

PENN NEWS

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GERBNER TO RETURN TO FULL-TIME TEACHING AND RESEARCH AFTER 25 YEARS AS DEAN OF PENN'S ANNENBERG SCHOOL

After serving as dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications for more than two decades, George Gerbner will return to full-time teaching, research, writing and editorial work in July 1988.

"I want to devote my energies to scholarly projects" said Gerbner, who recently embarked on a two-year joint project to study Soviet and American television program content and policy with scholars from Emory University and Moscow State University.

A pioneer in communications research renowned for his studies on the relationship between television and behavior, Gerbner has been called "the nation's foremost authority on the social impact of television."

He originated the Cultural Indicators Project, which since 1970 has tabulated and analyzed how television depicts violence, aging, women and minorities, various occupations, political involvement, family life, religion, and most recently, science and scientists. His reports on television, which are released every two years, have won him national acclaim.

He has directed national and multi-national mass communications research projects under contracts and grants from such organizations as the National Science Foundation, UNESCO, and the International Research and Exchanges Board.

Gerbner is the author of numerous articles, reports and books on mass communications research, the editor of Penn's quarterly Journal of Communication, and a Fellow of the International Communication Association.

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In response to Gerbner's announcement Penn Provost Thomas Ehrlich said, "I cannot underscore too strongly the debt owed to you by the entire University as well as the Annenberg School of Communications. For the past 25 years you have built the School into the institution of its type in the world. It has no peers, and that reality is a direct result of the extraordinary vision and wisdom of your leadership."

A 1982 Newsweek article sums up Gerbner's impact on both television's audience and its programming executives: "More than any spokesman for a pressure group, Gerbner has become the man that television watches. From his cramped, book-lined office at the University of Pennsylvania springs a steady flow of studies that are raising executive blood pressures at the networks' sleek Manhattan command posts.

"George Gerbner's work is uniquely important because it transports the scientific examination of television far beyond familiar children-and-violence arguments. Rather than simply studying the link between violence on the tube and crime in the streets ... Gerbner is documenting the ways in which video-entertainment portrayals subliminally condition how we perceive ourselves and how we view those around us."

Gerbner believes that viewers of prime-time television are receiving a "synthetic" picture of the real world that they tend to accept more than reality itself.

One of the first and most prolific scholars in the communications field, Gerbner can be said to have molded communications research and theories into a respected academic discipline.

He initiated in 1983 a project to produce a five-volume International Encyclopedia of Communications, the first comprehensive encyclopedia defining the field of communications scholarship and practice. The encyclopedia will be published in 1989 by the Oxford University Press.

At Penn, Gerbner will continue to edit the Journal of Communication and will teach "Studies in Mass Communications," a

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course he developed in the 1960s. The course teaches students how to develop a framework for the analysis of mass media content, functions and policy.

Gerbner has greatly expanded the School's facilities and resources, and helped design an undergraduate major in communications, part of Penn's School of Arts and Sciences that gives students "a liberal arts oriented perspective on communications."

He initiated the Annenberg School's Washington Program for Communications Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., and organized a series of national and international conferences on communications.

In the early 1960's, Gerbner was instrumental in the planning of Penn's Annenberg Center for Communication Arts and Sciences, and still serves on the Center's Board of Advisors.

Before coming to Penn in 1964, Gerbner taught at the University of Illinois' Institute of Communications Research and at the University of Southern California.

Born in Hungary, he came to the United States in 1939, received his B.A. in journalism from the University of California at Berkeley and his M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Southern California.

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