

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON

"Women should take leadership roles whenever they can."



*Kathleen Hall Jamieson, May 25, 2011.
Boston, MA. Photo by M. Meyen.*

Born:	1946 in Waconia, Minnesota
Education:	1967 B.A. in rhetoric and public address, Marquette University 1968 M.A. in communication arts, University of Wisconsin at Madison 1972 Ph.D. in communication arts, University of Wisconsin at Madison
Career:	1971 Assistant Professor, University of Maryland 1986 Associate and Full Professor, University of Texas at Austin 1986 Chair of the Speech Communication Department, University of Texas 1989 Full Professor, University of Pennsylvania 1989 Dean, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania 1992 Distinguished Scholar, NCA 1995 Murray Edelman Award, APSA 1998 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, two sons

Michael Meyen Interviews Kathleen Hall Jamieson

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My father ran a gas station and then worked as a trucker at the University of Minnesota. When my parents closed the gas station because they couldn't make it financially, my mom worked in an investment firm. At the age of five, I thought I would be a lady wrestler.

I guess your dreams have changed.

In high school, I thought I would be a physicist or a lawyer. I went to Marquette University on a debate scholarship. In my junior year, I visited law schools and realized that I didn't want to be a lawyer after all. So I got into academia by default. My minor in college was philosophy. I would have gone to graduate school in philosophy, but my adviser told me there were more qualified people than jobs in that field.

Were there any university graduates in your family environment?

My paternal grandfather had a law degree from the University of Michigan. He died when my father was young. My paternal grandmother was a registered nurse. So there is higher education on my father's side, but neither of my parents attended college.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

My mother is a devout Catholic. My father was an atheist. We were raised Catholic. I went to a Catholic high school on a scholarship and to a Catholic university.

How would you compare the student Kathleen Hall with your students today?

My students today are much better prepared and more likely to be middle or upper-middle class.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

In high school, a nun who was the debate coach taught me how to debate. She was getting her PhD in theology at that point. She is the reason I went to Marquette University on a scholarship. If you are competing against all the other great students from the Catholic high schools, you are not likely to be competitive for full scholarship support if you were at the top of a class of 33. She knew people, called them, and got me the debate scholarship.

What about your teachers at Marquette?

As an undergraduate, I had a remarkable philosophy professor—Francis Wade, a Jesuit. He could lay out an argument more clearly than anyone I've ever known. In grad school, my adviser was Edwin Black, whose book on the subject transformed rhetorical criticism as a field.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scholar?

I went to graduate school almost by accident and thought I'd probably get an MA. Bob and I were engaged in college and married a week after I got my MA degree. While in graduate classes at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, I realized that there were questions I wanted to answer, but that answering them required a command of a method I was just beginning to learn. I didn't consciously decide to become a scholar.

How did you get into political communication?

The only job in my field in the Washington area (where my husband and I moved after marrying) was at the University of Maryland. They wanted somebody to teach political communication. I was trained to be a rhetorical critic, had written a dissertation on the papal birth control encyclical, and participated in political campaigns while in school. So I argued "I have done political communication." (Additionally, the papacy is rife with it.) I grew up in Minnesota, which has a deep political culture. **In graduate programs in the '60s, there wasn't really an area called political communication. So I developed courses from scratch. I wrote "Packaging the Presidency" from my class notes.**

Is there any evidence that politicians use your knowledge for improving public discourse?

I founded FactCheck.org, a website that attempts to keep the discourse honest. We have anecdotal evidence that the campaign consultants pay attention to it when they are creating the ads, and that they are more likely to offer arguments that can be documented (although not necessarily with great fidelity to fact) as a result. My visual grammar for reducing the effect of ads when played in the news is used by the networks (Jamieson, 1992; Jamieson & Cappella, 1994, 1997). The greatest social effect has probably resulted from a series of books on adolescent mental health disorders that the Annenberg Public Policy Center created and distributed at **no cost to those who treat adolescents. We've gotten some lovely letters from people saying that the books helped them.**

How would you rate the position of political communication within our discipline?

It's still a field trying to find itself. It's not completely clear on most days exactly what it is studying outside elections. Some study power relationships, although others don't construe the field that way. In general, the field is quantitatively-based, **but houses a lot of good qualitative work. So it's not necessarily methodologically distinctive. When I'm writing about presidential rhetoric (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008), I think I'm doing political communication, although some of my friends say, "No, you are doing rhetorical criticism," as if those two were mutually exclusive.**

How would you rate the position of rhetorical scholars in communication?

It depends on the people you are talking to. In NCA, **it's one of the stronger traditions.**

Do you like the role of a university manager and decision maker?

Yes. It is satisfying when you have the needed resources. During my time at the University of Maryland, we were always struggling for funds. I headed up the communication doctoral program there for a while. Every semester we had to find money for the students. When Walter Annenberg and the faculty at Penn said they wanted me to be dean and that offer was tied to resources, I considered it an irresistible invitation.

So this is the main difference being at an institution like Penn.

It's Annenberg. The Annenberg schools at USC and Penn have been well financed. Each can fund its graduate students. When your faculty members get **a competing offer, you don't even think about it. You match. You don't have the problem of not having resources.**

Did you ever consider applying for a position outside Annenberg?

I've been offered positions outside the school, but when I accepted the Annenberg offer, Walter Annenberg ensured that I would never leave. I have a \$5 million professorship and a policy center that is backed by over a \$100 million in endowment and housed in a new building. It would be criminally negligent to walk away.

You named your chair after Elizabeth Ware Packard, an icon of the women's movement. Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?

I was offered the Maryland job for the first time when I was pregnant with our first child. When I told the department chair that I would have to take some time off in order to deliver but would ensure that my classes were covered, he withdrew the offer. Two years later, they still had not filled the position. A new chair interviewed me and said they would welcome a female faculty member who planned to have additional children. As a result, I was the first pregnant woman in tenure-track in the communication area at Maryland. In subsequent years, **I've been treated well. Studies suggest that a lot of women in academia are not paid what comparably talented men are, through most of my career that's not been true for me.** One of the advantages of being an administrator is being able to address gender inequality in pay.

What about Elizabeth Ware Packard?

I found out about her when I was writing the book *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership* (Jamieson, 1995). She was institutionalized by her husband because she wanted to speak to God in her own right. After her friends helped her to get out, she divorced him and then worked to ensure that what happened to her couldn't happen to other women. **That's a very powerful message, and why I took her name for my professorship.** At the Annenberg School, we are allowed to name our own chairs.

You are one of the TV stars in the discipline. Do you like the role of a public speaker, a celebrity?

I don't consider myself a celebrity. There is a space for public intellectuals from our field. Rhetorical analysis of public speech is my niche. A growing number of scholars from our field are now recognized as public intellectuals. The question for me is: Can I say something non-obvious and insightful? But spending time on air can distract from scholarship and teaching. Early in my career, I did a weekly segment on NPR. I gave it up because preparing those three-and-a-half minutes was taking time from my own work. I try to stay off air except in election years—unless the news agenda is focused on issues that I have thought a lot about.

Where is the difference between a public intellectual and a politician?

If you don't want to be a public intellectual who is not perceived as partisan, you **can't** engage in political advocacy. I worked in politics until I started writing books about it. It was difficult giving up the role of political advocate. I am proud to have worked on Capitol Hill, and to have helped craft a communication strategy to pass protection from age discrimination in employment in 1978.

How did you feel when you became an ICA fellow?

I was surprised and pleased.

You got awards and honors not only from NCA or ICA, but also from APSA. If you had to choose between all those associations, which one is your favorite?

The American Philosophical Society (APS). APS meets twice a year. The society is devoted to the sharing of knowledge across disciplines. I protect that time, because in those two-and-a-half days, I will hear scholars speak insightfully on topics in fields I know nothing about.

Who is Kathleen Jamieson: a researcher, a teacher, the "queen of quotes," the former Annenberg dean? What is the most important part of your academic life?

Sometimes I write things that matter a lot to me. I really wanted to write the book *Beyond the Double Bind* (Jamieson, 1995), but overall, the most important part in my professional life is teaching undergraduates. I relish the excitement they bring to learning new things. They have no sense of where the boundaries are. If I could keep only one facet of my professional life, I would keep my freshmen class.

It sounds like Doris Graber at Illinois-Chicago, who loves kids that need the teaching.

At Maryland and Texas, I was teaching first-generation college students. You can see the difference an education makes for them. Teaching well carries tangible psychological rewards.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

The discipline is critiqued for not having boundaries, but I see that as a strength. The strength of the field is its interdisciplinary and its methodological pluralism focused on the communicative act—the moment in which meaning is created by humans interacting with other humans and settings.

How is the reputation of the discipline at Penn?

The Annenberg School is a leading school there. I used to do an exercise with some of the other deans: Do you know which school on campus has the highest per capita number of members in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences? It's Annenberg. Which school has the highest per capita number of Guggenheim fellows? Which faculty has the highest per capita production of books in the last year? Annenberg is a very good school in a very good university.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

ICA has become an international organization. For a while, it was a label only. Now, the exchanges are shaping U.S. scholars' work. The British work on debates, the work in the Netherlands on elections or those people in New Zealand who are pushing methods in really important ways. By 2050, we will have internationally based theory to account for similarities and differences by nationality, geography, and so on. We are not there yet, but en route. You see it here. You can see major scholars from multiple countries talking about common problems. We should do more writing across countries. Most of our writing teams are still within country. It's hard to get cross-national funding, but some have done it, the people in journalism for example (Hanitzsch et al., 2010). It's the next natural step.

Are there any scholars whom you regard as role models?

It's hard to limit. Jay Blumler has been a major theorist who forged a U.S.-British partnership, and a U.S.-British-Israeli partnership with Elihu Katz. Elihu is one of the wonders of the world. Both see big pictures, theorize, and are generous, good people. Jay and Elihu don't live in their own bubble. They are generous

to young scholars. Michael Schudson is another, and Doris Graber. There aren't limits to what Doris is interested in. She is always doing something unexpected that I learn from. The field has been blessed with strong scholars who are also fine, generous teachers.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

The field wasn't producing books when I first came into it. It was largely known as a field that taught people how to communicate, and it was still being confused with drama and communication disorders. Radio-Television-Film was often a separate department. We have gotten rid of the useless distinction by medium. That's a huge advance. This field has also become a book-producing field, and it became it within my lifetime. I'm proud of being part of that tradition. My adviser produced one of the first single-authored major books in the field (Black, 1965). In the 1970s and early 1980s, people started to be able to control an idea well enough to generate a book. Now, the major university presses routinely publish in communication. They didn't before. The field should be proud of that.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

The field wasted a lot of time and energy fighting about the relative merits of quantitative versus qualitative methods. Those were fruitless debates. Finally, peace was declared, but it took us too much time to get there.

What will remain when Kathleen Jamieson is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

Most people's work doesn't live after them. The piece that will have some value is probably *Packaging the Presidency*, because I interviewed people for it who were important in development of political advertising (Jamieson, 1996). I hope the Annenberg Public Policy Center will survive for decades or centuries to come. I'm proud of its work.

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