

MASTERS OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

The M.A. program in Communication Studies at New Mexico State University is offered through the Department of Communication Studies, Room 304 of the Speech Building. Our mailing address is:

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The graduate program in Communication Studies provides students with a social scientific approach to the study of human interaction, using quantitative and qualitative methods. Our curriculum is designed to explore how oral communication takes place interpersonally, within organization, within our political system, and between and within cultures. Students take courses in interpersonal communication, organizational, communication, political communication and/or cultural communication. All graduate students take courses in communication theory and research methods. In addition, students can take courses in topic areas such as conflict management, small group communication, persuasion, and nonverbal communication.

The program offers a wide variety of courses allowing students in the program an opportunity to select topics pursuant to their special interests. In addition to courses, students have the opportunity to obtain practical experience by participating in professional activities offered by the department; for example, graduate teaching assistantships, research, and colloquia.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The department offers both thesis and non-thesis options in its Masters of Arts program. Both options call for a minimum of 36 credits, which includes not only Communication courses but courses from outside the department as well. The thesis option requires at least 30 credits of coursework, 3-6 credits of thesis (COMM 599), and an oral defense of the thesis and coursework. The non-thesis option requires 36 credits of coursework, plus a comprehensive written examination (8 hours minimum), followed by an oral defense. Both options require a minimum of 30 credit hours of Communication courses.

Master's Degree Program

Both of the following courses are required (6 hours)*:

- COMM 505 Research Methods 3 hrs
- COMM583 Seminar in Theories of Communication 3 hrs

Students must take *three* of the following four courses (9 hours)**:

- COMM 540 Seminar in Political Communication 3 hrs
- COMM 570 Seminar in Organizational Communication 3 hrs
- COMM 576 Seminar in Communication and Culture 3 hrs
- COMM 584 Seminar in Interpersonal Communication 3 hrs

COMM Electives 6-9 hrs

*Electives in Related Fields**** (graduate levels; numbered 450+) 6-9 hrs

COMM 599 Thesis 3-6 hrs

Non-Thesis Option: Additional Graduate COMM Electives 3-6 hrs

* The five required courses rotate so that COMM 505 and 583 are offered once every year.

**COMM 540, 570, 576, and 584 rotate on a three-semester on, one semester off rotation.

***Related fields include Anthropology, Education, English, Government, Psychology, Journalism, Management, Marketing, Sociology, Women's Studies.

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SELECTING AN ADVISOR

The department provides advisors at various stages of your program. Initial advising of graduate students will be conducted by the Director of Graduate Studies. Following this initial advisement, students may ask any graduate faculty member in the department to serve as their program or thesis advisor. During the student's *second* semester in residence, the student and advisor should meet to discuss the student's plan of study. Some students will opt to do a thesis. Others choose the non-thesis option. Regardless of which option you choose, you should work closely with your advisor.

GRADUATE FACULTY

- Greg Armfield (Ph.D. 2004, University of Missouri-Columbia) Assistant Professor of Organizational Communication, Communication Theory. Specific Interests: Organizational culture and the intersection of cultural influences on mass media use.
- Jeanne Flora (Ph.D. 1988, University of Kansas) Associate Professor of Family Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Intercultural Communication, Communication Theory, Public Speaking. Specific interests: Relationship development and maintenance.
- Kenneth Hacker (Ph.D. 1986, University of Oregon) Professor of Political Communication. Specific Interests: computer-mediated communication, political communication, and organizational communication issues.
- Anne Hubbell (Ph.D. 2000, Michigan State University) Associate Professor of Organizational Communication, Health Communication, Quantitative Methods. Specific Interests: Trust and deception in the organization; Health disparities among minorities
- Eric Morgan (Ph.D. 2002, University of Massachusetts-Amherst) Associate Professor of Intercultural Communication, Environmental Communication. Specific Interests: Cultural/Intercultural discourses of environment and place in diverse contexts.

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THESIS OPTION

Some students in our department choose the thesis option, which gives them the opportunity to pursue original research in their specific area of interest. Students selecting the thesis option will complete a minimum of 30 credit hours of courses and a minimum of 6 hours of thesis work (COMM 599), totaling at least 36 credit hours.

Advisors and Graduate Committee

When a student has chosen a research area to pursue for the thesis, the student should ask a graduate faculty member in the appropriate area of specialty to serve as the student's thesis advisor. This faculty member will most likely serve as the student's course advisor as well. The thesis advisor and student work together on a time-line for completion of the thesis.

The student and advisor will choose a graduate faculty committee comprised of 1-2 additional graduate faculty members from the Department of Communication Studies and one faculty member from a related field. The student should talk in person with potential committee members to ascertain their willingness and availability to serve on the thesis committee. These committee members will be present at the Thesis Prospectus Meeting and the Oral Defense Meeting.

Thesis Prospectus Meeting

This meeting will be held with the student's committee to approve the Thesis Prospectus. The Thesis Prospectus and the Thesis Prospectus Meeting serve as preparation before the student starts to collect data for the thesis research. The Prospectus usually includes the information that will form the basis for the first few chapters of the thesis: 1) introduction/rationale for the research; 2) a review of the relevant research literature; 3) a statement of research questions or hypotheses and the rationale for the choices made; 4) a detailed description of proposed research methodology; and 5) a detailed description of proposed data analysis techniques. Although Prospectuses vary in length, the average paper is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a grasp of the relevant research literature and demonstrates a thoughtful approach to the research method proposed for the student's study.

In consultation with the advisor and committee members, a two-hour prospectus meeting will be scheduled. The student should consult with his or her advisor on requirements for the Prospectus. The student is responsible for scheduling the meeting at a time convenient for all members of the committee. The student will deliver copies of the Prospectus to each committee member at least two weeks (10 business days) prior to the meeting.

Oral Defense Meeting

Upon completion of the thesis and with the approval of the advisor, an Oral Defense Meeting is held with the faculty committee. During this two-hour meeting the student is questioned on the completed thesis and M.A. courses. Students must pass the defense as a requirement for graduation.

A special note: Students are responsible for meeting all Graduate School procedures and deadlines. Students must obtain the approval of their thesis advisor *before* scheduling the Oral Defense Meeting. Students should submit the required paperwork to the Graduate School by the deadlines to be determined by the Graduate School.

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NON-THESIS OPTION

Students opting for the non-thesis plan will complete a minimum of 36 hours of courses. A minimum of thirty hours of courses must be completed in Communication Studies.

Advisors and Graduate Committee

Students will work with their advisor to choose a graduate faculty committee comprised of two graduate faculty members from the Department of Communication Studies and one graduate faculty member from a related field (usually a faculty member from whom the students has taken courses). This committee will write questions for the student's comprehensive written examination (8 hours) and will be present at a two-hour Oral Defense Meeting covering the written examination.

Written Examination and Oral Defense

During the last semester of residence, students will undergo a comprehensive eight-hour written examination over the course areas they have studied. Students will meet with their advisor to determine areas over which they will be examined. Upon successful completion of the written exam, a two-hour oral defense will be scheduled. During this two-hour meeting the student is questioned on his/her written exams and M.A. courses. Students must pass this defense as a requirement for graduation.

STEPS IN COMPLETING YOUR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

- 1) The student meets with his/her advisor to discuss written/orals examination procedures. The student and advisor put together a committee of 2 Communication Studies graduate faculty members and 1 graduate faculty member from a related discipline (usually the student has taken course work from this person). Please note that a minimum GPA of 3.0 is required in both COMM courses and overall before exams are planned.
- 2) The student and advisor will agree on "grouping" the student's work by content areas and/or faculty members. One hour must cover "Theories" while a second hour must cover "Methods." Then the student and advisor will decide who the student will write for, in what areas, and for how many hours. The advisor may seek questions from other faculty for courses that are not represented by faculty members on the committee, The length of the written exams shall be 8 hours (NMSU Graduate Catalog states a minimum of 6 hours).
- 3) The advisor will compile the breakdown of the committee members, subject areas, and writing times (length) into a memorandum, with a copy going to each faculty questioner.
- 4) Students may confer with each faculty member for whom they are writing. The student and faculty member may discuss the subject areas for the questions and the faculty member may suggest areas of concentration for the student. The faculty member should make sure the student understands which questions are closed-book versus open-book (if any).
- 5) Students typically schedule their written exams about the 11th week of their final semester, and complete them within *two weeks*.
- 6) Students should schedule their exam times with their advisor. Students should indicate whether they will answer the exam using a computer or if they will handwrite the answers. The student may request access to a notebook computer to be used for taking their examination. If the student chooses to use a computer then she/he must schedule his/her examination when a notebook computer is available. The student should schedule a room and computer (for students using a computer) via the department administrative assistant for the written exam.

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- 7) The student must complete the “Committee for Final Examination” form, which delineates the committee members and the date and time of the oral portion of the examination. This form must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than 10 working days before the oral exam is held.
- 8) Faculty members will submit their questions for the written exam to the advisor at 3 days prior to the exam. The questions should be clearly marked as to length of time the student has to write the question and should indicate if this is an open-book question (if not indicated, the student will answer the question closed-book).
- 9) The advisor will prepare the questions for the department secretary to distribute (i.e. put each question into an envelope, indicating the name of the student, the name of the questioner, the length of time the student has to complete the question, and will indicate if this is an open-book question).
- 10) The department secretary will distribute the questions according to the advisor’s instructions. Students should keep a copy of their answers. The original copies of the questions and answer will be returned to the student’s advisor.
- 11) The advisor will attach a cover sheet to each answer and promptly distribute to the faculty questioner. Advisors should retain one copy of the answers. Questioners will evaluate each question as “pass”, or “rewrite” and will mark that assessment on the cover sheet. Questioners will return the cover sheets to the advisor at least *3 days prior* to the oral examination.
- 12) *Before* proceeding with the oral examination, students must receive a “pass” for all parts of the written exam. Any portion of the exam given a “rewrite” must be made up by rewriting that portion of the exam to achieve an evaluation of “pass” for that portion. **Only one rewrite is permitted.** Any exceptions to this policy must have Department Head approval.
- 13) The oral examination will be held with all committee members present and will normally last 2 hours. The advisor will chair the oral examination. The Dean’s Representative (usually the outside faculty member) will submit the ballots and the final report to the Graduate School.
- 14) Upon completion of the oral examination, one copy of the student’s answers will be kept in the student’s file in the department office.

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SAMPLE PROGRAMS

Below are two sample programs. One is patterned after the thesis option; the other follows the non-thesis option. In actuality, neither program is an exact representation of a past student's program. Rather these are composite models that illustrate the balance between required COMM courses and other courses that enhance your program of study. For the most part, the courses listed below are offered in the fall and/or spring semesters. Some students also attend summer school. Be advised, though, that the offerings in the summer are not very extensive. Note that both options include 30 credit hours of Communication courses.

Thesis Option

First Semester: COMM 576 Seminar in Communication & Culture COMM 583 Seminar in Theories of Communication COMM 540 Seminar in Political Communication	Second Semester: COMM 505 Research Methods COMM 584 Seminar in Interpersonal Communication COMM 491 Special Topics
Third Semester: COMM 570 Seminar in Organizational Comm. COMM 551 Seminar in Persuasion CEP 517 Cultural Diversity	Fourth Semester: COMM 599 (6 cr) Master's Thesis ANTH 500 Women, Gender, and Culture

Non-Thesis Option

First Semester: COMM 576 Seminar in Communication & Culture COMM 583 Seminar in Theories of Communication COMM 591 Special Topics	Second Semester: COMM 505 Research Methods COMM 584 Seminar in Interpersonal Communication COMM 450 Technology
Third Semester: COMM 570 Seminar in Organizational Comm. COMM 506 Qualitative Research Methods PSY 471 Industrial & Organizational Psychology	Fourth Semester: COMM 515 Seminar in Philosophy of Comm. Science COMM 591 Special Topics MGT 582 Organizational Change & Development

While the required courses will be the same for all of our students, elective courses within and outside the department are chosen by the student **with the approval of her/his advisor**. Since parts of your program will be unique, you should not attempt to duplicate either of the above sample programs.

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DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

The department subscribes to all of the policies of the Graduate School. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with university policies and particularly, with graduation requirements and deadlines. For graduate teaching assistants, staff policy statements are located in the Faculty Handbook and the Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual. In addition to university guidelines, students majoring in Communication Studies will be expected to adhere to the following departmental guidelines:

1. No more than 6 credit hours in independent study courses (COMM 490 or COMM 590 or any other independent study numbers on campus) can be counted toward fulfillment of the minimum hours needed for graduation.
2. Graduate students must enroll in at least one course per year to remain active majors.
3. Students should note that the Graduate School policy for completion of the master's degree is 5 years (or 6 successive summers).
4. Students who do not maintain a 3.0 in their COMM courses may be dropped from the program.
5. Students are expected to attend colloquia, symposia, and special seminars arranged by the department.

OUTSIDE COURSES

Students majoring in Communication Studies may take 6-9 credits of courses (numbered 450 and above) outside of the department. This may or may not constitute an official minor. The Graduate School recognizes the completion of at least 8 graduate level credits as a minor. If you wish to have these credits count as a minor, check with the Graduate School. It is important that you check with your advisor and with the relevant departments before choosing your outside courses.

WRITING STYLE GUIDES

Graduate students are expected to engage in a considerable amount of writing before graduation, consequently, adhering to a recognized style guide is required. For most writing purposes, the APA (American Psychological Association) is suggested. First, this style is used predominately by journals in the fields of social sciences. Also, the APA style guide is recognized by the graduate school as one which is allowed for thesis work. Students should purchase the APA guide book for future reference.

RESEARCH

Opportunities: Several courses may require research papers but your research opportunities are not limited to coursework. Faculty members will frequently approach graduate students for assistance and collaboration on research projects. Also, you should feel free to approach faculty members if you would like to participate in one of their research projects or would like assistance on one of your own. If your project is not required in a faculty member's class, she/he may request appropriate authorship on the research project. Such collaboration has produced in the past a large number of convention papers and published articles.

Policies: If a research project involves collecting data in our basic course, please adhere to the following guidelines if you wish to use our students as participants.

- 1) Permission must be granted by the basic course faculty members before data collection can be approved and scheduled. Prepare a full description of the data collection procedures, including time required and copies of the research measures.
- 2) Data collection in lab sessions of the basic course will not be permitted. Instead, students will be offered extra credit to participate in the study outside of class.
- 3) The "Use of Human Subjects" form must be submitted before the data collection. Copies of this form are available in the departmental office.

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GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Opportunities: The Communication Studies Department awards a limited number of graduate teaching assistantships each year. Full-time graduate assistants receive a stipend, out-of-state tuition waiver, and office space. Graduate assistantships require 20 hours of service per week to the department, in most cases assisting in COMM 265G (Principles of Human Communication). Additionally, there may be opportunities for graduate assistants to teach in the summer.

Policies: The graduate assistantship stipend is intended to help you complete your education. Thus, the renewal of your assistantship is dependent on two factors:

- 1) Adequate progress towards the completion of the MA degree (Minimum 3.0 GPA, taking required courses, meeting enrollment expectations, etc.)
- 2) Satisfactory performance of your graduate assistant duties (effective teaching in basic course, attending lectures, staff meetings, maintaining office hours, etc.)

Students fulfilling both renewal criteria can expect four (4) semesters of support (excluding summers).

The 20 hours of service to the department is typically comprised of teaching COMM 265 labs, attending lectures, staff meetings, maintaining office hours, and preparation time. (Six office hours a week is the departmental norm.)

Graduate assistants are expected to adhere to the following departmental guidelines:

1. GA's must enroll in at least 9 hours of graduate courses each semester.
2. GA's are expected to enroll in at least 6 credit hours of communication studies courses each semester (exceptions to be approved by advisor and department head).
3. GA's must enroll in at least 3 credit hours of actual courses (exclusive of independent studies or thesis credits).
4. The department is not obligated to extend graduate assistantships stipends beyond four semesters of courses. Furthermore, each year all GA's will be reviewed for renewal. Renewal is based on quality of work performance, progress toward degree, departmental service, and professional development.

Additional policy statements, if necessary, will be distributed through the Department Head or Director of Graduate Studies.

ESL FACULTY

Although not members of the graduate faculty, our three full-time ESL faculty (Marieka Brown, Suzanne Buker, and Judy Messal) are available resources for our Master of Arts students.