

February 23, 201~~5~~6

Paul van der Veur, Ph.D., Chair
Department of Communication Studies
SUNY Cortland

Dear Chair van der Veur,

The Department of Communication Studies Personnel Committee met February 17 and 22 to review the application of Prof. Samuel Avery for contract renewal. On September 23 the ballots were counted. The vote was 3 to 0 to recommend for contract renewal. The Personnel Committee's decision was based on the evidence provided by the candidate in his dossier. As required under Section 230.04 of the College Handbook, as well as Sections D and E of the department's Personnel Policies and Procedures, the committee cites the following evidence and other pertinent data in making its decision.

Prof. Avery started teaching in the Department of Communication Studies in the Fall of 2013. The consensus of the committee is that he has demonstrated effectiveness in teaching, scholarship, service, mastery of subject matter, and continuing professional growth.

Among evidence of teaching effectiveness, Prof. Avery's CTEs continue to reflect strong student sentiment that he is an effective teacher. Consistently his scores continue to be in the 4 range. Among laudatory student comments, one said of Intermediate Writing for Media, "I really enjoyed this class, it challenged me to think. I wouldn't necessarily consider myself a creative person before this." Another said, "Use of facebook was good. Readily available for questions."

Moreover, in classroom evaluations by colleagues, it was noted that "Professor Avery showed himself to be a master at class management, leadership, and technical skill. His enthusiasm is only exceeded by their [the students'] enthusiasm for him." Still another noted, "Overall, Avery's teaching style was clear, competent, thoughtful, interesting and very effective."

In the area of creativity, he listed involvement in 30 competitions and accolades from various film/media festivals in the last year (2015) alone. The number is impressive, but it is also a sharp increase from previous years. Also impressive is that a number of his past films continue to draw recognition. Moreover, he is the founder of an online movie festival that will involve showings of movies on campus. While the project is still young, it is clearly ambitious if one reviews the online link. For example, one member of the committee was impressed that it included the feature-length film "Pechorin."

Meanwhile, Prof. Avery has been involved in several ongoing documentary productions since he arrived at Cortland. These include "The Buffalo Five," and "Making Green Trees Yellow." In addition, a documentary on mental illness, "Not Without Us," received international recognition in Switzerland where it was subtitled in German. It was also nominated for a 2014 Voice Award sponsored by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

- The syllabi for COM 422, Intermediate Media Writing, and COM 301, Mass Media and Society, call for writing projects, in the latter a research paper. However, these could not be found in the course materials in the dossier. We recommend they be provided since they are important components of the course. As the department's policies and procedures note (II.E.3.c.i): "Given the emphasis of the College and Department on the development of writing skills, candidates are encouraged to incorporate essay exams and writing assignments into their courses where feasible. Evidence of an instructor's commitment to teaching writing skills, as well as subject matter, will be noted and viewed as an important component of a candidate's teaching record." Thus Prof. Avery benefits from including them, along with some student examples reflecting his critique.
- Because Prof. Avery engages in a creative field, he would benefit from providing as much information as possible about the caliber of his film activities including film festivals and competitions. In his field is there a ranking system that can be used the way scholarly journals are ranked? For example, are films judged by acceptance rates? Such measures would help more traditional scholars better understand the significance of what he has accomplished in his creative field.
- Prof. Avery says that the course he developed around "Game of Thrones" (which the committee found an intriguing pedagogical experiment) received "national" recognition, but no evidence could be detected of national recognition. What was detected was an article in the *Dragon Chronicle*, the *Cortland Standard*, and Syracuse.com, the online site of the Syracuse newspaper, the *Post-Standard*.
- Regarding the article accepted for publication, the editors say, "We are happy to let you know that we will include your contribution into our volume (subject to the reviewing process). We are currently conceptualising the volume proposal for Palgrave MacMillan, who has expressed interest." We have two concerns. First, it was still subject to a reviewing process, but was it accepted as a result? Second, Palgrave MacMillan "has expressed interest," but that does not mean they have agreed to publish the volume. Could Prof. Avery please provide evidence that the article successfully made it through the reviewing process, and if the volume was accepted for publication by Palgrave MacMillan. The correspondence from the editors of the proposed volume was from last May so surely some progress has been made since then.

That said, these concerns are easily remedied and for this reason we do not see them as an obstacle to contract renewal. We appreciate that the ways of the academy are very much an extended learning process.

Should Prof. Avery have any questions about this review, or how to build the strongest case possible for tenure and promotion, he is certainly invited to consult with the committee and senior faculty who are more familiar with the process. At every stage he should be sensitive to concerns that could arise.

But it is clear that Prof. Avery deserves the opportunity to continue to contribute to the Department of Communication Studies and its majors. The vote on his contract renewal follows. The ballots are available for inspection from the department secretary.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,



John C. Hartsock, Ph.D., Acting Chair
Department of Communication Studies
Personnel Committee

Vote for contract renewal:

1 very highly recommend

1 highly recommend

1 recommend

not recommend

cc: Samuel Avery
Fang Yang, Personnel Committee
Sung Yoo, Personnel Committee

February 29, 2016



Fine Arts and Humanities Subdivision Personnel Committee
School of Arts and Sciences
SUNY Cortland

Dear Subdivision Personnel Committee Members,

I have reviewed the materials submitted by Sam Avery and am pleased to recommend his reappointment in the Communication Studies Department. This recommendation is based on the State University of New York Board of Trustees Policies and Procedures criteria of Mastery of Subject Matter, Effectiveness in Teaching, Scholarly Ability, College Service, and Continuing Growth. This positive recommendation is consistent with that of the Department Personnel Committee. The Committee's options were to very highly recommend (1), highly recommend (1), recommend (1), and not recommend (0).

Mastery of Subject Matter/Continuing Growth

Mr. Avery completed his Master of Fine Arts in Media Arts Production at the State University of New York University at Buffalo in 2013. Avery's creative works earned recognition at festivals and competitions in 2007, 2012, 2014, and most recently in 2015. In addition, Avery works to improve his skills through participation in events such as the Tribeca Talks Industry Master Classes (2014) and attendance at the regional Society of Broadcast Engineers Expo (2013, 2014, and 2015).

Effectiveness in Teaching

Since entering the Communication Studies Department, Mr. Avery has taught COM 243 Video Production I, COM 301 Mass Media and Society, COM 322 Intermediate Writing for Media, and COM 342 Video Production II. Effective teaching in each of these courses is essential to the delivery of our Communication Studies and New Communication Media programs. Mass Media and Society is a core course in Communication Studies and fulfills a General Education 03 requirement. Intermediate Writing for Media is required of our Media Production majors and carries the Writing Intensive attribute. Video Production I & II are central both to the Media Production concentration and the major in New Communication Media.

Sam Avery has performed exceptionally well in his teaching. In their evaluations, students rank Avery highly across all measures. Observations made in three classroom visitations by faculty in 2014 corroborate student opinions. By all accounts, Avery does an exceptional job establishing rapport with students, engaging his students and making content accessible to them.

Scholarly Ability

Samuel Avery's scholarship is creative in nature and focuses on the development of film and video projects. In the past year, Avery created one new documentary, *Northside*, which was screened in conjunction with the Syracuse International Film Festival. He also continues to screen prior works, entering them in more than 30 local, national, and international festivals. A review of his work reveals a good 'eye' for visuals and a strong sense of composition. Avery's editing demonstrates a well-developed sense of timing and motivation. An increasing level of technical skill and sophistication are also evident when viewing the body of work presented. While a few images and scenes are less than 'pristine', this can be attributed in large to the transient nature of the events that are

documented. It should be noted that the work ties in well with SUNY Cortland's commitment to community service and civic engagement, and has the potential to generate significant levels of undergraduate research.

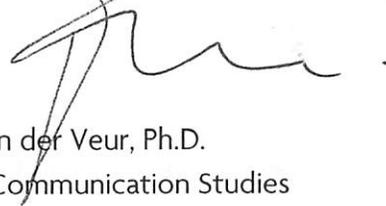
College Service

Mr. Avery was advised by me to limit his service outside the department during the initial year of his appointment in order to focus on developing his teaching skills and creative work. Within the department, Avery has been an active member of our Departmental Personnel and Curriculum Committees. This year he is chairing both the Curriculum Committee and our current Search Committee.

This year Avery began serving the broader campus community through his involvement as advisor to the campus television station, CSTV. In that role he works with approximately 50 students each semester. In addition, Avery has founded an online movie festival—serving the broader creative community while providing internship opportunities for students and involving the campus through on-campus screenings.

In all areas under review, Mr. Avery has demonstrated himself to be a valuable member of this academic community.

Sincerely,



Paul van der Veur, Ph.D.
Chair, Communication Studies

cc Samuel Avery
John Hartsock, Department Personnel Committee Chair
file

TO: Dr. R. Bruce Mattingly, Dean
School of Arts and Sciences

FROM: Dr. Stephen B. Wilson, Chair 
Fine Arts and Humanities Sub-School Personnel Committee

DATE: 21 March, 2016

RE: Professor Samuel Avery

The committee unanimously agrees with the Department of Communication Studies personnel committee and department chair that Professor Samuel Avery's contract should be renewed for two years. His research is proceeding at an increasing rate with the co-direction of a new film, an upcoming book chapter, and ongoing screenings of prior work.

Professor Avery is currently chairing the department curriculum committee and current search committee. His commitment to service in his department is commendable in chairing committees in the first year of service requirement.

His teaching style is very successful, as shown by consistently high CTE scores. His willingness to use non-traditional teaching methods is important to instill creativity in his students. It is apparent that he is very enthusiastic about teaching and maintains a professional yet fun rapport with students.

CC: ✓ Prof. Samuel Avery
Dr. John Hartsock
Dr. Paul van der Veur

*The vote was as follows:

 1 Very highly recommend

 2 Highly recommend

 3 Recommend

 Do not recommend

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mark Prus, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

FROM: R. Bruce Mattingly, Dean of Arts and Sciences 

DATE: March 30, 2016

RE: Reappointment Recommendation for Samuel Avery

I am pleased to recommend Samuel Avery for a two-year reappointment. This recommendation is consistent with those of the department personnel committee, the department chair, and the subschool personnel committee.

Mr. Avery's teaching responsibilities have included courses on video production, writing for media, mass media and society, and a special topics course based on the popular *Game of Thrones* series. He uses a variety of instructional approaches appropriate to the content and goals of each course. For instance, his production classes necessarily include instruction on equipment and technical knowledge, but as he indicates in his teaching philosophy statement, he encourages his students to understand the "why" and not just the "how" of various production choices. In other classes, he has used writing assignments and formal debates. For his *Game of Thrones* course, he even developed a card game. The evidence suggests that his teaching has been effective throughout all of his classes. His CTE results are consistently strong, with average scores ranging from 4.41 to 4.88. Comments from students are very favorable, noting that his classes are both interesting and challenging. His portfolio includes several peer observations that also praised his teaching. I would note that all of these observations were included in his last reappointment portfolio. In the future, it would be helpful to have more recent observations of his work in the classroom.

Mr. Avery's scholarly work includes a wide variety of film and video projects. The sheer volume of the work that he is completed is quite impressive, with over 100 films produced in a ten year period. Since his last reappointment he has completed two new film projects – a documentary and a 16 part web series. Both these films and his prior work continue to achieve recognition through their selection for inclusion in various film festivals. Mr. Avery's recent works have been nominated for seven awards, and won four of those awards in 2015 alone. In addition to his impressive body of film and video work, he has a forthcoming book chapter that is expected to be published this year.

Since his last reappointment, Mr. Avery has increased his service activity. Within the department he took on a leadership role as chair of the department search committee. He also serves as the CSTV advisor, which might be considered college service since student participation in CSTV is not limited to department majors. He has some prior history in producing promotional videos for the SUNY Faculty Senate. While his involvement in service to date has been sufficient, it would be reasonable to expect him to increase his activity in the future.

In conclusion, Mr. Avery has continues to be a valuable, contributing member of the Communication Studies Department. He is very deserving of reappointment.

Cc: ✓ Samuel Avery, Communication Studies Department
John Hartsock, Chair, Communication Studies Department Personnel Committee
Paul van der Veur, Chair, Communication Studies Department
Stephen Wilson, Chair, Fine Arts and Humanities Sub-School Personnel Committee

May 1, 2016

TO: Erik J. Bitterbaum, President
FROM: Mark J. Prus, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs *mjp*
RE: Samuel Avery, Assistant Professor
 Communication Studies

I have reviewed the materials submitted on Dr. Samuel Avery and am pleased to recommend him for a two-year term renewal in the Communication Studies Department effective September 1, 2017 through August 31, 2019. This recommendation is consistent with that of the department personnel committee, the department chair, the school personnel committee and the dean.

Professor Avery's record of teaching, service and scholarship warrants reappointment. In the area of teaching, Professor Avery regularly services a variety of courses in the new media communication media and communication studies majors. His courses integrate technology and innovative pedagogical methods and are well received by students. Numeric scores on his CTEs indicate that Professor Avery is well prepared, has an effective style of presentation and challenges students. Peer observations are similarly positive. Course materials are well organized and Professor Avery clearly establishes rapport with his students to create an effective learning environment.

Professor Avery's performance in the area of scholarship and creative activity meets the expectations for reappointment. Professor Avery has been active in producing and directing a variety of film projects culminating in submissions to juried film festivals. His latest productions have been recognized as Official Selections. He has also contributed a chapter to an edited book on documentary filmmaking. I look forward to his continued scholarly and creative contributions.

Professor Avery has established an appropriate record of service to the Department and the College. As a relatively new faculty member, Professor Avery has focused his service activities in the department. He serves on the department curriculum committee and chairs the department search committee. He is also the faculty advisor to CSTV. I concur with the dean's recommendation that Professor Avery extend his service commitments to include college wide service.

Professor Avery has contributed to the Department and the College and is deserving of reappointment. I look forward to his continued contributions in teaching, scholarship and service.

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	<u>Renewal</u>	<u>Non-renewal</u>	<u>Cont. Apt.</u>
Department Personnel Committee	X		
Department Chair	X		
School Personnel Committee	X		
School Dean	X		

NOTE: Your file in the above matter has been transferred to the President's Office for the President's review. In accordance with the UUP Agreement, Article 31.6, you have the right to examine the file during normal business hours and to respond to any item contained therein. If you wish to examine the file, please promptly call that office for an appointment.

May 15, 2016

Dr. Samuel Avery
Communication Studies
Van Hoesen Hall

Dear Dr. Avery: ^{Saw}

I am pleased to offer you reappointment to the faculty staff at SUNY Cortland as Assistant Professor in the Communication Studies Department effective September 1, 2017, such appointment to cease August 31, 2019. This is a term appointment subject to the laws of this State and the Policies of the Board of Trustees. Please note that Article XI, Titles D and Article XIV, Title B of these Policies are particularly applicable to this appointment.

In accordance with the Policies of the Board of Trustees of State University of New York, a term appointment does not obligate the staff member to serve beyond the termination date, nor does it obligate the College to employ a staff member beyond the termination date regardless of work or quality of performance.

If you wish to accept this offer, please sign the endorsement on the enclosed copy of this letter and return to me. This offer shall be considered withdrawn if I do not receive your acceptance on or before May 29, 2016.

Sincerely,



Erik J. Bitterbaum
President

I hereby accept the foregoing offer of appointment

5/20/2016
Date

[Handwritten Signature]
Signature

Pc: M. Prus F. Pierce
B. Mattingly T. Rammacher
J. Hartsock S. VanLiew
P. van der Veur
S. Wilson