Communication Studies Program Handbook

Welcome

The Department of Communication Studies offers programs of study at the undergraduate and graduate levels designed to help students understand and improve all facets of human verbal and nonverbal interaction. Through teaching, research, and service faculty work to advance the interests of our students, the university, the professional community, and the public.

Mission Statement

The Department of Communication Studies offers a Master of Arts degree in communication. Faculty research emphases include interpersonal communication and rhetoric. Faculty areas of expertise also focus on media, cultural studies, health communication, intercultural communication, political communication, and research methods. Courses of study are designed for students with various career aspirations. That is, students may choose either an applied, professional path for which the M.A. is a terminal degree, or a more research-based orientation that prepares them to enter a Ph.D. program upon completing their M.A. degree.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the UNLV Graduate Catalog, as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: valarie.burke@unlv.edu or kendall.hartley@unlv.edu.

Department Graduate Faculty

Donovan Conley, Associate Professor, Graduate Coordinator. Ph.D., 2004, University of Illinois. Rhetoric, cultural studies; taste and ecology.

Tara M. Emmers-Sommer, Professor, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education. Ph.D. 1995, Ohio University. Interpersonal communication, media, health, sex and gender studies.


Jennifer Guthrie, Assistant Professor. Ph.D., 2013, University of Kansas. Interpersonal and small group communication, the “dark side” of interpersonal relationships, relational health.

David Henry, Professor, Chair. Ph.D., 1976, Indiana University. Rhetoric, political communication, social movements, persuasion.

Tara McManus, Associate Professor, Undergraduate Coordinator. Ph.D., 2008, The Pennsylvania State University. Interpersonal communication, relational communication, communication theory, research methods.

Jacob Thompson, Associate Faculty in Residence, Director of the Sanford I. Berman Debate Forum. Ph.D., 2006, University of Kansas. Rhetorical theory and criticism, political communication, and argumentation and debate.
Sara VanderHaagen, Assistant Professor. Ph.D., 2010, Northwestern University. Rhetorical studies, public memory, race and gender.

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Faculty must hold either associate or full graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the Graduate Faculty status web page.

**Program Information**

All students are required to take four core courses during their first year in the M.A. program: Survey of Graduate Studies (COM 710), Theories of Communication (COM 730), Rhetorical-Critical Research Methods (COM 711), and Empirical Research Methods (COM 712). Because each student’s goals are unique, the curriculum allows flexibility for developing individual degree programs. Such development aims to balance the communication discipline’s varied traditions in theoretical, methodological, and applied research.

**Contact Information**

http://communicationstudies.unlv.edu/

*Department Chair*
David Henry, GUA 4146, david.henry@unlv.edu

*Graduate Coordinator*
Donovan Conley, GUA 4145, donovan.conley@unlv.edu

*Department Main Office*
GUA 4150, donna.ralston@unlv.edu, (702)895-5125, fax: (702)895-4805

**Program Requirements**

Program requirements regarding admission, coursework and culminating experience are found in the graduate catalog.

Applications for admission to the Graduate Program in Communication Studies must include the following materials (see below). Materials are uploaded onto the University’s Graduate Gateway at graduatecollege.unlv.edu. Application materials submitted by January 15 will receive priority consideration for Fall admission (September 15 for spring admission). Applications submitted after the deadline will be considered on a “rolling” basis.

**Completed Application Form**
All transcripts
Official Graduate Record Examination scores (international students must also send TOEFL scores)
Three letters of recommendation (including waiver form) addressing your ability to do graduate-level work (at least two should come from college or university faculty)
Letter of Intent outlining applicant’s reasons for seeking a MA in Communication Studies.
Writing sample (e.g., a paper written for an undergraduate class or an undergraduate thesis)
Graduate Teaching Assistantship Application (if student wishes to be considered for funding)

**Overview of Degree Options**

The Department of Communication Studies offers three tracks the student may take to achieve a Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies. Regardless of degree option, all students must submit a Graduate Education Portfolio. All students are also required to take and pass the Course in the Protection of Human Research Subjects. Expect to spend approximately 4 hours on the exam. (Visit the website at the end of this paragraph for information on the exam and the exam itself.) Following successful completion of the exam, please provide a printed copy of your completion report to the Graduate Coordinator and keep another hard copy for your own records.

https://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp
Thesis Track
The thesis track involves taking 30 credits of courses and writing a thesis (an additional 6 credits of COM 797). The thesis is an original piece of research that the student writes under the guidance of a thesis advisor and thesis committee. This track should be considered by students who wish to pursue a Ph.D.

Examination Track
The examination track involves taking 36 credits of courses, constructing a Graduate Education Portfolio (see below), and writing a comprehensive exam at the end of the program. This track should be considered by students who consider the M.A. to be a terminal degree.

Professional Paper Track
The professional paper involves taking 36 credits of courses and writing a focused, profession-oriented research project. The scholarly research project is an original piece of research that the student writes under the guidance of a project advisor and committee. This track should be considered by students who are unsure if they want to pursue a Ph.D. degree.

Degree Requirements

*Thesis Track
A minimum GPA of 3.0 must be maintained in order to graduate

30 hours of course work

6 hours of thesis (COM 797)

Graduate Education Portfolio

Completed thesis

Successful oral Defense of the Thesis

*Exam Track
A minimum GPA of 3.0 must be maintained in order to graduate

36 hours of course work

Graduate Education Portfolio

Written Exam

Successful Oral Defense of the Exam

Passing Grade on Exam

*Professional Paper Track
A minimum GPA of 3.0 must be maintained in order to graduate

36 hours of course work

Graduate Education Portfolio

Completed scholarly research project

Successful oral defense of the professional paper
* All students, regardless of track, are responsible for conforming to Graduate College Deadlines. See http://graduatecollege.unlv.edu/current/guidance/

The Graduate Education Portfolio

Purpose. The “Graduate Education Portfolio” is a tool designed to summarize and synthesize your educational experience as a Master’s student in the Department of Communication Studies.

Design. Using Adobe Professional, create a single PDF file of all work and copy to a CD. One copy is to be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator. Because the Portfolio is kept on record by the Department, students should “white-out” the grades on work. Completed Portfolios are due before the student’s final semester. Please make copies of all works for your possession before you submit the Portfolio to the Committee. Students are to keep the Portfolio up to date at all times as they could be intermittently reviewed during the year and will be reviewed at the end of each year.

Contents
I. Title Page with your name and contact information—1 page
II. Table of Contents—1 page
III. Course Materials
   A. Course Syllabi from Core Courses and Specialty Area
   B. One best, representative written work from each core course and specialty area (e.g., final paper, essay exam)
IV. Conclusions—1 to 2 pages
   A. Strengths of the Program
   B. Limitations
   C. Other (if necessary)
VI. Curriculum Vita

Advisory Committee Guidelines

Thesis and Professional Paper Committees
Composition. The student’s Thesis Committee consists of three members from the Department of Communication Studies, one of whom is the thesis advisor. A fourth member of the committee must come from outside the Department of Communication Studies and serves as the Graduate College Representative.

Duties. Although the student usually works most closely with his or her thesis advisor, each member of the committee plays a role in guiding the student through the thesis process. Each thesis and professional paper committee member reads the entire project and offers feedback. They are the ultimate judges of its quality and they make the decision on whether or not to pass the final project. The Graduate College Representative is charged with making sure there are no inequities in the project defense or other aspects of the process.

Exam Committee. The student’s Project Committee consists of four faculty: three members of the Department of Communication Studies’ standing Exam Committee, one of whom is the committee chair and project advisor; and one Graduate College representative.

Degree Program Benchmarks

The Prospectus
Before the student begins a thesis or professional paper, he or she composes a prospectus. The prospectus is a plan for writing the thesis or professional paper and includes an introduction explaining why the study is being executed and how the study will be conducted, including theory, methodology, and a timeline for completing the project. A prospectus meeting is scheduled, ideally early in the student’s third semester, in which the student’s committee makes suggestions for
completing the study. Committee members will receive the prospectus no later than two weeks prior to the meeting.

Thesis and Professional Paper Distribution. The completed thesis must be distributed to the committee members no less than two weeks before a desired defense date.

Oral defense. The oral defense must be scheduled at least three weeks before the end of the semester. No oral defenses will occur in the summer unless agreed upon by all committee members.

Exam Times
All written exams are scheduled either in mid-October or in mid-March at a time no later than three weeks before the end of the semester. No examinations are given during the summer sessions. During each Fall and Spring semester, one week will be designated for the written exams. Students must complete their written examination during this week. Specific days and times are arranged by the Exam Committee in cooperation with the student(s) taking the exams and with adequate advanced notice. The exam takes two days to complete with the student writing four hours each day.

Oral Exam Times
The oral defense of the exam occurs within a week of the written exam. The student is responsible for scheduling the room for the defense and finding a time that all faculty can meet. At the defense the student discusses the exam with the committee in a spirit of cooperative good will, understanding that the faculty may question any aspect of the exam and ask for further improvements. Improvements may involve more detailed answers to exam questions, or other refinement and editing.

Portfolio Due Date. The Graduate Education Portfolio is due immediately prior to the start of the student’s final semester (typically, the end of winter break).

Forms & Due Dates
Upon admission, there are several forms that will need to be completed and submitted by the appropriate deadlines. The due dates below are approximations. For current deadline information, see: http://graduatecollege.unlv.edu/current/guidance/

It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of and conform to all deadlines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Proposed Master’s Degree Program</td>
<td>Before completing more than 16 credits of course work (end of 2nd semester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Appointment of Examination Committee</td>
<td>Before your prospectus meeting (late 2nd semester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prospectus Approval</td>
<td>After your prospectus meeting (early 3rd semester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Notification of Oral or Written Examination</td>
<td>Two weeks before your defense date (4th semester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Final Examination for Advanced Degree</td>
<td>After defense of the thesis or exam (4th semester)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The link to some of the necessary forms is below. There are several other forms that address special needs that are available on an as-needed basis.

http://graduatecollege.unlv.edu/forms/
**Program Timeline**

Examples of Two-Year Course Schedules

**Example One**
If starting in the Fall and a Teaching Assistant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1</td>
<td>COM 710</td>
<td>Survey of Comm. Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COM 725</td>
<td>Teaching Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COM 730</td>
<td>Theories of Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1</td>
<td>COM 711</td>
<td>Empirical Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COM 712</td>
<td>Rhetorical-Critical Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another COM Graduate Class</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SU 1</td>
<td>COM 793</td>
<td>Independent Study (pre-prospectus)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And/Or</td>
<td>Any graduate course of interest</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total credits at the end of first year: 21/24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2</td>
<td>COM 797</td>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another graduate course of interest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(may be outside the dept., but may not exceed 6 credits of outside COM courses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another graduate course of interest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2</td>
<td>COM 797</td>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another Graduate Course of Interest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total credits at the end of the second year: 36

Note: In lieu of 797, Exam and Professional Paper Track Students need to take two additional courses.

**Example Two**
If starting in the fall and not a Teaching Assistant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1</td>
<td>COM 710</td>
<td>Survey of Comm. Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COM 730</td>
<td>Theories of Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another graduate class of interest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(may be outside the dept., but may not exceed 6 credits outside of COM courses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another graduate class of interest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 1</td>
<td>COM 711</td>
<td>Empirical Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COM 712</td>
<td>Rhetorical-Critical Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two more graduate classes of your choosing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SU 1</td>
<td>Independent Study? Any Graduate Course of Interest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total credits at the end of first year: 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2</td>
<td>COM 797</td>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another Graduate Course of Interest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2</td>
<td>COM 797</td>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another Graduate Course of Interest</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(may be outside the dept., but may not exceed 6 credits outside of COM courses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another course of interest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total credits at the end of the second year:  

36

Note: Examination Track and Scholarly Research Project Track Students need to take 2 additional courses to replace the thesis credits they would not be taking.

**Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines**

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the graduate catalog.

**Annual Review Procedures**

Students are required to make adequate yearly progress towards degree completion. The Communication Studies Graduate Faculty meets in April annually to discuss each student’s progress, noting accomplishments and highlighting areas in need of attention. The Graduate Coordinator summarizes this discussion in a written “annual report,” copies of which are sent to both the student and his/her advisor.

**Financial Assistance**

There are many opportunities for graduate students to receive scholarships, fellowships, assistantships (see next section), and other monetary awards. Please refer to the UNLV Graduate Catalog for a listing of programs available through the university. In addition to these university-wide programs, there are opportunities within the Department of Communication Studies that a student may be eligible for, including:

- The Greenspun College Scholarship. These are $1500 scholarships for students pursuing graduate degrees in the College. Only four are competitively awarded yearly. The application deadline is March 1st of every year.
- Departmental Research Travel Support. Students may apply for up to $750.00 annually in travel funds to present original research at professional conferences. The department will support travel for as many as two conferences in an academic year, one per semester, with a maximum of $500.00 for a single trip.

**Thesis and Dissertation Resources:**

https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/thesis

**Discipline Resources**

There are a number of helpful resources listed below that can assist you during your tenure as a M.A. student in the Department of Communication Studies at UNLV.

**Organizations**

- National Communication Association:  http://www.natcom.org
  Submission deadline for NCA is in March and the conference is the following November.
- International Communication Association:  http://www.icahdq.org
  Submission deadline for ICA is in November and the conference is the following spring or summer, depending on whether the conference is domestic or international.
- International Association for Relationship Research:  http://www.iarr.org
  IARR is a multidisciplinary organization that focuses on relationship research. Submission deadline is in the winter, with the conference being held the following summer. Conferences are held domestically and internationally. IARR includes a graduate conference as part of the main conference.
Western States Communication Association: [http://www.westcomm.org](http://www.westcomm.org)

There are four regional organizations and conferences (Western, Central, Eastern, and Southern). UNLV is part of the western region. Submission deadline is in early September and the conference is the following February.

Rhetoric Society of America: [http://rhetoricsociety.org](http://rhetoricsociety.org)

Society offers biennial conferences during even years and biennial institutes in odd years. These meetings are typically held in late May or early June.

Students are encouraged to get involved in doing research and participating in the conferences. Funding opportunities may be available through the Graduate Student Association (GPSA) (see below).

Links to Communication and Psychology Journals:

[http://guides.library.unlv.edu/content.php?pid=10311](http://guides.library.unlv.edu/content.php?pid=10311)

[http://guides.library.unlv.edu/content.php?pid=9566](http://guides.library.unlv.edu/content.php?pid=9566)

### University Resources

#### Academic Success Center

The goal of the Academic Success Center is to help students do well academically and complete their studies on time. They offer or will refer you to such programs and resources as tutoring, advising, skills testing, career exploration and more. They guide students every step of the way to the many established resources created to ensure they complete their educational goals. Learn more about the programs and services the center currently offers.

#### Alumni Association

With an alumni base 90,000 strong, the UNLV Alumni Association offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

#### Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Registrar’s Office, the commencement office is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College.

#### Office of Diversity Initiatives

The vision of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV’s diversity mission: to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

#### Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The DRC is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.
Office of International Student and Scholars
International Students and Scholars (ISS) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

Jean Nidetch Women's Center
The Jean Nidetch Women's Center is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

UNLV Libraries
UNLV Libraries has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)
The Graduate & Professional Student Association serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Conduct
The Office of Student Conduct is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Conduct collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the UNLV Student Code of Conduct by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Office of Veteran Services
The UNLV Office of Veteran Services is staffed with veterans and GI Bill-experienced staff to assist more than 1,000 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office
The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center
This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help
you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the Online Writing Lab (OWL) page.

**University Policies and Procedures**

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- Academic Integrity
- Activation for Military Service
- Change of Address
- FERPA/Privacy Rights
- Health Insurance - Mandatory
- Jeanne Clery Campus Safety and Security Report
- Proof of Immunization
- Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects
- Rebelmail Policy
- Student Conduct Code
- Student Computer Use Policy
- Title IX

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the Graduate Catalog:

- Academic Calendar
- Academic Policies
- Admission and Registration Information
- Degree Progression Policies & Procedures

In addition, the Graduate College website contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

*Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.*

**Handbook Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last revised</th>
<th>Revised by</th>
<th>Changes summary</th>
</tr>
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