Mitchell S. McKinney

Professor and Chair, Department of Communication

One of our nation’s leading scholars of presidential debates, McKinney is a former advisor to the U.S. Commission on Presidential Debates, where his work was instrumental in developing the presidential town hall debate and other innovations in the structure and practice of televised presidential debates in the United States. He also has advised national election commissions in other countries, including South Korea and Germany, to assist with those countries’ televised debates. He has combined practical political experience with his training as a political communication scholar, having worked at the White House and in the U.S. Senate, and has provided expert political commentary for state and national media. He has written seven scholarly books on political communication, has 50 refereed journal articles and books chapters, and has presented 174 papers at regional, national and international conferences.

- Founder and director of MU’s Political Communication Institute
- Received the William T. Kemper Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2009
- Served as president of the Central States Communication Association 2012-13
- Named a Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute Research Fellow for 2012-13 and holds a joint appointment with the Missouri School of Journalism
- Outstanding Director of Graduate Studies Award from the MU Graduate School in 2014

“When a butterfly flutters its wings in one part of the world, it can eventually cause a hurricane in another.” – Edward Lorenz’s Chaos Theory

“My own teaching philosophy describes this idealism that I take into my classroom—the idealism that I hope my students will take away from my classes. While I may never know the full impact that a class activity or discussion may have on one of my students, I’m confident that one student, one lecture, one semester at a time we’re changing the world!”