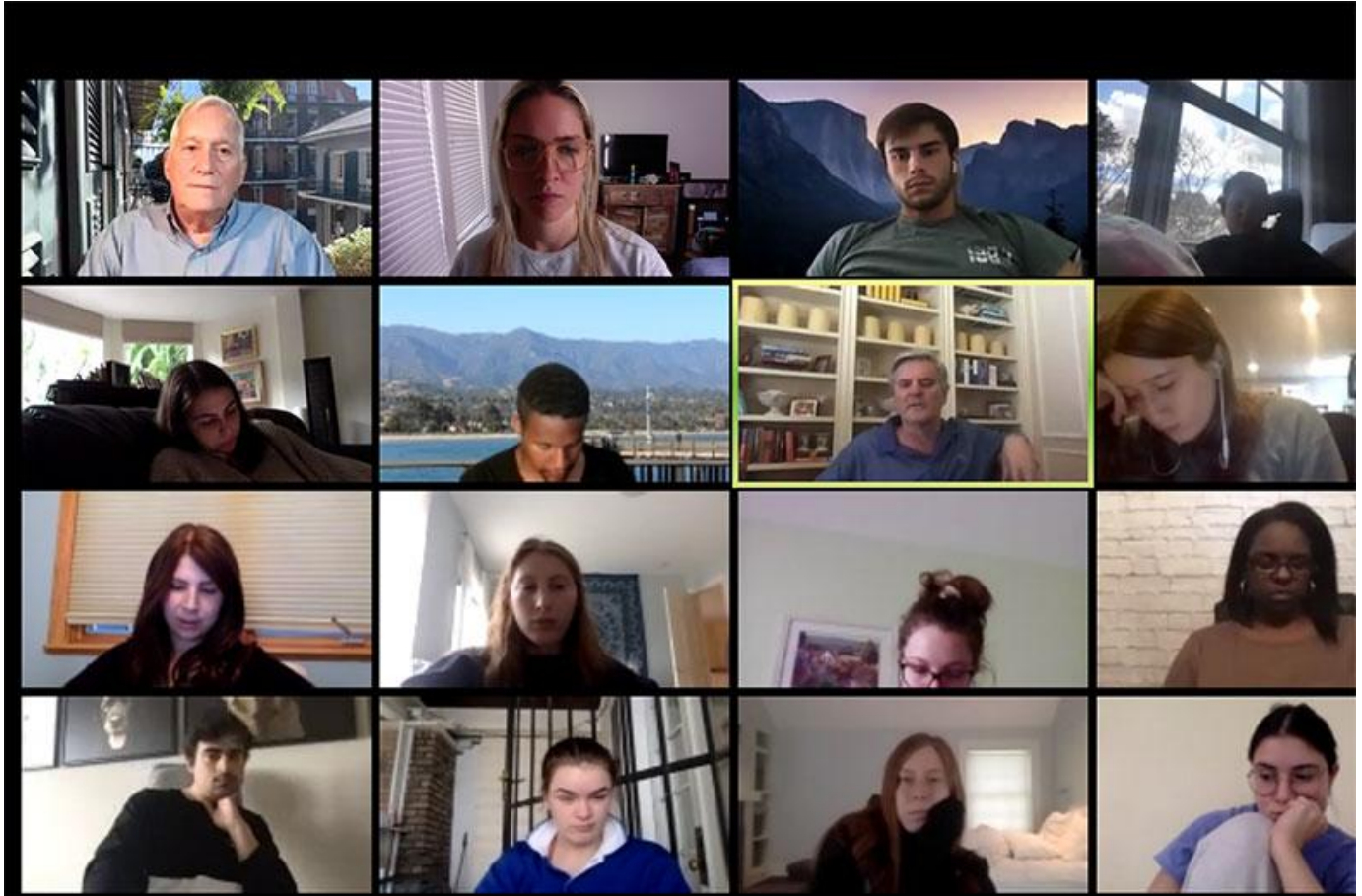


Famous guest speakers visit Tulane classes, virtually

May 11, 2020 4:00 PM Mary Ann Travis
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Walter Isaacson (top left), the Leonard A. Lauder Professor of American History and Values and professor of history, leads the discussion in his Digital Revolution class in which Steve Case (center), founder of AOL, is the guest speaker.

Through video teleconferencing, Tulane professors brought to their classes this spring highly accomplished experts in their fields who suddenly, due to the pandemic, had open dates on their calendars. With all coursework temporarily moved online to help slow the spread of the coronavirus, faculty members found ways to engage students virtually, and still offer a transformative educational experience.

[Nghana Lewis](#), associate professor of English and Africana studies, reached out to

Jordan Peele, who won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for *Get Out* in 2018, when a student, Julian Ventura, asked if class discussion on Peele's work could be extended. (*Get Out* also was nominated for Best Picture and Peele for Best Director.) To Lewis' surprise, Peele accepted her invitation to speak to two of her classes, Introduction to Africana Studies and Introduction to African American Literature, via Zoom video teleconferencing.

Lewis said, "It was apparent that having the opportunity to speak and engage with my students meant just as much to Peele as giving the students the opportunity to engage with him meant to me."

[Jennifer Jacobs](#), assistant professor of theatre and dance, also found guest speakers, "who, honestly, would never have the time to share their experiences and expertise," begin to fill up her schedule.

Clint Ramos, a Tony Award-winning costume designer and the first person of color to win a Tony in this category, met with Jacobs' class.

"Our Zoom meeting with Clint Ramos was so warm, encouraging, inspirational and informative, said MFA student Stephanie Dixon. "It was well-needed, especially during this world crisis."

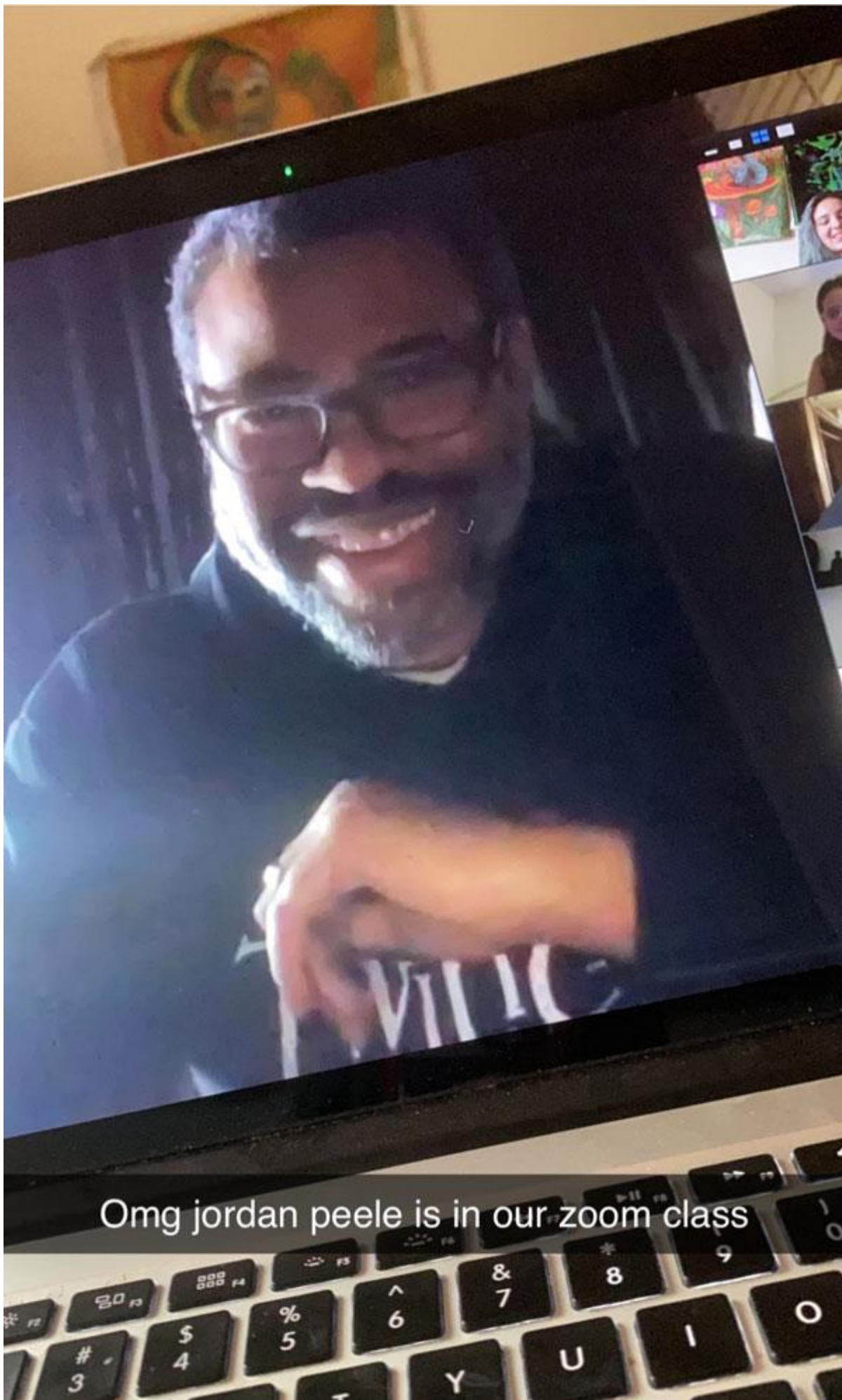
[Walter Isaacson](#), the Leonard A. Lauder Professor of American History and Values and professor of history, also brought, via Zoom, a range of speakers to his class, The Digital Revolution: From Ada to Zuckerberg.

Speakers included Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State; Steve Case, founder of AOL; Steven Levy, author of *Facebook: The Inside Story* (2020); Ken Auletta, who popularized the term "information superhighway" and is the author of books on Google and on the advertising industry; Mark Hoffman, CNBC chairman; Joel Klein, the head of the Justice Department antitrust division who brought the case against Microsoft; and Perry Chen, a Tulane graduate and founder of Kickstarter (who appeared before the class went virtual).

The professor, the guests and the students quickly adapted to the Zoom technology. "I found the discussions worked surprisingly well," said Isaacson. "I had phenomenally engaged students, and some were even more willing to engage

during the Zoom discussions.”

Isaacson doesn’t expect Zoom guests to go away. Now that people have gotten used to Zoom, even when “we get back to in-person meetings, I’m going to have special guests Zoom into class and answer questions remotely.”



Omg jordan peelee is in our zoom class

Jordan Peele visits Tulane via Zoom. (Photo courtesy School of Liberal Arts)

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— Nghana Lewis, associate professor of English and Africana studies