

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
Advisors: 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. (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).

Manuscripts In Progress

Brichta, M. "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.

Brichta, M., Woolley, S. "Parasitic Capital: Disordered Information and Deception in Decentralized Finance Ecosystems" Target Journal: *New Media + Society*

Conference Presentations

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

"Bitcoin as Vernacular Theory: The Sociotechnical Epistemology of a Networked Economic Culture". Presented at National Communication Association Conference, New Orleans, LA, 2024.

"Critical Political Economy of Bitcoin". Presented at National Communication Association Conference, New Orleans, LA, 2024.

"Bitcoin, the Network: A Cultural History of Bitcoin's Origins and Affordances". Presented at the National Communication Association Conference, National Harbor, MD, 2023.

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

"Public Speaking Reimagined: Towards a story-centric, practice-based Model." Presented at the Young Rhetoricians' Conference, Santa Cruz, CA, 2023.

"Fanning Money: The cultural economy and participatory politics of Dogecoin." Presented at the National Communication Association Conference, New Orleans, LA, 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 virtually, June 2021.

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

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

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

Richard B. Aronstam Scholarship: Department of Communication, CSU Northridge (2017)

Lee Wurthman Departmental Service Award: Department of Communication, CSU Northridge (2016)

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

“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	Email: lanaswartz@virginia.edu
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Henry Jenkins University of Southern California Provost Professor of Communication	Email: hjenkins@usc.edu
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Manuel Castells University of Southern California Professor and Wallis Annenberg Chair in Communication Technology and Society	Email: castells@usc.edu
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Hector Amaya University of Southern California Director of the School of Communication	Email: hectoram@usc.edu
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Peter J. Marston California State University, Northridge Professor of Communication Studies	Email: peter.marston@csun.edu
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