

Sydney Olivia Scheller

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Education

Ph.D., Media & Communication. *Texas Tech University. Lubbock, TX. ABD August 2025; Expected May 2027*

Cognate: Religious Studies

Advisor: Dr. Rob Stewart

Research Areas: Faith-based organizations, public relations, organizational communication, crisis and risk communication, advertising campaigns, digital media literacy, strategic communication, congregational trust, high reliability organizations.

4.00/4.00 GPA

M.A., Communication. *Asbury University. Wilmore, KY. August 2024*

Chair: Dr. Jim Shores

Thesis: The Kids Are Alright: A Systematic Review of Tumblr's Role in the Queering of American Youth Culture.

Research areas: Youth Culture, Political Communication, Social Media

3.78/4.00 GPA

B.A., Communication, Asbury University, Wilmore KY, Spring 2020

Concentration: Public Relations

Advisor: Dr. Jim Shores

Thesis: Megachurch Pastoral and Online Authority Cultivation. Chair: Dr. Elizabeth Jones

Research Area: Religion, Social Media Influencing

3.69/4.00 GPA, Cum Laude

Record of Academic Activity

Instructor of Record

Average student evaluation of instructor effectiveness across all classes: 4.7/5

- Texas Tech University COMS 2310: *Communication and Popular Culture*
 - *Semesters taught:*
 - *Fall 2024. Average enrollment: 45. Face to face.*

- *Spring 2025. Average enrollment: 60. Face to face.*
- *Summer 2025. Average enrollment: 35. Online.*
- *Fall 2025. Average enrollment: 90. Face to face, graduate TA support.*
- *Responsibilities:*
 - *Teach an undergraduate course examining popular culture and media as formative forces in contemporary society.*
 - *Emphasize how media environments and cultural narratives shape meaning, identity, values, and social interaction.*
 - *Provide students with a foundation for critical media literacy, ethical reflection, and thoughtful engagement with everyday media practices.*
 - *Design and maintain new course syllabus and schedule.*
 - *Assess and grade all student work via Canvas and Blackboard.*
- *Texas Tech University ADV 3351: Media Planning*
 - *Semesters taught:*
 - *Spring 2026. Average enrollment: 11. Face to face.*
 - *Responsibilities:*
 - *Teach an upper level undergraduate course examining best practices in media planning and strategic communication strategy.*
 - *Emphasize setting objectives, target audience research and projection, scheduling models, allocating budget, and training in tools such as Hootsuite, MRI Simmons, Nielsen Ratings, and YouGov.*
 - *Provide students with a foundation for media strategy and planning while guiding them in comprehensive media planning strategy to develop portfolio work for job market.*
 - *Design and maintain new course syllabus and schedule.*
 - *Assess and grade all student work via Canvas.*

Service to the University

- **Student Mentorship & Advising**
 - **Undergraduate Mentor** | 2024 – Present | Texas Tech University
 - Guided 4 undergraduate students through advanced coursework and graduate application processes, providing tailored academic, career, and research coaching.
 - Facilitated the successful admission of 3 mentees into the Mass

Communication Master's program at Texas Tech

- Provided ongoing advisement for a fourth mentee, currently on track for 2027 graduation with plans to enter a career in medical missions.
- **Graduate Mentor** | 2024 - Present | Texas Tech University
 - Recruited a high-potential graduate student from Grand Canyon University (GCU) to join the Communication Studies Master's at Texas Tech based on research and teaching potential.
 - **Facilitate** the student's integration into the Texas Tech community, offering guidance on graduate-level expectations, professional networking, career pathing, and academic success.
- **Undergraduate Mentor** | 2019 – 2023 | Asbury University
 - Coached an undergraduate student through the graduate application process, resulting in their successful admission to the Communication Masters program at Asbury University.
 - Leveraged professional connections to facilitate a post-graduation placement for the mentee at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- **Undergraduate and Graduate Recruitment**
 - Actively recruit high-potential students for the Communication Studies undergraduate and graduate program through tabling at off campus conferences and events.
 - Represent the Communication Studies program at university- and college-wide events to increase enrollment and program visibility.

Graduate Assistantships

- Texas Tech University, Spring 2026, *Research Assistant to Dr. Kent Wilkinson & the Thomas Jay Harris Institute for Hispanic and International Communication (HIHIC)*
 - Assist in conducting theory development-based research regarding bilingualism in American university classrooms, as well as assist in recruitment for undergraduate participation in HIHIC activities.
- Texas Tech University, Fall 2025, *Research Assistant to Dr. Rob Stewart*
 - Assist in conducting research regarding strategic communication in religious organizations as it relates to public prayer utilizing qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- Texas Tech University, 2024-2025, *Research Assistant to Dr. Mark Gring*
 - Assist in conducting research regarding historical covenantal communication practices utilizing archiving and rhetorical methods

- Asbury University, 2020-2021, *Communication Graduate Assistant*
 - Aided in advising the PRSSA under Dr. Todd Wold, assisting in transition as president to the next generation of leadership. Advised communication and theater undergraduate social media managers alongside Dr. Jim Shores. Managed the @asburygradcom social media channels. Served as a research assistant to Dr. Elizabeth Jones and Dr. Todd Wold.

Publications

- Jones, E., **Scheller, S.**, Vick, N. "#MarketingFaith: Megachurch Pastors as Social Media Influencers." *Research Perspectives on Social Media Influencers*. Lexington Press, 2021.
- **Scheller, S.** "Ethical Crisis Communication as Liturgical Practice: Reimagining Church Response through James K. A. Smith's Framework." *Untitled Book Project*. Integratio Press, 2026. Forthcoming.

Conference Papers and Presentations

- **Scheller, S.** (2025, March). *Thou Shalt Not Cover Up: a Case Study in Megachurch Crisis Communication*. [Conference Presentation]. International Risk and Crisis Communication Conference, Clemson, SC.
- **Scheller, S.**, Medina, A. (2025, April). *Connected Congregations: Reflecting On Church Live Streaming Practices After COVID-19 Lockdown*. [Conference Presentation]. Diffusion of Innovation Symposium, Lubbock, TX.
- **Scheller, S.** (2025, November). *Framing Revival: examining news frames of the 2023 Asbury Revival, both mainstream and religious*. [Conference Presentation]. National Communication Association Conference, Denver, CO.
- **Scheller, S.** (2025, November). *Ethical Crisis Communication as Liturgical Practice: Reimagining Church Response through James K. A. Smith's Framework*. [Conference Presentation]. CCSN Dialogic Unconference, Denver, CO.

Forthcoming Conference Presentations

- Medina, A., **Scheller, S.** (2026, March). *Framing a Perceived Global Religious Crisis: Message Factors in YouTube Communication About the Predicted 2025 Rapture*. Accepted for presentation at International Risk and Crisis Communication Conference. Clemson, SC.

- **Scheller, S.**, Wold, T. (2026, March). *When Revival Goes Viral: Examining Institutional Risk Communication During Asbury University's 2023 Outpouring*. Accepted for presentation at International Risk and Crisis Communication Conference. Clemson, SC.
- **Scheller, S.**, Medina, A. (2026, April). *Strength for Today, and Strategy for Tomorrow: a new framework for ethical public relations in faith-based crisis contexts*. Accepted for presentation at Southern States Communication Association Conference 2026. Birmingham, AL.

Major Research in Progress

- Wold, T. & **Scheller, S.O.** (In Progress). *The Gospel According to the Media: Examining News Frames of the 2023 Asbury Revival*.
 - This study utilizes Entman's (1993) framing theory and a qualitative content analysis to identify and analyze how the Asbury Revival was framed and in turn impacted public perceptions of the event, contributing both to framing literature and faith-based organization messaging in the mainstream news media.
- **Scheller, S.O.**, Medina, A., Brown, D., & Wold, T. (In Progress). *By Their Words You Will Know Them: Why Churches Need a New Approach to Crisis*.
 - Employing Coombs' (2007) Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), this study uses survey data to examine how individual religiosity and leadership crisis communication messaging influence congregational trust following a leadership-related crisis, extending crisis communication frameworks for faith-based organizations.
- **Scheller, S.O.** *Tumblr and the Rise of Digital Dogma: Exploring the Quasi-Religious Nature of Online Culture*. Manuscript in preparation.
 - Adapted from my master's thesis, this work explores Tumblr communities as tribes under religious tribalism theory as an adaptation of network theory.
- **Scheller, S.O.**, Medina, A., Bichard, S. (In Progress). *Click, connect, convert: Digital advertising strategies of megachurch online campuses*.
 - By examining megachurches' digital campus websites, this project explores how American Protestant megachurches strategically promote online worship through digital advertising, website design, and persuasive messaging, focusing on calls to action, emotional appeals, and interactivity to understand how religious organizations attract, retain, and engage digital congregants.

- Stewart, R., **Scheller, S.O.** (In Progress). *Public Prayer as Strategic Communication: a new framework for analysis.*
 - Through analyzing current theoretical perspectives from psychology, sociology, theology, and communication, we assert that communicative processes seen in strategic communication frameworks are persistently present in corporate and public prayer settings, especially following crises or major national events. By synthesizing these fields and analyzing several famous public prayers, we propose a new framework for rhetorical analysis of prayer and public address from representatives of religious organization for strategic communication scholarship and religious scholars.

Fellowships, Honors, and Awards

- Louisville Institute Doctoral Fellowship, Vocation of the Theological Educator Initiative, 2025-2027
 - Nationally competitive fellowship supporting advanced doctoral research in theology and religion. Awarded to doctoral students committed to teaching and scholarship that strengthens religious life and education in North America. \$6000.
- Top Diffusion Paper (First Place) Recipient, *Innovation Diffusion Lab at Texas Tech University, April 2025*
- Graduate Fellowship Recipient, 2024-2027, *Texas Tech University, 2024-Present*
- Helen DeVitt Jones Graduate Fellowship in the College of Media & Communication, 2024-2027, \$3000, *annually for three years.*
- AT&T Chancellor's Graduate Fellowship, 2024-2027, \$4000, *annually for three years.*
- Dean's List, *Asbury University, 2017-2020*
- Asbury University Communication 2020 Character and Leadership Award, *Asbury University, Spring 2020*
 - Given to one communication student per year who possesses superb leadership abilities and exemplifies the qualities of a servant leader through excellence in both coursework and mentorship of peers and younger students throughout the communication department during his or her four years at Asbury University.
- Outstanding Student Activities Board Member of the Year, *Asbury University, Spring 2019*
 - Given to one board member per year that has excelled both academically

and as chair of their committee. Received April 2019 for service to the Student Activities Board while serving as the Concert Committee Chair.

- Servant Leadership Award (Nomination), *Asbury University, Spring 2019*
 - Given to three juniors who excel in servant leadership during their tenure at the University. Nominated by the Communication Department Chair for service to the Communication Major, participation in Asbury Student Congress, and mentorship of younger students.

Public Engagements

- **Scheller, S.** (2025, March). *From Mishapocalypse to #MeToo: How Tumblr's Fandom Became a Force for Social Change*. [Invited talk]. Lubbock Comic-Con, Lubbock, TX. Presentation based on master's thesis research.

Leadership Positions

- Christian Communication Scholars Society
 - *Social Media Manager*, Fall 2025
- Student Activities Board, *Asbury University*
 - Concert Committee Chair, 2017-2020
- Public Relations Student Society, *Asbury University Chapter*.
 - *Graduate Mentor*, 2020-2021
 - *President*, 2017-2018; 2019-2020
 - *Vice President*, 2018-2019
- ASPIRE Agency, *Asbury University*
 - *Founder | President*, 2018-2020

Work History and Outside Activity

Employment

- Pylons Cloud Innovations, *Sales Development Representative*, 2022 - 2023
- Long Haul Management, *Influencer Marketing Campaign Manager*, 2021-2022

Internships

- International Olympic Committee, *Instructional Design Apprentice*, Summer 2021
- VisitLex, *Public Relations Intern*, Lexington KY Spring 2020

Community Service

- Fellowship Church Louisville, *Youth Ministry Leader*, Fall 2022-Spring 2023
- Christian Student Fellowship, *Production Coordinator*, Fall 2019-Spring 2020

Professional Memberships

- National Communication Association, *2025-Present*.
- Southern States Communication Association, *2025-Present*.
- Christian Communication Scholars Society, *2025-Present*
- International Crisis & Risk Communication Association, *2025-Present*.
- Public Relations Society of America, *2020-Present*.
 - Former: Public Relations Student Society of America, *2017-2020*

Professional References

Dr. Todd Wold

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Dr. Jim Shores

Jim.shores@asbury.edu, 828.279-1484

Dr. Drew Brown

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Dr. Rob Stewart

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Student References

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