

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND RHETORICAL STUDIES**

**GRADUATE STUDIES MANUAL**

Revised August 2018  
Revised March 2017  
Revised and Approved July 2014  
Revised and Approved January 31, 2011  
Revised and Approved April 1997  
Revised and Approved December 1992  
Approved August 1992

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## WELCOME TO COMMUNICATION AND RHETORICAL STUDIES

Welcome to the Department of Communication and 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 and 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 and Rhetorical Studies.

### Coursework

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

- At least 24 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 Language, Interaction & Culture
- CRS 603 Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric

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 completing the MA program may take either a thesis option or a non-thesis (comprehensive exams) option.

1. **Thesis** — Students electing to write a thesis must complete **27 credit hours** of coursework plus **6 credit hours** of thesis work.
2. **Non-thesis**— 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 and 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 and 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 complete their coursework within normal deadlines.

3. Full-time status (9 credit ours per semester) must be maintained.
4. By April 15 of the first year, students must declare in writing to the Graduate Program Coordinator whether they are taking the thesis or non-thesis (comprehensive exams) option and the name of the professor who has agreed to be their major advisor (chair of their thesis committee). There is an Exit Option Declaration Form appended to this document.
5. All students are expected to take required core-courses --CRS 601 and CRS 603--during the fall semester of the first year.

### Timeline

1. **April 15 of the first year**
  - a. Exit option declaration should identify 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).
2. By December 15
  - a. Defense of thesis proposal deadline.
3. By April 15
  - a. Defense of the Master's Thesis or Comprehensive Exams (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](#) where additional information is offered at the [Graduate Student Services](#). Also, you may consult the graduate student section of the [College of Visual and Performing Arts Undergraduate and Graduate Student Handbook \[PDF 609KB\]](#). 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 Department, the College of Visual and Performing Arts, and the Graduate Student Organization to support this important dimension of graduate studies. Please contact the Graduate Coordinator for more information about how to apply.

### Facilities

All graduate students have access to the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies' computer facility.

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.

All graduate students have access to the GTA office/community space. Each graduate student will be assigned a work space in the GTA office.

### Future Professoriate Program

The FPP is a University-wide pedagogy program for graduate students. There are university-wide and local programming. In the Department, the Graduate Coordinator plans and schedules sessions, usually 4 or 5 across the year, based on students' interests and needs regarding teaching and professionalization. Every year, graduate students should indicate their interest in the program to get signed up.

At the end of every year, students report on the sessions they attended, both university-wide and in the Department. Each student completing the year receives a **\$150 stipend**. At graduation, students who complete the program receive a "Certificate in University Teaching" from the Graduate School. To receive the CUT, students must have a supervised teaching experience, in which a faculty member observes and evaluates your teaching, and produce a teaching portfolio. There is a university-wide teaching excellence competition which you may enter (optional). Read more about the [future professoriate program](#).

### Website for Graduate Students

We have a [website just for current CRS graduate students](#). It contains important information, necessary forms, FPP information, and as a calendar of conference and other deadlines.

### 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 proposal. The proposal 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 proposal will provide focus and substance for initial portions of your thesis.

The proposal 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.

If you do not defend a thesis proposal by December 15 of your third semester, it will be assumed that you are taking the comprehensive exam option.

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 whom to ask. Also, information is available at [VPA's Graduate Student Resources page](#). 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 Option

### 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.

The Department wishes to stress that the comprehensive examination is not regarded as an inferior alternative to the M.A. thesis. Each requires intensive preparation and reflects academic achievements of which the student can be proud.

Students may take their comprehensive exams only after successful completion of prior degree requirements, including the following two required departmental seminars:

1. *CRS 601* Language, Interaction & Culture
2. *CRS 603* Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric

These two courses are part of a total of 33 hours of regular coursework. Students taking the exam option must take three courses per semester for three semesters and two additional courses in the spring of their final year. There are no course credits for comprehensive exams.

### Committee:

Students who elect to take comprehensive exams will have a committee consisting of the professor for *CRS 601*, the professor for *603*, and one other faculty member in a subject area of the student's choosing.

### Decision to Take the Exam Option:

The decision to take comprehensive exams may occur in one of three ways:

1. A student may wish to take this exit option from the beginning of their time in the program, and submit that intention on the Exit Option form due by April 15 of the first year.
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.
3. If a student does not pass an oral defense of a thesis proposal by the end of their third semester, it will be assumed that the student has selected the exam option.
4. The decision to take the comprehensive exam option must be final by December 15 of their third semester in the program.

### Format

Students will be allowed the entire semester to prepare for and write their exams.

Committee members will present the student with questions near the start of the student's last term.

The exam will include 2 questions to be based on the literatures of the two required courses (601 and 603). The professors of the 2 required courses will write one question each based on the required course material and submit them to the Graduate Coordinator for distribution to the student. The student will ask a third professor to submit a question in a third area of their choosing. These professors will also comprise the committee for the student's oral defense of the exam.

Answers will take the form of 12-15 page papers.

1. The student should schedule an oral defense to be held after completion of the written exam and no later than May 1.
2. 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, the Graduate Coordinator will inform the Graduate School 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 and to the graduating student.

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

## FIRST-YEAR GRADUATE STUDENT ASSESSMENT FORM

**Communication and Rhetorical Studies**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Student (*Advisor, Instructor, TA Supervisor*) \_\_\_\_\_

If instructor or supervisor, which course(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

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

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

TEACHING PERFORMANCE

DEPARTMENTAL CITIZENSHIP

Faculty Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date

