



SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

Illinois State University

Graduate Student Handbook



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Welcome to the ISU Graduate Program in Communication!

This handbook is designed to help guide you through your Communication graduate program at Illinois State University. Please use this handbook as a reference guide for the graduate program in the School of Communication. This handbook includes some of the basic policies and procedures that we ask you to follow. Policies contained in this guide are subject to change without notice at the discretion of the School of Communication and ISU. If at any time you have specific questions about policies, rules, guidelines, anything, do not hesitate to contact the Communication graduate program coordinator.

As you may have already figured out, a master's degree represents a different experience than an undergraduate course of study. We offer a generalist degree in communication with no specializations, sequences, "majors," or specific tracks of study. While it may be possible to take several courses in a particular area of communication study (e.g., mass communication, interpersonal communication), students cannot complete our master's degree by taking all or even most of their courses in one area of the discipline. Our master's degree program emphasizes the practical application of scholarly knowledge. We generally do not offer training in technical skills. Rather, our focus is preparing students to use theory and research to evaluate and solve social problems in a variety of contexts.

Student Responsibility

It is your responsibility to be familiar with the information in this handbook and to know and observe all regulations and procedures relating to the program. It is also your responsibility to seek answers to questions that you may not be able to find in these materials. Your first point of contact is the COM graduate program coordinator.

Coursework in our Degree Program

Required Courses

You are required to take three courses as part of our core, and then you can select the rest of your coursework based on your interests.

The required courses are COM 422 (Proseminar), either COM 402 (Rhetorical Methods) or 473 (Qualitative Methods), and COM 497 (Quantitative Methods). You take COM 422 and 402 or 473 in your first semester in the program and then COM 497 in the second semester in the program (if you are full-time). If you are a part-time student, consult with the graduate coordinator about the order of coursework.

After taking these required courses, you select the courses that make most sense for your plan of study. Here is a description of the types of elective courses you can take for graduate credit.

Electives

You will take many graduate seminars at the **400-level**. These courses are typically (but not always) taught once-a-week in the evenings, Monday through Thursday. These courses are small (approximately 15 students) and are usually discussion-based, focused on a particular topic on which the faculty member has expertise. We do not offer 400-level courses in the summer session.

If there are course topics that we do not offer as a graduate seminar, you can also consider taking undergraduate courses at the **300-level** that will include extra work for you to complete to earn graduate credit (you must seek out the instructor and inform them that you are a graduate student when starting the class). You cannot take more than 4 courses at the 300-level, but most students only take 1 or 2. Only 300-level courses that appear in the Graduate Catalog and are taught by members of the Graduate Faculty may be taken for graduate credit (check with your advisor and graduate coordinator about which courses count toward your graduate requirement).

We also offer you the opportunity to complete an **independent study (COM 400)** that provides the opportunity to intensively investigate a special area of interest under the guidance of a Graduate Faculty member. Each individual investigation has to culminate in a final project (e.g., complete study, training manual). You cannot enroll in COM 400 until you have completed 18 credit hours with a 3.0 GPA. There are rules about how many COM 400s you can take depending on thesis vs 39-hour, so check with your advisor and the graduate coordinator if you want to enroll in a COM 400 more than once. There is also a form you have to complete to enroll in COM 400.

Lastly, we offer you the opportunity to enroll in a **graduate-level internship (COM 498: Professional Practice)** to gain new, practical work experience (it can't be for a job you already have or have had!). You cannot enroll in COM 498 until you have completed 18 credit hours with a 3.0 GPA. Even though the course number is 498, this opportunity counts toward your 300-level limit. There are rules about how many COM 498s you can take depending on thesis vs 39-hour, so check with your advisor and the graduate coordinator if you want to enroll in COM 498. There is also paperwork you have to complete to enroll in COM 498. You need to complete a special project or paper associated with the internship.

You can take courses outside of Communication, typically after you have completed 18 credit hours in Communication and have finalized your committee. You can also transfer credits in from a different university that you took within the last 6 years. You must see the graduate coordinator if there are courses outside of COM that you are considering taking (before you take them!) or if you have course(s) you want to consider transferring.

Academic Guidance through the Program

The COM graduate program coordinator advises all students during their first 18 hours in the program. You will meet with the coordinator to figure out classes and to seek answers to any other academic questions you may have.

Sometime early in the semester when you start taking your 18-hours of study (for full-time students, this will be in your second semester; for part-time students, this will be a little later than that), you should start to consider the following:

- Do you want to complete a thesis or 39-hour project? and
- Which faculty members do you want to work with on your graduate committee?

By the time you start picking classes for your second fall semester (that is, if you are full time; the deadlines change a bit for part-time students), you will need to have completed and submitted the Request for Appointment of Graduate Committee form. Until you select a chair/advisor and committee, you should consult with the program coordinator for academic advisement.

Selecting a Committee

First, let's talk about your committee. You will select a Committee Chair/Advisor. This person must be a full member of the Graduate Faculty in COM. Your chair/advisor will guide you in selecting courses and will oversee your thesis or 39-hour project.

If you select a thesis, you will need a thesis chair/advisor and two (or more) other graduate faculty members as your committee members. The committee chair/advisor will help oversee the courses you selected to take. This committee is responsible for guiding the thesis project and conducting the final thesis oral defense (when the thesis is complete). A minimum of two of the committee members must be from COM (i.e., the Graduate Chair/Advisor and one other faculty member).

If you select the 39-hour option for completing the degree, you will have a chair/advisor, and for students starting the program in Fall 2016 or after, you will need to select one more committee member.

Selecting between a Thesis and 39-Hour Project

Our graduate program provides two different pathways to the master's degree: (a) the 32-hour thesis option, whether traditional or documentary thesis, or (b) the 39-hour option with revised paper/project.

A **traditional thesis** is a written report of an original research project proposed by the student and completed under the direction of the student's chair/advisor, with advice from the student's committee. A written thesis should consist of more substance than a conference or journal-length manuscript. Length and content will vary based on your interest and conversations with your chair/advisor.

A **documentary thesis** includes a written thesis proposal describing an original research project proposed by the student, and a digital documentary completed under the direction of your committee chair/advisor.

For both types of thesis projects, you will complete a proposal (also referred to as a "prospectus") under the direction of your chair/advisor that clearly explains the research project you wish to complete. For many students, this includes the first two chapters of the thesis (literature review and methods). Your committee must approve the proposal before you begin the project.

A **39-hour project** is typically a significantly revised seminar paper or project. The student and their chair/advisor will work together to identify a paper or project for revision. There is no required oral proposal or final defense for a 39-hour project. You will complete two forms: 39-hour Proposal Approval Form (when you and your chair/advisor decide on what project you

will complete) and 39-hour Outcome Approval Form (when both of your committee members approve of your final project).

Coursework

Now for coursework, here's a typical breakdown for full-time students in our program:

Thesis Option (32 credit hours; you take 9 courses plus 5-6 thesis credits)

Fall semester of 1st year: COM 422 (required), COM 402 or COM 473 (required), Elective

Spring semester of 1st year: COM 497 (required), Elective, Elective

Fall semester of 2nd year: Elective, Elective, COM 499 (thesis)

Spring semester of 2nd year: Elective, COM 499 (thesis)

39-hour Option (39 credit hours; you take 13 courses and complete the project)

Fall semester of 1st year: COM 422 (required), COM 402 or COM 473 (required), Elective

Spring semester of 1st year: COM 497 (required), Elective, Elective

Fall semester of 2nd year: Elective, Elective, Elective, Elective (or you can take 1 class in the summer so you don't have to take 4 in one semester)

Spring semester of 2nd year: Elective, Elective, Elective

If you are part-time, then you take fewer classes each semester and your timeline to completion is longer. Talk with the program coordinator about a study plan that fits your timeline and interests!

Course Registration

To register for courses, we do something a little different than having you just go online to sign up for courses. Here are the steps for registration:

- 1) The graduate coordinator will post a description of courses for the following semester on the graduate program website.
- 2) You will meet with your chair/advisor to determine which courses and how many courses you take for that semester. You will then complete an Override Request Form, have your chair/advisor sign it, and then give it to the graduate coordinator to also sign.
- 3) Once your form has been signed by everyone, the graduate coordinator and their administrative assistant will go through all override request forms, grant you your overrides, and notify you that your overrides are in the registration system. You then register for those courses through my.illinoisstate.edu.

Preferences for classes are based on credit hours you have completed. Priority is also given to COM graduate students, with graduate students outside COM then being enrolled in remaining seats pending permission from the COM Graduate Coordinator. Overrides for COM 400 and COM 498 will be issued once the appropriate application forms have been submitted to and approved by the Graduate Coordinator.

Academic Policies You Need to Know

Academic Integrity

We take academic integrity very seriously. We expect students to be honest and ethical in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct. A student's placement of his or her name on any academic exercise (e.g., theme, report, notebook, paper, lab assignment, quiz, examination) shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own thought, effort, and study. Offenses involving academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: (a) cheating on quizzes or examinations, (b) plagiarism, (c) grade falsification, (d) fabricating data, and (e) involvement in the advertising, solicitation, or sale of term papers or research papers. Plagiarism can range from omitting source citations to not properly documenting sources, directly quoting material without proper notation, copying passages with citations from a source without crediting that source (i.e., secondary source citations that are not cited appropriately), copying passages or whole works from another student or other scholar, not properly crediting ideas from another individual, and/or placing one's name on work done by another. All ideas are to be appropriately cited in both oral and written form when borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Inadequate citation, unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration, and/or the presentation of someone else's work constitutes plagiarism. Submitting the same paper for more than one course is considered a breach of academic integrity unless prior approval is given by all the instructors involved.

For group assignments, the same principle applies: groups may not plagiarize the work of others outside that group. Furthermore, for co-authored or group papers and assignments, all students will be held responsible for violations of academic integrity. It is, therefore, the responsibility of all group members to ensure the integrity of the work by carefully editing and reviewing all aspects or components of an assignment; taking a divide-and-conquer approach to the workload does not dissolve responsibility. Relatedly, sharing papers or assignments, even as an example or model, with other students is considered a breach of academic integrity. Ask instructors - not classmates - for example papers or templates. Any collaboration, without the express permission of the instructor, is subject to consequences.

Penalties for academic dishonesty may include: (a) failing grade for the assignment, (b) failing grade for the course, (c) academic probation, (d) non-renewal or termination of a graduate assistantship, and/or (e) dismissal from the graduate program. Please note, the graduate faculty is very serious about reporting academic dishonesty and view it as our professional responsibility; we are not shy about enforcing the consequences of this policy. Students found to commit acts of academic dishonesty will be referred for appropriate disciplinary action to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (<https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conflict/>).

Time Limits

You must complete all master's degree requirements within six calendar years after starting the program. If you want to petition to extend the 6-year limit, please contact the COM graduate program coordinator.

Academic Load

Full-time students typically take 9-12 credit hours per semester (the maximum load during fall and spring is 15 credit hours). In summer, the max load is 12 credit hours (full-time is

considered at least 6 credits in the summer). The ideal academic load for a graduate assistant is 9 credit hours. A graduate assistant wishing to take fewer than 9 credit hours or more than 12 credit hours should contact the graduate coordinator. Part-time graduate students typically take either 3 or 6 credit hours, depending on the semester. If you are in your last semester, have a grad assistantship, and need to take fewer credits than full-time, contact the graduate coordinator.

Grades

Courses completed at ISU with grades below C will not count toward a graduate degree, but all grades of D, F, and WF in graduate courses at ISU will be counted in computing the cumulative GPA.

Good Standing

To remain in “Good Standing” for the program, you must maintain a cumulative and semester GPA of 3.00 in graduate work at ISU. You must also practice academic honesty and be making progress toward completing your degree. If you fail to remain in good standing, you may be placed on probation or terminated from the program. If you are ever placed on academic probation, you may lose your COM assistantship. Terms of the probationary period will come in writing from the graduate coordinator. You must be in Academic Good Standing to graduate.

Incomplete Grades

An incomplete (I) will only be assigned to you if you are doing passing work but something makes it impossible, because of reasons beyond your control, such as serious illness, to complete the required work by the end of the semester. You and the faculty member teaching the course need to work together to develop a plan for you to complete the coursework. Incompletes not completed within an allotted time period will default to an F. Once a default grade has been placed on a student’s record, it can only be changed with the approval of the Graduate School. You cannot have an Incomplete on your record within three weeks prior to the end of the final’s week of your last semester.

M.A. vs M.S.

Most students graduate from our program with a master of science (M.S.) degree. This degree is awarded to students who have completed a minimum of 32 credit hours within an approved plan, but who have not completed a minimum of two years of foreign language study at the college level. If you are interested in exploring an option to earn a master of arts (M.A.) degree, please contact the graduate coordinator.

Continuous Enrollment for Thesis Students

If you choose to complete a thesis, once you have successfully defended your thesis proposal (and had your thesis completion form approved by the Graduate School), you have to register for one credit hour of COM 499 each semester through the semester of degree completion to stay continuously enrolled. The requirement for continuous registration does not apply during a summer term unless the student is graduating in that term. If you cannot maintain continuous enrollment, please contact the graduate coordinator.

Authorship Policy for Faculty Working with Students Toward Publication

Authorship can be one of the most contentious yet least-discussed facets of academic publication and remains an important way of acknowledging the various efforts of involved

scholars. The COM graduate faculty developed a policy to set forth information and guidelines regarding authorship within the School of Communication. In short, faculty authorship with students should not be required or expected for projects completed in the course of regular, paid contractual instructional duties or time; and, authorship should be discussed and mutually agreed upon for other types of projects before the project commences. The aim of this policy is to protect student authorship rights rather than to penalize faculty or prohibit collaborative research. You can find the full policy on our graduate program webpage, on the Current Students webpage.

More Information

There is no way for one document like this handbook to cover all policies and expectations. It is up to you to seek information as questions arise or if you find yourself unclear about how to go about doing something in our program. Beyond our own website (<https://communication.illinoisstate.edu/graduate/>), the COM graduate program coordinator, and your chair/advisor, the Graduate School Website is a valuable source of information about deadlines, policies, and procedures to completing your degree. Here are some useful links:

Grad School Website: <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/>

Grad School Deadlines: <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation/deadlines/>

Grad School Thesis Guidelines: <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation/>

Grad School Degree Audit & Graduation: <https://grad.illinoisstate.edu/students/graduation/>

It is your responsibility, regardless of your path to your COM graduate degree, to learn about and follow the process for completing the program. We are here to help you and want to have a positive, productive, and satisfying experience in the School of Communication. But ultimately you will get out of this program what you put into it! We are happy to have you here and look forward to working with you and assisting you in your success!

Typical Graduate Seminars Offered

[Courses with * are sometimes offered with different topics that you can take more than once]

COM 402 Seminar in Rhetorical Communication Research Methods
COM 409 Seminar in Health Communication
COM 410 Seminar in Family Communication
COM 418* Foundations of Mediated Communication
COM 422 Proseminar in Communication Philosophy and Theory
COM 424 Seminar in Persuasion
COM 433 Seminar in Leadership Communication
COM 435 Communication Training and Development
COM 436* Advanced Message Design
COM 460* Seminar in Mass Communication
COM 462* Seminar in Critical Studies in Mass Communication
COM 463 Seminar in Mass Media Effects
COM 472 Seminar in Intercultural/Interethnic Communication
COM 473 Seminar in Qualitative Communication Research Methods
COM 474* Seminar in Interpersonal Communication
COM 475* Seminar in Public Relations
COM 478* Seminar in Public Relations Research: Case Studies
COM 481 Seminar in Communication Education: Communication Pedagogy
COM 482 Seminar in Communication Education: Communication Assessment
COM 483 Seminar in Communication Education: Instructional Communication
COM 492* Seminar in Communication Theory
COM 494* Seminar in Small Group Communication
COM 495* Seminar in Organizational Communication
COM 496* Seminar in Rhetorical Theory
COM 497 Seminar in Quantitative Communication Research Methods

List of Graduate Faculty Members and their Areas of Expertise/Methodology

*You can find profiles of each of our graduate faculty on our program website, on the Current Students page

Dr. John Baldwin: communication theory, intercultural communication, nonverbal communication, qualitative methods

Dr. Joe Blaney: mass communication, political communication

Dr. Lauren Bratslavsky: communication theory, mass communication, media literacy

Dr. Caleb Carr: mediated communication, organizational communication, quantitative methods

Dr. Phil Chidester: communication theory, journalism, mass communication, rhetoric & public address

Dr. Byron Craig: organizational communication, rhetorical methods, rhetoric & public address, small group communication

Dr. Mary Beth Deline: communication theory, mass communication, organizational communication, persuasion, public relations, qualitative methods, quantitative methods

Dr. Jack Glascock: journalism, quantitative methods

Dr. Ashley Hall: rhetorical methods, rhetoric & public address

Dr. Becky Hayes: public relations, qualitative methods, social media

Dr. John Hooker: communication education, mediated communication, quantitative methods, social media, training & development

Dr. Megan Hopper: journalism, mass communication, media literacy

Dr. Steve Hunt: communication education, persuasion, political communication, quantitative methods, rhetoric & public address, social media

Dr. John Huxford: journalism, mass communication

Dr. Lance Lippert: health communication, leadership communication, organizational communication, qualitative methods, training & development

Dr. John McHale: documentaries, journalism, mass communication, political communication,

Dr. Kevin Meyer: communication education, communication theory, health communication, persuasion, quantitative methods, small group communication

Dr. Aimee Miller-Ott: family communication, health communication, interpersonal communication, mediated communication, nonverbal communication, qualitative methods, quantitative methods, small group communication

Dr. Brent Simonds: communication theory, documentaries, mass communication, mediated communication

Dr. Cheri Simonds: communication education, qualitative methods, training & development

Dr. Roth Smith: organizational communication, qualitative methods

Dr. Pete Smudde: organizational communication, public relations, rhetoric & public address

Dr. Lindsey Thomas: family communication, health communication, interpersonal communication, qualitative methods, quantitative methods

Dr. Andrew Ventimiglia: documentaries, mass communication

Dr. Joe Zompetti: communication theory, intercultural communication, persuasion, political communication, rhetorical methods, rhetoric & public address,

Helpful Links

Where should I go if I need...

To contact Human Resources for employment questions?

www.hr.illinoisstate.edu

To ask a question about travel vouchers after a conference?

www.comptroller.ilstu.edu

To review academic policies, the final exam schedule, or order a transcript?

www.registrar.ilstu.edu

To review the university's policies?

www.policy.ilstu.edu

To review training schedules and register for trainings?

www.teachtech.ilstu.edu

To ask questions about the university credit union?

<https://itsmycreditunion.org/>

To access library recourses?

www.library.ilstu.edu

To know what is happening at ISU?

www.calendar.ilstu.edu

To access counseling services?

www.counseling.ilstu.edu

To know where to park?

www.parking.ilstu.edu

To register my study with the Internal Review Board?

<http://research.illinoisstate.edu/ethics/>

To report technology problems?

<https://ithelp.illinoisstate.edu/> or <http://cas.illinoisstate.edu/about/casit/>

To take or post surveys on the Communication Research Board?

<https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/home>

To know when I get paid?

<http://payroll.illinoisstate.edu/calendar/monthly.shtml>

To find Graduate Assistantships?

<https://www.jobs.ilstu.edu>