

# Stephen J. McConnell, Ph.D.

[sjmcconnell.com](http://sjmcconnell.com) | [sjm638@nyu.edu](mailto:sjm638@nyu.edu)

Stephen J. McConnell earned his Ph.D. in 2022 after working in journalism where he was an investigative reporter and in marketing where he was the founder of a digital marketing company. Since 2017, he has been a university instructor who thoroughly enjoys mentoring, including at New York University, Colorado State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and University of Colorado Denver.

Stephen brings an interdisciplinary approach to his research and writing — the detailed eye of a journalist, the heart and meaning-searching of the humanities, the innovativeness of an entrepreneur, and the care, rigor, and empathy of a social scientist. His current research explores human interactions with AI technologies, from social media feeds to ChatGPT, with a key area examining how we can flourish during exchanges with these powerful communication tools so we enhance our autonomy, agency, productivity, and well-being.

## Career Highlights

- University instructor/mentor that is fully dedicated to service
- Investigative journalist, with more than 2,000 publications over a 7-year full-time career
- Social scientist, with peer-review publications and a vigorous conference schedule
- Entrepreneur, who ran a successful digital marketing company and managed a team of content creators
- Public scholar, with new op-ed work published, as well as developing a pipeline of additional public work on technology, media, environmental, and social justice topics
- Interdisciplinary qualitative researcher and teacher
- Award-winning scholar and journalist
- Storyteller, with professional and teaching experience in multiple print and digital genres

## Education

Ph.D., Public Communication and Technology  
Colorado State University, Department of Journalism and Media Communication  
Dissertation: Mind over Machine? [The Clash of Agency in Social Media Environments](#).  
*Nominated for Best Dissertation Award in Department*  
Dec. 2022

M.S., Professional Writing, with distinction  
New York University, School of Professional Studies  
Thesis: Twitter and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign: [A Rhetorical Analysis of Tweets and Media Coverage](#).  
2016

B.S., English, summa cum laude  
Radford University, Department of English  
Minor: Geography

2005

### **Academic Appointments**

New York University, School of Professional Studies  
Faculty, Center for Publishing and Applied Liberal Arts, Jan. 2021 - present

University of Colorado Denver, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Aug. 2023 - present

Colorado State University, Department of Journalism and Media Communication  
Instructor, Aug. 2018 - Dec. 2020  
Graduate Teaching Assistant, Aug. 2017 - Dec. 2019

### **Scholarship**

#### Academic Research Agenda

Presently, investigating human interactions with AI technologies, particularly social media feeds and popular AI platforms like ChatGPT and Bard.

Also, examining the intersections of communication practices and digital-AI information environments, as well as the role of professional writing and writing programs in these cutting-edge milieus.

#### Articles in Peer-Reviewed Journals

Wolfgang, J. D., Blackburn, H., & **McConnell, S.** (2020). Keepers of the comments: How comment moderators handle audience contributions. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 41(4), 433-454.

Wolfgang, J. D., **McConnell, S.**, & Blackburn, H. (2020). Commenters as a threat to journalism? How comment moderators perceive the role of the audience. *Digital Journalism*, 8(7), 925-944.

#### Works in Progress

— Slated for Peer Review Journal, Swayed by The Algorithm or Owning It? Gen Z's Dance with Social Media Personalization Architectures

— Slated for Peer Review Journal, Policy Meets Science: Taming the Algorithm for Collectivist Action

— Slated for Peer Review Journal, Agentic Transformations and AI Social Media Feeds: A New Explanatory Approach through the Machine Agency Dynamic Model

— Slated for Peer Review Journal, ChatGPT and Human Agency: Human Flourishing or Harm by The Machine?

— Mainstream Book Project, The Rabbit Hole: Social Media and Our Children

### Dissertation

McConnell, S. (2022) Mind over Machine? [The Clash of Agency in Social Media Environments](#).

### Academic Conference Presentations

McConnell, S. (2023). Swayed by the Algorithm or Owning It? Gen Z's Dance with Social Media Personalization Architectures. Presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference, August 7-10, Washington D.C.

McConnell, S. (2023). Policy Meets Science: Taming the Algorithm for Collectivist Action. Presented at the International Association for Media and Communication Research conference, July 9-13, Lyon, France.

McConnell, S. (2023). To Be the Captain or Steered by the Machine: A Social Cognitive Analysis of Social Media Users' Interactions with Choice Recommendation Architectures. Presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Midwinter conference, February 24-25, Norman, Oklahoma.

McConnell, S. (2022). Mind over Machine? The Clash of Agency in Social Media Environments. Presented at the Association of Internet Researchers conference, November 2-5, Dublin, Ireland.

McConnell, S. (2022). "The 2020 U.S. Presidential Election and Media Rhetoric: What Social Constructionism Can Teach Us." Presented at the Western Social Science Association conference, March 30-April 2, Denver, Colorado.

McConnell, S. (2021). "News Flood or Trickle: Information Choice and Selectivity in New Media." Presented at the Western Social Science Association conference, April 2021, Virtual.

McConnell, S. (2021). "How to Win Readers and Influence People: Bringing Social Science Research into the Mainstream." Presented at the Western Social Science Association conference, April 2021, Virtual.

Wolfgang, J. D., Blackburn, H., & **McConnell, S.** (2019). "Keepers of the Comments: How Comment Moderators Handle Audience Contributions." Presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference, August 7-10, Toronto, Canada.

Wolfgang, J. D., **McConnell, S.**, & Blackburn, H. (2019). "Commenters as a Threat to Journalism? How Comment Moderators Perceive the Role of the Audience." Presented at the

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference, August 7-10, Toronto, Canada.

McConnell, S., Lan, D., & Bonser, C. (2019). "Battle of the Frames: Perspective Collision and Hyper-Mediation at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C." Presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference, August 7-10, Toronto, Canada.

McConnell, S., & Lan, D. (2019). "Blurring the Gap: A Comparative Textual Analysis of U.S. and Chinese Media Coverage." Presented at the International Communication Association conference, May 24-28, Washington D.C.

McConnell, S. (2019). "The Marriage of Twitter and Post-Truth Politics: A Rhetorical Analysis of Tweets and Media Coverage in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign." Presented at the Western Social Science Association conference, April 24-27, San Diego, California.

McConnell, S. (2018). "Lock Her Up: Limitations and Liberations of New Media Expression." Presented at the Communication University of China and the National Communication Association international conference, Communication, Media, and Governance in the Age of Globalization, June 22-23, Beijing, China.

McConnell, S. (2018). "Lock Her Up and the Circuit of Culture: Evaluating Effectiveness of a Critical Cultural Paradigm in New Media." Presented at the Western Social Science Association conference, April 5-8, San Antonio, Texas.

#### Awards and Award Nominations

3rd Place Academic Paper. MacDougall Award, Newspaper and Online News Division, Issued by Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Aug. 2019

3rd Place Faculty Paper. Newspaper and Online News Division, Issued by Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Aug. 2019

Nominated Academic Paper. AEJMC Research Prize for Professional Relevance, Issued by Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Aug. 2019

#### Research Positions/Fellowship

Assistant to Dr. David Wolfgang, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colo.

- Assisted with interviews, qualitative data analysis, interpretation of findings, and writing
- Resulted in publication of two peer-reviewed articles in mass communication field

Research Fellow, Rocky Mountain Climate Organization, Louisville, Colo.

- Integral research and writing role leading to generation of white paper examining mass forests risks in the U.S. West correlated to climate change

## Funding

### Travel Grants

- Colorado State University, Communication University of China (CUC) and the National Communication Association conference, \$1,500, Beijing, China
- New York University, \$1,250, International Association for Media and Communication Research conference, Lyon, France
- Colorado State University, \$1,000, Western Social Science Association conference, San Diego, California
- Colorado State University, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference, \$1,000, Toronto, Canada
- Colorado State University, \$750, International Communication Association conference, Washington D.C.
- Colorado State University, \$750, Western Social Science Association conference, San Antonio, Texas, U.S.

### Research Grants

- Currently pursuing funding opportunities

## Professional Organizations

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication  
Association of Internet Researchers  
International Association for Media and Communication Research  
International Communication Association

## **Teaching**

### Instructor

Communications & AI: An Essential Guide, New York University, Spring 2024 (\*anticipated),

- Utilizing AI technologies to assist a wide range of communication tasks, from writing to research to marketing
- Pitched and developed course to help students integrate AI to accelerate communication, work, and other task flows

Introduction to Digital Storytelling, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Fall 2023

- Crafting compelling video and multimedia stories for digital environments and learning best practices of film composition, editing, media production, and Adobe Premiere Pro
- Held semester long in-class media production workshops that taught students how to capture quality film and edit footage through a variety of Premiere Pro tactics

From Killer Apps to Killer Bots: Technology and Social Change, University of Colorado Denver, Fall 2023

- Exploring the intersections of society, technology, and social change from media, communication, and sociological frameworks

Fundamentals of Storytelling, New York University, Spring 2022, Summer 2022, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Summer 2023

- Generating persuasive narratives and stories, utilizing a variety of fundamental techniques, and examining how new communication technologies alter storytelling approaches and writing practices
- Fully designed synchronous course; taught weekly sessions over Zoom, supplemented by instructor-selected materials published on learning management system
- Held in-class writing/storytelling sessions to practice skills discussed in class

Writing for Self-Promotion and Performance Coaching, New York University, Spring 2021

- Developing key workplace writing skills, including wedding clean writing with self-promotion and performance coaching tactics, and utilizing social media technologies to project personal brand to a wider audience
- Fully designed online-only, asynchronous course

Newswriting, Colorado State University, Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2020

- Learning the fundamentals of journalism and news writing, in addition to marketing and public relations writing skills development, and evaluating how digital technologies shape writing and journalism practices and audience outreach and impact
- Fully designed in-person course
- Held in-class lab sessions to practice writing and journalism skills - often on "deadline"
- Predominantly in-person instruction; one semester taught hybrid class, simultaneous online/in-person

Social Media Management, Colorado State University, Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Summer 2020

- Practicing how to effectively manage and professionalize social media accounts for organizations and develop social media campaigns that help attain organizational goals, and analyzing contemporary media and emerging technologies and their intersection with marketing practices
- Partially designed in-person course, modifying past instructor's materials; fully designed online-only, asynchronous summer course

Professional and Technical Communication, Colorado State University, Summer 2019

- Online-only, asynchronous course examining professional, technical, and business writing practices to help hone student writing for future workplace scenarios

### Graduate Teaching Assistant

Professional and Technical Communication, Colorado State University, Fall 2017, Spring 2018

- Led weekly recitation sessions and developed original lecture material on writing practices and techniques

Media in Society, Colorado State University, Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2019

- Evaluating media and communication technology history, theory, effects, and practices, as well as media and communication technology intersections with society, culture, politics, and other key social dimensions; led recitations sessions and aided professor in grading and large lecture hall in-class activities

### Unlisted Self-Developed Courses

#### Digital Methods

Social Media and Online Strategies

### Professional Development

2023

- Generative AI Workshops, New York University (scheduled)
- Incorporating Generative AI in Media Assignments, New York University (scheduled)
- Incorporating Generative AI in Writing Assignments, New York University (scheduled)
- Understanding and Addressing Microaggressions, Workshop, New York University
- Anti-Asian Hate and Microaggressions: The Role of Media Educators in Sensitizing our Students, Workshop, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
- Building an Inclusive Learning Environment, Workshop, New York University
- How (and Why) to Design Student-Centered Learning Experiences, Workshop, New York University
- Disability Inclusive Classrooms for Faculty, Workshop, New York University
- Mentorship Matters, Workshop, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
- When Ethics and Technology Collide: ChatGPT, What Every Media Educator Needs to Know, Workshop, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
- Collecting Student Feedback and Midterm Grades, Workshop, New York University
- Environmental Sustainability and the Curriculum, Workshop, New York University
- Technology and Politics in the Anthropocene, Symposium, Association of Internet Researchers
- Universal Design for Learning, Workshop, New York University

2022

- University Teaching, Certificate, The University of Hong Kong

2021

- Best Practices in Teaching: Inclusive Pedagogy, Certificate, Colorado State University
- Pride Resource Center's Safe Zone Training, Colorado State University
- Graduate Teaching Program, Certificate, Colorado State University
- Teaching Online: Facilitation and Engagement, Certificate, Colorado State University

2020

- Applying the Quality Matters Rubric, Online Course Design Best Practices, Certificate, QM
- Learning to Teach Online, Certificate, The University of New South Wales
- Designing Your Online Course, Certificate, Colorado State University

2018

- Mentoring and Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness, Workshop, Colorado State University
- Good Intentions Are Not Enough: Building Intercultural Communication Skills through Reflective Teaching and Learning, Workshop, Colorado State University
- Student Course Surveys: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, Workshop, Colorado State University
- Adding 20% More Passion to Learning and Teaching: Exploring Genius Hour as a Pathway for Collaboration and Creativity, Workshop, Colorado State University
- Crafting a Teaching Persona, Workshop, Colorado State University
- Using Undergraduate Learning Assistants to Promote Student Engagement in a STEM Course, Workshop, Colorado State University

2017

- Integrating Writing in the Academic Core, 6-week course, Colorado State University
- Graduate Teaching Assistant Training Seminar, Colorado State University

2016

- The Basics of Effective Tutoring, Certificate, New York University
- Foundations of Virtual Instruction, Certificate, University of California-Irvine

2015

- Foundations of Teaching for Learning: Introduction to Student Assessment, Certificate, Commonwealth Education Trust
- Foundations of Teaching for Learning: Learners and Learning, Certificate, Commonwealth Education Trust
- Shaping the Way We Teach English: The Landscape of English Language Teaching, Certificate, University of Oregon
- University Teaching 101, Certificate, John Hopkins University

## **Service**

Officer, Communication Technology Division (CTEC), Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, July 2023 -

Fulbright Scholarship Mentor/Advisor, Office of Global Awards, New York University, 2023 -



Mentor, School of Professional Studies / Center for Publishing and Applied Liberal Arts students, New York University, 2022 -

Mentor, Graduate and Undergraduate students, Department of Journalism and Media Communication, Colorado State University, 2018 - 2023

Outside Doctoral Committee Member, Stephanie Longo, Doctor of Strategic Communication, Regent University, 2023 -

Conference Discussant, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 2023 -

Conference Reviewer, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, International Communication Association, 2019 -

Peer Reviewer, Newspaper Research Journal, 2022 -

Faculty Hire Reviewer/Interviewer, Graduate Student Representative, Department of Journalism and Media Communication, Colorado State University, 2018 - 2020

Undergraduate Capstone Project Reviewer, Department of Journalism and Media Communication, Colorado State University, 2019

Safe Zone Network, Colorado State University, 2020

Volunteer, Society of Environmental Journalists 29th Annual Conference, Colorado State University, 2019

Focus Group Moderator, Graduate Student Research, Department of Journalism and Media Communication, Colorado State University, 2019

### **Invited Presentations/Panels**

AI: The Future IS Your Friend: Ways to Harness AI on Multiple Fronts. Invited Speaker and Discussion Panelist, NYU Advanced Publishing Institute, New York University, 2024 (scheduled)

Utilizing actor-network and social cognitive theories to study social media algorithms. Guest Lecturer, Graduate-Level Class, Posthumanism/Social Theory, Department of Journalism and Media Communication, Colorado State University, 2021

Writing social media advertising copy. Guest Lecturer, Undergraduate Class, Advertising Copywriting, Department of Journalism and Media Communication, Colorado State University, 2020

Qualitative research techniques and best practices. Guest Speaker, Graduate-Level Class, Communication Research and Evaluation Methods, Department of Journalism and Media Communication, Colorado State University, 2019

Battle of the frames: Perspective collision and hyper-meditation at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. Guest Speaker, Graduate Research Colloquium, Department of Journalism and Media Communication, Colorado State University, 2019

On visiting Beijing, China. Radio Interview, China Radio International, Beijing, China, 2018

Entrepreneurs and the digital economy. Panelist, Virtual Forum on Marketing and Business Practices, School of Professional Studies, New York University, 2018

Traditional and new media marketing techniques for fiction and non-fiction writers. Panelist, 17th Annual Writing the Rockies Conference, Gunnison, Colorado, 2016

Reading of select poetry. Guest Speaker, Annual Lighthouse Writers Workshop's Lit Fest conference, Denver, Colorado, 2016

## **Industry/Professional Experience**

### Journalism, 2006 - 2013

Reporter, Scranton Times-Tribune, Scranton, Penn.

- Award-winning investigative and enterprise reporter
- Published more than 2,000 stories, some of which protected the community from harm and corruption, including from government and private sector
- Developed a reputation for honest, ethical reporting and never missed a deadline despite high intensity, high-volume work
- 2nd Place, Keystone Press Award: Best Ongoing News Coverage, Issued by Pennsylvania News Media Association, 2013

Reporter, The Wayne Independent, Honesdale, Penn.

- Created new environmental beat exploring the effects of natural gas extraction in rural Pennsylvania
- Served as a guardian of a low-income population susceptible to unethical energy extraction practices
- Wrote about an eclectic mix of issues, including the demise of dairy farming and highlighted community leaders who made positive impacts to the region

Reporter, Times Shamrock Community Newspaper Group, Scranton, Penn.

- Covered multiple municipalities and local government issues in suburban/rural region

Reporter, The Foley Onlooker, Foley, Ala.

- Despite pushback, expanded the boundaries of standard community coverage to include higher profile investigative and enterprise work that sought to protect the public from corruption and abuse

### Marketing and Professional Writing, 2014 - 2018

Owner/Operator, Guiding Type, Denver, Colo.

- Founded and co-operated digital marketing and professional writing agency
- Developed print and multimedia content for businesses, organizations, and individuals that helped them earn revenue and project their brand to larger audiences
- Created digital and social media strategies that promoted organizations' services and products

Content/Marketing Director, Conundrum Press, Denver, Colo.

- Created comprehensive marketing, media, and publicity strategies for organization and its authors to improve book sales
- Managed five-member team and mentored them on marketing approaches and strategies

Writer/Publicity Committee, Rock the Earth, Denver, Colo.

- Wrote a series of columns focusing on environmental issues that elevated the organization to a national audience; published in *The Huffington Post*
- Provided digital and social media consultation to help improve organization's online brand quality

Owner/Editor, Climate Times, Denver, Colo.

- Founded digital publication focusing on environmental issues, particularly climate change impacts
- Formed content partnerships with organizations and individuals worldwide; reached readers in 144 countries

### **Select Professional and Creative Publications**

#### Journalism

McConnell, S. (2013). Scranton's burgeoning Indian community putting down roots and sharing culture. *The Scranton-Times Tribune*.

McConnell, S. (2013). Two years later, some normalcy returns to river communities. *The Scranton-Times Tribune*.

McConnell, S. (2013). Wealth denied. *The Scranton-Times Tribune*.

McConnell, S. (2013). Violence at federal prison in Wayne County nothing new, some blame staffing levels. *The Scranton-Times Tribune*.

McConnell, S. (2012). Mellow case remains secret as plea nears. The Scranton-Times Tribune.

McConnell, S. (2012). Carbondale man struggles to rebuild charred family home before judicial sale. The Scranton-Times Tribune.

McConnell S. (2011). Blaze rips through Dickson City home; 'I don't know where we are going to live,' victim says. The Scranton-Times Tribune.

McConnell, S. (2011). Mystery of Bethany Bones still unresolved. The Scranton-Times Tribune.

McConnell, S. (2011). Four state agencies probe misuse of taxpayer money in Starrucca borough. The Scranton-Times Tribune.

McConnell, S. (2011). Trash, toxic emissions up at local landfills. The Scranton-Times Tribune.

McConnell, S. (2011). Dunmore landfill accepting gas drilling waste that may be radioactive. The Scranton-Times Tribune.

McConnell, S. (2010). Small town, big pay: Honesdale code officer draws more than \$800,000 in seven years. The Scranton-Times Tribune.

McConnell, S. (2009). Gas driller cited for violation after environmentalist takes photos. The Scranton-Times Tribune.

McConnell, S. (2007). The changing of the guards: Bay Minette, election night. The Foley Onlooker.

#### Op-ed/columns

McConnell, S. (2023). North Carolina's economic boom is wrecking havoc on rivers, creeks, and streams near you. The News & Observer, The Charlotte Observer, The Durham Herald Sun.

McConnell, S. (2016). Forget Star Wars; Get Ready for Water Wars. The Huffington Post.

McConnell, S. (2015). Bees, Foxes and Hens: EPA's Failure to Protect Our Food Supply. The Huffington Post.

McConnell, S. (2015). Give Us the Whole Truth about Fracking. The Huffington Post.

McConnell, S. (2015). Tipping the Scales in Our Favor: Carbon Divest/Renewable Invest. The Huffington Post.

McConnell, S. (2015). Climate Change and the True Wealth of Nature and Prosperity. The Huffington Post.

McConnell, S. (2014). Bridging the Energy vs. Environment Divide: Colorado's Roan Plateau Case Study. The Huffington Post.

McConnell, S. (2014). Where Profits Aren't Enough. The Huffington Post.

McConnell, S. (2014). Living in a Plastic World. The Huffington Post.

McConnell, S. (2014). Paradise Lost: Why Our Desire to Protect U.S. Wilderness Should Not Cease. The Huffington Post.

#### White Paper

Rocky Mountain Forests at Risk: Confronting Climate-driven Impacts from Insects, Wildfires, Heat, and Drought. (2014).

#### Poetry

McConnell, S. (2023). Inner. North Dakota Quarterly.