

GRADUATE HANDBOOK

MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

The University of Arkansas

Organized in 1871 under provisions of the Morrill Act as both the State University and the Land-Grant College of Arkansas, the University of Arkansas is now comprised of ten colleges and schools. The Graduate School, which was established in 1927, has offered a Master of Arts degree in Communication, or its precursor Speech, since 1954. The graduate program is located in the Department of Communication, at 417 Kimpel Hall, on the University's flagship campus at Fayetteville.

Nestled in the Ozark Mountains, Fayetteville is a cultural crossroads where students find opportunity, excitement, and diversity. The seat of government for Washington County, Fayetteville has a population of nearly 85,000 people, with at least 500,000 people in the Northwest Arkansas metropolitan area. This progressive city attracts patrons of the arts, the sciences, and the professions, which makes Fayetteville an excellent choice for graduate study.

While attending the University of Arkansas, you may find the opportunity to have coffee with a nationally recognized researcher in laser physics or lunch with a prize-winning poet. You can enjoy a weekend backpacking through a wilderness area, canoeing the Buffalo National River, sailing on Beaver Lake, or enjoying an open market of arts, crafts, and farm-fresh produce around the town square.

To contact the Department write or call:
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This document is offered to prospective and current students in the Department of Communication. Any policies mentioned are those of the Department of Communication at the time of publication and are subject to change. Moreover, they may not be the policies of other departments or of the Graduate School. Details on University regulations are published in official college catalogs and bulletins and are available from the University of Arkansas Graduate School.

THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is a basic feature of human behavior and is fundamental to everyday life. Within the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Communication conducts research, teaches, and provides services to the University and to the community beyond.

The Department of Communication is committed to the contemporary study of human communication by bridging the humanities and social sciences. We have a long and proud heritage dating to 1891 when we were the Department of Elocution formed at the Arkansas Industrial University. Our name was changed to the Department of Communication in 1980.

Teaching and scholarship in the Department focuses on the study of factors and processes related to symbolic messages in interpersonal, public, and mass communication settings. As such, the contexts of friendships and families, business relationships and political systems, cultural interaction, and technological advances are important areas of study in communication.

Our Department's major strength is its faculty whose credentials are superior. The scholarly productivity of the faculty is best described as prolific and exceptional. Scholarship authored by the faculty is of the highest quality, generally published in the discipline's most competitive journals." There are currently fourteen Ph.D. faculty members in the department. Our faculty members have regularly won awards for their teaching, research, and advising.

If you are interested in the way people interact through the use of messages and symbols, you will find the graduate program in communication offers opportunities for scholarship and research. Using communication people work together to identify and address matters of public concern, create more democratic organizations, participate in the political process, facilitate community involvement, and work together for the common good. Each student designs a specific curriculum of study in consultation with his or her major professor which focuses on one of the following areas of civic engagement: 1) political; 2) organizational; 3) media; or 4) community.

The Graduate School Admissions Process

To earn an MA degree, you must formally apply to, and be officially admitted by, the University of Arkansas Graduate School. The University of Arkansas provides a detailed description of admission requirements for graduate study. To learn more about the admission requirements for graduate study, including [regulations for international students](#), consult the guidelines from [the Graduate School](#). For further questions, contact the office of the Graduate School and International Education at (479) 575-4401, or via email at gradinfo@uark.edu.

Financial aid programs at the University of Arkansas are designed to provide partial or full support in helping meet the costs of graduate education. There are many different programs available. More detailed information is available at the [Office of Financial Aid](#) at (479) 575-3806 or toll free (800) 377-8632.

It is important to note that admission to graduate standing in the Graduate School does not automatically constitute acceptance in any specific program of study. To pursue a graduate degree in Communication, you must also be accepted in the program after gaining regular admission to the Graduate School.

Admission into the Department of Communication

For consideration of admission to the MA degree program in Communication, you must provide the department with a writing sample, which may be an essay or research paper that you wrote for an undergraduate or graduate class, your Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score, and a brief admissions essay. In the essay please state, as precisely as you can, your goals for your graduate education, the interests you have in the field of communication, and the subject areas or specific projects you wish to research while enrolled as a graduate student in the department.

A student entering graduate studies should have a minimum of 24 semester hours in undergraduate credit in Communication (or a closely related area). However, the Department of Communication regularly

admits students with fewer than 24 hours in Communication.

Requirements for the Program

When you are admitted, the Department of Communication assigns a faculty member as your advisor to work with you during your first semester. By the start of the second semester, you should ask a faculty member you think shares a common academic interest with you to become the chair of your M.A. committee. You will name the other members of your committee during your second year of study.

During your first semester, meet with your advisor to develop a Plan of Study (forms are available on the program's Blackboard site). This plan will include all coursework completed to date, as well as future classes you propose to take. Both your advisor and the Graduate Coordinator must approve and sign your Plan of Study. Over time, your plan may change. You must report any modifications to your Plan of Study to the main office and complete a new Plan of Study form. Work with your advisor to continually develop and update a coherent plan to your coursework. Seek faculty advice so you can select the most appropriate classes for your goals.

Your Plan of Study will include either a minimum of 30 semester hours in graduate-level courses plus the capstone course (3 hours) or 27 hours of course work and a thesis (6 hours). Although there are some restrictions, generally you (with your advisor's consent) should select classes that best meet your particular interests and goals.

Required courses. You must complete the Paradigms of Communication Research class (COMM 5163) during the first semester of your resident graduate study that the course is offered. You must complete two graduate courses in communication research methods during your first year of graduate study drawn from the following options: 1) Qualitative Research Methods in Communication (COMM 5173), 2) Quantitative Research Methods in Communication (COMM 5123), or 3) Interpretative Research Methods in Communication (COMM 5183). If you are a teaching assistant you also must enroll each semester in COMM 5111, Section 002 (Colloquium in Communication

Education). The hours earned in this colloquium will not count toward the 33 minimum hours required for graduation.

In addition to the Paradigms class and the required methods courses, at least four three-hour 5000-level courses must be completed in the Department of Communication. At least three of these courses should be in one focal area of civic engagement;

The remaining hours of graduate credit must be selected from the following options:

- (1) Additional 5000-level departmental seminars;
- (2) Up to six hours of graduate-level courses outside the Department of Communication that directly relate to the student's Plan of Study;
- (3) Three hours of internship credit in COMM 5913;
- (4) Up to six hours of credit in COMM 590V;
- (5) Up to six hours of Thesis credit (COMM 600V) or three hours of capstone project credit (COMM 5923);
- (6) Each student must pass a defense over the thesis or capstone project.

Required grade point. In order to receive a master's degree, you must maintain at least a cumulative 2.85 grade point average. If you are a graduate teaching assistant the department expects you to maintain at least a 3.25 GPA.

You will find a detailed description of performance standards and issues related to academic honesty within the *Graduate Catalog*. It is important to realize that a grade of "C" in graduate school does not mean the same thing as a "C" in your undergraduate coursework. If you receive C's in more than one graduate course perhaps you should rethink your immediate career goals. C's are warning signs and are not to be taken lightly.

Annual Graduate Student Academic Review. The standards of the Graduate School of the University stipulate that you have six consecutive calendar years to complete all requirements for the MA degree. Each spring semester, the graduate faculty in the department will review your record to make sure that you are making normal

progress toward your degree. Shortly thereafter, your advisor will communicate the results of this review to you in a face-to-face meeting. This meeting is very, very important for your own information and for planning your academic program. Your participation in supplying documentation for the review process and your attendance at the face-to-face meeting is expected.

The graduate faculty will look at your work as a graduate student and whether you are making normal progress toward the MA degree, adequate progress, or unsatisfactory progress. You should be aware that anything less than normal progress is a serious warning sign about your ability to complete the degree. Students who are found to be making unsatisfactory progress toward the degree in two consecutive annual reviews will be dismissed from the program.

Normal Progress toward the MA in Communication:

Progress in completing courses:

- minimum 6 hrs. per semester w/ 3.0 CGPA over all coursework
- required courses completed or scheduled in plan of study (NOTE: graduate assistants must complete 15 hrs. per academic year to maintain their assistantship)

Thesis option: satisfaction of thesis committee that the thesis will be completed within the time requirements for the degree

Non-thesis option: enrollment in and completion of the capstone project class (COMM 5923) the final semester of coursework.

Other requirements:

- Updated plan of study on file by February 1 of each year
- Each semester, confers with his/her Administrator or Advisor before registering for classes and before dropping or adding credits
- Participation in the Annual Grad Student Review Process

Adequate Progress toward the MA in Communication:

Progress in completing course:

- minimum 3 hrs. per semester w/2.85 CGPA over all coursework;
- required courses scheduled or completed
(NOTE: graduate assistants must complete 15 hrs. per academic year to maintain their assistantship)

Thesis option: satisfaction of thesis committee that the thesis will be completed within time requirements

Non-thesis option: enrollment in and completion of the capstone project class (COMM 5923) the final semester of coursework.

Other requirements:

- Updated plan of study on file by February 1 of each year
- Each semester, confers with his/her Administrator or Advisor before registering for classes and before dropping or adding credits
- Participation in the Annual Grad Student Review Process

Neither Normal nor Adequate Progress toward the MA in Communication:

Requirements for at least adequate progress have not been met in whole or in part

Review Results. The results of the review and your face-to-face interview will become part of your permanent record in the department and the Graduate School. If you wish to appeal the results of your review, you may certainly do so by following the step-by-step procedures as outlined in the Graduate Student Grievance Policy of the Graduate School. This procedure begins by appeal to your advisor and then, to the department chair.

Thesis vs. capstone option

You can design your program to concentrate on graduate coursework and a capstone project (30 semester hours of courses plus the 3-hour capstone class) or to conduct independent research in the form of a 6-hour thesis (and 27 semester hours of course work). Copies of recent

theses are available online.

Thesis option. By the end of your second semester of study, you should select a faculty member to direct your thesis. This faculty member becomes your Thesis Advisor for the remainder of your program of study. Discuss possible topics and a tentative schedule with him or her as early as possible. Completing a thesis often requires at least two full semesters. Initiate discussion with your Thesis Advisor and establish a schedule for completing your thesis no later than the beginning of the semester prior to your final semester of study. Your Thesis Advisor can help provide detailed information and requirements.

After selecting a Thesis Advisor and identifying a topic (in consultation with your thesis advisor), you will select at least two more faculty members to serve on your thesis committee. The Graduate School requires that your committee members are members of the graduate faculty, and if two of your committee members are married to each other, neither can serve as your Thesis Advisor.

- Your thesis committee must be formed by the third week of the semester prior to the semester in which you plan to finish.
- By the sixth week of the semester prior to the one in which you plan to graduate, you must present a written thesis proposal or prospectus for approval by the committee. This proposal should include your purpose, rationale, partial literature review, and methodology for the study.

The Graduate School has [detailed guidelines](#) for completing the thesis, along with step-by-step instructions on deadlines, formatting, and required forms. The Graduate School must approve the thesis title at least three months before the oral defense is scheduled. Your completed thesis must be submitted to your committee at least two weeks before the oral defense. At this time, you should also submit your thesis to the Graduate School to start the formatting pre-check process. The oral defense must be completed at least two weeks before the degree is to be conferred. Upon acceptance by the committee, students should complete the thesis submission packet and upload the thesis electronically to ProQuest.

Capstone Option. By the beginning of your third semester of study, you

should select a faculty member to direct your capstone project. This faculty member becomes your Capstone Advisor. Your final semester you enroll in COMM 5923. During the 1st week of your last semester you must provide your Capstone Advisor with a 5 page prospectus to your major professor identifying 1) how this related to civic engagement, 2) why your topic is important, 3) how you propose to collect original data or identify what primary sources you plan to analyze for your project, 4) the scope of the work product you will produce and how it makes a significant contribution in this area, 5) any external organizations you will need to work with to complete this project, and 6) your proposed timeline, implementation plan, and/or budget. A related theory/literature review paper (6th week of classes) and a professional quality work product (the 12th week of classes) are due. A project defense presentation attended by Communication faculty and graduate students occurs before the 14th week of classes.

Comprehensive Exams. At the end of your graduate work you must pass either (a) an oral defense of a thesis or (b) an oral defense of your capstone project. Questions may be asked over all course work.

Non-thesis option. If you elect to take the Capstone Course (COMM 5923) you must pass an oral exam over your project. This defense also may include questions from the 30 hours of course work you completed for the degree. Each project defense presentation should be approximately 15-20 minutes (or presentation of the work product itself as appropriate – i.e. short film), allowing approximately thirty minutes for a question/answer session with the faculty and graduate students attending. Expect to answer challenging questions about your project (and related coursework). At the defense the capstone project work product, presentation, and oral defense will be evaluated by a three-member faculty team which will not include your Capstone Advisor. Students must receive a minimum grade of a B in the capstone course and successfully pass the oral exam in order to graduate. Students who do not MAY receive one opportunity to retake the course, if approved by the department chair. First year graduate students must attend one presentation session.

Thesis option. If you elect to complete a thesis, you must pass an oral examination in defense of the thesis. This thesis defense also may include questions from the 27 hours of course work you completed for

the degree. In the case of exemplary performance, a student will be awarded the honor of “Pass with Distinction.”

Graduate Assistantships

Every year, the Department of Communication awards a limited number of graduate assistantships. When applying for an assistantship, you concurrently must apply to the Graduate School for graduate admission. These assistantships carry stipends for a nine-month appointment, waivers of tuition (both resident and out-of-state), and some assistance with health insurance. Appointments generally require a working assignment of 20 hours per week; the workload equals a half-time (50%) appointment.

A graduate assistant usually will teach two sections of the basic speech communication skills course (COMM 1313: Fundamentals of Communication). A limited number of other appointments may be offered to support faculty teaching large sections (e.g., COMM 1003—Basic Course in the Fine Arts: Film Lecture) or to assist in teaching, research, or service.

The Department of Communication expects graduate assistants to meet high standards for satisfactory academic progress. You must complete a minimum of six graduate credit hours (but no more than 12) during each semester and 15 hours by the end of the second semester on appointment. You also must maintain a 3.25 GPA and receive a positive recommendation from the Graduate Committee to be continued on appointment. If you receive a summer appointment, you must enroll for at least three semester hours, although you may teach during one summer session and attend class in another. The assistantship can be extended over four semesters (not including Summer School) or until you have earned 30 hours toward your degree (whichever comes first).

If interested in an assistantship, you can find application information on the Department of Communication website. New students will submit the application as part of their online application packet through the Graduate School portal.

To insure full consideration of your application for a teaching assistantship, you should make sure your COMPLETED file reaches us by October 1st for Spring semester appointments, and by March

1st for Fall semester appointments.

International students (and resident aliens) whose native language is not English must demonstrate competency in spoken English by submitting a test score of at least 7 on the IELTS (speaking) subtest, 26 on the Internet-based TOEFL (speaking) subtest, 71 on the PTE-A (speaking), or “pass” on the Spoken Language Proficiency Test (SLPT). Competency in written English may be demonstrated by submitting a score of 6.0 on the IELTS (writing) subtest, 26 on the Internet-based TOEFL (writing) subtest, 4.0 on the GRE, 4.5 on the GMAT (analytical writing) subtest, 71 on the PTE-A (writing) sub-test, or 75 on the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT). These test cannot be waived.

Involvement in Research & the Department

Research is an integral part of the graduate program in communication, and to help in this important work, the Department provides access to a variety of resources, including the University libraries, Computing Services, and the Arkansas Archives of Public Communication. Multimedia equipment and funding support also may be secured within the department.

Our faculty place special emphasis on graduate students’ professional development. As a master’s student you should plan to work closely with the faculty on research projects. Many faculty members have achieved national recognition and stature for their professional work as researchers, teachers, and consultants. They will help guide you through the challenges, opportunities, commitments, and obligations associated with graduate study in communication.

As a graduate student, you will be given many opportunities to become actively involved in research with faculty and students alike. You may work as an integral member of a research team or conduct independent research. Required papers in graduate courses may generate creative ideas for theses and conference papers.

For many graduate students, research opportunities like these have led to significant professional accomplishments including published journal articles and papers presented at regional and national conventions. Past students have published articles in the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, the *Journal of Family Communication*, the *Quarterly*

Journal of Speech, the *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, and presented numerous papers at the conventions of the Southern States Communication Association, the National Communication Association, and the International Communication Association.

If you present a discipline-related research paper at a convention, the Department of Communication can help with travel funds. Additionally, from monies available from the Walton Charitable Gift, the Graduate School has been able to provide substantial travel support for department-approved requests. The Graduate School's guidelines for applying for the "Professional Meeting Travel Grants" are located at: <https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/graduate/costs-and-funding/travel-grants.php>. You should apply for these funds as early as possible in the semester you are attending the meeting. The number and amount of travel fund grants is limited.

We strongly encourage you to become active in the professional associations of the discipline. By joining these groups, you initiate a path toward meeting expectations of professional involvement. Free or discounted subscriptions to many excellent publications and reduced membership fees are available to students. These organizations include:

National Communication Association
International Communication Association
Southern States Communication Association
Rhetoric Society of America
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Broadcast Education Association
Organization for Research on the Study of Women and Communication

In addition, the department has a Graduate Advisory Board composed of three MA students elected by the graduate student body. Those students meet at least once each semester with the graduate coordinator. These discussions are meant to identify, discuss, and resolve any such issues as necessary and serve as a point of contact between MA students and the department faculty.

Internships

Finding your place in the job market can be challenge. To help, we offer the chance for practical experiences to go along with the theoretical

aspects of communication. An internship program can provide that practical experience. Both paid and unpaid intern positions are available through local, regional, and national industries and organizations.

Dr. Lisa Corrigan serves as the departmental internship coordinator. Graduate students may include an internship in their plan of study (COMM 5913: Internship in Communication). You must recruit a field supervisor from the organization for whom you will intern. You can expect continuing guidance for professional development and skills training from Dr. Corrigan and your field supervisor during your internship. As you conclude your training, your employer will provide an evaluation of your work performance, as well as letters of recommendation for your file. For more information, contact Dr. Corrigan at (479) 575-5272 or lcorriga@uark.edu.

Graduate Faculty

Allen, Myria W. (Prof., Ph.D., Kentucky) has interests in organizational, intercultural, and environmental communication.

Aloia, Lindsey S. (Assist. Prof., Ph.D., Penn State) has interests in interpersonal communication.

Amason, Patricia (Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., Purdue) has interests in interpersonal, group, and health communication, as well as communication theory.

Brady, Robert M. (Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., Michigan) has interests in persuasion, communication theory, consulting and training, and media effects.

Butcher, Margaret (Clinical Assist. Prof, Ph.D., Missouri) has interests in intercultural communication.

Corrigan, Lisa (Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., Maryland) has interests in rhetorical studies.

Guan, Mengfei (Assist. Prof, Ph.D., Georgia) has interests in health communication, interpersonal communication, and quantitative methods.

Neville-Shepard, Meredith (Clinical Assist. Prof, Ph.D., Kansas) has interests in rhetorical studies and argumentation.

Neville-Shepard, Ryan (Assist. Prof., Ph.D., Kansas) has interests in rhetorical studies and political communication.

Rosteck, Thomas. (Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., Wisconsin) has interests in rhetorical studies as well as communication and culture.

Scheide, Frank M. (Prof., Ph.D., Wisconsin) has interests in film and film history.

Schulte, Stephanie (Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., George Washington) has interests in new media, history of technology, popular culture and American studies.

Sharman, Russell (Assist. Prof. of Practice, Ph.D., Oxford) has interests in film studies.

Spialek, Matthew L. (Assist. Prof, Ph.D., Missouri) has interests in disaster communication, communication ecology, and quantitative methods.

Walker, Kasey L. (Clinical Assist. Prof., Ph.D., Purdue) has interests in organizational, small group, and leadership communication.

Warren, Ron (Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., Indiana) has interests in media processes and effects, socialization, and research methods.

Wicks, Robert H. (Prof., Ph.D., Michigan State) has interests in mass communication theory and research.

Zhu, Yaguang (Assist. Prof., Ph.D., Texas) has interests in communication technology, organizational communication, and health communication.

Graduate Faculty Communication Department Directory

Professors	Kimpel	575-	Email
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Margaret Butcher	326		mbutcher@uark.edu
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