



Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies
Graduate Studies Manual

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WELCOME TO COMMUNICATION AND RHETORICAL STUDIES

Welcome to the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies' Graduate Program. The Graduate Studies Program Coordinator will be your acting advisor until you designate your Major Advisor at or before the end of your first year of studies. The Coordinator will answer your questions and help you construct your course of studies. In addition, you are encouraged to consult publications of the Graduate School and the College of Visual and Performing Arts.

You should introduce yourself to other faculty members as soon as possible. The Department's faculty encourages you to meet with each of them, find out what their interests are, and let them know what you are interested in. You should visit them during their office hours, or make an appointment when it is convenient for you.

Overview

This document is intended to give you a "big picture" of graduate studies in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies—to set an ethic and give you an idea of what we expect of our graduate students. In addition, it is offered as an advising tool and should be consulted as you make decisions and seek information concerning the courses you take, course-load requirements, eligibility for registering for given courses, and other important standards which must be met in order to smoothly traverse the graduate curriculum. To this end, we have included an overview of the requirements, some important guidelines that must be followed, information related to financial aid, and resources available for your use in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies.

The Graduate Program

All students are required to complete a minimum of 33 credit hours of graduate level coursework. In addition:

At least 21 credit hours must be Communication & Rhetoric courses.

At least 15 credit hours must be 600 level or above.

A maximum of 6 credit hours of "Independent Studies" are allowed.

All students are required to complete the following 6 credit hours of core coursework:

CRS 601 Pro-seminar in Communication

CRS 603 Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric

In addition to the 9 credit hours of required courses above, students can pursue course work in any of the following areas of study:

1. Social Interaction and Culture
2. Community and Organizational Dialogue
3. Rhetorical Theory and Criticism

Students may take a maximum of 9 credit hours from other graduate programs within the University. These "other" courses should be clearly related to the student's individual emphasis and cannot be taken as substitutes for communication and rhetorical studies courses.

Exit Options:

Students may choose to receive the M.A. or the M.S. degree. Both degrees are offered with one of two potential exit options: a thesis option and a non-thesis (comprehensive exams) option.

Students electing to write a thesis must complete 27 credit hours of coursework plus 6 credit hours of thesis work.

Students electing to take the non-thesis option must complete 33 credit hours of coursework and pass a comprehensive examination consisting of written and oral components.

Appropriate Progress Toward The Degree

In order to continue in good standing in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies, all students are expected to make appropriate progress toward completion of the degree. At the beginning of the second semester of studies, each graduate student will receive a written evaluation of her or his general performance from the Graduate Program Coordinator. Students will continue to receive regular input on the state of their degree progress and general professional development thereafter. An Evaluation Form is attached as Appendix A.

In order to continue in good standing in the program all graduate students must meet the following minimum expectations:

1. A grade point average in Communication & Rhetorical Studies courses of "B" (3.0) or better, and an overall grade point average of "B-" (2.67) or better.
2. Coursework where a grade of "Incomplete" is assigned must be finished by the end of the next semester. A petition must be submitted stipulating the date when the work will be completed. The grade of "Incomplete" is assigned only in unusual circumstances (for

example, protracted illness). Otherwise, it is expected that students will appropriately manage their time and complete their coursework within normal deadlines.

3. Full-Time status must be maintained:

Regular Students: 12 credit hours (9 credit hours when serving as a TA or having a Fellowship).

International Full GTAs Fulfilling Language Requirements: 6 credit hours, attendance and successful completion of all language labs.

Full GTAs: 9 credit hours (6 credit hours when working on thesis or taking comprehensive exams).

Half GTAs: 9 credit hours (6 credit hours when working on thesis or taking comprehensive exams).

4. No student may register for "Degree in Progress" (GRD 998) unless she or he has completed all coursework requirements, but has not yet completed the thesis, and is permitted to stay in the program by the Director of graduate studies (the Chair of the Department).

5. Non-thesis students taking comprehensive examinations may not register for "Degree in Progress." GTAs must take a minimum of 6 credit hours of concurrent coursework and take their comprehensive exams during the semester they study for them. For example, if a Full GTA completes 24 credit hours before the Fall semester of her or his second year, she or he may take 6 credit hours of coursework and complete the comprehensive exams during the Fall semester of the second year. However, if the same student elects to take the comprehensive examination in the Spring semester, the student is required to take 9 credit hours of coursework in the Fall and 6 credit hours in the Spring, even though this adds up to more than the required minimum of 33 credit hours. Regular students must take a minimum of 9 credit hours of concurrent coursework and take their comprehensive exams during the semester they study for them. Comprehensive exams are not offered during Summer.

7. By April 15 of the first year, students must declare in writing to the Graduate Program Coordinator: (1) their area of individual emphasis; (2) whether they are taking the thesis or non-thesis (comprehensive exams) option; and (3) the name of the professor who has agreed to be their Major Advisor (i.e., Chair of thesis committee, Director of the faculty-guided research project, or Chair of the comprehensive examination committee). A *Declaration Form* is attached as Appendix B

8. All students are expected to take required core-courses in the sequence they are offered: CRS 601, CRS 603, and CRS 605 during the Fall semester of first year.
9. All students must fill out a *Program of Study* Form during their first semester of studies. These are available in the main office of the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies and at the Graduate School in Bowne Hall.
10. Exceptions to 1-8 above must be approved by petition.

Timeline projection:

By April 15 of the first year – Exit option declaration which identifies the student’s advisor, the selected exit option, thesis proposal and defense of proposal date (usually defended during Fall semester of the second year) as well as an overview of the subject matter (e.g., organizational communication in non-profits) and method (e.g., discourse analysis).

By December 15 – Defense of thesis proposal deadline.

By April 15- Defense of the Master’s Thesis (to ensure May graduation). Note: Defense meetings will not take place during summer as faculty members have no contractual obligations to the university during the summer months.

Financial Aid

See the *CVPA Graduate Study Prospectus* for information on scholarships, loans, fellowships, and other sources of funding. In addition, there are reference materials available for your use at the Graduate School. You may visit the College's home page at <http://vpa.syr.edu>, where additional information is offered at the Graduate Student Services link. Also, you may consult the graduate student section of the *College of Visual and Performing Arts Undergraduate and Graduate Student Handbook*. You should have received a copy in your Department mailbox. You may request a copy from the Office of Graduate Student Services, 204 Crouse College--443-3089.

All graduate students are encouraged to present scholarly papers at conventions or conferences. There is modest funding available through the Graduate School to support this important dimension of graduate studies. In addition, there is modest funding available to support summer research or creative work. In each case, the funding is awarded on a competitive basis given the merit of your proposed project. Proposal forms are available through the Graduate School. Deadlines shift from year to year. You should contact the Graduate School as soon as possible for further information.

Facilities

All graduate students have access to the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies’ computer facility. Each student should request a key to the facility during the first week of classes (keys can be obtained from the assistant to the department chair). In addition, all graduate students are encouraged to open a computer account as soon as they arrive on campus.

All graduate students will be assigned personal mailboxes in the main office. All

graduate students are expected to check their mail on a regular basis—important information is frequently delivered through campus mail and in the form of memos. It is your responsibility to keep apprised of deadlines and other significant events posted in your mailboxes.

Each GTA will be assigned a desk in the GTA office. Some

Encouraging Words

We want you to succeed in our program. We will do all we can to enable you to do so. When you have questions, the Graduate Program Coordinator will be glad to meet with any student.

We look forward to an exciting and productive adventure with you.

The Thesis Option

Should I write a thesis?

Generally, students should take the thesis option if they intend to continue their graduate studies and pursue the Ph.D. In some cases, students with a specialized professional interest may take the thesis option as a way of gaining practical expertise. However, in either case, the thesis should be viewed as a highly supervised preparation for more advanced independent research or professional practice.

What is a Master's thesis?

A Master's thesis is a series of connected essays making up the chapters of the total document. Usually, a thesis has four chapters. The shape and length of the thesis should be determined by the question you address and the method you employ to address it.

Theses usually range in length from 50 to 125 pages. Again, the length of the thesis depends on the question you address and the method you employ to address it. There are theses on file with the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies. They will give you a good idea of what a Master's thesis should look like.

The question you address in your thesis should make a modest contribution to your chosen area of specialization. This usually entails replicating or extending previous research. The question should emerge from coursework and the thesis should build on an extended interest coupled to an established literature addressing the interest. Often, the thesis may be developed out of a term paper written during the first two semesters of graduate studies, or from undergraduate or professional experience carried forward in graduate studies. The subject matter and methods of a thesis can widely vary, from sustained analysis of primary texts or empirical data to mainly theoretical inquiry or even applied communication research. In all cases, students should consult in depth with their advisors to shape the best possible thesis project for his or her needs.

Usually, the first chapter of your thesis consists of a statement of the problem and an overview of the literature which is suggestive of its coherence and relevance to the field of communication and rhetorical studies. Subsequent chapters will vary according to the question addressed and method employed, but the final chapter should discuss the implications of the study for future research.

How do I start a thesis?

By April 15, of your first year of graduate studies, before the end of the Spring semester, you are required to declare in writing to the Graduate Studies Program Coordinator whether you intend to take the thesis option. In your declaration (a one page document) you should name your thesis advisor (who will also be your major advisor). In consultation with you, your thesis advisor will appoint a thesis committee made up of two additional faculty members. Next, in consultation with your advisor, you will write a

thesis prospectus. The prospectus should overview your intended program of research. It should (not necessarily in the following order) lay out the chapters of the thesis, provide a rationale for the study, explain how the study will be undertaken and completed, and finally, provide evidence that there are resources available which will enable the timely completion of the project. Usually, the prospectus will provide focus and substance for initial portions of your thesis.

The prospectus must be approved by your committee at the latest by December 15 of your third semester. At this time you may register for up to 6 hours of thesis credit and proceed with your study. The 6 hours of thesis credit count toward the 33 credit hours you need to complete the Master's degree.

Once the thesis has been written (in close consultation with your advisor) and appears to be defensible, your advisor will submit copies of the thesis to your committee for their general approval. If generally approved, an oral examination committee will be appointed. During the final weeks of your final semester you will orally defend your thesis.

There is a style manual available at the Graduate School (303 Bowne Hall). The style manual outlines the way your thesis and/or faculty-guided research project should be formatted and explains the procedures for submitting final copies of the thesis to the library, and for the conduct of the oral defense of the thesis.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to ask the Graduate Studies Program Coordinator for the answers. If the Coordinator cannot answer your questions, the Coordinator will be able to give you advice about who to ask. Also, information is available at the College's web site: <http://vpa.syr.edu> from the Graduate Student Services link. You should also consult the *College of Visual and Performing Arts Undergraduate and Graduate Student Manual* for useful information. You should have received a copy in your mailbox. You may obtain a copy from the Office of Graduate Student Services, 204 Crouse College.

Comprehensive Examination Policy for the Degree of Master of Arts or Master of Science

Overview

The comprehensive examination is the second of two available exit options from which M.A. candidates must choose and successfully complete in order to receive their M.A. degree. Comprehensive exams are intended to be a culmination of the individual student's educational experience and refinement of his or her research interests as part of our program. The format is designed to allow M.A. candidates to showcase their developing mastery of key concepts, intellectual works, and modes of scholarly analysis. This exam option should constitute a chance for students to display scholarly rigor in equal measure to the thesis option, only in a different format. The comprehensive examination is not a repetition of course examinations. They invite candidates to reflect on their particular learning experiences and to demonstrate their knowledge of the field of communication and rhetorical studies, as well as their selected area of individual emphasis within the field.

The department wishes to stress that the comprehensive examination is not intended to be a less impressive, secondary option to that of an M.A. thesis. Both should require intensive preparation and reflect academic achievements of which the student in question can be proud. The existence of two distinct exit options merely reflects the fact that different students are best served by different educational outcomes.

Students may take their comprehensive exams only after successful completion of prior degree requirements. More specifically, comprehensive exams can only be scheduled after a student's completion of his or her elective coursework as well as the following two required departmental seminars:

1. *CRS 601* Proseminar in Communication
2. *CRS 603* Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric

Scheduling

Students who elect to take comprehensive exams will decide on a committee composed of one permanent faculty advisor and two other departmental graduate faculty members by April 15 of their first year in the program (as all M.A. candidates are required to do, irrespective of exit option). The decision to take comprehensive exams may occur in one of two primary ways:

1. A student may wish to take this exit option from the beginning of their time in the program and select committee members accordingly.
2. A student may intend to take the thesis option in order to complete his or her degree but decide, in subsequent consultation with his or her faculty advisor, that the comprehensive examination is a more fitting exit option for his or her personal needs.

All students who decide to take comprehensive examinations must declare their intention to do so by December 15 of their third semester in the program.

Format

Students will be allowed 30 days to complete their comprehensive exams. The starting date must be proposed by the student and approved by his or her committee well in advance in order to ensure proper time for preparation. The 30-day period will be divided as follows:

- 3 examination questions (one from each committee member) in take-home, open book format.
- Students will receive their questions at the beginning of each week and write their responses to one question per week (for 3 weeks total).
- Before the beginning of the 30-day period, an oral defense will be scheduled sometime during the fourth and final week the comprehensive exams.

Comprehensive exam questions will be administered as follows:

- 1 Methods Question (specifically tailored to the student's individual research interests—i.e., not a random question about any particular method).
- 1 Analysis Question (in which the student is asked to apply his or her prior studies to the analysis of some communicative or rhetorical artifact).
- 1 question from 3-5 questions the student submitted to the committee prior to the start of his or her 30-day exam period (covering any possible combination of theoretical, methodological, historical, or analytic topics).

M.A. candidates must successfully pass their comprehensive examinations according to annual degree requirement dates established by the Graduate School in order to graduate on time. Upon successful completion of a student's examinations, his or her permanent faculty advisor will inform the Graduate School (303 Bowne Hall) by means of a signed memo addressed to the College of Visual and Performing Arts' Graduate Recorder. Copies of the signed memo also should be forwarded to the Office of Graduate Student Services, 204 Crouse College and to the graduating student.

APPENDIX A
Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSESSMENT FORM

Communication and Rhetorical Studies

Student Name _____

Relationship to Student (*Advisor, Instructor, TA Supervisor*) _____

If instructor or supervisor, which course(s)? _____

Assess the student's progress/achievement in the following areas:

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

TEACHING PERFORMANCE

DEPARTMENTAL CITIZENSHIP

Faculty Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B
Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies

EXIT OPTION DECLARATION FORM

All M.A. candidates in the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies are required to complete this form by April 15 of their second semester (students admitted for the Spring semester must complete the form by November 15 of their second semester). The form must be signed by the student, the student's advisor, and submitted to the departmental Graduate Program Coordinator by the aforementioned date.

STUDENT _____

ADVISOR _____

EXIT OPTION (check one)

_____ Thesis _____ Comprehensive Examination

PROSPECTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (*brief description of subject matter and research goals*):

PRELIMINARY EXIT OPTION PROPOSAL DEFENSE DATE: _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Advisor Signature _____ Date _____

Graduate Program Coordinator Signature _____ Date _____