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The AJHA Margaret A. Blanchard Doctoral Dissertation Prize, established in 1997 and named in 2003, is awarded annually for the best doctoral dissertation on media history. Named in honor of the late Professor Margaret A. Blanchard of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – superb scholar and the source of guidance and inspiration for generations of doctoral students of journalism history – the prize is accompanied by an honorarium of five hundred dollars. A two-hundred-dollar honorarium is awarded to each honorable mention.

2010 AJHA ANNUAL CONVENTION
OCTOBER 6-9, 2010 • TUCSON, AZ
The House Un-American Activities Committee conducted investigations of the movie industry in 1947 and 1951-1952. The goal was to determine the extent of communist infiltration in Hollywood and whether communist propaganda had made it into American movies. The committee's practice of requiring witnesses to name names, the scrutiny of movies for propaganda, and the intervention in union disputes, contributed to the Committee's notoriety. Previous historical accounts concentrated on the early probe of 1947 and the blacklist of Hollywood professionals and the resulting public relations crisis. This dissertation analyzes the impact of the House Un-American Activities Committee on the movie industry, focusing on the period from 1947 to 1952. It examines the committee's activities and practices of communist front organizations, which the HUAC viewed as powerfully effective in political and social movements. The dissertation concludes that the HUAC operated in a less sinister manner than previously supposed, and thus, revises previous scholarship on the HUAC.

Mario Castagnaro, “Embellishment, Fabrication, and Scandal: Hoaxing and the American Press”

My dissertation, “Embellishment, Fabrication, and Scandal: Hoaxing and the American Press,” examines literary and journalistic hoaxes in American culture from the 18th century to the late 19th century. It argues that literary hoaxes have been a common and important practice in American journalism, and that they have played a key role in shaping American news institutions. The dissertation explores the differences in the quality of radio foreign news and foreign correspondents between CBS during World War II and NPR during the Iraq War II. Triangulating qualitative and quantitative methods, the study proposes a model of foreign news to help determine what the Murrow tradition means. The model is then used to test if that celebrated tradition lives on in a non-commercial setting at NPR. The study evaluates the new generation of foreign correspondents at NPR and correlates the quality of foreign news in the Murrow tradition with the new generation of foreign correspondents at NPR.

Raluca Cozma, “The Murrow Tradition: What Was It, and Does It Still Live?”

This dissertation explores how the Murrow tradition, defined as a professional institution of broadcasting and journalism, has been shaped just as much by negative examples as by positive, definitive constructions, and hoaxes have played a key role in this process. The study evaluates how the Murrow tradition has been defined and shaped by negative examples, such as the Watergate scandal and the Iran-Contra affair, and how the tradition has been further defined and shaped by positive examples, such as the rise of NPR as a public media institution. The study concludes that the Murrow tradition has been shaped by a combination of positive and negative examples, and that hoaxes have played a key role in this process.

Leland K. Wood, “When the Locomotive Puffs: Corporate Public Relations of the First Transcontinental Railroad Builders”

The dissertation documents public-relations practices of officers and managers in two companies: the Central Pacific Railroad with offices in Sacramento, California, and the Union Pacific Railroad with offices in New York City. It asserts that sophisticated and systematic corporate public relations were practiced during the construction of the first transcontinental railroad, fifty years before historians generally place the beginning of such practice. Documentation of the transcontinental railroad practices was gathered utilizing existing historical presentations and a review of four archives containing correspondence and documents from the period. The study addresses how the two enterprises were compelled to practice public relations in order to raise $125 million needed to construct the 1,776-mile-long railroad by obtaining and keeping federal loan guarantees and by establishing and maintaining an image attractive to potential bond buyers. Also, relationships had to be established and maintained with members of Congress, the California state legislature, and federal regulators; with workers and potential workers; and with journalists. In addition, the companies’ images among the general public also had to be established and maintained. The dissertation concludes that, despite the enormous challenges faced in the construction of the railroad, the companies’ leaders persisted in their attention to public relations and developed practices that continue to be used.

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