

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Department of Communication Studies

2016-2017

Our Department Mission Statement

We teach and research communication to connect people, create change, and work toward a just world.

Philosophy of Scholarship

We believe that communication is formative and foundational to human identities, relationships, and communities--and that ethical and strategically effective communication can be the means of critiquing, constructing, and transforming identities, relationships, and communities.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

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Introduction

Welcome to the Master of Arts program in Communication Studies. The Graduate Faculty offers this handbook in the hope it will help guide you toward a successful experience in the program. Please refer to the Handbook and the Graduate School Catalog throughout your time with us and feel free to ask about any of the information in it with the Director of Graduate Study and any other member of the graduate faculty (see p. 21 for list of faculty).

Mission

The Master of Arts program in Communication Studies prepares students for scholarly or applied communication careers in the social, public, and private sectors, community college teaching, or advancement to a doctoral program. As they master the tools of scholarship, students acquire: 1) a deep, research-based, critical understanding of communication in relation to public and private contexts and issues, and 2) the ability to participate in and contribute to the communication discipline as scholars and practitioners.

Student Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate an advanced development of professional oral and writing abilities, including scholarly argument.
- Generate communication knowledge for and apply communication knowledge to local/global human interaction processes, problems, or issues.
- Conduct communication research that engages a substantial scholarly communication question or topic.

Department Philosophy of Scholarship

We believe that communication is formative and foundational to human identities, relationships, and communities—and that ethical and strategically effective communication can be the means of critiquing, constructing, and transforming identities, relationships, and communities.

We engage in communication scholarship in the form of research, teaching, and service that:

- Integrates dialogue and other approaches to communication as the foundation for scholarly inquiry and application to the world
- Cultivates diversity and respect for differences
- Promotes change that leads to more democratic, just, and peaceful relationships and communities
- Engages creative partnerships of faculty, students, and other stakeholders in addressing contemporary challenges and opportunities for improving communication

Scholarly Focus Areas

These beliefs and values are articulated in the following ongoing scholarly focus areas of the Department:

- **Public Voice**
How can communication scholarship help us to understand and improve the quality of public discourse in the world around us?
- **Voices of Change, Diversity and Difference, and Conflict**
How can communication scholarship help people to engage with diversity, differences, and divisions in ways that promote understanding and collaborative/democratic change?
- **Voices of Identity and Relationships**
How can communication scholarship help us understand how people create and sustain desired identities and healthy relationships?
- **Voices of Discovery**
How can communication scholarship help us understand how people learn to co-construct, share, and critique knowledge?

Profile of a Successful Graduate Student

Successful graduate students are intellectually curious, self-directed, and deeply committed to their development as masters of communication. They are open to lifelong learning to cultivate their effective and ethical voices in their public, professional, and personal communicative practices.

Professional Identity Development

A graduate degree is much more than a collection of courses and grades. Successful graduate students maintain a high degree of involvement in shaping a professional identity and core research interests. To facilitate this socialization into the discipline and the department, various events, colloquia, trainings, and educational sessions will be available for students to attend. The department **STRONGLY ENCOURAGES** all graduate students to attend these sessions. Specifically, we strongly recommend that all incoming students attend the general Graduate School orientation session as well as departmental orientation sessions before the fall semester begins. These sessions are in addition to any trainings required for teaching assistants.

Another aspect of professional socialization into the field of Communication involves attendance, when possible, at professional meetings and conferences. We encourage you to attend at least one conference during your studies and we encourage advanced students to submit research for presentation at the annual meetings of our professional associations. Some of these include:

National Communication Association

www.natcom.org

International Communication Association

www.icaheadq.org

Southern States Communication Association

www.scca.net

Central States Communication Association

www.ccsca-net.org

Eastern Communication Association

www.ecasite.org

Western States Communication Association

www.westcomm.org

Carolinas Communication Association

www.carolinascommunication.org

Intellectual Development

The Department offers almost all of its coursework in 3 semester hour seminars that meet one evening per week. In addition, throughout the academic year, lectures, colloquia, social, and research opportunities are available to enrich your graduate experience. We take as given that you will attend seminars prepared to participate meaningfully. We expect that you will attend a range of extracurricular events designed to cultivate your professional identity and membership in the department community.

Advising

Permanent Academic Advisor

In our program, the Director of Graduate Study serves as the permanent academic advisor to all graduate students. Students should plan to meet with the Director at least once each semester throughout the program to discuss coursework selection for the Plan of Study, professional development, progress toward a capstone project, and any problems or concerns.

Incoming Faculty Mentor

In addition to an advisor, all incoming students are paired with an incoming graduate faculty mentor, based on mutual research interests or more general academic interests. Mentors provide guidance into the conceptual underpinnings of research, suggested readings in areas of interest, and the potential to participate in ongoing faculty research projects and colloquia. When a student's specific capstone focus takes shape, she/he should seek out a graduate faculty member, whose research background aligns with this focus, to direct the capstone project. This capstone director can be any graduate faculty member, including the incoming faculty mentor or academic advisor. For more on the Capstone, see pp. 17-23.

Graduate Student Buddy

Finally, all incoming graduate students are paired with a buddy, who is a continuing graduate student in our program. Buddies help new students acclimate to graduate student life at UNCG and ease their transition to a new town. They are a rich experiential resource for advice on how to become a successful and confident graduate student.

Please take advantage of our relatively small program to make good use of all of these resources to connect you to the program and its possibilities for you. In addition, faculty stand ready to guide you, and the Director of Graduate Study will advise you regularly on curricular and graduate school requirements (formally and informally), but the need to sustain a commitment to your development as a master of communication rests with you.

General Guidelines for Graduate Study

The UNCG Graduate School dictates a set of University-wide requirements for the completion of a master's degree. Keep these basics in mind.

Progress through the program

Graduate students are admitted unconditionally or provisionally. Students admitted provisionally need to fulfill the requirements as laid out in their acceptance letters in order to remain in the program.

Full time status

At UNCG, graduate students are considered full-time students when enrolled for 9 semester hours per semester. Full time students in Communication Studies usually take no more than 9 hours per semester. Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, and Graduate Assistants are required by the University to be full-time students and in satisfactory academic standing (minimum overall GPA of 3.0). Exceptions to how full time status is defined do exist. Please visit the Graduate School website for more information or cut and paste the following link into your browser:

<https://grs.uncg.edu/current/faqsfulltime/>

Full-time students can complete our program in two years. Students who work full-time, and take 3 to 6 hours per semester, will take longer to complete their degree.

Continuous enrollment

Once admitted to the program, graduate students must be continuously enrolled for two semesters per year and graduating students need to be enrolled in the semester they plan to graduate. Normally, this means enrollment in fall and spring semesters but can also include enrollment in fall or spring plus a summer session.

Leaves of absence

Graduate students who need to step out of the University for more than one semester should apply for a leave of absence to avoid the need to reapply for admission to our master's program. If special circumstances necessitate a temporary leave, please contact the Director of Graduate Study to explore your options.

Time limits for completion of the program

The Graduate School has a limit of 5 years from the student's date of matriculation to fulfill all the requirements of the MA degree. In other words, the 5-year time limit begins from the date of the first course carrying graduate degree credit listed on the student's Plan of Study. This includes any transfer credits carrying graduate credit at UNCG.

Transfer credits

At the master's level, credit may be given for graduate work at other accredited universities (including the Greater Greensboro Consortium and UNCG's Division of Continual Learning). Some Graduate School restrictions apply as a way to ensure the intellectual integrity of our degree programs. These include the following:

- Transfer credit may not exceed one third of the number of hours required by a program
- Transfer credits used to complete the requirements for another degree cannot be applied
- Transfer work needs to be taken within the 5-year time limit for all coursework
- Students need to have earned a grade of B (3.0) or better on transfer credits, as documented on an official transcript from the accrediting institution
- Transfer credits must be necessary to meet specific degree requirements
- Coursework eligibility will be determined by the Director of Graduate Study and the Dean of the Graduate School
- Only hours, not grades, transfer

Please talk to the Director of Graduate Study if you want to consider transfer credit for graduate level coursework taken at another institution.

Checklist of Graduate School requirements for graduation

- A Plan of Study, submitted prior to the completion of 15 hours of coursework
- A final Plan of Study, if any changes have been made to the previous Plan, filed by the end of the first week of classes of the semester in which you plan to graduate
- Application for graduation and payment of graduation fee, also completed by the end of the first week of classes of the semester in which you plan to graduate
- Satisfactory completion of all course requirements for the degree
- A 3.0 overall average
- Satisfactory completion of the capstone experience
- Payment of all accounts

Please be aware that the Graduate School rarely accepts late applications to graduate. Be sure to pay attention to deadlines outlined in the University Academic Calendar for specific dates.

Graduate student governance

All departments are invited to nominate graduate student delegates to the University Graduate Student Association (GSA). The Association meets several times a year to discuss graduate program policies and student concerns. In recent years the Graduate School Dean, Dr. William Wiener, has worked closely with the GSA to develop policy and professional development relevant to UNCG graduate students.

The GSA also allocates funds to students to attend and participate in professional meetings. Students who want to apply for funding need to meet the periodic deadlines and should apply before applying to the Department.

Here is general information about the GSA, taken from their website:

“The Graduate Student Association is a student fee funded organization formed by students to promote the interests of the graduate student body at UNCG. We meet monthly during the fall and spring semesters in joint senate and executive board meetings to discuss issues relevant to the general membership. The association is student operated and governed. Throughout the year we award approximately \$50,000 to support travel to conferences, assist with thesis and dissertation expense, and provide grants for local community-based research. We believe that it is our responsibility to act as good university citizens by informing ourselves about the actions of the university, the community, and the state, and to advocate for the interests of all UNCG graduate students in terms of employment, professional development, and school/life balance.”

For more information about GSA activities and professional development support, go to their website at: <https://sites.google.com/a/uncg.edu/gsa/>

If you would like to be nominated as a delegate, and are committed to attending the meetings on a regular basis, please see the Director of Graduate Study to discuss your interest.

Contact information

All graduate students have a UNCG email address, which is the address faculty use for paperless contact, both individually and collectively. In addition, students have a mailbox in the office at 103 Ferguson for hard copy communication. A graduate student bulletin board, opposite 103 Ferguson, features news about students, upcoming events, and other announcements.

Assistantships & Scholarships

Assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis to qualified, full-time graduate students. Stipends for Teaching Assistants, Graduate Assistants, and Research Assistants include a stipend and a contribution toward health insurance coverage. In addition, some stipends include a tuition waiver.

Teaching Assistantships

In our Department, we try to maintain compensation consistency among the teaching assistantships we award. In practice this means that some students receive a higher stipend, but no tuition waiver. Other students receive a lower stipend along with a tuition waiver.

All stipends assume a 20-hour per week workload, the normal maximum allowed for funding full-time students. To fulfill the teaching contract, teaching assistants assist with CST 105: Introduction to Communication Studies in the fall and spring semesters, under the direction of the Basic Course Director.

The role of a Teaching Assistant is an important one in serving the educational goals of our Department and the University. Our Department has a significant role in the Speaking Across the Curriculum component of UNCG undergraduate education. CST 105 is a core course for undergraduate majors in Communication Studies. It is also a course many undergraduate students across the University take in partial fulfillment of their General Education Curriculum. UNCG requires that students satisfactorily complete two Speaking Intensive courses for graduation. As a result, our Department serves both our majors and students in diverse areas of study in multiple offerings of the CST 105 course.

The Department takes seriously its commitment to provide teaching assistants the conceptual and practical skills they need to succeed in the CST 105 classroom and to ensure a positive classroom experience for instructors and their students. To meet this commitment to skillful pedagogy, all incoming teaching assistants enroll in CST 599: Communication Pedagogy in their first semester in the program (fall).

In CST 599, taught by the Basic Course Director, teaching assistants engage the materials for teaching CST 105, including a common textbook and syllabus. They also engage relevant readings and practices. Throughout the course, and in regular meetings with the Basic Course Director, teaching assistants learn effective and engaging teaching strategies to develop their skills and strengthen their confidence in the classroom.

As currently structured, the teaching assistant program asks first-year Teaching Assistants to assist with CST 105 by attending the large lecture one day a week and running two breakout sections two days a week. Second-year Teaching Assistants will, generally, serve as Senior Teaching Assistants and teach their own stand-alone sections of CST 105. However, to be eligible to teach a stand-alone section in their second year, graduate students must satisfactorily complete 18 hours of Communication Studies graduate coursework during their first year. Please note that we cannot guarantee that all qualified graduate students will be

assigned a stand-alone section in their second year as such teaching assignments must depend on the needs of our undergraduate students and available funding.

Graduate and Research Assistantships

University-wide, Graduate and Research Assistantships are awarded competitively to full-time students who meet the qualifications for the assignment. Positions range from one to several semesters, depending on the funding source of the stipend and generally equate, on an hourly basis, to a teaching stipend. Positions range from administrative support in centers and departments to research and administrative support for faculty research projects.

Students seeking a graduate or research assistantship are free to investigate opportunities in any department, office, or center at UNCG. An excellent resource for opportunities is Career Services (csc.uncg.edu). Very often, students who are diligent in their search are successful. In addition, the Director of Graduate Study maintains a list of our graduate students interested in these assistantships and will contact students when announcements of opportunities become available.

Other assistantship opportunities

University Speaking Center

The University Speaking Center provides one-on-one tutoring and instructional workshop services for UNCG students, faculty, employees, and members of the Greensboro community. Assistance is offered in the preparation and delivery of speeches, development of knowledge and skill in interpersonal communication, and group or team communication. The staff includes both undergraduate and graduate student tutors from departments across the University including Communication Studies.

Some graduate assistantships may be available. Interested students with previous speaking center or communication lab experience should contact the Director of the Speaking Center, Kim Cuny.

More information about the Speaking Center, including contact information, can be found at: speakingcenter.uncg.edu.

Resident Hall Staff Positions

A limited number of residence hall staff positions are available to qualified graduate students.

Address inquiries to:

Director of Resident Life

UNCG

PO Box 26170

Greensboro, NC 27402-6170

Phone (336) 334-5636

More information about Residence Life can be found at: www.uncg.edu/rli

The John Andrew and Margaret E. Robinson Fellowship in Communication Studies

The John Andrew and Margaret E. Robinson Fellowship in Communication Studies is awarded each spring to a continuing full-time graduate student on the basis of merit. In recent years, the amount of the award has been approximately \$1500 a year, or about \$750 each semester.

Information regarding the application process can be found at:

<http://cst.uncg.edu/graduate-scholarships/>

The Glenn-Tedford Fund

This fund, begun in honor of former department faculty members Ethel Glenn and Tom Tedford, provides modest financial support for the scholarly development of graduate students. For more information on funds available, contact the Director of Graduate Study.

The Robert Schwartzman Fund

Established by Communication Studies Professor Roy Schwartzman, this fund honors his father, who never had the opportunity to get a college education. We use this fund to support outstanding applicants with a strong interest in Communication research.

As mentioned above, the GSA also has some funds available for graduate student development.

Plan of Study

Introduction

Our master's program holds to the University's broad objective to offer students a reasonable and comprehensive mastery of a chosen field of study. In Communication Studies, we subscribe to that objective through a program that emphasizes our mission statement goals and faculty foci in research and teaching.

The Plan of Study is designed to help students structure and tailor their studies in ways that serve their particular research and learning goals within that broad objective. Students and their advisor, the Director of Graduate Study, begin to formulate a plan upon a student's admission to the program.

Submission of a completed plan of study is due in the Graduate School before students complete 50% of the program (15 hours). If any changes are made to the plan subsequent to the submission, the Director of Graduate Study and student will submit a revised plan to the Graduate School.

General Requirements

The plan of study consists of required and elective coursework choices to accommodate diverse theoretical and research interests in the program. The minimum number of semester hours required for a Master of Arts in Communication Studies is 30. The structure of the program is as follows:

- Required core coursework: 6 hours, consisting of the core courses, CST 601 and 602
- Required capstone project: 3 hours
- Elective coursework: 21 hours, to be taken primarily within the Department of Communication Studies

The core is structured to help prepare students to think intelligently and critically about their own research projects and is designed to position students to gain a more meaningful experience in their elective coursework choices.

Given the core's significant role in the program, all incoming full time graduate students are required to complete the core courses during their first year as graduate students. As a reminder, full time graduate students at UNCG are defined as students enrolled in six semester hours of coursework. The core is offered in a seminar format one evening per week, in the following sequence:

CST 601: Engaging Communication Theory, fall semesters only

CST 602: Engaging Communication Research Methodology, spring semesters only

Teaching Assistants are also required to enroll in CST 599, Communication Pedagogy during their first semester, to fulfill a condition of their teaching contract. This course fulfills three hours in the elective coursework category on the plan of study. CST 599 is offered during fall semesters only. Part time students, defined as those enrolled in fewer than six semester hours, are strongly encouraged to complete the core during their first year. If professional and/or personal obligations

prevent taking these six hours the first year, please remember that CST 601 and CST 602 are offered only in the fall and spring, respectively.

The second component of required work for graduate students is satisfactory completion of the final research project, CST 698: Capstone Experience in Communication. A full discussion of the capstone project follows in the “Capstone Experience in Communication” section of the Handbook.

The core courses and capstone project make up the nine required hours, which leaves 21 hours available for elective coursework.

Elective Coursework (21 semester hours in graded courses, to be taken primarily within the Department of Communication Studies)

Elective coursework gives students the flexibility to refine their interests and prepare for the capstone final research project. Some constraints apply in these 21 hours to ensure academic strength and a coherent plan tailored to students’ research foci. These include:

500-level coursework

A maximum of 9 hours of coursework, or three courses, may be taken at the 500 level.

500-level courses at UNCG are “bridge” courses, open to selected senior undergraduates and all graduate students. A separate syllabus for graduate students in 500-level courses sets out higher order learning objectives and assignments consistent with graduate education expectations.

At UNCG, 100-level through 400-level courses are undergraduate offerings. No graduate credit can be given for these courses.

Optional cognate coursework in other disciplines

Graduate students may also pursue relevant graded cognate courses in other disciplines. Credit for one such course may be included in the minimum 30-hour plan of study, with approval of the Director of Graduate Study. This flexibility recognizes the interdisciplinary nature of many research inquiries and, at the same time, acknowledges the need to preserve the coherence of a master’s degree awarded in Communication Studies.

Independent study

Independent study hours do not count toward the minimum 30-hour plan of study.

**Department of Communication Studies
Master of Arts Plan of Study**

Graduate Student: _____ ID: _____

Term/Year entered program _____ Date plan approved: _____

Graduate Studies Director signature: _____

Graduate student signature: _____

Total minimum program hours: 30

- 1) **Total Required core coursework and capstone research project: 9 hours**
- 2) **Required core coursework (6 semester hours):**

<u>Course</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Semester taken</u>	<u>Grade</u>
CST601	Engaging Communication Theory	Fall	_____
CST602	Engaging Communication Research Methodology	Spring	_____

Required capstone research project (3 semester hours, taken in 3 1-hour credit hours during the last three semesters of study):

<u>Course</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Semester taken</u>	<u>Grade</u>
CST698	Capstone Experience in Communication		

Elective coursework: (21 semester hours in Communication Studies graded courses)

Of these 21, a maximum of 9 hours may be at the 500-level.

<u>Course</u>	<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Semester taken</u>	<u>Grade</u>
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____

Cognate courses (optional, up to 3 hours included in the minimum 30 hours required):

<u>Course</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Semester taken</u>	<u>Grade</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____

Graduate Student Research

Research integrity

Our program offers several avenues for a graduate student to pursue her/his research interests, including coursework, a capstone project, a research practicum, and independent study.

Regardless of the particular avenue, please keep in mind a few key issues. First, all research projects should have some measure of faculty oversight. For course projects, such oversight is often fairly straightforward as the project fits within the constraints of the assignment and is discussed with the faculty member and peers during development. For projects outside of a course, a student must be more proactive in seeking guidance.

Second, all research projects involving human subjects must be reviewed by a member of the Graduate Faculty. If a student plans to make the findings of a project public, whether through oral or written presentation, the project must have prior approval from the UNCG Institutional Review Board.

Third, often, graduate students will work with a faculty member on the faculty member's research program. We pride ourselves on fostering research collaborations with our graduate students. Within that context, a few rules must apply. Any "products" derived from a faculty research project must be reviewed and approved by the supervising faculty member before dissemination to anyone outside of the research project. Supervising faculty members reserve the right to alter and/or refuse to send something out to audiences external to the project. As well, supervising faculty members reserve the right to be a co-author on anything that goes out to external audiences. These kinds of requirements ensure the integrity of our scholarly projects and aid your own professional development.

Practicum in Communication Research (CST 652)

CST 652: Practicum in Communication Research aids graduate students in the conduct of Communication research through apprenticeship with a Graduate Faculty member.

Our Practicum course is designed for students to learn how to conduct original research under the direct supervision of a Communication Studies faculty member. The Practicum course extends students' education through practical, hands on research experiences in the discipline of Communication. Current student and faculty interests will drive specific offerings of this course. A typical offering will likely require synthesis of communication scholarship, instruction in the design of research projects as well as data collection and analysis, and may extend to the oral and written presentation of research results to various audiences. CST 652 may be included on a Plan of Study.

Independent Study (CST 650)

An independent study gives a student an opportunity to pursue a more focused, in-depth examination of specific communication theories, methods, and practices that align with their research interests and those of a faculty member. An independent study can be a useful addition to a student's coursework on those rare occasions when scheduled coursework cannot fulfill a student's progression toward a specific capstone project. Students need to have completed the core

courses and some elective coursework in order to know if more depth might be needed as they move toward a final research project.

An independent study consists of a graded course in guided readings and research under the instruction of a graduate faculty member. Readings and assignments are designed to provide students a level of knowledge in an area of communication scholarship not available in a regularly scheduled course in the graduate curriculum or in guided readings during the first two phases of the capstone project.

Generally, students find that the focused readings and conceptual work associated with the first two phases of the capstone project provide considerable and sufficient conceptual depth of study for the completion of their projects.

Independent studies do not substitute for regularly scheduled coursework. Thus, we do not include independent study credit hours in the minimum 30 hours required for the degree.

Students are eligible to enroll in independent study when they have met the following requirements:

- Completed the 2 core courses (6 hours) and at least 3 electives (9 hours) for a total of 15 hours
- Earned a minimum of 3.0 GPA overall
- Enrolls for no more than 3 credit hours in independent study during a semester

If a faculty member agrees to direct an independent study, and you have met the eligibility requirements, complete the Independent Study Permission through the Graduate School.

Communication Studies Graduate Capstone Process

Academic Year 2016-2017—Subject to Change for AY 2017-2018

In lieu of a comprehensive examination or thesis, Communication Studies graduate students are required to complete a satisfactory capstone experience in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree.

What is a capstone? The term is borrowed from architectural building design. A capstone on a building is a finished cover or cap at the top of a construction, originally made of stone.

This image of a capstone is apt. Faculty members regard graduate students as emerging scholars and professionals who embark on their own construction of themselves as masters of communication studies. The “building” begins with a program that offers a rich intellectual and experiential foundation for this construction of the graduate. The culminating building experience, or capstone, enables students to build on the program's foundation in order to conceptualize, design, and bring shape to their communicative voices.

Finally, architects and builders rarely stop with one construction. Like them, students will continue to build and rebuild themselves in public, professional, and personal contexts.

Satisfactory completion of the capstone experience includes four requirements:

1. Completion of an approved research proposal.
2. Completion of a final research project
3. Public presentation of the project to Department faculty and other students
4. Completion of the exit questionnaire on the MA program

The Final Research Project (CST 698 – 3 semester hours)

Timeline:

The capstone final research project is a focused, in-depth inquiry and analysis of a communicative practice, phenomenon, or object. To help students move productively and thoughtfully through their projects, the capstone assignment progresses in three phases over the final three semesters in the program, though students enroll for all three credit hours in their final semester in the program.

For full-time students who are on track to complete the program in two years, the capstone progresses as follows:

- Spring semester, first year: phase one
- Fall semester, second year: phase two
- Spring semester, second year: phase three

Those not meeting this timeline face increased risk of not completing the capstone for May graduation clearance.

Part-time students also begin the first phase of CST 698 after 18 credit hours (6 courses) are completed. The Director of Graduate Study will collaborate with each student on her/his Plan of Study to determine when to begin the capstone experience.

Capstone Phase One – Identifying Interest Areas

By the end of the first year, or when nearing 18 hours of course credit, students have been exposed to many theories, methods, contexts, and topics. It is quite likely that several different interest areas have developed during this time; however it also is quite probable that students may struggle choosing one particular topic for their capstone project. To help identify potential topics areas for their capstone projects, students will be given an opportunity to discuss their preliminary ideas with the graduate faculty. To prepare for this meeting, students are expected to come prepared (i.e. typed) to discuss interests in the following categories:

1. Theory/Communication Process or Construct
2. Method
3. Context
4. Research Questions
5. Specific academic readings/sources that interest you (e.g., theorists, primary source material)

The goal of these preliminary discussions are for students to come away with a clearer sense of what they'd like to focus on and what faculty "may" be the best people with whom to work. We intend for those ideas to continue to be developed in consultation with faculty.

Capstone Phase Two – Developing the Research Proposal

In the fall semester of the second year, students will complete Phase Two of the capstone process. More specifically, students will complete a research proposal with guidance from their faculty committee. Once approved, the proposal will lead to the capstone project that will be completed in the spring semester of their second year. For part-time students, Phase Two will begin after completing 6 courses and while they are enrolled in their 7th course. Importantly, both core classes need to be completed prior to beginning Phase Two.

This phase of the project involves several steps, including: 1.) developing a first draft of a proposal, 2.) discussing the draft proposal with the graduate faculty, 3.) composing a committee (advisor and reader or co-advisors), 4.) revising the research proposal, 5.) receiving approval of the proposal, and 6.) submitting an IRB application if applicable.

1.) Draft Proposal

In early fall, students will prepare a first draft of a research proposal (4-6 pp., double-spaced (max.)), briefly articulating what they "propose" to do for their capstone project. It is expected that this proposal be developed out of the preliminary conversations with faculty and subsequent, more narrowed discussions with specific faculty identified from the initial meeting.

The draft proposal should include the following sections (using APA formatting guidelines):

1. A working title.
2. A project description: Three to five lines of an overall description of the project, introducing the communication “problem.”
3. A rationale for why the study is needed. The argument presented should be grounded in relevant academic literature. The following questions can help compose this section: What does the current academic literature say? What literature does the student plan to consult? What does all this have to do with communication studies? What is the theoretical and practical/applied implications of the study?
4. Preliminary research question(s) or purpose statement relevant to the context or problem and rationale.
5. A methods section describing the communication, phenomenon, discourse, or artifact the student wants to examine, along with a summary of the research methodology or methodologies that might be well suited to examine the research question and communication phenomenon. In addition, a plan for collecting the data or textual artifacts should be included as well as a brief description of how the data or text will be analyzed.
6. A reference page. Include a working bibliography of 10-15 sources that provide a foundation for the project.
7. Other preliminary considerations. Include here a brief summary on what the student has done to date with the project (ie a pilot study in methods) and an update on what faculty with whom the student has consulted. In the student’s opinion, what faculty would be likely advisors or readers? Is there anything in particular that should be considered at this time?
8. Questions for the DGS and/or graduate faculty.

THE PROPOSAL DRAFT IS DUE TO THE DGS BY 5:00 P.M. ON THE FIRST FRIDAY OF THE [FALL] SEMESTER. SEND VIA EMAIL ATTACHMENT.

2.) Draft Proposal Discussions

Approximately two weeks after submission of the draft proposal to the DGS, students will gather with graduate faculty to discuss the proposals. Students need to be prepared to ask questions they have about the project as well as answer questions from the faculty.

After graduate faculty review, discussion, and deliberation, the DGS will communicate with each student steps for moving forward, including recommendations for faculty committee assignment.

3.) Faculty Committee

Based upon feedback from the DGS and no later than 5 weeks into the semester, the student needs to meet with and confirm faculty approval to serve on the capstone committee. At this time, the faculty and student need to determine advisor and reader roles. It is also important

to clarify the specific contributions the reader will make and when he/she will provide feedback on the project. For instance, the reader may contribute to theoretical and methodological approaches to the project or suggest additional readings once the project and research question are defined. The reader may also serve as a co-director.

Timelines for proposal completion should also be completed at this time.

4.) Research Proposals

For the rest of the semester, the student will work with his/her committee to revise the research proposal.

PROPOSALS ARE DUE TO THE STUDENT'S COMMITTEE BY THE END OF THE 11TH WEEK OF THE SEMESTER.

During the remaining weeks of the semester, the student and faculty will engage in a proposal revision process. Specifically, upon submission of the proposal, the faculty committee will provide feedback to the student in a timely manner. The student is expected to revise and resubmit (R & R) the proposal by the agreed upon deadline. This R & R process will continue until the committee finds the proposal satisfactory and approves it.

A few more words about the research proposal....

The structure of the proposal will vary, depending upon the type of project. It is imperative that the student and committee clarify the expected structure.

5.) Proposals Approved

IT IS EXPECTED THAT PROPOSALS WILL BE APPROVED NO LATER THAN THE DAY GRADES ARE DUE FOR THE SEMESTER. The faculty advisor will need to submit to the DGS the Proposal Approval Form by the end of the semester.

6. IRB Applications (if relevant)

For those students planning to involve humans in the approved research project, they will need to complete and submit (with faculty committee guidance) an IRB application. It is strongly recommended that this application be submitted once the proposal is approved and no later than the end of the semester.

Capstone Phase Three – Registering for CST 698 and Completing the Capstone*

In the spring semester of the second year, students will complete the final phase of their capstone—the actual research approved in the proposal. For part-time students, Phase Three can commence only after they have completed 8 courses (or 24 credits).

*It is during this semester when students register for the 3 credits of CST 698.

Phase Three involves three steps: 1.) completion of research project; 2.) public presentation of research, and 3.) submission of exit survey

1. Completion of Capstone Project:

When relevant, IRB approval is needed before any data can be collected from human participants. Also, it is important to realize that additional R & R's may be necessary during this stage, improving upon the research proposal approved in Phase Two. It is strongly recommended that the student and faculty committee members create a timeline for project completion.

Capstone research projects vary significantly in their theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches. In addition, their structures vary, depending upon the type of inquiry guiding the project. Students need to communicate with their faculty advisor to gain a clear sense of the project's structure and length (a 25-30 page length is quite typical but not required).

Assessment Criteria and Grading

Capstone projects are graded as either "S" for satisfactory or "U" for unsatisfactory. If a student receives an unsatisfactory grade on the first attempt to satisfy the capstone requirement, one additional attempt to achieve a satisfactory grade is permitted. If a student fails to meet the Department's minimal criteria for assessing a satisfactory capstone, the Graduate School Dean is notified, who will send the student a letter of dismissal from the program.

Completion and Graduation

In order for the student to complete the degree by the end of the semester in which he/she intends to graduate, a final grade must be submitted by the advisor to the DGS two days before final grades are due. Students need to discuss with their advisor when he/she needs to receive the final version from the student in order for them to meet the deadline with the DGS.

2.) Public Presentation of Project

All graduating students present a summary of their capstone project in the semester they graduate. Historically, presentations are made at the end of classes, on the day after Reading Day in May or in December. Practice sessions with the DGS and qualified others are required prior to the public presentation.

The format for the presentation follows a conference panel model. The audience consists of Department faculty and graduate students, and any other interested faculty or community members. Presenters will have 10-15 minutes to present their project. After ALL presentations are made, a question and answer period will follow. During Q & A, anyone in the audience can direct questions or comments to any of the presenters.

3.) Exit Questionnaire

All graduating students complete an exit questionnaire on the MA program, to be given to the Director of Graduate Study by the deadline for posting final grades for the semester. Since this date varies slightly with academic calendars, the Director will provide specific dates to students each semester.

Communication Studies Graduate Capstone Process
Academic Year 2016-2017—SUBJECT TO CHANGE FOR AY '17-'18
At-a-Glance Checklist and Timeline

Task	Due Date	Student Completion Date	Faculty Approval Date
Initial meeting with Graduate Faculty	Spring '16	April 28, 2016	n/a
Draft Proposal to DGS	August 26th		
Draft Proposal Discussion with Graduate Faculty	Sept 7 th OR Sept 12 th		
Faculty Committee Composed	Sept. 23rd		
Research Proposal Submitted	Nov. 4th		
Research Proposal Approved	Dec. 15th		
IRB Application Submitted (if applicable)	Dec. 15th		
Capstone Completion Date	Coordinate with advisor		
Capstone Approved by Faculty Committee	May 3rd		
Research Presentation	May 3rd		
Exit Survey	May 12th		

Department of Communication Studies
Capstone: Final Research Project Timeline and Agreement
Please give a copy of this agreement to the Director of Graduate Study

Date _____

Student _____

Faculty Director _____

Reader (or Co-director) _____

Project topic _____

Timeline for completion of capstone components:

Refine research question by _____
Date

Complete literature review by _____
Date

Secure IRB approval, if required, by _____
Date

Gather data by _____
Date

Complete first draft by _____
Date

Complete subsequent drafts, as needed, by _____
Date

Date

Complete final draft by _____
Date

Meeting Schedule Dates:

Director signature _____

Reader (or Co-director) signature _____

Student signature _____

Graduate Faculty

Professors

Spoma Jovanovic, PhD

Communication and communities; communication ethics; social justice; service learning

Christopher N. Poulos, PhD (Department Head)

Relational communication; ethnography; philosophy of communication; film; dialogue

Roy Schwartzman, PhD

Figurative language; rhetoric of science and technology; computer-mediated communication; critical theory; Holocaust studies; public address

Associate Professors

David Carlone, PhD

Organizational communication; socio-cultural theory; cultural studies of work, organization

Cerise Glenn, PhD

Cultural identity and identity negotiation; African-American communication and culture; occupational socialization and identification of diverse groups; organizational culture; third wave feminism

Peter M. Kellett, PhD

Conflict analysis and management; narrative methodology

Etsuko Kinefuchi, PhD

Intercultural communication; language and culture; cultural identity and identity negotiation

Marianne LeGreco, PhD

Health communication; healthcare institutions; public health policy

Elizabeth J. Natalle, PhD

Gender and communication theory; interpersonal processes; feminist criticism

Loreen Olson, PhD (Director of Graduate Studies)

Gender; family communication; relationships; intimate partner violence, campus sexual assault; dark side of relational/family communication

Senior Lecturer

Jessica Delk McCall, PhD (Basic Course Director)

Communication pedagogy; small group communication; relational communication; educational philosophy