A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity to sit with our two new Program Directors in the Media, Film, and Journalism Studies Department to talk about their vision for the department's graduate programs and their research in the field of communication.

Both Dr. Kaneva and Dr. Polson have done a significant amount of research internationally which has been recognized around the world.

Dr. Nadia Kaneva is now the Director of the Graduate Program in Media & Public Communication. With her experience, Dr. Kaneva brings an important international perspective to our program. She is passionate about both fostering an intellectual environment in and out of the classroom and providing students with new opportunities.

"I really believe in what we do," Dr. Kaneva said when asked what she likes most about her new role in the department. "In a small program like this one, it is all very personal and meaningful. We care about issues and ideas and we all work together to see our students grow."

Dr. Kaneva's research draws on critical theories of communication and culture and explores the construction of national and gendered identities in various contexts. She is particularly interested in critical perspectives on promotional culture (advertising and public relations), nation branding (a term that refers to the ways that countries adopt commercial practices to make themselves more attractive as trade partners and as tourist destinations), and public diplomacy (a term that refers to how nations use various communication strategies to inform and influence as well as build trust among various stakeholders). Much of her research focuses on the cultural transformations of post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

During the 2016-17 academic year, Dr. Kaneva presented her research at four international conferences in Prague, Pretoria, New York, and San Diego. Dr. Kaneva felt honored to be the
keynote speaker at a conference on nation branding at the University of Pretoria, hosted by the university and the government of South Africa.

"I was humbled to be the guest of honor and grateful to see that my research on nation branding is gaining international notice." Dr. Kaneva explained.

She feels motivated to continue to explore this topic, which has been a central theme in her research for over ten years. Dr. Kaneva is currently in the early stages of a new, interdisciplinary study about the way in which the Islamic State (ISIS) is using promotional and popular media to present itself as a legitimate state actor. This study will extend her research on nation branding in a new direction. The project received a grant from the university’s Dean of the Art, Humanities and Social Sciences, and is a joint study with Dr. Andrea Stanton from the Department of Religious Studies.

Dr. Kaneva teaches graduate and undergraduate classes in media theory and history, strategic communication, and branding. If you are interested in any of these areas, I highly recommend her classes!

Dr. Erika Polson has been appointed Director of the graduate program in International & Intercultural Communication. Dr. Polson just returned from sabbatical this year.

When asked about her vision for the program, Dr. Polson said, "I'm excited to have come back from sabbatical to new challenges as the IIC Program Director. I particularly enjoy the community aspect of this work. It’s so great to meet all of the new students who come to us from different backgrounds and life experiences. I’m also looking forward to reconnecting with alums and learning more about where their degrees have taken them professionally and personally. As we continue to build our IIC network, we can make sure our current students have access to more opportunities in international communication-related fields."

Dr. Polson’s research focuses broadly and critically on socio-cultural change in relation to globalization, specifically on globalizing middle classes and media as intersecting sites for analyzing such changes. She is the author of "Privileged Mobilities: Geo-Social Media, Professional Migration, and a New Global Middle Class" which explores how migrating professionals use new media to create local territory in global cities. The work is based on ethnographic research of online and offline digital media practices by expatriates in Paris,
Singapore, and Bangalore. Dr. Polson’s work appears in publications such as *New Media and Society; Media, Culture, and Society; International Journal of Communication; European Journal of Cultural Studies; and Communication, Culture & Critique. *While on sabbatical, Dr. Polson participated in research-related conferences and research projects in many countries, all of which showcase her work in the field of communication.

In October of last year, Dr. Polson attended the annual meeting of the Association of Internet Researchers in Berlin. Dr. Polson organized and participated on a panel where she presented on "Intersections of Technology and Place."

In November, along with Dr. Lynn Schofield Clark, Chair of MFJS, Dr. Polson organized and led an all-day symposium on "Media & Class in the 21st Century" as part of the annual conference of the National Communication Association, in Philadelphia. Polson and Clark, along with Professor Radhika Gajjala of Bowling Green State University have signed a contract with Routledge to edit a book based on this symposium. Titled the "Routledge Companion to Media and Class," the volume will be published in early 2019. Thirty scholars from around the world are already lined up to write chapters for this book.

In April of this year, Dr. Polson spent two weeks doing fieldwork in Havana, Cuba, building on a 2015 research project about the new Wi-Fi networks the state has rolled out around the country. These networks have been developed over the past two years through a series of fixed access points along streets and in public parks. In Havana, Dr. Polson interviewed app developers, Wi-Fi users, editors, and digital journalists. She explains that some of that work will be discussed in the forthcoming Routledge edited book collection called "Location Technologies in International Contexts," forthcoming in 2019.

In May, Dr. Polson presented “Doing Local: Place-Based Travel Apps and the Globally Networked Self” at the GeoMedia 2017 Conference in Karlstad, Sweden; this work will be published as a chapter in Zizi Papacharissi’s “Networked Self, Volume 2,” forthcoming in 2019.

As for her plans for next year, in April 2018 Dr. Polson will present additional work from the Havana project at a symposium on "Mobile Socialites" at Lund University in Sweden, where the University of Denver has a strategic partnership.

The Department of Media, Film & Journalism Studies is proud to have Dr. Kaneva and Dr. Polson as the new Graduate Program Directors. Both Dr. Kaneva and Dr. Polson are eager to keep connecting with prospective students, current students, and alumni to continue building new opportunities for the MFJS department.

Find out more about both of our graduate programs on our website:
- M.A. in Media & Public Communication
- M.A. in International & Intercultural Communication