you can come and do radio broadcasts. You just come in. You want to sit in and listen to the show? Then you want to come in the next time, and you want to get involved? We can do that.'"

**Q: Why do you think a lot of journalism students don't take part in the radio productions?**

A: "It's lower in the pecking order as far as journalism or communication types of skill sets. I feel like they tend to forget that we do have a radio station that journalism students can get on-air experience with. And then I feel like with students — you have to be committed to doing this. Students don't get paid for sports unless it's my position, so those students are volunteering their time to go to the station and perfect their craft."

**Q: There are students interested in podcasting. Do you think that participating and getting experience in radio would trans-**



PHOTO WILL SUGGS

**Journalism student Zack Boyd works his shift as sports director for WUMR 92 FM, the campus radio station at the UofM.**

**fer over to podcasting?**

A: "Yeah. You have to hear your voice and how you sound behind the microphone. I know that (Journalism and Strategic Media) has a studio on the second floor and they offered a class, but you can go to the station and start there as well. It's important to hear your voice and hear how you fluctuate different tones and how you say different things so that when you go back into it, you can do it a little bit differently. You'll be a little more professional about it."

**Q: Overall, what are the biggest things that working at the radio station has given you as a professional, skill-wise?**

A: "Gathering information, consistency, getting out of your shell, talking for more than 30 seconds on

the phone. It was a big development for me to kind of get out of."

**Q: For students who might be interested, but not necessarily in sports, what can they do at the radio station?**

A: "They want more students to join whether you're into sports or you just want to get broadcasting experience. They have DJ spots for students available to come in and learn how to run the board, play music, being able to talk on air, and all of this in like two hours, or however long depending on your schedule. It's open to students, and it's open to their schedule. You don't have to be a sports broadcaster to join the radio station."

— INTERVIEW CONDUCTED  
BY WILLIAM SUGGS

# Jemele Hill talks career, Twitter fame at First Amendment Lecture

BY OLIVIA STEWART

Sports journalist Jemele Hill inspired UofM students with her passion and perseverance for journalism during her remarks at the Eighth Annual Norm Brewer First Amendment Lecture on March 12 at the University Center.

Hill, a 21-year veteran of journalism, is known for her work with ESPN and her role as co-anchor on "SportsCenter" with Michael Smith. But it was a tweet she made about President Donald Trump on Sept. 11, 2017, calling him a "white supremacist" that made her a national figure.

That tweet and another tweet about an NFL team owner played a role in her being suspended and then later parting ways with ESPN. But she said she had no regrets about her leaving the network in late 2018 because journalists sometimes have to say things that are unpopular.

"Tell the truth bravely, even if it makes people uncomfortable," Hill said.

The lecture attracted a crowd filling more than 450 chairs set up in the UC Ballroom. The annual lecture is named for the late Memphis journalist Norm Brewer to discuss issues in journalism.

It was on the morning of Oct. 10, 2017, when Hill's career took an unusual twist when she became the subject of a tweet from Trump. It read, "With Jemele Hill at the mike, it is no wonder ESPN ratings have 'tanked,' in fact, tanked so badly it is the talk of the industry!"

The dispute immediately blew up. Hill said she saw her name on every TV screen when she went to her favorite steakhouse that night.

Hill continued to tweet about social issues including a tweet encouraging fans to boycott advertisers who support the Dallas Cowboys after that team's owner said he would bench any player who refused to stand for the national anthem. That led to her suspension from ESPN for



PHOTOS BY TOM HRACH

**Jemele Hill listens to questions during her presentation during the eighth annual Norm Brewer First Amendment Lecture on March 13 at the UC ballroom.**



**People line up to ask questions after Jemele Hill's presentation.**

two weeks in fall 2017. Hill departed ESPN in 2018.

"ESPN and I were two people that loved and respected one another but had no business being together," Hill said about her decision to leave. "I needed the freedom to create without corporate interest."

The social media crisis and suspension ended up being a blessing in disguise, and Hill said she was able to find work that truly inspired her. In

addition to writing for The Atlantic, she went into business with her best friend Kelley Carter and is producing a podcast titled "Unbothered."

"She took a huge blow to her career in front of the entire country and somehow turned it into an amazing, positive opportunity," Whitney Waits-Easley of Brighton, Tennessee, said after the speech. "That, to me, is really inspiring and proves how important determination is in this field."

Rolling Stone recently named Hill one of 20 women who are shaping the future. Hill's podcast "Unbothered" debuted on Spotify on April 8.

"I left feeling inspired to chase my dreams and to be confident enough to tell the truth. Jemele Hill is a great example of what a journalist should be and I hope I can compare to her one day," Waits-Easley said.

# 'A Spy in Canaan' brings positive attention to new Public Service Reporting Institute

BY WILLIAM SUGGS

The creation of the Institute for Public Service Reporting at the University of Memphis has brought new attention to Marc Perrusquia's 2018 book "A Spy in Canaan," which tells the hidden story of Memphis civil rights photographer Ernest Withers.

The book, which came out in March 2018, has been well received by critics and reviewers. Perrusquia, who heads the Institute, discussed his book and the issue of FBI surveillance with Journalism and Strategic Media faculty on March 29 saying that the story of Withers is one that needs to be told.

"This whole history of the FBI spying on Americans – there's quite a bit known generally about it," Perrusquia said. "But when you get down into the specifics in different communities about what they were doing, there are these hidden secrets that have been tucked away for decades and no one really knows what was going on. So, I was able to pull the cover off a lot of this and write about this hidden history."

This book tells of how Withers served as an FBI informant tasked with keeping tabs on civil rights activists and leaders in Memphis from the late 1950s and into the 1960s. Because Withers was well-known in the movement, he was able to get access that others could not. But what was not known until Perrusquia's reporting was that Withers was paid by the FBI as an informant.

Perrusquia, 59, came to the University in July 2018 after more than 30 years at The Commercial Appeal, which is where he began his initial reporting on Withers.

Perrusquia said the inspiration for the book and investigation came when he was told by a source in 1995 that Withers had worked with the FBI as an informant. He later obtained files via a public records request from the FBI confirming that Withers was an informant.



PHOTO BY TOM HRACH

**Marc Perrusquia discusses his book "A Spy in Canaan" with the faculty and students in Journalism and Strategic Media on March 29.**

"There was a file on (Withers) from the late '70s," Perrusquia said. "In that file there was a background report that referred to Ernest as having formally been designated 'ME338-R' which is an informant number, a source number, that's assigned directly to him."

Perrusquia said that type of information should have been redacted but never was, possibly from human error. He was then able to obtain other documents that linked the informant number to photographs and information provided by Withers to the FBI.

Withers was a valuable asset to the FBI in Memphis because Withers, a black man acquainted with the Civil Rights Movement and African American community, could move around and gather information with much more ease and less suspicion than any member of the mostly white FBI.

The information that Perrusquia provides in his book exposes long-kept secrets about the government's role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Aram Goudsouzian, chair of the UofM Department of History, called the book, "a triumph of investigative reporting, the product of the author's

dogged research and a bold lawsuit backed by the Commercial Appeal," referencing the lawsuit that Perrusquia and The Commercial Appeal had to file in 2010 against the FBI in order to gain access to files that the FBI would not release.

The book has gotten national publicity after reviews appeared in The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal.

Yet the book's greatest weight remains in Memphis because it is about a Memphis man who chose to work for the FBI to spy on people in Memphis. The point of this book is not to attack or defend Withers or the FBI but point out reasons for the actions of the government.

"You have to understand the period and the time," Perrusquia said. "It was the Cold War and a lot of the leaders and citizens were freaked out about Communism. It seems kind of funny in a way looking back now, but these were deep-seated fears that a lot of Americans had."

"A Spy in Canaan" was published by Melville House Publishing. It is available for purchase at [mhpbooks.com](http://mhpbooks.com) and [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and in bookstores.

# Student ad team scores high at district

MOBILE, Ala. — The University of Memphis National Student Advertising Competition team finished fifth at the annual regional competition conducted on the weekend of April 12 and 13.

Students from around the South compete every spring with winners going onto the national competition. The UofM is in District 7. Student teams are scored on their presentations. This year's client was Wiener-schnitzel, a chain of hot dog restaurants, and the goal for the teams was to come up with a plan to convince the public to eat more hot dogs.

The UofM team developed an advertising strategy based around the tagline "Any Way. Any Day." The goal was to promote hot dogs as a delicious food made any way or at any time of the day.

Even though the UofM was not the top school, it was only a few points from the winner. The competition finished with Alabama 64; LSU 63; ETSU 61; MTSU 60; and Memphis 59, with others following.

Winners of the district competitions around the country compete in the national competition, which is set for June 6-7 in Hollywood, Florida.



PHOTO BY RUOXU WANG

**The NSAC team from left:** T'Yanna Woods, Julia Mendez, Walt Whitsett, Liz Porter, Kirt Jenkins, Dr. Sandra Utt, Peyton Whitehead, Kathleen Blackwell, John Watkins, Cassidy Cockrell, Cynthia Castor and Jennifer Nichols.

## Documentary highlights links from King's life to Black Lives Matter

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Coche said that a total of 28 people were interviewed for the documentary.

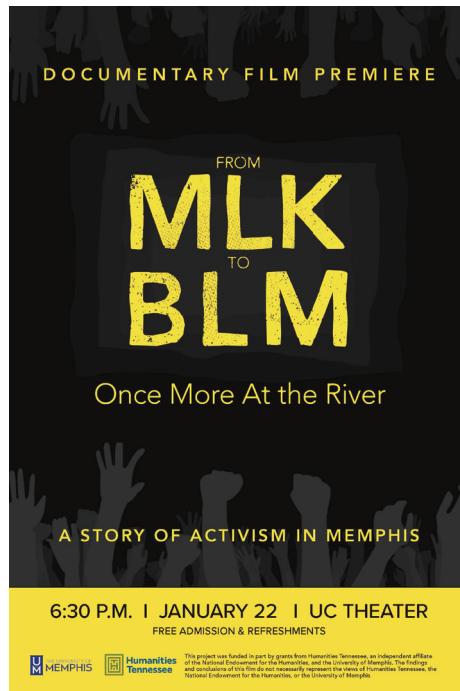
"We interviewed 'activists' in the large sense of the term," Coche said. "Some people called themselves organizers rather than activists. Others may be journalists or professors."

The film also utilized interviews with politicians and anyone who was interested in the fight for social justice. Some interviewees were old enough to have marched with King in 1968 while others were not even born then.

"Ultimately, we wanted to focus on their story to uncover how activism has evolved in the city, and how it has shaped it, too," Coche said.

Caleb Suggs, a journalism student and one of the documentary's producers, said this documentary highlights Memphis history because it is Memphis history.

"Memphis history is the founda-



tion of this documentary," Suggs said. "All it does is showcase and put on display what Memphis has been through and where it started, and it does that through not just the images in the past, but the people that lived through them."

Nearly 300 people attended the premiere. Otis Sanford, a journalism professor at the University of Memphis, said that the documentary serves as a portrayal of the activism

that still exists in Memphis as well as the motivation young people possess to keep striving for equal rights.

"I think they'll benefit by understanding that it's OK to be an activist," Sanford said. "To get involved, to let your feelings be heard, to exercise your First Amendment right to peaceably assemble and to protest, there's nothing wrong with that."

Coche said a teaching guide produced with the help of the UofM College of Education is available on the documentary website, oncemoreattheriver.com, and other schools across the country are being asked if they would be interested in screening the film for their local areas.

Suggs said that the documentary is in the process of becoming available to the general public for free, so that any educational institution or community organization that requests use of it will be able to do so.

"People can request viewing across the country," Suggs said. "Anyone who wants to educate people or inform their community can use this around the country and probably even around the world just to show people not just what's going on in Memphis, but things they can do in our world to make it better."