Faculty Spotlight

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR TO WRITE BOOK ON MULTICULTURAL JOURNALISM

By Andrew Kort, First Year IIC Student

An Associate Professor and a founder of the International and Intercultural Communications Master's Program here at the University of Denver, Margie Thompson has a rich career history that seems ever-expanding.

From the time she arrived at the University of Wisconsin in Madison as an undergraduate student, Margie has continually and innovatively been an advocate for social justice through her passion for and expertise in journalism.

For 15 years, Professor Thompson worked with an organization run by Latin American and Caribbean women called FIRE - Feminist International Radio Endeavor/Radio Internacional Feminista, where she interviewed women from around the world.

"From them I learned a more collaborative reflexive style of journalism that involves 'sharing the power of the microphone,' so women feel far more comfortable to share their stories. I have encountered hundreds of women and learned about their 'strategies of survival,' which all women develop in any context."

Her work with FIRE would eventually motivate her to work as a photojournalist with ESCRIBANA, a women's communications initiative based in Costa Rica that actively projects the voices of associated women and their causes and experiences. She is still working with the organization today.

These experiences and the knowledge she gained from them would be some of the crucial motivations that would result in her latest venture - a book entitled Multicultural Journalism: Critical Reflexivity in News Practice, which is under contract with Routledge publisher.

As Professor Thompson notes, the book "addresses the chronic imbalance by mainstream corporate media in coverage of people of color, women and other marginalized groups. I
include a critique of traditional journalism values and practices and argue that journalists must recognize their own cultural identity, power and privilege and also that of the people they interview in order to better connect and cover diverse communities."

As a past student of Margie's, I can verify the fact that she communicates these practices. She encouraged us to employ tactics of self-reflexivity in our assignments and class discussions, and urged us to consider our own cultural position to understand how it can affect our world view and consequently our writing.

She is directly applying her learnings from her time at FIRE to her book as well, elaborating on "sharing the power of the microphone." Margie describes it as "a new more collaborative and reflexive style of journalism... resulting in richer and more in-depth stories from a greater diversity of people."

Dr. Thompson's interest in research was sparked while writing her Master's thesis, and she decided to design her PhD work around the psychological effects and processes of media employing a behavioral approach. More recently, the concentration of her efforts has shifted to alternative media, globalization and social and political movements of women and marginalized groups through a more critical and interpretive approach. Finally, and luckily for those of us who have been beneficiaries, Professor Thompson somehow found the time to apply her knowledge to the international and intercultural communication field as well.

Margie currently teaches multiple classes within the IIC program such as Intercultural Communication and Multicultural Journalism, providing students with the valuable opportunity to learn from someone who has applied knowledge and wide-ranging experience.

In 2012, Professor Thompson was awarded the William T. Driscoll Master Educator Award. The award is given out annually to acknowledge excellence in professional work in education at the University of Denver, and the recipient of the award is chosen by teachers and students alike. A past student of Margie's mentioned in her nomination letter that "she encourages the exchange of ideas, past experiences and cultural dialogue. For me as an Arab/American, Margie created a safe space in which I was valued for my differences."

When I asked her what the most valuable pieces of advice she would give to students attempting to make a change in the world, it became even clearer that she perfectly encapsulates the old adage "practice what you preach."

"Seek ways to be open and aware of issues of culture, power and privilege of yourself and others in order to better understand and respect diverse ways of being, knowing and doing.
Recognize that each person has the power to work toward change and be an activist with whatever issues drive his/her passion or convictions," she says.