

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a blue and white jacket and dark pants, is sitting on the wide stone steps of a large Gothic cathedral. The building's facade is made of light-colored stone and features intricate Gothic architecture, including pointed arches, statues in niches, and a large, ornate window with tracery. The sky is clear and blue.

Backpack journalists

By Peter Tormey

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hen John Caputo came to Gonzaga University as a visiting professor 19 years ago, he anticipated a communication revolution. Caputo might have had second thoughts, however, when he entered a small, fourth-floor Administration Building office. There, he was told by a staff member, "Faculty don't have computers at Gonzaga."

In the nearly two decades since, Caputo has seen some of his career dreams come true. He started a master's program in communication and leadership studies that began in 2004. As the world grows increasingly connected, the program has



For Gonzaga communication Professor John Caputo, the international media program relates directly to his career-long interests in globalization and ways to improve international and intercultural communication.

never been more relevant. Offered online and "on-the-ground," interest is reflected by an enrollment of 273 students: 49 in the classroom, 223 online.

Caputo says the online curriculum allows professionals to experience Jesuit education, gain the skills needed to remain competitive in the market place.

"Our online education only works to the extent that there is a first-rate, high-quality master's program on campus," Caputo said. "Peter Drucker wrote that universities as we know them will not exist in 30 years. I still think what we do on the ground and in the classroom makes everything else possible."

St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, would approve, he said. "His (Ignatius') people have technology to promote the same mission of faith and justice and my sense is, yes, Ignatian pedagogy translates into a multimedia world," he said.

The incessant advance of technology has made global markets instantly accessible and has connected people and cultures like never before. As organizations and industry have asked for more and better ways to conduct business, entrepreneurs and technology have met the challenge. What remains are communications challenges for organizations trying to bridge modern divides of culture and language.

This is the landscape that has given growth to the International Media Certificate program, a four-week international summer immersion experience. It offers media training for GU undergraduate and graduate students.

Language and society

Teams of four students, based in the ancient towns of Cagli, Italy, and Armagh, Ireland, dip their toes into the modern practice of multimedia journalism. Each student gains experience writing for the Web, creating Web pages, interviewing, taking photos, shooting video and editing. Faculty are assigned to each group. The approach has captivated U.S. educators, students and journalists. Most agree this modern method of storytelling across multiple media platforms is the wave of the future.

The summer media course is set in small, rural towns so students can know foreigners and recognize similarities and differences between cultures and people, instead of a traditional focus on differences, he said.

"Young people begin to think that everyone is the same throughout the world because their perceptions don't ever change," Caputo said. "Our media convergence program immerses them in another culture. The students become backpack journalists and start to understand and appreciate how important language is in the fabric of society."



Alexandra Lanouette

A few economic realities seem to indicate multimedia journalism will be here to stay: a near universal decline in newspaper subscriptions nationwide and declining market shares for many traditional broadcast media entities as more people, especially the young, turn to the Internet for news. Print and broadcast news media owners wishing to remain relevant realize they must invest more in their online reports as they try to retain subscribers and adapt to a major realignment of markets.

Earlier this year, the American Journalism Review wrote about the widespread interest in multimedia journalism among U.S. journalists, media companies and college journalism programs. Gonzaga's summer program was discussed regularly last year at TVSpy.com's "ShopTalk" [www.tvspy.com/shoptalk.cfm], a daily Web-based newsletter sent to 30,000 mostly broadcast media. Classes at Columbia University, Syracuse University and others required "ShopTalk" as daily reading.

"There is a lot of rich learning going on here," Caputo said. The Overseas Press Club grants membership to all students in the summer program.

Alexandra Lanouette, an alumna from the master's program, attended the Italy summer media program when it was in Camerano in 2006. She is finishing a master's degree in international policy studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

"It benefited me academically in terms of all my cross-cultural communication theory background," she said. "The International Media program allowed me to further experience living and studying abroad and gave me an amazing foundation for my current studies." She is completing a six-month internship with the U.S. Department of State.

"Many people I work with and many of my schoolmates and professors are impressed with my organizational communication and leadership background," she said.

Some have parlayed the course into faculty positions. Dan Garrity uses skills he learned in the summer program as an assistant professor at Gonzaga and as director of broadcast studies. Others have taken faculty and staff positions at other schools, including Debbie Schallock, director of marketing at University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Putting it all together

Christine Slomski, who earned a bachelor's degree in public relations in May, said she was overjoyed with her experience in Armagh last summer.

"This was really an enriching academic experience. It was jam-packed with so much, just an amazing curriculum. And it was self-empowering for us to be journalists, to find a story, research it and do the photography and videography," she said. "It requires a lot of you, but if you are willing to put yourself into it, what you will get out of it is so rewarding."

Slomski happened upon an event of historic significance when a conference in Armagh included representatives of both sides of the longstanding "troubles." The big news was that nothing happened.

"The Irish people around us said, 'Can you believe this? I never thought I'd live to see this,'" Slomski recalled.

Caputo says technology and communication have made the world a place where endlessly fascinating stories await modern storytellers. Ironically, computers – the now ubiquitous tools Caputo was told 19 years ago that Gonzaga faculty don't use – have led the revolution.

"The computer is what's making this whole thing possible," Caputo said. "Through the portable technological revolution, we at Gonzaga can be at the crest of it." ☺



Alexandra Lanouette

◀ At left, in a photo by Christine Slomski, a student visits St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Armagh. Above, the vibrance of a small town in Italy gives way immediately to pastoral views.