

CATHY HUGHES SCHOOL OF  
COMMUNICATIONS

**RESEARCH AND  
CREATIVE WORKS DAY  
2025**

**Thursday April 17, 2025**

8:15 AM – 3:10 PM

# RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORKS DAY

8:15–9 AM Check in and Welcome MET 301

## 9:10 AM

### Session 1:

"From Insult to Injury":  
Sports Media, Image  
Repair, and Safety  
Protocols

**MET 201**

### Session 4:

"Do You Remember?":  
Cultural Preservation, Public  
Memory, and Storytelling

**MET 203**

### Session 11:

"It's Magic":  
Resistance, Justice,  
and Representations in  
the Caribbean

**MET 202**

## 10:20 AM

### Session 2:

"Sounds at the Mecca:  
Study of language(s) and  
sound(s)"

**MET 201**

### Session 3:

"Is it True": Combating  
Misinformation/  
Disinformation and Telling  
Different Stories

**MET 203**

### Session 8:

"We Outside": Black  
People in Transit,  
Environmental Justice,  
and Climate Change

**MET 202**

## 11:30 AM

### Session 5:

"I Believe the Children are  
the Future": Education,  
Advocacy, and Resistance

**MET 203**

### Session 6:

"Project Runway": Fashion,  
Fetishism, and Politics

**MET 202**

### Session 7:

"Mothers in the Media":  
Representation, Maternal  
Care, and Magic

**MET 305**

## 12:40–2 PM

### **BYO Lunch Session**

**MET Auditorium**

## 2:10 PM

### Session 9:

"At the intersection": Performances, Transcending  
Borders and (re)Building identities

**MET 201**

### Session 10:

"Welcome to D.C.":  
Placemaking, Politics and  
Power

**MET 301**

# ORDER OF EVENTS

**CHECK-IN**

**8:15 – 8:45 AM**

MET 301

**CALL TO ORDER**

**9:00 AM**

**BLOCK ONE**

**9:10 – 10:10 AM**

**SESSION 1 - "FROM INSULT TO INJURY": SPORTS MEDIA, IMAGE REPAIR, AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

MET 201

*The Phoenix Has Risen: The Rebirth and Rebrand of Former NFL Phenom, Chad "Ochocinco" Johnson*

**Kalema Meggs | CCMS**

Chad "Ochocinco" Johnson is recognized as one of the most talented and gifted wide receivers who played in the NFL. Johnson's vibrant and colorful personality as a professional athlete attracted his fan base, followers of the NFL, sport world, and media. Though Johnson's boisterous personality created an image and sport brand that captured the attention of endorsement partners and collaborators, his life took a turn when he was involved in a domestic violence altercation with his then-wife and reality star of VH1's Basketball Wives, Evelyn Lozada. According to Collins (2005) and Leonard (2004), Black men have been historically commodified and viewed as entertainment while also being considered a threat to society. Johnson's 2012 publicized domestic transgression not only added to stereotypes attached to Black athletes who commit crimes, but it also temporarily damaged the former NFL player's image and sport brand. Applying the theoretical framework, image repair theory (Benoit, 1995), this study investigates how Johnson has repaired his image and brand since 2012 by using image repair's strategies and tactics by analyzing the Cincinnati Bengal Ring of Honor Recipient's image and brand transition in the last decade. Qualitative interviews with experts in the professional field of academia, sports industry, and media broadcast and journalism were applied and examined. Findings present Chad "Ochocinco" has repaired his image and brand since his 2012 transgression through the application of Benoit's (1995) image repair's strategies and tactics through the evolution of Johnson's rebrand represented in traditional, social, and new media platforms.

*Examining Factors Related to Head and Neck Injuries in Black NFL Players*

**Jasmine Branch, Amanda Melendez, & Eme Offiong | COSD**

To date, there is limited data on the incidence and prevalence of concussions among current Black NFL players. Therefore, the authors aimed to identify the prevalence and incidence of concussion and neck injuries among Black NFL players for the past five years. The relationship between concussion/neck injuries and player demographics will be analyzed. Preliminary data indicates that Black NFL players maintain the highest prevalence of concussion and/or neck injuries when compared to the players from other racial backgrounds for the past five years.

## *Examining Neuropsychological Analysis of Post-Concussion Symptoms: Profiles of Black Student-Athletes*

### **Alaina Davis | COSD**

The purpose of this study was to assess the cognitive performance of Black student-athletes with and without concussion over the course of a season. Second, to examine relationships between the measures of cognitive performance at baseline and post-concussion. Third, to identify the role of cognitive learning styles and academic performance in student-athletes. Collegiate student-athletes were administered measures to assess cognitive performance, cognitive learning styles, and measure academic learning abilities and strategies during pre-season of their college level sport and, if experienced, following a concussion experience. Results identified post-concussion cognitive challenges that may lead to either misdiagnosis or dual-diagnosis of psychological disorders and cognitive-communicative impairments.

## *Examining Vocal Fold Dysfunction in Athletes with Neck Trauma*

### **Cameese Jackson | COSD**

Athletes with VFD may experience laryngeal hyperresponsiveness, inflammation (swelling), and neuromuscular incoordination (Ishman et al., 2019). In terms of phonatory production, voice disorders may present as inspiratory stridor, a wheezing sound that occurs on inspiration. As well as, exertional dyspnea, which is decreased breath support during physical activity. In some instances, the symptoms may be incorrectly identified as respiratory impairments such as asthma or bronchitis that is exercise-induced. The purpose of this project is to examine the incidence and prevalence of VFD in the athletic population and to determine the types of assessment and treatments available in speech-language pathology that would provide functional support as they return-to-play.

## **SESSION 4 - "DO YOU REMEMBER?": CULTURAL PRESERVATION, PUBLIC MEMORY, AND STORYTELLING**

MET 203

### *"Lifting Her Legacy: The Henrietta Lacks Podcast"*

### **Heidi Gerber-Salins | MJFC**

This project is a part of the work of the Henrietta Lacks Legacy Group, a non-profit organization based in Baltimore, Maryland. Legacy Group Board Member Professor Gerber-Salins is currently recording and producing audio interviews with family members of Mrs. Henrietta Lacks and Turner Station, MD community members that will be featured in this celebratory program.

## *The Black Family Museum & Archive*

### **Fatou Sow | COMM**

The Black Family Museum & Archive preserves Black family histories through poetry, photography, documentary interviews, and family heirlooms. Our mission is to creatively engage with Black diasporic communities through art, soundscape technology, and event curation. Our work centers around Black homeplaces (bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms, businesses, and religious spaces) and physical and digital safekeeping (our ancestor's Bible, virtual family reunion, and editorial). With the support of a microgrant from the University of Maryland's Black Communication and Technology Lab, we are building a virtual reality (VR) space that includes three photographic collections of our African-American and Senegalese families from the late 1800s to the present day, compiling interviews with Black elders into a mini docuseries and creating an interactive genogram family tree.

## *Night at the Museum: How Black Queerness is Preserved*

### **Antonio Mercurius | CCMS**

This critical analysis examines how museum archives play a role in constructing public memory about queerness. Public memory and history are important for how people construct their identity and values. History and memory are rhetorical devices that decide who belongs, what is remembered, and how we make meaning of them. Museum archives can offer the possibility for vital preservation of Black queer people who historically face erasure. This study explores the descriptions of the National History Museum of African American Culture's digital artifacts, tagged with LGBTQ, to uncover how queerness is represented and memorialized for museumgoers and digital archivists.

## *From Resistance to Rubric: The Institutional Capture of Hip-Hop and the Cost of Legibility*

### **Ayanna Muhammad | CCMS**

Hip-Hop emerged as a communicative act of resistance, an improvisational, community-rooted response to systemic violence and cultural erasure. As the culture increasingly enters academic and archival institutions, its meaning is reshaped through communicative practices that often sanitize, reframe, or commodify its original intent. This study explores how universities and museums use narrative, discourse, and framing strategies to institutionalize Hip-Hop, and what this process reveals about power, representation, and cultural legitimacy. Grounded in communication theory (including Fisher's narrative paradigm, Hall's encoding/decoding model, Fairclough's institutional discourse analysis, and archival theory by Caswell and Cifor) this research examines how syllabi, museum exhibits, and archival materials act as rhetorical texts that encode institutional values. While institutional inclusion can offer visibility and resources to historically excluded communities, this study argues that inclusion without structural accountability often results in epistemic violence and cultural distortion. Ultimately, the paper calls for a reframing of how institutions engage Hip-Hop, centering community control, narrative sovereignty, and communication as a site of resistance, not containment.

## **SESSION 11 - "IT'S MAGIC": RESISTANCE, JUSTICE, REPRESENTATIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN**

MET 202

### *Haitian Birthworkers in the Digital Space: A Rasamblaj of Vodou Childbirthing Rituals*

#### **Marline Edmonds | CCMS**

Research shows that Caribbean birthworkers did not keep records, journals, or diaries of their medical knowledge compared to those in North America (Paugh, 2017, p. 124). Without a written record kept and maintained by Black women, we must examine their use of technology between the lives of the historical record (Steele, 2021, p. 23). According to Ulysse (2017) rasamblaj is the "assembly, compilation, enlisting, regrouping of ideas, things, people, spirits." Haitian birthworkers are political actors gathering in technocultural spaces or "digital lakous" to promote Haitian birthing practices that are often demonized by Western media. Although there are stigmas and stereotypes of Vodou, Vodou practitioners play a significant role as birthworkers in childbirth and postpartum care. Thus, this research applies Hall's (1997) Circuit of Culture to examine how culture is produced, circulated, consumed, and regulated to investigate the following research questions: (1) How do Haitian birthworkers threaten the digital space? (2) How do Haitian birthworkers use Instagram to preserve traditional birthing practices? Methodologically, this study conducts a Critical Textual Analysis of (3) @Lakoudantes Instagram posts to explore how Haitian birthworkers empower their users to embrace their cultural identity and turn from Western medicine.

### *Birth of a People: Bwa Kayiman - A Rasamblaj of Caribbean Reproductive Justice*

#### **Kenja-Rae Farquharson & Marline Edmonds | CCMS**

'Fe yon rasamblaj': do a gathering, a ceremony, a protest. Rasamblaj is the "assembly, compilation, enlisting, regrouping of ideas, things, people, spirits". Bwa Kayiman, the cornerstone of the Haitian Revolution was a historical, political, and religious ceremony held in the northern swamps of Haiti organized by Jamaican priest Dutty Boukman and Haitian priestess Cibil Fatima. This research recasts Bwa Kayiman as a rasamblaj of Caribbean reproductive justice to explore the legacy of spirituality as a strategy of reproductive resistance. Reproductive justice is defined as the right to have children, the right to not have children and the right to raise children in safe and sustainable environments. For many enslaved Africans of the Caribbean attaining reproductive justice required the supernatural. Using a critical cultural health communications lens this historical analysis interrogates white European medical texts from the 18th and 19th centuries to bring forth the stories of traditional birth workers, spiritual practitioners and community members. While the writings of white European men are overrepresented in the archives, this analysis carves space for the Black women who fought for reproductive freedom by any means necessary.

## *Barriers to Aural Rehabilitation in the Caribbean: The Impact of Education, Language Access, and Communication Diversity Among Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Individuals*

**Kristen Linton | COSD**

Access to aural rehabilitation services and communication modes for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) individuals in the Caribbean remains an under-researched issue. This study highlights disparities in hearing care and linguistic accommodations, emphasizing the need for awareness and inclusive healthcare policies to improve the quality of life for DHH individuals. Caribbean nations face a shortage of audiology services, trained professionals, and government support, creating barriers to rehabilitation and communication. The lack of dedicated schools for the Deaf, interpreter services, and widespread sign language use further marginalizes DHH individuals. This literature review examines aural rehabilitation and communication access in the Caribbean. Sources include an interview with Dr. Martin, Au.D., discussing rehabilitation challenges in the Cayman Islands, a World Health Organization report on hearing loss disparities (2021), a genetic study on hearing loss in the Caribbean (Peart & Tekin, 2024), and research on emerging sign languages (Braithwaite, 2016). Aural rehabilitation services remain severely limited, with little access to hearing aids, cochlear implants, or auditory training. Healthcare systems remain fragmented, exacerbating these challenges (Independent Study, 2025). Many Caribbean nations have low sign language use, limited interpreter availability, and rely on written communication as a substitute (Braithwaite, 2016). Additionally, diverse genetic factors contribute to hearing loss, requiring specialized but largely unavailable diagnostic approaches (Peart & Tekin, 2024). Urgent policy interventions are needed to expand audiology services, increase funding, and recognize sign language. Addressing these gaps will enhance education, employment, and healthcare access, promoting the social integration of DHH individuals across the Caribbean.

## *Famn Se Poto Mitan : A Critical Analysis into the Branding of Haitian Women by a U.S. Food Corporation*

**PJ Pierre-Jerome | CCMS**

There is a lack of notable academic research on stereotypical representations of Haitian women in U.S. food social media advertising. This study critically examines the cultural imagery present in the branding of Madame Gougousse, a U.S. food corporation that has targeted the U.S. Haitian community for more than 30 years. This research values the concept of “controlling images” from Black Feminist Thought (BFT) to analyze these representations. This approach is particularly effective because it allows for the researcher, a Haitian- American woman scholar, to explore the distinct Haitian cultural symbols exploited in stereotypical portrayals produced by Madame Gougousse’s food branding, as well as reinforced by social media posts (Collins, 2000, Butler, 2022). Through critical textual analysis, three Instagram posts (Figures 1-3) featuring the hashtag #MadameGougousse were examined, leading to the emergence of three main themes. These insights provide a basis to challenge prevailing negative notions of Haitian women.

**BREAK**

**11:20 AM- 11:30 AM**

**SESSION 2 - "SOUNDS AT THE MECCA: STUDY OF LANGUAGE(S) AND SOUND(S)"**

MET 201

*They Not Like Us: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas in Speech-Language Pathology***Morgan Moore | COSD**

Through interactive discussion, this session aims to foster dialogue regarding real world ethical considerations faced by professionals in the field of Communication Sciences & Disorders (CSD) while highlighting the role of ethics in maintaining and upholding ASHA's Code of Ethics. Learner Outcomes: At the end of this session, attendees will be able to: Demonstrate an understanding of ethical challenges in the field of Communication Sciences & Disorders for individuals of cultural & linguistically diverse backgrounds.

*Comprehensive Care for Fragile X Syndrome: The Role of the HUNPSLC***Robin Eury | COSD**

This presentation aims to demonstrate the Howard University NeuroPathways Speech and Language Clinic's (HUNPSLC) role in serving the community of clients diagnosed with Fragile X Syndrome (FXS). FXS is a genetic disorder caused by the mutation of the FMRI gene on the X chromosome. It causes intellectual disabilities, developmental delays, and difficulties with social and behavioral skills. Further, it causes delays and disorders of communication, speech, and language skills. The presenters aim to raise awareness of FXs, the causes and manifestations, the need for collaborative teaming to increase communication skills, and the need to increase advocacy. Specialized services, such as those given in the Howard University Speech and Hearing Clinic (HUSHC), specifically the HUNPSLC, serve to provide speech and language intervention and advocacy towards an improvement in communication, social skills, and an improvement in life skills needed to navigate the world more independently.

*Sounds & Expressions***Andrea "Andi" Toliver-Smith | COSD**

Dr. Andi Toliver-Smith is an associate professor in the Communication Sciences and Disorders department and is a proud alumna of the graduate program here at Howard University. During her short time here, she has taken on various roles that showcase her love and support of the department and the School of Communications department. This "Bring Your Own Lunch" presentation was left out of the Communication Sciences and Disorders department BYOL Day due to time constraints. This presentation follows the professional and research journey of Dr. Andi Toliver-Smith. She has participated in numerous research activities that includes student research and presentations as well as her own research publications, articles, and presentations at national conferences.

*Exploring Care for Cognitive, Communicative, and Swallowing Disorders Associated with Fibromyalgia: A Patient and Practitioner Perspective***Aethiopia Joseph-Salmon | COSD**

Communication, and swallowing is known by speech-language pathologists, many practitioners are not aware that cognitive-communicative challenges can exist among persons with diagnosis of Fibromyalgia. The purpose of this pilot study is to determine relationships that exist between reported symptoms of fibromyalgia and disorders of cognition, communication, and swallowing. We aim to 1) Examine the relationships between symptoms of fibromyalgia and disorders of cognition, communication, and swallowing. 2) Explore the knowledge and awareness of persons diagnosed with fibromyalgia and specialists in rheumatology on cognition, communication, and swallowing. 3) Identify indicators of health disparities for race/ethnicity among persons diagnosed with fibromyalgia.

### *Second Chances and Digital Classes: A Phenomenological Analysis of Online Educational Pathways for the Formerly Incarcerated*

#### **Ingrid Sturgis | MJFC**

The purpose of this research will be to explore the online educational pathways taken by formerly incarcerated individuals. It seeks to hear from the people who are living through this phenomenon. Their voices are often missing from the discourse about how they traverse the barriers to education, their experiences with learning technology, and their strategies to surmount the hurdles. Secondly, this research seeks to determine the online support they need to transition back into society. The findings from this research will contribute to a growing body of research on the post-prison online learning landscape.

### *Black Middle Class Families Represented on Primetime Sitcoms*

#### **Joslynn White | CCMS**

Black sitcoms for many Americans serve as a first glance of Black culture, and Black life. Considering the history of Black Americans, the representation of Black life on prime time television is extremely important in identifying how audience members receive Black stories and Black storytelling. Majority of these Black sitcoms were created, produced, written, and directed by white industry veterans and they also had a lot of creative control and authority regarding the details and direction of these sitcoms and the way Black families were being represented. These behind the scenes personnel have contributed to the stereotypes, assumptions, and biases—both consciously and unconsciously—of Black families, more specifically Black parents. Research demonstrates that although the industry America to sell a white perception of successful Black middle class families. The problem is although there are different types of Black families represented in primetime sitcoms, there is still a stigma attached gender roles and norms of Black middle class parents. The significance of this research is to uncover the representation of Black middle class parents—how gender roles and norms intersect with race—on American prime time television programs

### *Fake News and Vaccine Hesitancy in Nigeria*

#### **Stella Okigbo | CCMS**

Nigeria's access to social media platforms in this modern post-colonial era is more dependent on the advanced communication technologies that currently influence the majority of its citizens and their decisions not to receive vaccines. The problem is the correlation between the mis/disinformation communicated on WhatsApp and Facebook social media platforms and vaccine hesitancy in Nigeria. While WhatsApp and Facebook as communication technologies have made it not only possible but convenient and effective for Nigerian citizens to stay connected with each other and the rest of the world, both communication technologies have become a detriment (Omi pidan & Sanusi, 2024) in the ability of the Nigerian government to curtail the COVID-19 pandemic from February 27, 2019, until November 30, 2020, due to the transmission of mis/disinformation from fake news transmitted from social media platforms. The speed with which information is transmitted on WhatsApp alone cannot be discounted because WhatsApp is the most widely used social media platform not only in Nigeria but in other African nations because of its accessibility and affordance as a communication technology (Batra, 2016; Kola & Sunday, 2018). Similarly, Facebook (now called Meta) is also widely used by Nigerians for information sharing (Mefolere, 2016).



## Cover2Cover Magazine

### Hailey Mcmannen | MJFC

Cover 2 Cover Magazine (C2C) aims to creatively encapsulate the experiences of Howard University students. Cover 2 Cover aims to provide students of all majors and interests to gain in-field experience in media, entertainment, fashion, and more. As a student media publication and digital media association, C2C Magazine aims to publish digital content weekly as well as print at least one magazine issue per semester while simultaneously hosting professional development opportunities for students interested in the publishing industry. C2C is committed to upholding professional journalistic expectations and presenting culturally relevant information to its readers.

## SESSION 8 - "WE OUTSIDE": BLACK PEOPLE IN TRANSIT, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, AND CLIMATE CHANGE

MET 202

### *In My Backyard: How Pollution and Climate Change Are Making Black America Sick to Death*

#### Yanick Lamb | MJFC

During the Great Migration, African Americans often found themselves trapped in unhealthy neighborhoods of the so-called Promised Land. That reality is still with us. African Americans are 79% more likely than whites to live in communities with such dirty air, water, and soil that they are dubbed "sacrifice zones." Those who stayed put on the land of their ancestors, where polluters replaced plantations with toxic facilities, face the same fate. This tragic legacy is all the more pernicious because it is by design, as noted in redlining maps, residential covenants, plans for urban renewal or what some call "Negro removal," modern-day housing developments that have been built on toxic soil, and other sweetheart deals that place profits and politics over people. In a beautifully written narrative, award-winning health journalist, educator, and medical sociologist Yanick Rice Lamb, Ph.D., will tell the untold story of how all of this came to pass. "In My Backyard: How Pollution and Climate Change Are Making Black America Sick to Death" speaks to everyday people in an everyday voice about everyday experiences. The book's title is a reverse play on the "not in my backyard" or NIMBY movement. In this ground-breaking and unflinchingly honest book, Dr. Rice Lamb will draw not only from her expertise in medical sociology and public health, but also from her experience growing up in Akron, Ohio, the Rubber Capital of the World, where smokestacks emitted soot and the smell of sulfur dioxide. In the process, she will chronicle how the nation continues to fail communities of color.

### *Understanding the demographic discrepancy in park visitorship*

#### Kayla Smernoff | MJFC

Public spaces such as parks, monuments and other natural spaces are experiencing a diversity problem. Black people are one of the least likely racial groups to visit a National Park. Black rangers and park volunteers are the least likely to be employed by the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS and its employees are directed to steward parks, monuments, and reservations by conserving "the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life" and by providing "for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." The mission seems simple; however, the statement excluded Black people living in America during 1916 and beyond. Exclusion and elitism from the white community prevented Black people from enjoying the parks near their communities. In their own words, the NPS has a diversity deficit. This disenfranchisement has historically manifested in three ways: Black people were excluded from public parks by law, Black people have felt ambivalent towards some public parks because their communities were destroyed in order to create them and Black Americans remain afraid of visiting national parks in remote locations because they feel unsafe. Understanding people of color and Black peoples' relationship to environmentalism can widen discussion about relationships to land and historical displacement. Black peoples' lack of access to public spaces is imbedded in the spaces' conception and the lack of access hindered Black America's ability to enjoy nature in their country and individual communities.

## "SLEEPY HEAD" (Film)

**Malik Quinonez | MJFC**

Ky's late night train ride turns into a terrifying premonition when he encounters a mysterious woman and witnesses her tragic fate, blurring the lines between reality and a haunting vision.

## *Dashing Through Public Transport (Film)*

**Baylor Diamond | MJFC**

Jackson's high school morning starts with a hectic journey across snow-clad Chicago because the short film "Dashing Through Public Transport" shows his commute. In his haste Jackson leaves his residence after oversleeping which causes his mother to receive the door impact. His rush results in him dropping his phone into a sewer drain which brings greater worries. Jackson finds his friend Venessa at the bus stop where she tells him bus has been delayed for fifty minutes. As the students start to think about their alternatives a transportation vehicle finally surfaces. The driver presents an indirect transportation plan which involves extensive bus transfers before reaching school. Despite their doubts about the situation they climb into the bus which turns out to be filled with senior citizens and the homeless. The driver interrupts their conversation to inform them about the fares which makes them reluctantly return to the front section. Jackson and Venessa find out at the zoo transfer point that they will need to spend money for the succeeding bus since its arrival time remains uncertain. Jackson and Venessa argue about their bad luck since Jackson lost his phone while Venessa yelled at the first bus driver before they manage to catch a new vehicle filled with uncertainty for getting to school in time. The script was heavily derived from a nearly identical experience that I had as a high school student in Evanston Illinois, trying to get school on a snowy day. I expanded on this screenplays concept and adapted it into a comedic short story with more characters, higher stakes, and a more comedic tone.

**BREAK**

**11:20 AM- 11:30 AM**

**BLOCK THREE**

**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

## **SESSION 5 - "I BELIEVE THE CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE": EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, AND RESISTANCE**

**MET 203**

*"When You Hit Me" -- An Interactive 3D Medical Animation App for Child Abuse Prevention*

**Stacey Patton and Carolyn Malachi | MJFC**

When You Hit Me is a 3D medical animation app that uses immersive audio and stunning visuals to take users on a virtual journey inside a child's body during toxic stress. Designed for parents, educators, and medical professionals, the app reveals what happens beneath the skin when a child is hit—showing, in vivid detail, the damage that occurs across multiple organ systems. Through realistic 3D animation and immersive audio, users experience how violence triggers a cascade of stress hormones, alters brain architecture, weakens the immune system, and disrupts emotional and cognitive development. The app translates decades of neuroscience, developmental psychology, and trauma research into an intuitive, emotionally resonant experience that speaks across cultural, educational, and language barriers. When You Hit Me offers a science-based intervention for communities where corporal punishment is often normalized and results in high rates of child abuse and fatalities. Rather than shame or blame, the app provides knowledge and compassion, encouraging nonviolent, culturally responsive parenting practices. This is not just an educational tool—it's a visceral, transformative experience that helps users truly see and hear what a child cannot say. imbued in the spaces' conception and the lack of access hindered Black America's ability to enjoy nature in their country and individual communities.

## *Coming of Age in Crisis: Visualizing Liberation in African American Photobooks*

### **Marie Chery | CCMS**

African American children in the Jim Crow South, often dubbed the “Emmett Till Generation”, were rarely exposed to photographic and textual articulations of black childhood that weren’t stereotypical, limiting, or depictive of child martyrdom. While photographic images of Till’s mutilated body and other instances martyred black youth did galvanize a generation of black youth activism, this paper considers alternative photographic and textual articulations of black childhood and social

justice that were available to black child readers of this era. Using a critical historical methods approach, this paper traces black child political agency within African American photobooks and argues that texts like Jane Dabney Shackelford’s *My Happy Days* (1944), Ellen Tarry’s *My Dog Rinty* (1946), and Langston Hughes and Roy DeCarava’s *The Sweet Flypaper of Life* (1955) engaged civil rights work through visual arguments about the need for political and social transformation. Documenting this history is critical in that it disrupts standard conceptions of childhood in modern history and contributes to a growing body of literature that chronicles childhood agency in relationship to the civil rights era.

## *School for Whom? Project 2025’s Plan to Dismantle the Department of Education*

### **Jordyn Britton | MJFC**

The article “School for Whom? Project 2025’s Plan to Dismantle the Department of Education” examines the proposal for the dissolution of the Department of Education put forth by The Heritage Foundation and other conservative organizations. The proposal outlines a stark reconstruction of the United States federal government and its entities. While advocates of the education proposal feel as though it should be left up to individual states to decide how they educate each citizen, those not in favor of it feel as such because of the complications that state-wide autonomy in education could pose to certain populations but also the country as a whole, specifically in terms of public education, administrative and academic freedoms, quality of education, and the safety of students and families who come from marginalized communities. The Department of Education was put into effect to promote equality in primary, secondary, and postsecondary education in the post-antebellum United States, but its other functions have been to distribute federal funding to states and to distribute funds to individual students to fund postsecondary education, creating and disseminating policy addressing and protecting marginalized students, faculty, and families, especially those who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community. Project 2025’s plan for the Department of Ed. also went as far as to qualify topics like race, the history of the United States, and gender identity as inappropriate and vow to ban them from being taught at all federally funded institutions of education. Throughout are interviews and expert analysis from educators and students.

## *Attitudes Toward Misinformation and Disinformation Among HBCU Students*

### **Uchenna Onuzulike | COMM**

Fake news-related topics have flooded our society now more than ever before due to the increase in technology. Social media platforms have increased misinformation and disinformation in news consumption. Increased access to digital technology has advantages and disadvantages, including quick information dissemination and less fact-checking. Thus, scholars should pay more attention to how college students perceive fake news. This study aims to capture how HBCU undergraduate college students perceive fake news and if they spread fake news unknowingly or in denial of spreading fake news. Constant comparative thematic analysis was performed using information obtained from the qualitative interviews. The research findings reveal that the participants actively

share and repost information on social media platforms. Interestingly, they also express a strong ethical stance against spreading fake news, despite some admitting to sharing unverified information. The study contributed to understanding how Black students at an HBCU university perceive fake news in this oversaturated social media environment.

### *Luxury, Influence, and Resistance: Black Women Challenging Norms on Instagram*

**Dasia Clemente | CCMS**

The growth of the "Normalize Black Women in Luxury" movement led to more visibility for Black female luxury influencers on Instagram, igniting conversations about consumerism, capitalism, and resistance. This research examines how the presenting of luxury items by Black female influencers challenges traditional norms of Black womanhood. With the theoretical framework of Black feminist thought, this study explores how multiple digital spaces serve as platforms for resistance against systemic racism and economic exclusion. Through critical textual analysis, this research investigates content directly from the Instagram page @blackgirlunboxing, which specifically highlights Black women embracing luxury and material wealth. Findings also suggest that luxury consumption by Black women disrupts dominant narratives that historically associate Black womanhood with economic limitation. However, the movement tends to raise questions on the general role of capitalism within liberation. While it's argued that luxury influencers promote consumerism, along with unrealistic wealth standards, others see this movement as an assertion of agency and economic empowerment. This research highlights themes, like consumerism, and unapologetic self-expression. Ultimately, this research builds upon discourse regarding digital Black feminism by depicting how social media serves as both a place for resistance and where capitalism is perpetuated. By normalizing Black women in luxury, influencers are reshaping cultural views of Black womanhood, positioning themselves as active participants in a redefined, self-determined narrative of success.

### *Fast Fashion in Correlation to Climate Change*

**Esther Njoroge | COMM**

Fast fashion has become a dominant force in the modern clothing industry, offering affordable and trendy apparel at a significant environmental cost. This paper examines the link between fast fashion waste and climate change, highlighting the industry's role in exacerbating global warming. The rapid production and disposal of clothing contributes to carbon emissions, microplastic pollution, and landfill overflow, with textiles taking centuries to decompose while releasing toxic chemicals. This paper also traces the historical development of fast fashion, from the British Industrial Revolution to its modern-day impact, particularly in the United States. The rise of fast fashion is deeply tied to the socio-economic changes of the 19th century, which laid the groundwork for mass production and consumption. The paper proposes a sustainable alternative, such as collaborative consumption through clothing rentals, to mitigate fashion waste and reduce environmental harm. Renting clothes can help reduce the demand for fast fashion and slow its cycle of overproduction and waste. Despite potential resistance from industry leaders and consumers, this reform could significantly decrease textile-related emissions and promote a shift toward a more sustainable fashion economy. The findings underscore the urgent need for policy changes, corporate responsibility, and consumer awareness to address the environmental crisis caused by fast fashion. By adopting such reforms, we can make significant strides in combating climate change and creating a more sustainable fashion industry.

### *STRUT The Yard: The Documentary (Film)*

**Taylor Brooks | MJFC**

STRUT The Yard: The Documentary takes the audience behind the scenes of Howard University's first-ever fashion show competition, where aspiring models compete for a signed contract with a major modeling agency and an academic scholarship. Inspired by the story of Anok Yai's rise to fame, the documentary highlights the intersection of fashion, culture, and ambition at one of the most prestigious HBCUs. STRUT The Yard captures the intense preparation, creative vision, and high-stakes moments leading up to the big night through unfiltered access with models, designers, and showrunners. But beyond the glamour, the film sheds light on the mental health and the emotional toll of the industry—exploring the pressure, self-doubt, and resilience required to succeed in a space that often critiques more than it uplifts. When accusations of colorism emerge, it sparks deeper discussions about beauty standards, representation, and inclusivity within the Howard fashion community. These conversations highlight the importance of diversity and inclusion in the fashion world, challenging industry norms and pushing for change.

*'I wear my Trump tie everywhere': For these GenZers, it's not just MAGA, it's fashion,*

### **Asia Alexander | MJFC**

A growing number of Gen Z conservatives are embracing Trump merchandise as more than just campaign gear—it's become a bold fashion statement and a symbol of political identity. For young Republicans like Notre Dame law student Will Donahue, wearing a red Trump tie is a cultural counterpunch to what they see as progressive dominance in mainstream youth politics. Donahue and others view Trump-branded apparel—ties, MAGA hats, custom cowboy hats, even \$550 clutches—not just as accessories but as badges of pride and defiance. Influencers like Claire Bettag recall fearing backlash for wearing MAGA gear but now see it as a source of solidarity and hope for Trump's return. While political merchandise has long been used to foster unity, fashion experts note that Trump has ele

Fashion historian Summer Anne Lee sees echoes of past campaign memorabilia but argues Trump's merchandise empire is unprecedented in scale. The trend mirrors earlier political branding success stories like Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, which sparked widespread demand for logo-branded merch. From walking sticks in the 1800s to mass-produced buttons, clothing, and accessories, political fashion has always shaped cultural identity. For today's young conservatives, Trump gear is less about party affiliation and more about reclaiming a voice they feel has been suppressed—and doing it in style.

## **SESSION 7 - : "MOTHERS IN THE MEDIA": REPRESENTATION, MATERNAL CARE, AND MAGIC**

MET 305

*Reel Mothers: Millennial Perceptions of Motherhood in Television and Film*

### **Brandale Mills-Cox | COMM**

Television and film play a significant role in shaping societal perceptions of motherhood, often reinforcing stereotypical narratives that fail to reflect the lived experiences of real mothers. This study examines how millennial mothers perceive media portrayals of motherhood and whether these representations align with their realities. Using survey data from 550 millennial mothers and Stuart Hall's Representation Theory, this research critiques dominant motherhood archetypes—including the "supermom" and "welfare mom"—and their impact on self-perception and parenting styles. Findings reveal that while some mothers relate to media portrayals, many reject rigid stereotypes, highlighting the need for more nuanced and inclusive representations.

*A Critical Health Communication Inquiry on Black Women's Experiences with Assisted Reproductive Technology & Insights from Clinicians: A D.C., Maryland, and Virginia Case Study*

### **Bukky Babalola | CCMS**

In the United States, Black women are adversely affected by a looming reproductive health issue associated with the ongoing Black maternal health crisis. Infertility is defined as a woman having difficulties becoming pregnant for over a year and affects 19% of women of reproductive age (CDC, 2024). However, Black women are two times more likely than non-Black women to experience infertility issues (APA, 2022). Although medical solutions such as assisted reproductive technology (ART) were developed to be an effective alternative birthing option, Black women account for the most unfavorable outcomes while using the technology (Ghidei et al., 2021). In addition, research suggests that Black women have the highest rate of birthing outcomes challenges (Jain, 2020). This problem calls for actionable research that evaluates the problem through accounts from those who utilize the treatment and those who provide the treatment. Accordingly, the study assesses the lived experience of Black women who access fertility treatment through ART, particularly in vitro fertilization. The research also provides prescriptive recommendations for clinical practice through insights by fertility and reproductive health clinicians who serve the study population. This phenomenological study explores the multidimensional modes of communication which patients use to navigate their medical and social experiences through the lens of health communication. The core assumption of this research is that racial health disparities are a major contributor to the experience of Black women seeking ART. Therefore, the study employs a combination of public health and critical feminist theories to evaluate the problem (Seifer et al., 2022).

## *A Critical Textual Analysis of Doula-Care Narratives and the Application of Intersectionality on Television News Programs*

**Daliah Ouedraogo | CCMS**

Over the years, television's news programs have spotlighted doula-care as playing a crucial role in supporting Black maternal mortality in the United States (Gollust et al., 2019; Sayyad et al., 202). This critical textual analysis explores the representation of doulas on the ABC Nightline program Expectant Black Mothers Find Support With Doulas and Midwives and their awareness of Black women's racialized birthing experiences. The analysis attempts to answer the following question: "How do television news programs represent doulas' intersectional understanding of Black women's racialized birthing experiences? Examining how doula-centered media narratives reveal doula's understanding of the unique lived experiences Black women face in the context of motherhood must be understood within the gendered racism that contribute to their racialization (Brantley, 2022).

## *The Witches You Couldn't Kill Were Black: This Magic Is Resistance*

**Mary Holiman | CCMS**

The representation of African traditional religions (ATRs) and the portrayal of "conjure women" in media contributes to the degradation of Black women, girls, and other marginalized genders, with ATRs being seen as evil, barbaric, and primitive. Yet, recollections of "witch hunts" and spirituality often tend to center white women and paganism, becoming today symbolic of self-empowerment, feminism, womanhood, and a disruption of patriarchal, cisnet male whiteness. In return, this reinforces harmful and dominant ideologies about traditional African spiritualities and the Black women who practice them, including but not limited to healers, herbalists, and birthworkers. Grounded in Black feminist thought theory as a framework, this research will explore conjuring as a feminist practice (e.g. conjure feminism), arguing that by engaging in hoodoo, voodoo, and/or rootwork, Black women resist, affirm their own identities, and contribute to cultural and social change.

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**MJFC BYOL**

**12:40 PM- 2 PM**

**MET 100**

**SESSION 9 - "AT THE INTERSECTION": PERFORMANCES, TRANSCENDING BORDERS AND (RE)BUILDING IDENTITIES**

MET 201

*Decolonizing African Feminist Spaces through Performance Activism***Ama Appiah-Kubi | CCMS**

Performance activism has become a powerful feminist praxis for centering marginalized voices and challenging heteronormative norms. Yet, while scholarship points to the significance of performance activism in feminist movements, a consistent empirical perspective within the Ghanaian context is lacking, particularly regarding social media platforms like Instagram. To address this gap, this dissertation examines feminist activism in Ghana and investigates how performance activism functions as a feminist praxis. Focusing on Drama Queens, a Ghanaian feminist organization, this study analyzes their discursive performances on Instagram to determine how they disrupt heteronormative structures and exclusionary feminist politics. These performances highlight intersectional oppressions and illuminate practices of marginality, agency, and resistance. By examining Drama Queens' online activism, the research underscores the need to broaden feminist activism beyond conventional approaches and encourages a more inclusive decolonial framework.

*A Critical Textual Analysis of the New York Times coverage of Blaxit and Black repatriation experiences***Christina Jimbah | CCMS**

Blaxit is a movement of Black and English Americans returning to their ancestral home in Africa. While there are many different reasons for this migration and tourism, including spirituality, economics, and politics, escaping systemic oppressions tends to be at the forefront. This movement is not structured in terms of an umbrella campaign or timeframe. It is, however, used as a term encompassing migration efforts of Blacks to Africa in the present day and dating back to the 1800s migration of Black American slaves to Liberia, West Africa. And while historical news coverage in the United States has been inclusive of coverage that reflects racial systems - crime, poverty, oppression - news coverage of the Blaxit movement has also been inclusive of boycotts and economic impacts, legislation and policy. Through a critical textual analysis, an examination will be conducted of news coverage of the Blaxit movement and its framing of the experiences of Black Americans in relation to their ancestral homelands, and what power dynamics are evident in these representations.

*Day Off (Film)***Elijah Hall | MJFC**

This comedic short film explores the day off of an older woman, Evelyn, a workaholic attorney whose grind for work backfires as unfortunate events occur during a solo picnic -- preventing her from focusing on a case but also preventing her from having the day off she unknowingly needs.

## *“Bendición, mami”. Exploring Cultural Identity Formation of Millennial “DiaspoRican” Mothers and Their Nurturing Process in the U.S.*

### **Lillian Agosto Maldonado | CCMS**

Puerto Rico is considered a “Diasporic Community” (Ayala, 2020) and a “nation on the move” (Duany, 2002). Given its political relationship with the United States and its status as a “commonwealth,” Puerto Rico has experienced migration from the start. After undergoing my identity formation as a “DiaspoRican,” I have been exploring the experiences of various “Puertorriqueños y Puertorriqueñas” who left their homes and moved to the United States in search of new opportunities. One particularly intriguing scenario to me is being a mom as a “DiaspoRican” and belonging to the Millennial demographic. This phenomenological study examines the cultural identity formation perspectives of Millennial “DiaspoRican” mothers and their nurturing process in the United States. Preliminary findings highlight the preservation of Puerto Rican identity through language, food, and traditions, the necessity of a support network post-migration, and the fear of discrimination surrounding the use of the Spanish language.

### *Sin Luces (Film)*

### **Shahriar Shafiani | MJFC**

*Sin Luces* follows Jerry, a Mexican American bartender struggling to feel at home in a changing hometown. Through fleeting moments of friendship during a World Cup workday, Jerry faces the difficulties of holding onto a world that feels increasingly distant.

## **SESSION 10 - : “WELCOME TO D.C.”: PLACEMAKING, POLITICS AND POWER**

MET 301

### *Scandalous Places: A cultural analysis of Washington, D.C. in Scandal’s episode, “The Lawn Chair”*

### **Loren Saxton Coleman | CCMS**

Scandal’s “The Lawn Chair” episode aired seven months after the death of Michael Brown and days after the Justice Department released a report that detailed how the Ferguson Police Department was unjustly and illegally targeting Black residents with citations and arrests. I, like Butler, propose that this episode’s depiction of a white male police officer shooting and killing a young black male in the streets of Washington, D.C. re-presented scenes from Ferguson and Michael Brown’s death. Yet, I argue that this episode was not just a re-presentation of the events surrounding Michael Brown’s death. As the first episode physically shot in Washington, D.C. I examine how this particular episode constructs Washington, D.C. as a contested space, a battleground conditioned by racial and spatial politics. Instead of focusing on how this episode tells a story of Michael Brown, I focus on how Washington, D.C. , the city, is represented in this episode, paying particular attention to how structures of space and race condition how Black bodies and cities are governed and policed. This work rests at the intersection of media studies and critical geography work that calls attention to how media representations construct places and help shape meaning about those places.



## *No Taxation Without Representation: Voter Apathy and Information Overload*

**Kessonga Allen | COMM**

Despite being founded on the principles of proper representation, voter apathy in the United States is very high, with only half of eligible voters casting ballots in the 2022 election cycle. A potential issue of voter apathy in America is the phenomenon of “information overload”: when too much information confuses and disengages voters. This research investigates the relationship between voter apathy and information overload, honing in on Black working-class Millennial and Gen Z populations in the District of Columbia. While the dissemination of political information to voters has caused confusion amongst voters, the widespread accessibility of digital media has had a strong impact—especially in marginalized communities such as Black America. This paper shall utilize surveys, media analysis, and focus groups to measure the relationship between voter apathy and information overload. The researcher hopes to identify strategies to enhance political engagement and improve voter turnout among Black Americans.

## *A Day On, Not a Day Off: MLK’s Legacy in Environmental Justice*

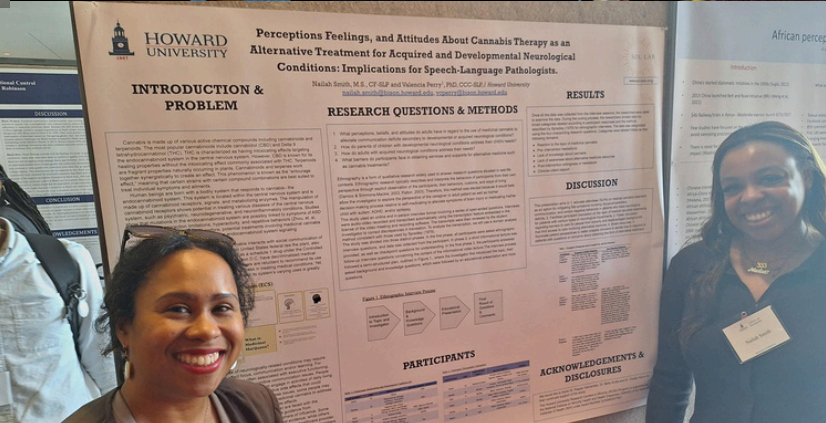
**Morghan Manuel | MJFC**

On January 18, Anacostia Riverkeeper hosted a Day of Service cleanup at Pope Branch Park in Washington, D.C., honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy of service and justice. Volunteers worked in near-freezing temperatures, removing nearly 4,000 pounds of illegally dumped waste, including tires, suitcases, and industrial debris. This community-driven initiative highlights the intersection of environmental justice and civil rights, as pollution in the Anacostia River disproportionately impacts low-income communities and communities of color. This feature story examines the ongoing fight to restore the Anacostia River, with insights from local leaders such as Dolly Davis, a longtime advocate for cleanups and illegal dumping enforcement, and Trey Sherard of Anacostia Riverkeeper. Additionally, environmental policy expert Karim D. Marshall provides analysis on pollution mitigation efforts, including the Anacostia River Sediment Project and legal battles holding polluters accountable. Beyond the cleanup, this piece calls attention to systemic environmental injustices and the broader fight for climate equity. Volunteers’ personal stories illustrate the importance of sustained advocacy, while expert interviews provide context on the policies shaping urban environmental health. The article ultimately connects Dr. King’s message of service with ongoing efforts to protect D.C.’s waterways, urging readers to take action through community engagement and policy advocacy.

## *Need That Matters to YOU: The Fall 2024 NewsVision Newscast*

**Skyler Winston | MJFC**

From a polarizing election season, to history at Howard University and how artists are honoring local DC heroes.. The Fall 2024 NewsVision capstone cohort is covering the news that matters to you and your community. The seniors, known as "The Skillful Seven," reported and produced stories affecting the Black and global community. They covered the historic 2024 Presidential Election in real time and found inspiring stories from residents in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The multimedia collegiate journalists are under the tutelage of Prof. Jennifer Thomas. They filmed their production at WHUT, Howard University's PBS Station serving more than 2.5 million viewers. This capstone newscast is the culmination of "the village" of professors in the Dept. of Media, Journalism and Film at the Cathy Hughes School of Communications.



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