

# Lee McGuigan

Assistant Professor

UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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## Education

- 2018 **Ph.D. Communication**  
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
- 2015 **M.A. Communication**  
Annenberg School Communication, University of Pennsylvania
- 2011 **M.A. Media Studies**  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario
- 2009 **B.A. Honors Specialization in Media, Information, and Technoculture;  
Major in English Language and Literature**  
University of Western Ontario

## Professional Experience

- 2021-present **Assistant Professor**  
UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- 2019-2020 **Postdoctoral Research Fellow**  
Digital Life Initiative, Cornell Tech
- 2019 **Lecturer**  
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

## Honors and Awards

- 2021-22 **CITAP Faculty Research Fellowship (\$15,000)**  
Center for Information, Technology, and Public Life, UNC-CH
- 2017 **Prize in Memory of Dallas W. Smythe**  
International Association for Media and Communication Research

- 2015            **Brian Murphy Best Paper Award**  
Union for Democratic Communications
- 2013-2017    **Doctoral Fellowship (\$20,000 CAD per annum)**  
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- 2010            **Joseph-Armand Bombardier Master’s Scholarship (\$17,500 CAD)**  
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

## Bibliography

### Books

- 2023            **Lee McGuigan**. *Selling the American People: Advertising, Optimization, and the Origins of Adtech*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- 2014            **Lee McGuigan** and Vincent Manzerolle (eds). *The Audience Commodity in a Digital Age: Revisiting a Critical Theory of Commercial Media*. New York: Peter Lang.

### Refereed Articles

- 2023            **Lee McGuigan**, Ido Sivan-Sevilla, Patrick Parham, and Yan Shvartzshnaider. Private attributes: The meanings and mechanisms of “privacy-preserving” adtech. *New Media & Society*, online ahead of print 28 November. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444823121326>
- 2023            **Lee McGuigan**, Sarah Myers West, Ido Sivan-Sevilla, and Patrick Parham. The after party: Cynical resignation in Adtech’s pivot to privacy. *Big Data & Society*, 10(2): 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517231203665>
- 2023            Jake Goldenfein and **Lee McGuigan**. Managed sovereigns: How inconsistent accounts of the human rationalize platform advertising. *Journal of Law and Political Economy*, 3(3): 425-449.
- 2021            Salomé Viljoen, Jake Goldenfein, and **Lee McGuigan**. Design choices: Mechanism design and platform capitalism. *Big Data & Society*, 8(2): 1-13.
- 2019            **Lee McGuigan**. Automating the audience commodity: The unacknowledged ancestry of programmatic advertising. *New Media & Society*, 21(11/12), 2366-2385.

- 2019 Emily Hund and **Lee McGuigan**. A shoppable life: Performance, selfhood, and influence in the social media storefront. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 12(1), 18-35.
- 2019 **Lee McGuigan** and Rosemary Clark Parsons. This kill shot is brought to you by...: An analysis of hunting television in the United States. *Critical Studies in Television*, 14(1), 55-73.
- 2018 **Lee McGuigan**. Selling Jennifer Aniston's sweater: The persistence of shoppability in framing television's future. *Media Industries*, 5(1), 1-26.
- 2018 Anthony Nadler and **Lee McGuigan**. An impulse to exploit: The behavioral turn in data-driven marketing. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 35(2), 151-165.
- 2017 **Lee McGuigan**. The hunting industry: Exploring the marriage of consumerism, sport hunting, and commercial entertainment. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 17(3), 910-930.
- 2015 **Lee McGuigan** and Graham Murdock. The medium is the marketplace: Digital systems and the intensification of consumption. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 40(4), 717-726.
- 2015 **Lee McGuigan** and Vincent Manzerolle. "All the world's a shopping cart": Theorizing the political economy of ubiquitous media and markets. *New Media & Society*, 17(11), 1830-1848.
- 2015 **Lee McGuigan**. Procter & Gamble, mass media, and the making of American life. *Media, Culture & Society*, 37(6), 887-903.
- 2015 Joseph Turow, **Lee McGuigan**, and Elena Maris. Making data mining a natural part of life: Physical retailing, customer surveillance, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century social imaginary. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 18(4/5), 464-478.
- 2015 **Lee McGuigan**. Direct marketing and the productive capacity of commercial television: T-commerce, advanced advertising, and the audience product. *Television & New Media*, 16(2), 196-214.
- 2012 **Lee McGuigan**. Consumers: The commodity product of interactive commercial television, or, is Dallas Smythe's thesis more germane than ever? *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 36(4), 288-304

## Book Chapters

- 2023 **Lee McGuigan** and Marcel Rosa-Salas. Model consumers: Numerical and normative constructions of Hispanic consumers. In *The Routledge Companion to Advertising and Promotional Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, eds. Emily West and Matthew McAllister, pp. 126-134. New York: Routledge.
- 2021 **Lee McGuigan**. Industrial media studies: Considering infrastructures for audience manufacture. In *The Routledge Companion to Media Industries Studies*, ed. Paul McDonald, pp. 121-131. New York: Routledge.
- 2018 **Lee McGuigan**. Canadian contributions to the study of advertising and consumer culture. In *Advertising, Consumer Culture, and Canadian Society: A Reader*, ed. Kyle Asquith, pp. 4-22. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.
- 2016 Anthony Nadler and **Lee McGuigan**. Captains of habit formation: Marketers' emerging models of the consumer mind. In *Explorations in Critical Studies in Advertising*, eds. James F. Hamilton, Robert Bodle, and Ezequiel Korin, pp. 124-137. New York: Routledge.
- 2016 **Lee McGuigan** and Victor Pickard. Comcast Corporation. In *Global Media Giants*, eds. Benjamin Birkinbine, Rodrigo Gomez, and Janet Wasko, pp. 72-91. New York: Routledge.
- 2015 **Lee McGuigan**. From demographics to buying power: Economic evaluation of audiences as consumers. In *La médiatisation de l'évaluation/Evaluation in the Media*, eds. Julie Bouchard, Etienne Candel, Hélène Cardy, and Gustavo Gomez-Mejia, pp. 259-280. Berne, CH: Peter Lang.
- 2014 **Lee McGuigan**. After broadcast, what? An introduction to the legacy of Dallas Smythe. In *The Audience Commodity in a Digital Age: Revisiting a Critical Theory of Commercial Media*, eds. Lee McGuigan and Vincent Manzerolle, pp. 1-20. New York: Peter Lang

## Encyclopedia Entries

- 2022 **Lee McGuigan**. Comcast Corporation. In *SAGE Encyclopedia of Journalism*, ed. Gregory A. Borchard, pp. 355-359. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

## Other Writing

- 2021 Helen Nissenbaum and **Lee McGuigan**. Comments to the UK Competition and Markets Authority on Google's FLoC.
- 2021 **Lee McGuigan**. This tool lets you confuse Google's ad network, and a test shows it works. *MIT Technology Review*, January 6.

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/01/06/1015784/adsense-google-surveillance-adnauseam-obfuscation/>

- 2014 Joseph Turow and **Lee McGuigan**. Retailing and social discrimination: The new normal? In *Data and Discrimination: Collected Essays*, eds. Seeta Peña Gangadharan, Virginia Eubanks, and Solon Barocas, pp. 27-30. Open Technology Institute, New America Foundation.  
<https://www.newamerica.org/oti/policy-papers/data-and-discrimination/>

## Selected Conference Presentations

- 2023 Living rent-free in your head? Advertising, subscriptions, and audience valorization. *Union for Democratic Communications 2023 Conference*, October 12-14, Philadelphia. (with Aaron Shapiro)
- 2023 The after party: Cynical resignation in Adtech's pivot to privacy. *23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers*, Oct. 18-21, Philadelphia. (with Lee McGuigan, Sarah Myers West, Ido Sivan-Sevilla, and Patrick Parham)
- 2023 The contextual integrity of "privacy" in ad attribution: A comparative analysis of AdTech platforms. *Privacy Law Scholars Conference*, June 1-2, University of Colorado, Boulder. (with Yan Shvartzshnaider, Ido Sivan-Sevilla, and Patrick Parham)
- 2023 Tracking in new media platforms: The case of universal cookie-less identifiers by the AdTech industry. *Privacy Law Scholars Conference*, June 1-2, University of Colorado, Boulder. (with Ido Sivan-Sevilla and Patrick Parham)
- 2023 Advertising dreams of optimization: The old-media origins of adtech. *Canadian Communication Association Annual Conference*, May 30-June 2, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- 2023 Adtech flows: Claims and logistics in digital advertising. *73<sup>rd</sup> Annual ICA Conference*, May 25-29, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- 2023 Optimization takes command: Management technique, from the military to Madison Avenue. *73<sup>rd</sup> Annual ICA Conference*, May 25-29, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- 2023 How ad-tech got its spots: Automation, optimization, and the broadcast-era ancestry of programmatic advertising. *A Century of Broadcasting*:

- Preservation and Renewal*, 2023 Conference of the Radio Preservation Task Force of the Library of Congress, April 27-30, Washington, D.C.
- 2023 Managed sovereigns: How inconsistent accounts of the human rationalize platform advertising. *PlatGovNet 2023: Imagining Sustainable, Trustworthy, and Democratic Platform Governance*, April 3-4, virtual event. (with Jake Goldenfein)
- 2022 Adtech's state-of-play on "privacy": A case study of companies' attribution proposals. *4<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Applications of Contextual Integrity*, Cornell Tech, New York City, September 22-23. (with Yan Shvartzshnaider, Ido Sivan-Sevilla, and Patrick Parham)
- 2022 Making an Impression. *72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association*, Paris, France. May 26-30. (with Bridget Barrett and Aaron Shapiro)
- 2021 Design choices: Mechanism design and platform capitalism. *22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers*, Oct. 13-16, virtual event. (with Salomé Viljoen and Jake Goldenfein)
- 2021 Producing an audience of one: Cable's contributions to personalized advertising," *Canadian Communication Association Annual Conference*, June 1-4, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta (virtual).
- 2021 The complexity and mess of digital advertising, *3<sup>rd</sup> Workshop on Obfuscation*, May 7, TU Delft (virtual).
- 2020 Economic method, digital platform: When mechanism design moves online. *4<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Mechanism Design for Social Good*, August 17-19, virtual event.
- 2020 Mechanism design for what? *Privacy Law Scholars Conference*, June 4-5, Washington, DC (virtual). (with Salomé Viljoen and Jake Goldenfein)
- 2019 Automating the audience commodity: The unacknowledged ancestry of programmatic advertising. *69<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association*. Washington, D.C. May 24-28.
- 2018 A shoppable life. *International Association for Media and Communication Research 2018 Conference*. University of Oregon, Eugene, USA. June 20-24. (with Emily Hund)

- 2018 Information: Blind spot of the audience commodity thesis? *Union for Democratic Communications 2018 Conference*. Loyola University Chicago, USA. May 10-13.
- 2017 Institutions and infrastructures: Audience manufacture and the making of a market. *Annual Meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science*. Boston, USA. August 30-September 2.
- 2017 The productive capacity of commercial television: An approach for analyzing media systems in society. *International Association for Media and Communication Research 2017 Conference*. Cartagena, Colombia. July 16-20.
- 2017 Data-driven television: Automating the audience commodity. *Data Power 2017 Conference*. Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. June 22-23.
- 2017 This kill shot is brought to you by...: An analysis of hunting television in the United States. *Canadian Communication Association Annual Conference*. Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada. May 30-June 2. (with Rosemary Clark-Parsons)
- 2017 Selling Jennifer Aniston's sweater: The persistence of shoppability in the television industry. *67<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association*. San Diego, USA. May 25-29.

## Teaching Record

### Courses Taught

- Fall 2023 **MEJO 490 Advertising, Media and Society** (24 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- MEJO 843 Media Processes and Production** (5 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- Spring 2023 **MEJO 379 Advertising and PR Research** (30 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- MEJO 379 Advertising and PR Research** (31 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- Fall 2022 **MEJO 445 Media Processes and Effects** (22 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH

- MEJO 843 Media Processes and Production** (5 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- Fall 2021 **MEJO 445 Media Processes and Effects** (25 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- MEJO 843 Media Processes and Production** (7 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- Spring 2021 **MEJO 379 Advertising and PR Research** (35 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- MEJO 673 Advertising Campaigns** (23 students)  
Hussman School for Journalism and Media, UNC-CH
- Spring 2019 **Media Industries and Society (COMM 130)** Annenberg School  
for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
- Fall 2018 **Teaching Assistant to Lecturer Howard Fineman – The  
Journalism of Social Change (COMM 381)**  
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
- 2017 **Certificate in University Teaching**  
Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Pennsylvania
- Fall 2016 **Teaching Assistant to Prof. Felicity Paxton – Critical Approaches to  
Popular Culture (COMM 123)**  
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
- Summer 2016 **Mass Media and Society (COMM 130)**  
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
- Spring 2016 **Teaching Assistant to Prof. Joseph Turow – Mass Media and Society  
(COMM 130)**  
Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
- Fall 2010 **Teaching Assistant to Prof. Robert E. Babe – Designing and Critiquing  
Research Methods (MIT 3000)**  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario
- Spring 2009 **Teaching Assistant to Prof. Daniel J. Robinson – Advertising and the  
Mass Media (MIT 3214)**  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario



Fall 2009      **Teaching Assistant to Prof. Robert E. Babe – Designing and Critiquing Research Methods (MIT 3000)**  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario

## Student Advising

PhD students: LaRisa Anderson (chair); Pablo Miño (co-chair); Madhavi Reddi (committee); Teresa Tackett (committee); Bridget Barrett (committee); Contia' Prince (committee); Patrick Parham (committee [University of Maryland College of Information Studies])

Undergraduate students: Keyao Du (honors thesis); Anwar Boutayba (letters of recommendation); Briana Corrie (honors Contract); Kamryn Hailey (letter of recommendation); Yazmin Aguila (letter of recommendation); Sofia Ramirez (letter of recommendation); Hailey Clodfelter (letter of recommendation)

Masters students: David McClay (thesis reader)

## Professional Service

### Event Organizing

- 2023      Program Committee, *5<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Applications of Contextual Integrity*, York University, Toronto, September 22-24.
- 2023      Co-organizer, *Manipulation Workshop*. Cornell Tech, New York City, May 11-12. (with Helen Nissenbaum, Daniel Susser, and Beate Roessler)
- 2020      Co-organizer, *Manipulation Workshop*. Virtual event, October 30. (with Helen Nissenbaum, Daniel Susser, and Beate Roessler)

### Invited Talks and Lectures

- 2023      Guest lecture in PUBPOL/PJMS 410 "Policy Journalism & Media Studies Capstone," Duke University (Professor Robyn Caplan), November 9.
- 2023      Book talk: *Selling the American People*. Digital Life Initiative, Cornell Tech, October 11.
- 2023      Book talk: *Selling the American People*. Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, September 14.

- 2023 Book talk: *Selling the American People*. Center for Information, Technology, and Public Life, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, September 7.
- 2023 Discussant for paper “Reining in Surveillance Advertising Through Privacy Regulations? Multi-stakeholder Responses to Online Behavioral Advertising in the United States,” by Jeeyun (Sophia) Baik, *Media Law and Policy Scholars Conference*, virtual event, January 12-13.
- 2022 Social Issues in Automated Decision Making: Media Template Launch. Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. December 9.
- 2022 Guest lecture in CULANTH 700S “Technology, Surveillance, and Capitalism,” Duke University (Professor Orin Starn), November 9.
- 2022 Law’s Consumers and Platform Users: How Competing Constructions of Humans Legitimize Online Advertising. *AI and Humanity Workshop*, Simons Institute for the Theory of Computing, University of California, Berkeley. July 13-15.
- 2022 Mechanism Design and Platform Capitalism. Platform Economics Research Network Salon, New School for Social Research, New York, April 7. (with Salomé Viljoen and Jake Goldenfein)
- 2022 Guest lecture in CS 5436/INFO 5303 “Privacy in the Digital Age,” Cornell University (Professors Vitali Shmatikov and Helen Nissenbaum), March 3.
- 2020 Guest lecture in INFO 5330 “Technology, Media, and Democracy,” Cornell Tech (Professor Yael Eisenstat), April 20.

## Reviewer

Cambridge University Press; *Journal of Digital Social Research*; *Journal of Consumer Culture*; *Sociology Compass*; *Television & New Media*; *Journal of Communication Inquiry*; International Communication Association; *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*; *Information, Communication & Society*; *Canadian Journal of Communication*; *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*; *Big Data & Society*; International Association for Media and Communication Research; *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*; *Social Media + Society*.

## Committee Memberships

**Carter-Tinson Gallery Committee (2023)**

UNC Hussman School of Media and Journalism, UNC-CH

**Seed Grant Committee (2022-2023)**

UNC Hussman School of Media and Journalism, UNC-CH

**Graduate Student Council**

Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

**Media Studies Program Committee**

Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario

## Professional Association Memberships

International Communication Association (ICA); Media Ecology Association (MEA); International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR); Canadian Communication Association (CCA); Union for Democratic Communications (UDC); Society for Social Studies of Science (4S); Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS); Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR)

## Press Mentions

“Column: The 10 best tech books of 2023,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 2023. <https://www.latimes.com/business/technology/story/2023-12-22/column-the-best-tech-books-of-2023>

“Adtech’s surveillance ambitions are decades in the making,” *Fast Company*, August 3, 2023. <https://www.fastcompany.com/90932403/adtechs-surveillance-ambitions-are-decades-in-the-making>

“How you can avoid accepting cookies,” *Vetenskapsradion På djupet (Science Radio in Depth)*, Sverige Radio, July 4, 2023. <https://sverigesradio.se/avsnitt/sa-kan-du-slippa-acceptera-cookies-repris>

“The rewards and risks of lying to tech companies,” *Popular Science*, October 27, 2022. <https://www.popsci.com/diy/data-obfuscation/>

“Social shopping is finally having its moment,” *Protocol*, March 11, 2022. <https://www.protocol.com/newsletters/sourcecode/social-shopping-having-its-moment?rebelltitem=1#rebelltitem1>

“Your Facebook News Feed sucks because that’s how advertisers like it,” *Gizmodo*, October 20, 2021 <https://gizmodo.com/your-facebook-news-feed-sucks-because-thats-how-adverti-1847885252>

“How Facebook’s ads system lets companies talk out of both sides of their mouths,” *The Markup*, April 13, 2021 <https://themarkup.org/news/2021/04/13/how-facebooks-ad-system-lets-companies-talk-out-of-both-sides-of-their-mouths>

“Confessions of an influencer whisperer,” *Town & Country*, March 10, 2021. <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/money-and-power/a35729363/amber-venz-box-rewardstyle-influencer-whisperer/>

“NBC’s latest gamble depends on the idea that you’ll want to shop while you watch TV,” *Washington Post*, November 1, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/11/01/nbcs-latest-gamble-depends-idea-that-youll-want-shop-while-you-watch-tv/>

“Today’s influencer economy can be explained by a 19<sup>th</sup> century economic theory,” *Quartz*, March 1, 2019. <https://qz.com/1562813/influencer-marketing-explained-by-a-19th-century-economist/>