

Regional

Nastasia is all about interpersonal communication

In the world in which we live everything seems connected to communication. Most employers are requiring more and more that new employees have good communications skills. Someone who teaches and does research in this area is Sorin Nastasia, an assistant professor in the department of speech communication at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

To be sure, Nastasia has a strong academic background. Born in Torgoviste, Romania, he has three master's degrees, one in American cultural studies from the University of Bucharest, a second master's degree in management of international transactions from the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest and a third master's degree in communications and public relations from the National University for Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest. He received his doctorate in communication and public discourse at the University of South Dakota. Among Nastasia's interests are the ways that audiovisual and social media have become increasingly important forces in the way that we communicate with each other.

"Interpersonal communication has changed, and not only in the United States. It has changed around the world," Nastasia said. "People are now in the fast lane, everybody is now taking from the TV their impulses to do something very fast. Nastasia said that we now communicate to "the rhythm of television." Add to these communication changes the challenges of living in a more and more globalized world, and suddenly communication becomes amazingly complex. To address this complexity, Nastasia teaches a course on international public relations.

"I explain how to try to move the same reflexes that you would have in your own culture and try to see if you can adapt if you are moving to another culture," he explained. "People will have different idiosyncrasies based on their education, based on their culture, based on their local influences." To provide his students with actual field experience in intercultural communications, he is taking them to Lyon, France, and



Isaac Blankson/SIUE

Dr. Sorin Nastasia, third from left, with some of his students.

Bucharest, Romania, this summer.

"With a grant from SIUE the students will take a 6-credit course titled International Public Relations. They will have to interact with professors and students from universities located over there two days a week. And three days a week they will shadow public relations professionals in public relations firms in groups of four," Nastasia said. "And

then they will react to what they have seen and perceived as methods of implementing public relations campaigns, organizing events, communicating with the media, because I'm sure those people in France and Romania have their own idiosyncrasies." As a person who grew up in a communist country, Nastasia said that he has seen a lot of changes in the way public relations work

these days in those countries.

"To me, in a country like Romania, but also in a country like France after the Second World War, they took American models of public relations. But that doesn't mean for me that necessarily public relations brought democracy," Nastasia said. "There are so many other elements that have to be taken into consideration and I think that all of these

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have to be weighted in." He added that what they do now in Europe is not a carbon copy of the American model of public relations.

"I understand that you have to have a vibrant market and a certain kind of economy and certain institutions in place and people understanding democracy in a certain manner in order to have things functioning. But in order to do public relations 'a la carte' or following the book, this doesn't work. You have to adjust to the cultural realities of the place," said Nastasia. One of the areas he has studied is how the perception of gender has changed from the communist to the post-communist era in those countries.

"I did research with people from Romania in 2006 and it is called "Gender Identities in Communist and Post-communist Romania" trying to see if change in state organizations has influenced the relationship between males and females in my country and it seems to me that certain reflexes have been taken over," Nastasia said. "But still the past has influences." During the time of communism the state decided how gender roles would play out in public, but now, of course, things have changed.

"Now the common people would say 'Now it is democracy, we can do whatever we want.' So that was reflected with some people depending on their level of culture and their level of understanding of human relationships. That was reflected in how they reacted," Nastasia explained. "And now they were saying to their wives, 'Get back to the kitchen and take care of the kids because now I'm the bread winner here because it is a democracy and who has the power has the first word'."

Aldemaro Romero is the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. His show, "Segue," can be heard every Sunday morning at 9 a.m. on WSIE, 88.7 FM. He can be reached at College_Arts_Sciences@siue.edu.