

Cassandra D. Hightower, M.A.

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Doctoral Student

University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Department of Communication

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RESEARCH INTERESTS: My research focuses on how rhetoric influences and motivates political thought and identity in America. Specific areas of interest include political communication, presidential rhetoric, feminist studies, digital politics, and propaganda/disinformation.

EDUCATION

Ph.D.: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Beginning August 2022 (Anticipated May 2026)

Department of Communication Studies, Program in Rhetoric and Public Communication

Temporary Adviser: Dr. Sara VanderHaagen

M.A.: Northern Illinois University, August 2021

Department of Communication, Program in Communication Studies in the emphasis of Rhetoric

Master's Thesis: "Strategic Misrepresentation or Something More Sinister? Deception in George W. Bush's War Rhetoric on Iraq"

Committee: Drs. Ferald Bryan (Chair), Kerith Woodyard, and Karen Whedbee

Cum. & Major GPA: 4.0/4.0

B.A.: Northern Illinois University, May 2019

Major: Communication Studies in the emphasis of Rhetoric and Public Communication, Department of Communication

Minor: Journalism, Department of Communication

Certificate: Applied Ethics, Department of Philosophy

Cum. GPA: 3.64/4.0 | Major GPA: 3.7/4.0 | Cum Laude

A.A.: Kishwaukee College, 2015

Associates in Art

GPA: 3.8/4.0

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Starting August 2022	Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Communication, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Instructor for 2 sections of COMMUN 105: Business and Professional Communication
2019–2021	Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University, Instructor for 6 sections of COMS 100: Fundamentals of Oral Communication
Spring 2020	Graduate Teaching Assistant to Dr. Laura Vazquez, Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University, Special Topics in Media Studies: Reality Bytes Film Festival

RESEARCH INVOLVEMENT AND PRESENTATIONS

"Madame, Mrs., or Kiddo? How About 'Dr.': Examining the Anti-Intellectual Criticisms of First Lady Dr. Jill Biden." Women's Caucus, Central States Communication Association Convention, Madison, WI, March 2022.

"Partisan Selective Exposure of Fake News on Social Media." Political Communication & Technology, Top Student Paper Session, Central States Communication Association Convention, Virtual, March 2021.

"Demagogues and Rule Breakers: A Comparative Analysis of Presidents' Andrew Johnson and Donald Trump's Dismissal of the 'Rules' of Presidential Rhetoric." Rhetorical Theory & Criticism, Top Paper Session, Central States Communication Association Convention, Virtual, March 2021.

"Partisan Selective Exposure of Fake News on Social Media." Midwestern Conference on Literature, Language, and Media (MCLLM), Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, March 2020.

SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

- 2022 Chancellor's Scholarship Award, Department of Communication, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, \$5,000
- 2021 Martha D. Cooper Graduate Teaching Scholarship Award, Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University, \$1,500
- 2021 Paul Crawford Outstanding Graduate Student Award, Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University
- 2021 Top Student Paper Award, Communication Technology Interest Group, Central States Communication Association Convention, \$50
- 2021 Outstanding Women and Gender Advocacy Graduate Student Award, Presidential Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), Northern Illinois University
- 2019 Dean's Award, Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University
- 2019 Outstanding Undergraduate Major Award, Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University
- 2019 Outstanding Woman Undergraduate Student Award, Presidential Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), Northern Illinois University
- 2019 Employee Scholarship Award, Oak Crest (DeKalb Area Retirement Center), \$5,000
- 2018 Margaret L. Woods Rhetoric Scholarship Award, Department of Communication, Northern Illinois University, \$1,300

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

- 2022–Present Graduate Student Member & Vice President of Communication, Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society, Chapter 080, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- 2022–Present Graduate Student Member, Rhetoric Society of America, Student Chapter at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- March 2022 Student Volunteer, Central States Communication Association Convention, Madison, WI
- 2020–2021 President, Graduate Communication Advisory Council (GRADCOM), Northern Illinois University
- 2020–2021 Graduate Member, Lambda Pi Eta National Communication Honor Society, Kappa Omega Chapter, Northern Illinois University
- 2019–2021 Curriculum Committee, Graduate Communication Advisory Council (GRADCOM), Northern Illinois University
- 2019–2020 Professional Development Committee, Graduate Communication Advisory Council (GRADCOM), Northern Illinois University
- 2018–2019 President, Lambda Pi Eta National Communication Honor Society, Kappa Omega Chapter, Northern Illinois University
- 2018–2019 Member, Public Relations Committee, Mortar Board National Senior Honor Society, Pleiades Chapter, Northern Illinois University
- 2018–2019 Tau Sigma National Honor Society for Transfer Students, Beta Upsilon Chapter, Northern Illinois University
- 2013–2015 Phi Theta Kappa National Honor Society, Alpha Rho Eta Chapter, Kishwaukee College

ADDITIONAL TEACHING & INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Kishwaukee College

Malta, IL

TRiO Upward Bound Summer Humanities Instructor

June 2022–August 2022

- Created all lessons for the 6-week program to instruct and prepare high school students for college.
- Devised activities and worksheets for students to develop and strengthen skills in reading, writing, spelling, and argumentation.
- Performed all in-class instruction, record-keeping, and grading.

DeKalb High School, CUSD 428

DeKalb, IL

Long-Term Remote Substitute Teacher

August 2021–May 2022

- Adhered to the curriculum and lesson plans assigned by the regular teacher.
- Followed procedures and achieved lesson goals.
- Assigned and explained homework.
- Worked with Canvas, Skyward, and Google Classroom.
- Monitored and reported on the remote students in their progress through the online alternative program, Acellus.

Long-Term Social Studies Substitute Teacher

October 2021–December 2021

- Conducted all lesson planning, in-class instruction, and grading for three sections of freshman World Geography, one section of Western Civilization I, and one section of upperclassman Sociology.
- Managed the classroom effectively to encourage student participation.
- Minimized distractions and maintained a positive learning environment.
- Adapted teaching style to unique needs of students.
- Adapted lessons for online learning for remote or quarantine students through Canvas.

Northern Illinois University

DeKalb, IL

Intern for Reality Bytes Independent Student Film Festival

Fall 2020

- Aided Director Dr. Laura Vazquez in all communication, organization, and marketing tasks for the first virtual Reality Bytes student film festival.
- Created promotional content, managed all social media platforms, and connected with the public to stimulate engagement for the event.
- Conducted behind-the-scenes duties to evolve the festival to the virtual format due to COVID-19.

PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS

Central States Communication Association (CSCA)

Lambda Pi Eta National Communication Honor Society (LPH)

Mortar Board National Senior Honor Society

National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity

National Communication Association (NCA)

Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society (ΦΚΦ)

ACADEMIC CERTIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

WhyTry Training Level 1 Certificate, WhyTry Organization, 2022

Interdisciplinary Teaching Strategies Seminar (UNIV 595), Northern Illinois University, Spring 2021

Graduate Teaching Certificate, Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Northern Illinois University, 2020