

**UNDERGRADUATE
COMMUNICATION STUDIES
AND ENGLISH CONFERENCE**



Play!

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026

James B. Woulfe Alumni Hall
Anderson Student Center
University of St. Thomas

WELCOME



Welcome to the Undergraduate Communication Studies and English Conference sponsored by the University of St. Thomas.

This conference is a celebration of undergraduate research in Communication Studies and English, bringing together students and faculty from colleges and universities from across the Midwest.

The theme of the conference is **Play**. Play is essential to human creativity and communication. Play is key to cognitive, aesthetic, and ethical growth; to developing and sustaining imagination; to relationship-building; and to personal and collective problem-solving and innovation. The aim of this conference is to explore this theme in an interdisciplinary way, engaging with a wide variety of texts, approaches, traditions, innovations, performances, points of view, and communication contexts, past and present.

University of St. Thomas Conference Organizing Team:

Dr. Kristi Wenzel Egan, Department Chair of Communication Studies; Dr. Debra Petersen, Associate Professor of Communication Studies; Dr. Amy Muse, Department Chair of English; Ms. Jessica Moore, Communication Studies Coordinator; and Mr. Andy Leet, English Coordinator. Student assistant: Renee Nies.

2026 PARTICIPATING UNIVERSITIES

College of St. Benedict and St. John's University
Concordia College at Moorhead
Concordia College-Saint Paul
Gustavus Adolphus College
Macalester College
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
University of Nebraska at Omaha
University of Phoenix
University of St. Thomas

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

REGISTRATION: 8:15-9:00 a.m.

Anderson Student Center, James B. Woulfe Alumni Hall North

CONCURRENT PANELS: 9:00-10:15 a.m.

Panel 1: Room ASC 202

Panel 2: Room ASC 340

Panel 3: Room ASC 238

Panel 4: Room ASC 341

CONCURRENT PANELS: 10:30 a.m.-11:45 a.m.

Panel 5: Room ASC 340

Panel 6: Room ASC 202

Panel 7: Room ASC 341

Panel 8: Room ASC 238

LUNCH AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Noon - 1:30 p.m.

Anderson Student Center, James. B. Woulfe Alumni Hall North

CONCURRENT PANELS: 1:45-3:00 p.m.

Panel 9: Room ASC 238

Panel 10: Room ASC 202

Panel 11: Room ASC 340

Coffee, water, pastries, fruit, and other snacks will be available throughout the day next to the registration table.

CONCURRENT PANELS

9-10:15 A.M.

PANEL 1: Room ASC 202

PLAYFUL LITERARY CRITICISM ROUNDTABLE

Lily Bode, University of St. Thomas

"Shelley and the Arcane: Performing Cartomancy in *Frankenstein*"

Logan Goulet, University of St. Thomas

"Tea with Prufrock"

Claire Hartung, University of St. Thomas

"Rodrigo's Request, a Letter Based on *Hour of the Star*"

Faculty Moderator

Dr. Laura Zebuhr, University of St. Thomas

PANEL 2: Room ASC 340

REIMAGINING ORIGINS AND FUTURES: CREATIVE EXPLORATIONS IN POETRY AND PROSE

Natalie Mazey, Macalester College

"'Becoming': A Collection of Poems"

Sarah Pacholski, University of Nebraska at Omaha

"Beowulf Before Heorot"

Jordon Perkins, Concordia College at Moorhead

"A Second Trump Presidency: The First 100 Days,' A Collection of Poems"

Andrew Dong, Macalester College

"The Life and Times of Freddy Frog"

Faculty Moderator

Prof. Shannon Scott, University of St. Thomas

CONCURRENT PANELS

9-10:15 A.M.

PANEL 3: Room ASC 238

AFFECTIVE, DYSTOPIAN, AND ALGORITHMIC: MEDIA AND NEWS FRAMING OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE

Celeste Conteh, University of St. Thomas

"Media in a Mental Health Crisis: An Analysis of Pixar's *Inside Out*"

Andrés Di Bauer, University of Nebraska at Omaha

"Play as Grief Work"

Ava Lawson, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

"Playing Handmaid: A Media Analysis"

Chloe Rossow, Gustavus Adolphus College

Evangelyn Hill, Gustavus Adolphus College

"News Commentary Framing of AI Trends"

Faculty Moderator

Prof. Marceleen Mosher, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

PANEL 4: Room ASC 341

FRAMING THE FEMALE ATHLETE: INVESTMENT, REPRESENTATION, AND EQUITY IN WOMEN'S SPORTS

Olivia Bonk, University of St. Thomas

"Major League Baseball's in the Athletes Unlimited Softball League: A New Era for Women's Professional Sports"

Tessa Jones, University of St. Thomas

"Media, Uniforms, Objectivication: Examining the Sexualization of Women Athletes"

Trinity Adams, University of St. Thomas

"Equity on the Field: Communication, Representation, and the Challenges that Black Women Face in Collegiate Softball"

Ashley Alden, University of St. Thomas

"The Pom-Pom Controversy (over the Minnesota Vikings' Male Cheerleaders): Who Owns the Poms?"

Faculty Moderator

Dr. Debra Petersen, University of St. Thomas

CONCURRENT PANELS

10:30-11:45 A.M.

PANEL 5: Room 340

WHO GETS AHEAD? COMMUNICATION, BIAS, AND BELONGING ACROSS FIELDS

Callie Sieg, University of St. Thomas

"Closing the Gender Gap in Finance: How Communication Shapes Progress"

Yohannes Balema, University of St. Thomas

"Cultural Appropriation, Selective Racism, and Hair Discrimination: Understanding the Politics of Black Hair in Institutions, Media, and Society"

Nicole Reineke, University of St. Thomas

"Dominance and Discrimination: How Media Bias and Stereotypes Impact Asian Golfers in the PGA"

Marisa LaPlante, College of St. Benedict and St. John's University

"How I Play with Non-Profit Organizations"

Faculty Moderator

Dr. Adrienne Christiansen, Macalester College

"Play is our brain's favorite way of learning."

--Diane Ackerman

CONCURRENT PANELS

10:30-11:45 A.M.

PANEL 6: Room 202

NARRATIVE PLAY AND LITERARY PERFORMANCE ACROSS TIME

Sheralynn Weider, Concordia University (Saint Paul)

"Tall Tales: Performativity in Pilgrimage Literature"

Xinle Sui, Macalester College

"The Narrative Play of Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*"

Abigail Reno, University of Phoenix

"Playing with Life"

Adam Stomberg, University of St. Thomas

"The Gates Are Open"

Faculty Moderator

Dr. Liz Wilkinson, University of St. Thomas

PANEL 7: Room 341

STORY: THE SHORTEST DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE

This session combines roundtable discussion and demonstration of the story exchange, a practice developed by the global non-profit Narrative 4 to increase empathy and strengthen relationships. Presenters will share examples of how leading and participating in story exchanges have impacted their connections with classmates, their learning and teaching, and their lives.

Gianna Mitchell, University of St. Thomas

Marie Khamphoune, University of St. Thomas

Makai Green, University of St. Thomas

Faculty Moderator

Dr. Amy Muse, University of St. Thomas

CONCURRENT PANELS

10:30-11:45 A.M.

PANEL 8: Room ASC 238

GOVERNING THE GAME: CRISIS COMMUNICATION, RULE CHANGE, & COMMERCIAL INNOVATION IN SPORT

Isaiah Maharaj, University of St. Thomas

"Crisis Communication: A Concept Misused by FIFA When Handling Human Rights Controversies"

Astrid Kieser Kisting, University of St. Thomas

"Advantage In or Out? The Coaching Rule Change that Altered the Game of Tennis"

Cage Linton, University of St. Thomas

"How to Catch a Fan: The Successful Marketing of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC)"

Elena Arriondo, University of St. Thomas

"From Sideline to Spotlight: The Effect of Netflix's 'Cheer'"

Faculty Moderator

Dr. Kristi Wenzel Egan, University of St. Thomas

LUNCH AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS

ANDERSON STUDENT CENTER, WOULFE HALL NORTH
12-1:30 P.M.

KEYNOTE: TANE DANGER AND DANGER BOAT PRODUCTIONS



Our keynote for the 2026 conference on “Play” will embody and celebrate the critical role of play in our lives as students, scholars, artists, and citizens of the world.

Twin Cities-based Danger Boat Productions lives out the work of what you learn as majors in English and Communication Studies: inquiry, creativity, communication, and collaboration to make complex topics comprehensible and engaging. They bring big ideas to life through improvisational performance.

This keynote will include a talk by founder Tane Danger about the value of improv skills for everyday life and an improv performance by the Danger Boat ensemble.

About Danger Boat:

For more than a decade, co-founders Tane Danger and Brandon Boat have used humor to break down barriers and energize audiences. With backgrounds in public policy and social work, they envisioned how improv could make difficult topics accessible. Since then, they have built a team that has brought that magic to hundreds of stages, from small retreats to large-scale conferences.

CONCURRENT PANELS

1:45-3 P.M.

PANEL 9: Room ASC 238

RHETORIC AND REHUMANIZATION: VOICE, IDENTITY, AND RESISTANCE ACROSS GENRES

Amelia Dewberry, Gustavus Adolphus College

"An Analysis of Ruth Muskrat Bronson's Speech to President Coolidge"

Chloe Knuteson, Gustavus Adolphus College

"Christ is Palestinian: An Analysis of Reverend Munther Isaac's 'Christ in the Rubble'"

Jordon Perkins, Concordia College at Moorhead

"Documentary Poetry as a Tool for Rehumanization"

Faculty Moderator

Dr. Emily Scroggins, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

CONCURRENT PANELS

1:45-3 P.M.

PANEL 10: Room ASC 340

IMPROV(ING) COMMUNICATION: STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH IMPROV AND PLAY

Improv(ing) Communication is an interactive workshop that will uncover the hidden benefits of improv in everyday life. In this interactive event, we will discuss the important role improv plays in workplace communication and play some improv games to demonstrate the way improv can foster communication confidence and build interpersonal skills. Attendees of this workshop will learn the power improv has to 1) develop strategies for relating to others, 2) increase openness to social discomfort and uncertainty, and 3) say "yes!" more.

Isaiah Maharaj, University of St. Thomas
Errol Mickelson, University of St. Thomas
Brianna Ranglall, University of St. Thomas
Liberty Schultz, University of St. Thomas
Matthew Stephan, University of St. Thomas
Salma Thompson, University of St. Thomas

Faculty Moderator

Dr. Bernie Armada, University of St. Thomas

Student Respondent

Shanneal Young, University of St. Thomas

RAFFLE

**ANDERSON STUDENT CENTER, REGISTRATION TABLE
3:15 P.M.**

Student participants will be eligible to enter our raffle for a leather journal notebook or a wireless Bluetooth speaker.

Student must be present to win.

“It is a happy talent to
know how to play.”

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

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