

Maximilian Brichta

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Academic Appointments

Postdoctoral Research Associate (2025-Present), Thriving Youth in a Digital Environment (TYDE), University of Virginia

Research Fellow (2025-Present) Communication Technology Research Lab (CTRL), University of Pittsburgh

Education

- Ph.D.** Communication (2025)
University of Southern California – Los Angeles, Ca
Committee: Henry Jenkins (Chair), Manuel Castells, Jonathan Aronson
Dissertation: *From Memes to Money: The Vernacular Economics of Cryptocurrencies*
- M.A.** Communication Studies w/ emphasis in Rhetorical Studies (2018)
California State University, Northridge – Northridge, Ca
- B.A.** Communication Studies (2016)
California State University, Northridge – Northridge, Ca
- A.A.** Transfer Studies w/ Certificate of Skill in Communication Studies (2014)
College of the Sequoias – Visalia, Ca

Research Activity

Peer Reviewed Publications

Brichta, M. & Woolley, S. (Under review) Parasitic Capital: Disordered information and deception in decentralized finance (DeFi) ecosystems

Swartz, L., Hudome, H., & Brichta, M. (Under Review) “I’m a small business owner, and unfortunately that means I have to be a content creator”: Platformization and the changing work of running a small business

Brichta, M. (2025) (Not) Just Monkeying Around: Play, proliferation and personae in meme coin speculation. *First Monday*, 30(3).

Brichta, M. (2023) Fanning Money: The cultural economy and participatory politics of Dogecoin. *International Journal of Communication*, 17.

Chang, H.-C. H., Brichta, M., Ahn, S., & de Vight, J. (2023). Will she win? Gendered media coverage of the 2020 Democratic Party presidential primaries. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 10776990231182154.

Brichta, M. (2022) Fusing piety and pop culture: Ritual forms of transcendent consumption in Hillsong Church services. *Journal of Communication & Religion*, 45(2).

Books and Chapters

Swartz, L. & Brichta, M. (Eds). *Shitcoin: Tales of Faith and Failure in Crypto's First 20 years*. (Under contract: The MIT Press)

Brichta, M. (Forthcoming) Cryptosymbiosis: The Civic, Para-Civic, and Parasitic Imaginaries of Blockchain in Jenkins, H and Shresthova, S (Eds.) *Handbook on the Global Civic Imagination*. De Gruyter Press.

Manuscripts in Progress

Brichta, M. & Swartz, L. (Currently writing first draft) Personal finance influencers: Money management as a personal development journey.

Conference Presentations

“Parasitic Capital: Disordered Information and Deception in Decentralized Finance (DeFi) Ecosystems.” Cambridge Disinformation Summit, University of Cambridge, 2026.

“Crypto Communities and Influencers.” Invited panel guest at the Cambridge Disinformation Summit, University of Cambridge, 2025.

“Bitcoin as Vernacular Theory: The Sociotechnical Epistemology of a Networked Economic Culture.” Presented at National Communication Association Conference, 2024.

“Critical Political Economy of Bitcoin.” Presented at National Communication Association Conference, 2024.

“Bitcoin, the Network: A Cultural History of Bitcoin’s Origins and Affordances.” Presented at the National Communication Association Conference, 2023.

“(Not) Just Monkeying Around: Play, proliferation and personae in meme coin speculation.” Presented at the National Communication Association Conference, 2023.

“Public Speaking Reimagined: Towards a story-centric, practice-based Model.” Presented at the Young Rhetoricians’ Conference, 2023.

“Fanning Money: The cultural economy and participatory politics of Dogecoin.” Presented at the National Communication Association Conference, 2022.

“Rituals of Reconciliation: On the formal linkage of pop culture and piety in Hillsong Church services.” Presented at the Triennial Kenneth Burke Society Conference, 2021.

“Christian Nationalism as Political Myth: Robert Jeffress and the redemption of Donald Trump.” Presented at the National Communication Association Conference, 2020.

“Nefarious Nonsense: Postmodernism from Alan Sokal to Jordan Peterson.” Presented at the National Communication Association Conference, 2020.

“Gender and the Question of Electability: How the Media Covered the 2020 Democratic Party Presidential Primaries.” Presented at the National Communication Association Conference, 2020.

“Hypocrisy Talks: Promoting positive behavior change through induced hypocrisy.” Presented at the Young Rhetoricians Conference in Monterrey, Ca, June 2018.

Awards, Honors, and Fellowships

TYDE Training Award (for Spanish language study): University of Virginia

Fulbright Open Study/Research Award (*Declined* – accepted postdoc position at UVA)

Annenberg Advanced Graduate Funding: University of Southern California (2024)

Top Paper Panel Award: Economics, Communication, and Society Division at NCA (2023)

Top Student Paper Panel Award: Media Ecology Division at NCA (2023)

Top Student Paper Panel Award: Religious Communication Association Division at NCA (2020)

MASA Global Leadership Fellowship (2019)

MASA English Teaching Fellowship (2018)

Outstanding Graduate Student Award, Department of Communication, CSU Northridge (2018)

First-Year Graduate Student Scholarship (Covered 1st year M.A. tuition costs): Department of Communication, CSU Northridge (2017)

Teaching Experience

University of Southern California

“Communication, Culture, and Economy”, Instructor of Record. (Spring 2024) **Personally designed special topics seminar.*

“Social and Economic Implications of Communication Technology”, Instructor of Record. (Fall 2023)

“Communication and Media Economics” Instructor of Record. (Summer 2023)

“Public Speaking”, Instructor of Record. (Spring 2023)

“Contours of Change in Communication Media”, Teaching Assistant and Discussion Leader (Fall 2021, Fall 2022, Fall 2024, Spring 2025 - total of seven sections)

“Media and Society”, Teaching Assistant. (Spring 2022)

“Communication and Social Media”, Teaching Assistant (Fall 2020, Spring 2021)

California State University, Northridge

“Fundamentals of Public Speaking”, Instructor of Record (Fall 2016 – Spring 2018, total of 5 sections)

“Argumentation and Lab”, Instructor of Record (Spring 2018)

“Communication for Youth Institute”, Student/Teacher (Fall 2015 – Spring 2016)

California State Prison, Los Angeles (California State University, San Bernardino / Prison Arts Collective)

“Performance Poetry”, Teaching Artist (Summer 2017 – Summer 2018)

Professional Activity

Compensated Research Assistant

Civic Paths, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism – Fall 2022

Marston, P. "Passion." In James Joseph Ponzetti, Ed., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Intimate and Family Relationships*, 2019.

Non-Refereed Publications

“How personal finance advice is getting political, thanks to ‘finfluencers’” in *The Conversation*

“Financial Lives in a Networked Generation: How FOMO, Fintech, and Finfluencers Shape Young Adult’s Financial Well-Being” [Report]

“Why Trump’s meme coin is a cash grab” in *The Conversation*

“Dogecoin is a joke – so what’s behind its recent rally?” in *The Conversation*

“What Super Bowl Advertisements Can Teach Us About the Civic Imagination” in *The Journal of Media Literacy*

“How Cryptocurrencies Allow Fundraisers to Sidestep Censorship” in *ScheerPost*

“Technobabble, Speculative Bubbles and the Ignorant Enthusiast: Part 1” in *Bitcoin Magazine*

“Technobabble, Speculative Bubbles and the Ignorant Enthusiast: Part 2” in *Bitcoin Magazine*

Department and Community Service

Los Angeles Maritime Institute - Volunteer deckhand and educator (Spring 2021-present)

Prison Education Project - “Intro to College Applications” at (Summer 2020);
“Intro to Memoir and Biography Writing” at Crossroads Women’s Reentry Program (Spring 2025); “Intro to Financial Literacy” at Santa Barbara County Juvenile Facility (Summer 2025)

Unistream - Volunteer speech coach and English tutor (Fall 2018 – Summer 2019)

Common Movement Experience performance workshop at San Diego State University -
Facilitator (April 2017)

University of the People - Intern (Summer 2016)

CSUN Communication Association at California State University, Northridge - President (Fall 2015 – Spring 2016)

R.U.T.H. Youth Build performance workshop - Facilitator (Fall 2015)

Languages

Spanish – CEFR B1 (Intermediate) **Actively being tutored*

References

Lana Swartz
University of Virginia
Associate Professor of Media Studies

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Henry Jenkins
University of Southern California
Provost Professor of Communication

Email: hjenkins@usc.edu

Manuel Castells
University of Southern California
Professor and Wallis Annenberg Chair in
Communication Technology and Society

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Peter J. Marston
California State University, Northridge
Professor of Communication Studies

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