

Department of Communication and Media

Handbook for M.A. in Communication Studies

Fall 2023/Spring 2024

This handbook has been prepared to provide students with a guide to the M.A. in the Communication Studies degree program. It is intended to supplement rather than replace the university catalog and other official university publications. As such, please consult those documents or check in with the Graduate Coordinator with any questions or concerns you might have. Students are encouraged to keep this handbook throughout their association with the program. Students will find this handbook helpful in planning their program and in maintaining a record of their progress toward completing the requirements for the M.A. degree in Communication Studies.

The Mission of the Department of Communication and Media

- We exist to educate students through the study of communication.
- We strive to challenge the intellect, stretch the imagination, and develop the talent of each of our students.
- We believe that communication theory and performance are interdependent and essential for student development.
- We value strong teaching, continuous scholarly growth, and service to our university and larger community.
- We seek and support faculty members who are fully credentialed, enjoy teaching, grow as scholars, appreciate communication technology, desire a collegial atmosphere, and value the mission of West Chester University.
- We work closely with students through dedicated advising and an impressive array of co-curricular projects and activities.
- We respect diversity as a requirement for integrity, collegiality, and communication competence.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	p. 3
II. Faculty and Staff	p. 4
III. Degree Program	p. 7
IV. COM M.A. Degree Paths & Requirements	p. 8
Sample Programs of Study	p. 9
V. Other Programs Requirements	p. 10
Maintenance in Good Standing	p. 10
Admission to Degree Candidacy	p. 10
Graduation	p. 10
Other Graduation Reminders	p. 10
Thesis Process for the Thesis Track	p. 10
Comprehensive Exam Process for the Non-Thesis Track	p. 11-13
VI. Opportunities Within the COM M.A. Program	p. 14
Internships	p. 14
Directed Study	p. 14
Certificate in Digital Media Marketing	p. 14
VII. Other Policies and Helpful Information	p. 15
Departmental Advisement	p. 15
Course Repeat Policy	p. 15
Transfer Credit Policy	p. 15
Academic Probation	p. 15
Academic Integrity	p. 16
University Statement on Academic Integrity	p. 16
Department Advice for Avoiding Issues Surrounding Academic Integrity	p. 16
Policy on Disruptive Classroom Behavior	p. 17
American with Disabilities Act	p. 17
Emergency Preparedness	p. 18
VIII. Graduate Courses in Communication Studies	p. 19
IX. List of Department of Communication and Media M.A. Theses	p. 20
Appendix A: Advising Sheet – Non-Thesis Pathway	p. 23
Appendix B: Advising Sheet – Thesis Pathway	p. 24

I. INTRODUCTION

The M.A. in Communication Studies

A Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies combines theoretical knowledge and research skills to help communication specialists bring about positive social change. Specifically, students will understand how to ethically persuade individuals and groups towards specific beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors to better meet their goals. The program seeks to build understanding and abilities across a broad array of communication contexts (including organizational, interpersonal, small group, mass media, and public relations). The program is designed to provide a theory-based approach to a variety of everyday social contexts, while simultaneously stressing the value of research.

Coupled with an optional graduate Digital Media Marketing Certificate, students will also learn interdisciplinary theory and practical skills giving them a well-rounded approach to problem solving in any industry. Our faculty equip students with the most up-to-date strategies for effective and efficient communication success, design and strategic thinking with management, economics, and business skills. Students can pursue either a research-focused thesis track or a more applied non-thesis option.

Connecting Theory and Practice

Together, theory and research provide our students with the proper foundation for making solid, persuasive arguments in their professional and academic pursuits. Courses are taught by excellent faculty who are active researchers across an array of topics and contexts including persuasion, conflict communication, media effects, media representation, campaign writing and development, environmental communication, public relations, and power and social change.

Areas of Coursework

Coursework in the M.A. program covers a range of topics including theory, research methods, interpersonal, media strategy, persuasion, and many others. Please see Section VIII for the full list of course offerings.

Our Commitment to Teaching, Scholarship and Practice

West Chester University believes that faculty should serve as examples of both teachers and scholars. Teacher-scholars actively engage students to connect classroom learning with the everyday world through scholarship and practice. Our department and our faculty embrace WCU's commitment to the teacher-scholar model. This means that not only will you learn theories, but you will also learn how to use them in practical and professional contexts. Further, our experienced faculty offer a diverse range of pedagogical, methodological, and practical approaches to make our students more competent communicators in person and across media.

II. FACULTY AND STAFF

The faculty and staff in the Department of Communication and Media are highly trained professionals dedicated to helping students. Please reach out to a faculty member if you have any questions, have a project in mind or are interested in learning more about anyone’s expertise and research. More detailed bios and courses taught may be found on the Department of Communication and Media Website (www.wcupa.edu/arts-humanities/CommunicationStudies/faculty.aspx)

List of Faculty in Department of Communication and Media

	<u>MICHAEL P. BOYLE, Ph.D.</u> , (he/him/his) specializes in the effects of mass communication, news coverage of social conflict, news framing, and television production. (Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Committee chair)
	<u>CAMILO C. DÍAZ PINO, Ph.D.</u> , specializes in cultural studies of media texts and production. His research interests include post-colonial and peripheral media dynamics, cross-cultural media circulation, cultures of production, animation, and children’s media.
	<u>STEPHEN M. DIDOMENICO, Ph.D.</u> , specializes in interpersonal communication and language in social interaction, with a focus on qualitative and naturalistic methods. His research explores the dynamics of everyday talk, identities, and relationships in both ordinary and professional settings
	<u>ROGER DAVIS GATCHET, Ph.D.</u> , (he/him) is an expert in rhetoric and oral history. His research focuses on popular culture, public memory and tourism, and the oral history of diverse communities.
	<u>MAXINE GESUALDI, Ph.D.</u> , specializes in organizational communication, strategic communication and public relations.
	<u>ELAINE JENKS, Ph.D.</u> , studies interpersonal and relational communication with research interests in communication and visual impairment, friendship communication, and health communication.
	<u>MARIA (OLA) KOPACZ, Ph.D.</u> , studies new media, diversity, and community building with expertise in online content marketing, media technologies, strategic communication, research methods, and public speaking.

	<p><u>BESSIE LEE LAWTON, Ph.D.</u>, is an award-winning, nationally renowned scholar interested in issues related to intercultural and interracial communication, communication and power, and public speaking.</p>
	<p><u>EDWARD LORDAN, Ph.D.</u>, is a teacher and researcher in media studies, advertising, and public relations. (Internship Coordinator)</p>
	<p><u>L. MEGHAN MAHONEY, Ph.D.</u>, specializes in media studies with a focus on new and social media and audience behavior. (Graduate Committee member)</p>
	<p><u>JEREMY MCCOOL, Ph.D.</u> specializes in media technology and culture, with experience working as a radio personality. He researches the perceptions of socially conscious hip-hop music, media effects, and critical race scholarship.</p>
	<p><u>LISA MILLHOUS, Ph.D.</u>, is an expert in organizational communication and intercultural communication. (Department Chair)</p>
	<p><u>ELIZABETH MUNZ, Ph.D.</u>, is a scholar of interpersonal and family communication and her research focuses on parent-child communication during times of transition.</p>
	<p><u>TARYN MYERS, Ph.D.</u>, is a critical cultural scholar, specializing in how race converges with gender, socioeconomic class status, and other identities to reveal the complexities of marginalized people’s lived experiences.</p>
	<p><u>DENISE M. POLK, Ph.D.</u>, is a teacher and scholar of interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and health communication.</p>
	<p><u>NICHOLAS PREPHAN</u>, specializes in counter terrorism and public memory, specifically the commemoration of tragedy and its impact on group identity.</p>
	<p><u>ADAM M. RAINEAR, Ph.D.</u>, specializes in new media and production, specifically examining how individuals use media and technology to communicate about science, risks, and environment. (Graduate Committee member)</p>
	<p><u>MARTIN REMLAND, Ph.D.</u>, is a teacher and scholar of nonverbal communication, interpersonal communication, and communication research.</p>

	<p><u>MEGAN SCHRAEDLEY, Ph.D.</u>, both teaches and employs her qualitative research to address the discursive causes of food (in)security, which can be transformed through collaborative policymaking and community organizing practices. (Graduate Committee member)</p>
	<p><u>PHILIP A. THOMPSEN, Ph.D.</u>, is a scholar of communication media and technology, with interests in broadcast performance. He helped establish our campus radio station, WCUR-FM, and currently serves as its faculty advisor.</p>
	<p><u>ERYN TRAVIS, Ph.D.</u>, specializes in public relations and strategic communication, with 15 years of practical experience and research interests in political and marketing communication.</p>
	<p><u>JULIA WADDELL, Ph.D.</u>, specializes in media studies, examining mass communication, communication technology and media effects, specifically the impacts and influences of video and digital gaming.</p>

Graduate Program Administration for 2023/2024 Academic Year

Department of Communication and Media

- Graduate Coordinator: Michael P. Boyle
- Department Chair: Lisa Millhous
- Department Secretary: Marisol Padilla

Department Graduate Committee

- Chair: Michael Boyle
- Members: Meghan Mahoney, Adam Rainear, Megan Schraedley

The Graduate School

- Dean of the Graduate School: Lisa Calvano
- Associate Director of Graduate Student Records and Registration: Jill Sweeney
- Associate Director of Graduate Admissions & Outreach: Robert Marco
- Assistant Director of Admissions, College of Arts and Humanities: Nicholas Snyder

Please note that administrative roles and personnel change over time, so the handbook may not reflect changes immediately. Please see the [Department of Communication and Media](#) and WCU’s website for the most up-to-date contacts and information.

III. DEGREE PROGRAM

The Communication and Media Department's master's degree program prepares students with both practical skills and theoretical knowledge through comprehensive mastery of a diverse array of theories, methods, and critical approaches. Our program is also flexible and adaptable to meet your career goals in the modality that best suits your learning.

Grounded in Practical Skills

The Communication Studies M.A. will allow you to master the following critical skills:

- **Information Literacy** – able to identify, select, and use relevant scholarly sources to support their own arguments.
- **Effective Writing Skills** – able to demonstrate effective writing skills in the areas of organization, content, and delivery.
- **Social Influence Strategies** – able to demonstrate social influence strategies to ethically persuade individuals and groups towards specific beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors

Comprehensive Communication Mastery

By the end of your M.A., you will have mastered the following:

- **Communication Theory** – able to identify and demonstrate knowledge of major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in communication.
- **Communication Methods and Research** – able to describe and explain the basic characteristics of the science of communication, including research methods, designs, and analysis.
- **Critical Thinking Ability** – able to demonstrate an ability to identify and evaluate the quality of sources and apply information to make linkages or connections between diverse facts, theories, and observations.
- **Practical Application** – able to apply communication research, theory and strategies to positively influence everyday social life, personally and professionally.

IV. COM M.A. DEGREE PATHS & REQUIREMENTS

The Communication Studies M.A. offers two pathways to degree completion: 1) thesis; and 2) non-thesis. Both include the required core Communication Studies foundations and COM graduate coursework. Further detail on credit distribution for the two pathways can be found below.

Non-Thesis Option (36 credits) – See Appendix A for further details

1. Required Core (21 credits)

COM 501: Theoretical Perspectives on Human Communication (3)

COM 502: Communication Research Methods (3)

15 additional credits selected from departmental offerings

2. Applied Courses (15 credits)

These courses are to be selected from other departments or from communication studies courses. A three-credit or six-credit graduate internship (COM 598) may be selected upon successful completion of the required core but requires graduate coordinator approval.

3. Comprehensive Examinations

Non-thesis students may schedule their comprehensive written examinations in three areas during the semester that, upon completion, they are within six credit hours of completing the program.

Thesis option (36 credits) – See Appendix B for further details

1. Required Core (27 credits)

COM 501: Theoretical Perspectives on Human Communication (3)

COM 502: Communication Research Methods (3)

COM 601: Communication Studies Thesis 1 (3)

COM 602: Communication Studies Thesis 2 (3)

15 additional credits selected from departmental offerings

2. Applied Courses (9 credits)

These courses are to be selected from other departments or from communication studies courses.

3. Thesis Core (6 credits)

COM 601: Thesis 1 (3)

COM 602: Thesis 2 (3)

These courses may be taken consecutively or concurrently.

Sample Programs of Study

(Note: students are not required to take summer classes, and students may attend as full-time or part-time students)

Example A – Non-Thesis

Year 1	Fall COM 501 (3) COM 508 (3) COM 510 (3)	Spring COM 502 (3) COM 506 (3) MKT 500 (3)	Summer COM 568 (3)
Year 2	Fall COM 509 (3) COM 520 (3) MKT 501 (3)	Spring MGT 611 (3) COM 598 (3) <i>(Comprehensive Exams)</i>	

Example B – Thesis

Year 1	Fall COM 501 (3) COM 508 (3) COM 510 (3)	Spring COM 502 (3) COM 506 (3) MGT 501 (3)	Summer MGT 611 (3)
Year 2	Fall COM 509 (3) COM 520 (3) COM 601 (3) <i>(Prospectus Defense)</i>	Spring COM 602 (3) PSY 530 (3) <i>(Thesis Defense)</i>	

V. Other Program Requirements

A. Maintenance in Good Standing

To remain in good standing, you must maintain an overall graduate GPA of 3.0 or above.

B. Admission to Degree Candidacy

At the completion of 12 semester hours (at least nine of which are within the department), a minimum graduate GPA of 3.0 or better must be earned for candidacy to be achieved. Students must complete the proper form which must be obtained through the WCU Graduate Office website. The Graduate Coordinator serves as advisor for all graduate students; however, at candidacy, if a student wishes to have an advisor other than the Graduate Coordinator, s/he may request this change.

C. Graduation Application Timing

The deadline to apply for May graduation is Feb. 1st. The deadline to apply for December graduation is Oct 1st. Please note that while WCU does not have an August graduation for the Graduate Program you may graduate in August without the graduation ceremony. Please refer to the Graduate School Catalog and the Office of the Registrar website for more information about graduation fees and requirements.

Typically, the Graduate Coordinator hoods graduating students along with the Dean of CAH. Students, however, may request another faculty member to hood them at the ceremony. In this case, you should ask the appropriate faculty member, and if that faculty member is available to perform the hooding, please let the Graduate Coordinator know in advance of commencement.

D. Other Graduation Reminders

In order to graduate, make sure that you have completed the following forms:

- **A Degree Candidacy Form** – available online through the Graduate School (please note this should be completed after earning 12 total credit hours, 9 of which are COM classes).
- **The Examining Committee Approval Form** – Students who intend to write a thesis must first have the Examining Committee Approval form completed and signed before the student begins work on the thesis. Students who write comprehensive exams must have their committee sign the Examining Committee Approval form completed by faculty to certify they earned Passing evaluations on all questions.

E. Thesis Process for the Thesis Track

Students who write a master's thesis must first have the “Examining Committee Approval” form and the “Thesis/Doctoral Culminating Project Registration and Research Compliance” form before the student begins work on the thesis (This form is available online through Graduate School and can also be found on the M.A. D2L page). The thesis prospectus and completed thesis must be successfully defended before a faculty examining committee. The requirement of the University is that a student passing the thesis defense will receive no more than one negative vote from the examining committee. However, in the Communication Studies M.A. program, *a unanimous positive vote of the examining committee is required* for a successful defense. Completion of a thesis is advisable for students for whom the M.A. is preparatory for a Ph.D., or other advanced degree program. A thesis also may be a good choice for a student hoping to

demonstrate project management skills to a potential employer. For example, a thesis can be a way to show someone the ability to conceptualize, design, execute, and interpret the results of a project.

Here are further details on the thesis process:

1. Students are required to have completed a minimum of 18 hours of coursework before beginning the steps toward thesis completion.
2. The thesis committee will consist of three Communication and Media faculty members, one of whom will serve as the advisor to the thesis.
3. The Graduate Coordinator will receive a copy of the Examining Committee Approval form or will be notified by the thesis chair once the paperwork has been submitted to the Graduate School.
4. If the proposed thesis uses human participants, the student must secure clearance through the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data.
5. Before the conclusion of the first semester of thesis research (COM 601), the student must submit a prospectus that includes an introduction to the topic, literature review, and methodology. Students who do not complete and defend a prospectus will not be permitted to register for COM 602.
6. After submitting the prospectus, the student must coordinate with their committee chair to schedule an oral defense before their committee. This defense provides an opportunity for the committee to check on the project's progress, clarify expectations for completion, and provide feedback on the project.
7. At the conclusion of the thesis project, an oral defense will be held for the purpose of accepting, recommending changes in, or rejecting the completed thesis. During the defense, the student will present a short summary of the research and then respond to committee members' questions about the research. Committee members will vote to "pass," "pass with revisions," or "fail." Committee members must vote unanimously to pass the thesis.
8. All members of the thesis committee must receive copies of the thesis at least one full week before the selected thesis defense meeting.
9. For planning purposes, check the Graduate School website for deadline information for thesis defenses. Typically, the defense needs to be about a month before the last day of classes.
10. After the oral defense, committee members will sign the signature page, which will be forwarded to Graduate School. From there it will be forwarded to the Provost. Please see the Graduate School webpage for information on the type of paper required and number of signature pages required.
11. After all signatures have been provided, the student is responsible for submitting the thesis to the Graduate School vis Digital Commons. Information about this process is available on the Graduate School webpage.

F. Comprehensive Examination Process for the Non-Thesis Track

STEP I: Notify Graduate Coordinator of Intent and Form Exam Committee

- You should notify the COM Graduate Coordinator of your intent to take the comprehensive exam path no later than the end of the 3rd week of the semester you wish to take the exams.
- Comprehensive Exams are given during the Fall and Spring semesters, typically during the 14th week of the semester.

- You may take exams the semester you will have completed at least 30 graduate credits. For example, you may take comprehensive exams with 24 *earned* credits while currently enrolled in at least 6 credits for a total of 30 credits when the semester ends. However, most students take them their final semester before graduating.
- You should reach out to relevant COM MA faculty members to request comprehensive exam assessment. Notify the Graduate Coordinator who is on your Exam Committee no later than the 5th week of the semester.

STEP II: Request Exams' Assessment

Students should reach out and request Comprehensive Exams' assessment from three members of the Department of Communication and Media faculty. Each of the three faculty members will provide a comprehensive exam question, study guide (distributed mid-semester) and assessment of the exam (the assessment rubric can be found on the COM graduate student D2L page).

Students will be tested on their knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, and synthesis of Social Influence and Communication Studies, specifically:

1. Communication Theory – Students will demonstrate their understanding of Communication and Media theories, reviewing relevant literature, concepts and variables to predict and generalize theory and communication phenomena. Students are encouraged to reach out to their instructor, who has taught Communication Theory (COM 501) or another relevant theory-based
2. Communication Research and Methods – Students will show their understanding of Communication Research and Methods, reviewing relevant literature, concepts, and variables to propose and analyze appropriate methods for communication phenomena. Students are encouraged to reach out to their instructor, who has taught Communication Methods (COM 502) or another relevant methodology-based Communication Studies graduate courses.
3. Applied Communication – The “Applied Area” is an area of expertise that you define in conjunction with a faculty member. This area can center on a specific graduate class (e.g. “Media Effects”) or on a content area that involves a number of classes (e.g. “Interpersonal or Intercultural”). Be sure you clarify what you are selecting as your applied area to the professor who is agreeing to write your question.

STEP III: Prepare to Take the Exams

Comprehensive Exams typically take place during the 14th week of the semester of the Fall and Spring semesters. You will have one week (7 days) to complete all three exams. Comprehensive Exam questions will be sent to you for at-home completion and must be submitted to the specified location (typically electronic) no later than one week from when they were sent. The Graduate Coordinator will direct students how to turn in answers. Each exam should be assessed according to Comprehensive Exams Rubric (see COM MA Forms) and the expectations set by each member of the Exam Committee. Faculty should provide students with a study guide and exam expectations.

Preparation Tips

- Start by review sample questions on the D2L page for our M.A. program.

- Correspond with each member of your Comprehensive Exam Committee. You should ask your committee member what you should do to prepare for your question. While faculty can't give you the question in advance, they can give you a general idea of what the question will look like.
- A general starting point for your preparation would be to go back over the course notes you have taken during your time in the graduate program, paying particular attention to the courses taught by the members of your committee.
- Review the research methods and communication theories you have learned in the program. Try to identify key concepts and examples used to explore communication and leadership that you have learned during your time in the program. Think big picture – major trends in a particular topic area, strengths and weaknesses of different methodologies, etc.

STEP IV: Take the Exams

Comprehensive Exam answers will be assessed based on the demonstration of your knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of Social Influence Communication. Each member of the exam committee will assess answers based on the provided rubric as well as their specific expectations. Faculty will have one week to evaluate comprehensive exam answers and provide students with the following (see COM MA Forms):

- **Pass** indicates that the answer has successfully completed the question. No further revisions are necessary.
- **Fail** indicates that the answer to the question is so inadequate that the student will not be given a chance to rewrite the response. No further revisions are allowed.
- **Revise** indicates that the answer is adequate but needs improvement before warranting a passing grade.
 - Students will have up to two weeks to finish the required revisions and earn faculty approval.
 - If the question is not determined **Pass** within two weeks, graduation may be delayed.
 - **Students must have a Pass** for each comprehensive exam question to meet the requirement for graduation.

STEP V: Graduate!

To ensure a timely graduation, make sure that you have completed not only the requirements of the COM M.A. but also the Graduate School. Check your university email and MyWCU to make sure that you aren't missing any outstanding fees, forms, or flags.

- The Graduate Director will review and approve your degree progress to make sure that you have met all COM M.A. coursework requirements and earned a Pass on all Comprehensive Exams.
- Any certifications earned outside of the Department of Communication and Media will be approved by that relevant administration.
- The Department Chair or faculty representative will review and approve your degree progress to make sure that you have met all COM M.A. coursework requirements and any certificates (optional).
- The Graduate School Dean or representative will review and finalize your Degree Progress to make sure that you have met all COM M.A. coursework requirements and any certificates (optional).

VI. OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE COM M.A. PROGRAM

Internships

As noted above, Graduate students in the Department of Communication and Media may secure internships ranging from 3 to 6 semester hours of credit per semester for a total of 6 credits throughout the program. To qualify for an internship, students must have completed at least 12 credit hours in the Communication Studies M.A. program and have filed the WCU Degree Candidacy Form page obtained through the Graduate School website.

All internship affiliations and organizations must be approved by the Internship Coordinator (who in most cases will be a faculty member other than the Graduate Coordinator) but the ability to take any internship for credit must be first approved by the Graduate Coordinator. You may not enroll yourself in an internship course. Please start the process by contacting the Internship Coordinator as your first step.

Directed Study (COM 599)

The purpose of a Directed Study is for students to undertake their own original research and/or to work with a faculty member in-depth on a research project.

M.A. students in the Department of Communication and Media may request up to 3 semester hours of credit per semester for up to two semesters as “Directed Study” to work with a specific professor on a project or curriculum pursuit outside the classroom setting, which will be counted as an applied course. Students must have completed at least 12 credit hours in the Communication Studies M.A. program and have filed the WCU Degree Candidacy Form through the Graduate School. You may not enroll yourself in a directed studies course. As such, please contact the Graduate Coordinator to find out more about COM 599 options.

Certificate in Digital Media Marketing

The Department of Communication and Media offers a professional certificate in Digital Media Marketing. The Digital Media Marketing certificate is a communication-focused, interdisciplinary program designed to give students exposure to strategic communication, visual communication, analytics, and marketing courses. The certificate requires four courses and can be completed within 1 year. You can earn the certificate as part of your COM MA or as a standalone certificate. Please note that students must officially enroll in the Digital Media Marketing Certificate program. Taking the courses without officially declaring the program will not ensure that you receive your certificate upon completing. Please contact the Graduate Coordinator to enroll in the DMM certificate.

The Digital Media Marketing certificate program combines design and strategic thinking with management, economics, and business skills. This interdisciplinary program gives students a well-rounded approach to problem solving in any industry. WCU's program is 4 courses (12 credits) and is available 100% online. Courses include Strategic Media Content, Integrated Media Marketing, Digital Analytics, Visual Communication. Additional digital media special topic elective courses may also be available to students that count towards the certificate credits.

Students learn about market segmentation and consumer insights, data analysis best practices,

creating engaging content across multiple digital channels, and how to develop strategic digital media plans and content management strategies. Our faculty equip students with the most up-to-date strategies for digital communication success and are dedicated to your personal and professional success.

VII. OTHER POLICIES AND HELPFUL INFORMATION

Departmental Advisement

COM MA students will be assigned to the Department of Communication and Media Graduate Coordinator. Advisors help guide the student through the required courses and criteria that allow each student to successfully graduate with the MA in Communication Studies. Please be aware that having an advisor does not absolve students from responsibility for knowing and meeting University requirements for graduation.

You are ultimately responsible for keeping both your file of progress and forms accurate and up-to-date. When you meet with your advisor, you should review their academic progress. Students should come for advising sessions with a tentative course schedule. You may select a different advisor from their initially assigned advisor once they have been admitted to degree candidacy. You are responsible for enrolling yourself in graduate courses or contacting the appropriate personnel for permission to enroll.

Course Repeat Policy

Graduate students may repeat up to two courses, which are being applied to their degree, and for which they have received a grade of C+, C, or C-. Courses may be repeated only once. Both grades earned for a course will remain on the student's record, however, only the most recent grade will (whether it is higher or lower) be used in the GPA calculation. Receipt of any C+, C, or C- grade applies toward the probation and dismissal policy.

Transfer Credit Policy

West Chester students who wish to take course work at other institutions for credit at West Chester University must obtain approval from their chairperson or graduate coordinator and the associate provost and dean of the Graduate School prior to enrollment. Other restrictions and requirements are the same as those given in the Graduate Catalog.

Academic Probation

Graduate students whose cumulative grade point average falls below 3.00 will be placed on academic probation. Graduate students must raise their GPA to 3.00 by the end of the next semester (or full summer term) in which they register. An additional probationary semester may be granted at the discretion of the graduate dean. If a student fails to meet the conditions of academic probation, the student is subject to dismissal. Graduate students earning a cumulative GPA of 2.00 or lower will be dropped from their graduate program without a probationary period.

A graduate student earning an "F" grade in any course will be dismissed from the University. Exceptions may be made for a course outside the student's discipline upon the recommendation of the graduate coordinator and the approval of the graduate dean. An "F" earned at West Chester University may not be made up at another institution of higher learning for the same course.

Academic Integrity

University Statement on Academic and Personal Integrity

It is the responsibility of each student to adhere to the university's standards for academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity include any act that violates the rights of another student in academic work, that involves misrepresentation of your own work, or that disrupts the instruction of the course. Other violations include (but are not limited to): cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing, which means copying any part of another's work, including A.I., and/or using ideas of another and presenting them as one's own without giving proper credit to the source; selling, purchasing, or exchanging of term papers; falsifying of information; and using your own work from one class to fulfill the assignment for another class without significant modification. Proof of academic misconduct can result in the automatic failure of the course and any two violations will result in the automatic expulsion from the University. For questions regarding Academic Integrity, the No-Grade Policy, Sexual Harassment, or the Student Code of Conduct, students are encouraged to refer to the Department Graduate Handbook, the Graduate Catalog, the *Ram's Eye View*, and the University website at www.wcupa.edu.

The Department of Communication and Media holds a zero tolerance policy about academic integrity. Proof of academic misconduct can result in outcomes ranging from the drop of a letter grade for the course to the automatic failure and removal from the course. Professors may determine whether violations are major or minor and may choose how they wish to pursue the violation and have the right to file the infraction with the department and/or WCU Graduate School. Should a student appeal a violation and is still found to have engaged in academic misconduct, the minimum penalty will be the drop of a letter grade for the course. Any student found guilty of a second infraction of academic integrity (regardless of intentionality or the size of the infraction) will receive an F in the course, resulting in dismissal from the University without the ability to appeal.

For questions regarding Academic Integrity, the No-Grade Policy, Sexual Harassment, or the Student Code of Conduct, students are encouraged to refer to the Communication Department's Graduate Handbook, the Graduate Catalogue, and the University website at www.wcupa.edu. For policies and procedures for handling cases of plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity, please refer to the Graduate Catalog. However, please note that one possible sanction for students found guilty of a violation is that they may be awarded **a grade of "F" for the course. A grade of "F" for the course triggers the graduate policy on automatic dismissal from the University. Students dismissed under these circumstances will not be considered for readmission to another academic program at West Chester University.**

Department Advice for Avoiding Issues Surrounding Academic Integrity:

- All work students present as their own must be their own.
- All work which is presented by students but for which they are indebted to others must be

cited – Always cite quoted material.

- Sources should be cited for oral assignments.
- There should be a clear distinction made between that which is the result of student efforts and that which results from the efforts of others.
- The only exception to these obligations is in the presentation of facts, opinions, concepts, etc. that are widely known.
- Plagiarism is not limited to the use of material taken from professional sources but may also include material taken from other students or A.I.
- Students should retain all notes or other materials prepared by them to meet the assignment until a grade has been received.

Policy on Disruptive Classroom Behavior

Disruptive behavior is defined as an act that is disorderly, that might include but is not limited to that which disrespects, disrupts, harasses, coerces, or abuses, and/or might threaten or harm property or person, so that it interferes with an orderly classroom, teaching process, or learning function. Such behavior is antithetical to academic freedom and to the rights of all citizens and will not be tolerated.

- The first instance of such behavior shall result in an immediate verbal warning by the faculty member.
- The second instance shall result in the expulsion of the student from class for the remainder of the class period.
- Subsequent disruptive behavior may result in the expulsion of the student from the class for the remainder of the semester and the awarding of a grade consistent with course requirements depending upon the point in the course at which the removal took place. A statement of the reason for permanent expulsion from the class shall be given in writing to the student, the chairperson of the student's major department, the chairperson of the department in which the course is offered, and the Registrar.
- The disciplinary actions listed above may be appealed through the informal and formal mechanisms contained in the Academic Appeals Process. An appeal of the grade may be made under the current Grade Appeals Process, but the student may not employ both the Academic Appeals Process and the Grade Appeals Process for relief from the same disciplinary action.
- In addition, disruptive behavior which constitutes a threat to persons and/or property will result in a call to Public Safety and the immediate removal of the disruptive student from the classroom. Extreme instances of disruption can result in removal from the course rather than the immediate class meeting. Any sanctions imposed may be appealed only through the appeals process contained in that document.

Americans with Disabilities Act

If you have a disability that requires accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please present your letter of accommodations and meet with me as soon as possible so that I can support your success in an informed manner. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively. If you would like to know more about West Chester University's Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD), please visit them at 223 Lawrence Center. The OSSD hours of Operation are Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Their phone number is 610-436-2564, their fax number is 610-436-2600, their email address is ossd@wcupa.edu, and their website is at www.wcupa.edu/ussss/ossd.

Emergency Preparedness

All students are encouraged to sign up for the University's free WCU ALERT service, which delivers official WCU emergency text messages directly to your cell phone. For more information and to sign up, visit www.wcupa.edu/wcualert. To report an emergency, call the Department of Public Safety at 610-436-3311.

VIII. GRADUATE COURSES IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

COM 501: Theoretical Perspectives on Human Communication

A comprehensive examination of major theoretical perspectives on human communication ranging from classical to contemporary.

COM 502: Communication Research Methods

An examination of the major issues pertaining to inquiry in human communication, including the nature of inquiry; qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to communication research; moral and ethical standards for human research; the role of the researcher; and comparisons of academic research.

COM 503: Communication & Persuasive Influence

An analysis of major conceptual approaches to persuasion and their implications for understanding influence context and designing pragmatic strategies.

COM 505: Rhetoric and Leadership

The criticism and history of influence will be explored to focus on examples of persuasion through public discourse.

COM 508: Special Topic Seminar

An intensive examination of a selected area within communication study. Topics will vary and will be announced in advance of each semester.

COM 509: Communication & Conflict Resolution

Using both theoretical and activity-centered learning, the student will explore the options available to resolve conflict through communication.

COM 510: Culture, Media and Representation

Course examines how the media constructs ideologies and images of various cultural groups for mass consumption.

COM 511: Understanding Close Relationships

This course is designed to introduce and discuss basic theories, themes, concepts, and controversies in relationships from a communication standpoint. Students will be better equipped to apply theoretical knowledge to repair, maintain, and enhance their own personal relationships.

COM 520: Political Communication

Examines the role communication plays in the political system with a specific focus on campaign communication, political advertising, and media coverage of politics.

COM 535: Communication Competence

This course examines what it means to be a highly competent communicator. Communication competence will be explored across a multitude of communication contexts including interpersonal, organizational, intercultural, and leadership contexts.

COM 551: Public Relations Research and Writing

Familiarizes students with the skills needed to work as a public relations writer and editor. Explores applicable media theories as well as ethical and legal issues.

COM 561: Strategic Media Content

Today's digital environment provides endless distribution options. The purpose of this course is to guide students through the process of creating and maintaining a digital media content strategy. Specifically, students will learn how to apply communication audience research measurements to strategic development of organizational goals. Next, students will apply knowledge towards the development of a strategic digital marketing plan for distribution. In this phase, students will study various social media platforms and the function and audience for each, as well as how they work together in cross-platform promotion. Finally, students are expected to complete a final marketing campaign to meet a local organization's digital media goals. The final project will require digital media creation and evaluation.

COM 563: Visual Communication

Digital communication these days is overwhelmingly visual. We consume visual content through websites, streaming video, and social media. The most engaging social media content typically consists of visual images. This course equips students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to create compelling social media visuals in a variety of formats.

COM 568: Special Topics in Digital Media Marketing.

An intensive examination of a selected area within digital media marketing study. Topics will vary and will be announced in advance of each semester.

COM 575: Seminar on Speech Pedagogy

An examination of pedagogical research on the development of effective public speakers. Provides opportunities for both training speakers and critiquing public presentations.

COM 598 (3-6): Graduate Internship in Communication Studies

Supervised professional training in approved communication placements. PREREQ: Approval of department chairperson.

COM 599 (3): Directed Graduate Studies

Research projects, reports, readings in speech communication. PREREQ: Approval of department chairperson.

COM 601 (3): Communication Studies Thesis I

Original research supervised through: 1) the selection of a topic and the conceptualization of the research project, 2) the drafting of a first chapter/prospectus that contains a preliminary literature review and method, and 3) submission and approval of manuscript by thesis committee.

COM 602 (3): Communication Studies Thesis II

Original research supervised through: IRB approval (if necessary), data collection, analysis, writing results, writing thesis chapters, and defense.

IX. LIST OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES M.A. THESES

- Hatchett, A. (2020). *Diversifying Representation in Film: An Examination of Racial and Ethnic Inclusivity in Black Panther and Crazy Rich Asians*.
- Pollino, M. (2018). *Cross-Borders Mergers and Acquisitions: An Examination of Company and Third-Party Portrayals of Organizational Culture*.
- Booker, J. (2017). *Don't Touch My Hair: Rhetorical Messages of Black Hair Through Black Culture*.
- Valenta, D. J. (2016). *The performing bullying project: (Re)Constructing identity in narrative and performance analysis*.
- Fourney, S. (2014). *Do you see me now? Black masculinity, the good/bad paradigm, and the black athlete: Scripting LeBron James before and after "The Decision."*
- Keating, S.G. (2014). *Lowering classroom communication apprehension levels in the undergraduate communication course: Translation of effect from Web 2.0 to classroom*.
- Matthews, R. (2012). *We're really just friends: Outsiders' perceptions of adolescent cross-sex friendships*.
- Thomas, S. (2012). *The orientation: An exploration of how identity and status influence college adjustment*.
- Andersen, K.R. (2010). *Media and law enforcement relations: A study of fugitive safe surrender as a working partnership*.
- Gesualdi, M. (2009). *Working mothers and job commitment in online news*.
- Peirce, M.L. (2008). *Interrogation, terrorism, and fear: A content analysis of Jack Bauer's world*.
- Lucas, P.L. (2007). *Femintendo: A feminist criticism of Animal*.
- Anterbridge, K.M. (2005). *Perceptions of the communication of sexual harassment in the military*.
- Schmidt, H. (2004). *Playing the part: Relationship communication and the creation of the university tutor role*.
- Every, D.R. (2002). *Short term sojourners: Making sense of coming home, a preliminary examination of short term sojourners reentry*.
- Heinlein, M.A. (2002). *Discovering the gifts of time: Linking communication and volunteerism*.
- Lacey, N.K. (2001). *"Nigga" in me: Exploring the significance of informal Black talk*.
- DeAngelis, J.L. (2000). *Chivalrous rhetoric: A study of Jefferson Davis' 1862 Jackson, Mississippi address*.
- Canning, T.A. (1999). *Observer perceptions of a simulated online tutoring environment: A contribution to Internet pedagogy*.
- Piatkowski, C.A. (1998). *Small children and peer conflict*.

- Piersol, J.F. (1998). *Pedaling my way to narrative ecstasy: An ethnography of the 24 hours of Canaan.*
- Harper, V. (1997). *Norplant in the newspapers: A functional analysis of newspaper content.*
- Carusi, D.L. (1996). *Performance as pedagogy: a study of using performance to teach literature.*
- Kirkbride, A. (1996). *Mothers and daughters: perceptions in female role models at three critical stages of adolescence.*
- Tsutui, K. (1996). *Leader's behaviors in conflict management situations: comparing Japanese and American managers.*
- Brown, T.J. (1994). *President Jimmy Carter and the 1980 United States Summer Olympic Boycott: A fantasy theme analysis of three messages.*
- Capuano, K.A. (1994). *Needs of nontraditional students in contemporary forensic programs.*

**For more information, please visit our department website at
communication.wcupa.edu**

Appendix A: Advising Sheet (Non-Thesis Pathway)

Non-Thesis/Comprehensive Exam Option (36 credit hours)

Required M.A. Courses (All Students)

- _____ COM 501 (Theoretical Perspectives on Human Communication)
- _____ COM 502 (Communication Research Methods)

Five Elective Graduate Courses in the Communication Department

- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)
- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)
- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)
- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)
- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)

Five Elective Graduate Courses (Or, Internship Credits)

***internships must be approved by the graduate coordinator**

- _____ Graduate Level Course
- _____ Graduate Level Course
- _____ Graduate Level Course
- _____ Graduate Level Course/3 Internship Credits
- _____ Graduate Level Course/3 Internship Credits

_____ Degree Candidacy

Note: After completing 12 graduate-level credits, of which at least 9 credits are within the department, students must complete a Degree Candidacy form (form available on Graduate School website). Students must have a graduate GPA of 3.0 or better to achieve candidacy. After candidacy, students may elect to keep their assigned advisor or to select a new advisor.

_____ Successful Completion of Comprehensive Exams

_____ Email Graduate Coordinator with Intent to take COMPs at the start of your final semester in the program.

_____ Must assemble Comprehensive Exam Committee.

_____ Should meet with/contact Committee Members for studying guidelines.

_____ Must write for 2 hours on Communication Research, 2 hours on Communication Theory, and 2 hours on an Applied Area (Area of Specialty), date will be announced semester-to-semester but will be toward the end of semester.

_____ Student must pass written portion in all three comprehensive exam areas.

Appendix B: Advising Sheet (Thesis Pathway)

Thesis Option (36 credit hours)

Required M.A. Courses

- _____ COM 501 (Theoretical Perspectives on Human Communication)
- _____ COM 502 (Communication Research Methods)
- _____ COM 601 (Communication Studies Thesis – 3 Credits)
- _____ COM 602 (Communication Studies Thesis – 3 Credits)

Five Elective Graduate Courses in the Communication Department

- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)
- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)
- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)
- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)
- COM _____ (Communication Department Course)

Three Elective Graduate Courses

- _____ Graduate Level Course
- _____ Graduate Level Course
- _____ Graduate Level Course

_____ Degree Candidacy

Note: After completing 12 graduate-level credits, of which at least 9 credits are within the department, students must complete a Degree Candidacy form (form available on Graduate School website). Students must have a graduate GPA of 3.0 or better to achieve candidacy. After candidacy, students may elect to keep their assigned advisor or to select a new advisor.

_____ Thesis Prospectus

- _____ Assemble Thesis Committee (3 members).
- _____ Submit Examination Committee form to Graduate School.
- _____ Submit Thesis Research Compliance form to Graduate School.
- _____ Submit thesis to IRB if necessary (*before collecting data*).
- _____ Submit Prospectus including introduction, literature review, and methodology.
- _____ Defend Prospectus before Committee.

_____ Completion of Thesis

- _____ Defense must take place at least one month prior to last day of classes.
- _____ Must successfully pass oral defense of thesis.
- _____ Thesis must be approved by Departmental Committee.
- _____ Thesis must be approved by Dean of the Graduate School.
- _____ Thesis must be submitted to Graduate School via Digital Commons