



# OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

## Department of Communication and Theatre Arts

### ODU's Lifespan and Digital Communication Master's Program Partners with Christopher Newport University

by Amy Matzke-Fawcett

A new partnership between Old Dominion University's lifespan and digital communication (LSDC) master's program and Christopher Newport University aims to help students to reach their educational goals more efficiently.

Starting this fall, seniors from CNU's communication major can apply to ODU's lifespan and digital communication master's program while completing their undergraduate degree, saving them time and money, said Avi Santo, chair of the Department of Communication and Theatre Arts at ODU.

"The partnership benefits both institutions as it creates a clear pathway for students majoring in communication at CNU to transition into our graduate program at ODU," Santo said. "It is structured similarly to our accelerated programs in that CNU students can begin to earn credit toward their MA degree while still completing their undergraduate degree."

The program represents nearly a year of discussion and a memorandum of understanding between the schools. It has already led to enrollments after Tom Socha, professor in communication and former graduate

program director of LSDC at ODU, gave a talk in early spring 2020 at CNU.

"It is my understanding that we received a couple of applicants from CNU to our graduate program as a result of this process," Santo said. "I should also note that - to my knowledge - we have never had a CNU student apply to our grad program prior to the commencement of this program."

Santo hopes the success will be replicated with other regional universities and with professionals already working in the field to return to school through a hybrid online and in-person model in the coming year.

"There has never been a more critical time to earn a master's degree in communication, especially one focused on the intersections of multi-generational and strategic communication," he said. He added that the partnership will benefit more than ODU's graduate program and its students.

"It will have far-reaching impact as we train this next generation of communication leaders to tackle these emerging and ongoing challenges and develop innovative strategies for addressing them," he said.

## NEW SPRING 2020 SEMESTER SCHEDULE

**January 19**  
Classes Begin

**January 26**  
Add/Drop Deadline

**February 2**  
Withdrawal Deadline to Receive  
One-Half Refund

**March 30**  
Last Day to Withdraw from Classes

**April 26**  
Classes end

**April 27**  
Reading Day

**April 28**  
Exams begin

**May 5**  
Exams end

**May 8**  
Degree Conferral

**Spring Commencement**  
To be determined

Please adjust your syllabi to reflect these new date and format changes. If you have already been in touch with students in your classes, please update them on the new schedule.



## Dr. Takiyah Nur Amin Explores “The Radical Urgency of Now” in Anti-Racism Speaker Series

by Kaitlyn Justice

Starting this fall, The Department of Communications & Theatre Arts at Old Dominion University is hosting an Anti-Racism Speaker Series. This year-long event will present topics and discussions concerning anti-racism and how it ties into the arts and higher education practices. The first speaker featured in this series on Thursday, October 8th was Dr. Takiyah Nur Amin.

James Morrow, Assistant Professor in the Department’s Dance Program, explained how Dr. Amin’s perspectives and discussions benefit students and faculty, “Dr. Amin is a brilliant dance scholar and the subject matter for this event is paramount. ... Anti-racism is a discussion that needs to happen across ODU’s entire campus so whether you are a biology major or a dance major, Dr. Amin’s presentation will speak to you.”

Dr. Amin is a dance scholar, educator, and consultant, who has performed and published extensive research on 20th century American concert dance, African diaspora dance performance, and dance pedagogy.

Her research focuses on 20th-century American concert dance, African diaspora dance performance/aesthetics, and pedagogical issues in dance studies.

Her work has appeared in several peer-reviewed journals including *The Black Scholar*, *Dance Chronicle*, *Dance Research Journal*, *the Western Journal of Black Studies*, and the *Journal of Pan-African Studies*. She is a founding executive board member of the Collegium for African Diaspora Dance (CADD) and Vice President for Membership for the Dance Studies Association (DSA). Dr. Amin consults with institutional clients on curricular design, policy reform and issues pursuant to anti-racism and diversity in dance studies and related disciplines.

“We are in a moment of dynamic upheaval and social change that requires a radical re-ordering of our priorities in order for everyone to thrive,” Dr. Amin stated. Using her research and experiences, she shared how to make the most out of this current moment in our society.

Dr. Amin’s discussion in the series featured key topics from anti-racism, anti-hegemony, to anti-oppressive, all tied into the art of dance performance.

Department Chair, Dr. Avi Santo, expressed “We are very excited to have Dr. Amin kick off these efforts. She is an outstanding and well-respected scholar of dance focused on critical race studies and her focus on needing to change dance curriculum helps us recognize where implicit bias and institutional lag intersect to reproduce racialized hierarchies even in places that are invested in dismantling them.”

The Anti-Racism Speaker Series will feature a new scholar each month via Zoom, open to the ODU community and beyond.

# KUDOS!

Congrats to Lifespan & Digital Communication grad student **ADAM PYECHA**, who recently successfully defended his thesis and upon submission of final paperwork is our latest completed MA degree. Special thanks to his thesis advisor **DR. TOM SOCHA**, as well as the thesis committee for their assistance.

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**GIANINA THOMPSON** (ODU, 2012) has recently taken the reins as Communications Director for LeBron James's SpringHill media conglomerate. A graduate of our Communication Program, Thompson has held prior PR positions with the NFL, ESPN and Nike, and proudly carries on our mission of combating injustice and inequality through storytelling: "In any of the work that I have done and will do, the beauty is that my being a Black woman is in the front seat of my story-telling and truth seeking." [Read more from Gianina here.](#)

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**SARA WILSON**, one of our adjunct instructors, has been recognized for helping a student at Central Michigan University (where Sara also teaches) who lost all of their textbooks when their house burned down amidst the wildfires raging on the West Coast. Thank you for all your hard work, kindness and dedication, Sara! [Read more here.](#)

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Professor emeritus, **BOB ARNETT**'s book, *Neo-Noir as Post-Classical Hollywood Cinema*, has now been published. Be sure to [check it out here.](#)

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*Tidewater Family Plus* recently featured an interview with **BRITTNEY HARRIS** about her teaching and recent performances. [Read more here.](#)

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**DAVID MALLIN** recently took part in ZEISS Conversations Ask Me Anything Series: "David has transported audiences to different eras and locations, from Upper West Side New York to Paris to Sin City. With fast camera movements, stunning one shots, and a lush color palette, ...a visual tour de force."

Share your accomplishments [HERE!](#)

## Science Pubs Focused on "Social Media's Political Dark Side" features Dr. Ted Gournelos

by Dan Campbell



Social media has been used - and abused - by political and activist groups for years. It now encompasses everything from fake news to conspiracy theories to widespread surveillance and manipulation by hostile foreign governments and presents a threat to our democracy.

Old Dominion University's Science Pubs continued online with the second event in its fall 2020 series with "Social Media's Political Dark Side," on Oct. 14 via Zoom.

The featured researcher was Ted Gournelos, associate professor of communication and theatre arts and program director of strategic communication. Gournelos discussed echo chambers and spirals of silence existing at the individual level. The negative effects on our mental health and communities was also examined.

"Most of us know that social media can make us frustrated, angry and unhappy," Gournelos said. "We compare ourselves to it, we find out family and friends aren't who we thought they were, we get into fights about things we can't change. But we often forget that we're being manipulated into this, and that it's big business."

Strategies of government, social media companies, individuals and communities to reduce the negative elements were a hot topic of discussion with the audience after the presentation.



# #oduTheatre *in focus*

## October Mystery at the Hermitage

Do you love real local mysteries?...ghost hunts?... live theatre? Check out "Beneath the Surface: A Lochhaven Legend" at Norfolk's Hermitage Museum & Gardens coming up in October. Explore real life [and death] mysteries during this immersive ghost hunting experience, featuring our own Theatre Program faculty members Katherine Hammond and Lee Smith! Opens Oct. 23. [Find out more here.](#)

## Play Reading & Discussion Group: Take Part, Watch, and Chat

Take part in upcoming play readings! See the featured production on your own, then we'll come together to discuss it from all angles: political, writing, acting, staging, etc.

Discussions are Biweekly on Thursday during Activity Hour:  
Oct 15, Oct 29, Nov 19  
12:30-1:30 pm  
Questions? Contact Jim Lyden at [jlyden@odu.edu](mailto:jlyden@odu.edu)

*Participation will count as extra credit for students.*

## Symptomatic IRL

ODURep's next production will be *Symptomatic: IRL*, a virtual, devised, multifaceted work directed by ODU Theatre faculty member Brittney S. Harris and produced by Deborah Wallace. Performances will be live-streamed Nov 12-15.

*Symptomatic: IRL* will combine an ensemble cast, conflicting news reports, articles, and first-hand accounts, to co-create this exploration of connectivity, social distancing/isolation, individualism, artistic expression (or the lack thereof!), during the COVID era in the U.S.

**SYMPTOMATIC: IRL**

CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED BY BRITTNEY S. HARRIS  
PRODUCED BY DEBORAH WALLACE

**NOV 12-14 @ 7.30 PM AND NOV 15 @ 2 PM**

