

# **Department of Communication and Media**

## **GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

**Fall 2019**

Welcome to the West Chester University graduate program in the Department of Communication and Media. Within the pages of this handbook, you will find useful information for each stage as you progress through our program. The Graduate Program Handbook is intended to provide you with guidance. Its contents are regularly reviewed and may change at the discretion of the department. Therefore, if you have any questions about the application or interpretation of the policies, procedures, or other provisions of this handbook, you may also wish to consult the University's Graduate Catalog or consult with the Graduate Coordinator.

### **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.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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. Students are encouraged to keep this handbook throughout their association with the department. 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.

## II. FACULTY AND STAFF

The faculty and staff in the Department of Communication and Media are highly trained professionals who are dedicated to helping students. They are willing and able to assist in many and various academic matters. The following is a listing of the faculty and their teaching/research interests:

**MICHAEL P. BOYLE, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of mass communication, news coverage of social conflict, news framing, and television production.

**CAMILO C. DÍAZ PINO, Ph.D.**, 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 kid's media.

**ANITA FOEMAN, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of intercultural communication, organizational communication, and interpersonal communication.

**ROGER DAVIS GATCHET, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of rhetoric and oral history. His research focuses on popular culture, public memory and tourism, and the oral history of diverse communities.

**MAXINE GESUALDI, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of organizational communication, strategic communication and public relations.

**ELAINE JENKS, Ph.D.**, studies interpersonal and relational communication with research interests in communication and visual impairment, friendship communication, and health communication.

**MARIA (OLA) KOPACZ, Ph.D.**, studies mass communication with a focus on racial stereotyping and political reasoning. She teaches communication research, intergroup communication, and public speaking.

**BESSIE LEE LAWTON, Ph.D.**, is interested in issues related to intercultural/interracial communication, communication and power, and public speaking.

**DAVID LEVASSEUR, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of political communication, communication theory, rhetoric, and public address.

**EDWARD LORDAN, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of public relations and editorial communication. He advises the group Students in Communication.

**L. MEGHAN MAHONEY, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of media studies with a focus on new and social media.

**MATTHEW R. MEIER, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of rhetoric and popular culture. His research emphasizes the relationship between comedy and democracy.

**LISA MILLHOUS, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of organizational communication and intercultural communication.

**ELIZABETH MUNZ, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of interpersonal communication with a focus on parent-child communication.

**MICHAEL PEARSON, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of mass media, communication research, and computer-mediated communication.

**DENISE M. POLK, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and health communication.

**MARTIN REMLAND, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of nonverbal communication, interpersonal communication, and communication research.

**MEGAN SCHRAEDLEY, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of organizational communication with a focus on food (in)security, social class, and volunteerism.

**J. KANAN SAWYER, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of social influence with a focus on political communication and business communication.

**PHILIP A. THOMPSEN, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of new media and communication technology. He advises the student newspaper, *The Quad*. He is also the department's webmaster and educational technology coordinator.

**JULIA WADDELL, Ph.D.**, is a teacher and scholar of media and communication technology. Her research focuses on tragedy and crisis communication as well as the impacts and influences of video games.

**MARISOL PADILLA** is the department secretary.

### III. DEGREE PROGRAM

The West Chester Master's Program in Communication Studies focuses on building better leaders by improving their communication skills. Effective leaders must be effective communicators, and effective communicators need to develop a broad array of communication skills. In addition, the M.A. program is designed to provide a broad spectrum of knowledge in communication theory and methodology of the social scientific approach. Our program is intended for students in one of three vocational areas:

#### **New Careers**

As a result of their Masters in Communication Studies, students have launched new careers in Internet Web Design, Training and Development, Community Organization, Consultation, Marketing, Association Management, Public Relations, and Teaching at the secondary, community college, small college, or university level.

#### **Career Development**

Many students pursue their degrees while maintaining positions in the Delaware Valley's major corporations. They seek vocational advances as they acquire the conceptual foundations and professional skills for becoming a leader in their organization's communicative competence.

#### **Continuous Learning**

Some students have used their West Chester M.A. to launch a Ph.D. in Communication Studies and now teach in Universities throughout the United States or work as researchers in the private sector.

As students complete departmental requirements for the M.A. in Communication Studies, students will be able to *demonstrate*:

**Information Literacy** – M.A. Com Studies students will be able to identify, select, and use relevant scholarly sources to support their own arguments.

**Effective Speaking Skills** - M.A. Com Studies students will be able to demonstrate effective speaking skills in the areas of organization, content, and delivery.

**Effective Writing Skills** - M.A. Com Studies students will be able to demonstrate effective writing skills in the areas of organization, content, and delivery.

In addition to these three core learning outcomes, students encounter opportunities to hone the following competencies which relate to information literacy, speaking competency, and writing competency. Under the following learning outcomes students will be able to:

**Knowledge of Communication Theory** – M.A. Com Studies students will be able to identify/demonstrate knowledge of major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in communication.

**Critical Thinking Ability** - M.A. Com Studies students will be able to demonstrate an ability to identify and evaluate the quality of sources/information and apply information to make linkages or connections between diverse facts, theories, and observations.

**Research Skills** - Students who enroll in the M.A. Communication Studies will be able to describe and explain the basic characteristics of the science of communication, different research methods used by communication scholars, strengths/weaknesses of research designs, and evaluate the appropriateness of conclusions of research studies.

**Ethical Decision-making** - Students enrolled in the M.A. Communication Studies will be able to use information and technology ethically and responsibly; and act ethically both in personal and professional situations.

## IV. Degree Requirements

### A. Non-Thesis/Applied Curriculum Option (36 credits)

#### 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.

### B. Thesis option (36 credits)

#### 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. Comprehensive Examinations

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 students also will defend their theses orally.

### C. 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

<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>
	COM 502(3)	COM 503(3)	COM 508(3)
	COM 501(3)	COM 506(3)	
	COM 505(3)	MKT 500(3)	
<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	
	COM 509(3)	MGT 611(3)	
	COM 520(3)	COM 598(3)	
	MKT 501(3)	(Comprehensive Exams)	

**Example B – Thesis**

<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Fall</b> COM 502(3) COM 501(3) COM 505(3)	<b>Spring</b> COM 503(3) COM 506(3) MGT 501(3)	<b>Summer</b> MGT 611(3)
<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Fall</b> COM 509(3) COM 520(3) COM 601(3) (Comprehensive Exams)	<b>Spring</b> COM 602(3) PSY 530(3)	

**V. Other Program Requirements****A. Maintenance in Good Standing**

To remain in good standing, a student must maintain a minimum, 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**

Students have to apply for graduation. The deadline for May graduation is Feb. 1st. The deadline for December graduation is Oct 1st. WCU does not have an August graduation for the Graduate Program; however, students may graduate in August without the graduation ceremony. Students wishing to graduate in August will see that their transcripts will say “Degree Conferred” by early September and they will receive their diploma’s mid-October. 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, the student 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:**

1. **A Degree Candidacy Form** – available online through the Graduate School (please note this should be completed after earning 12 credit hours, 9 of which are COM classes). (See Section V, B.)
2. **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. (See Section VI, D).

## E. Comprehensive Examinations

Comprehensive Exams are designed to give you the opportunity to synthesize the material you have learned during your master's coursework. These types of questions tend to be larger, broad questions about communication in three areas: 1) research; 2) leadership; and 3) your applied area. Nearly everyone who has gone through the comprehensive examination process admits to feeling anxiety and pressure as the exams approach. However, consider another perspective as you prepare for Comprehensive Exams. You have worked hard to really understand communication and leadership at a richer, more meaningful level than you could in your undergraduate studies. Your Comprehensive Examinations provide you with a chance to show yourself – and the professors who have worked with you – that you really have come to “master” the subject that you are most interested in knowing. Undeniably, the anxiety will be there, but you can also look at these essays as an excellent opportunity to bring together and create meaning from all that you have learned in the program.

### STEP I: Notify the Graduate Coordinator

Notify the Graduate Coordinator of your intent to take comprehensive exams by the end of the third week of the semester during which you plan to take them.

- Remember, Comprehensive Exams are only given during the fall and spring semesters (No comprehensive exams are given over the summer).
- You can take comprehensive exams with up to six credits remaining in the program (for example, you could take the exams in Spring 2018 if by the end of spring 2018 you will have 30 credits completed in the program).

### STEP II: Reserve the Comprehensive Exam dates.

Unless the Graduate Coordinator announces a different date, COMPs will take place on the Friday of the 14<sup>th</sup> week of both the fall and the spring semester. A room will be reserved for students taking exams. You will need to bring your own laptop. Questions will be administered in the following order:

- 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Research Question
- 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Break
- 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Theory Question
- 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Lunch
- 2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Applied Question

**STEP III: Put Together Your Comprehensive Exam Committee.**

- The Comprehensive Exam Committee must consist of AT LEAST two faculty members from the Communication and Media Department (that is, one Communication faculty member can write two of your questions). The faculty members should have taught the course/content area.
- You need to select/ask a faculty member to write a Theory Question, a faculty member to write a Research Question, and a faculty member to write an Applied Area Question.
- 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.
- To assemble your Committee, simply ask faculty members if they would be willing to write/grade one (or more) of your Comprehensive Exam questions. Be certain that each member on your Committee knows what question(s) he/she will be writing for you. In other words, don’t just ask a faculty member to serve on your Committee. Ask if he/she would be willing to write your Applied Area Question, etc.

**STEP IV: Notifying the Graduate Coordinator.**

When your Comprehensive Exam Committee has been assembled, you must notify the Graduate Coordinator in writing (email is fine). Specifically, let the Graduate Coordinator know who will be serving on your Committee and what question(s) will be written by each Committee member (e.g. “Dr. Munz will be writing my Applied Area Question in \_\_\_\_, Dr. Gatchet will be writing my Theory Question, and Dr. Kopacz will be writing my Research Question). You should notify the Graduate Coordinator of your Exam Committee by the end of the sixth week of the semester.

**STEP V: Preparing for the Exams**

- To help guide your preparation/studying, you should correspond with each member of your Comprehensive Exam Committee. You should ask your Committee member what you should be studying/focusing on in order to prepare for his/her question.
- Whereas faculty members cannot give you the Comprehensive Exam 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 (this information can be helpful on a number of questions). 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.

- Here are some examples of COMP questions for each of the three areas. Note the differences in various faculty approaches. It would be very unlikely these questions surface as your actual exam questions.

### Research

**Example 1:** After graduation from your M.A. program in Communication Studies, you have been hired by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. The Department of Public Health has created a Health Communication Campaign in the form of a television commercial. The goal is inducing attitude and behavior change in the community, specifically in the areas of eating more vegetables and exercising on a regular basis. The Department of Health has hired you to determine if its current communication campaign is working. To tackle this issue, you develop a research project to collect and analyze data and ultimately reach conclusions. You proceed by developing your research project along all of the following dimensions. Be sure to provide enough detail to each item below to demonstrate your command of research methods. You must follow all the steps of the scientific method from identifying and defining variables to choosing and justifying your methodological approach to explaining your data analysis procedures and everything else in between. Please come up with a research question in the subdomain of communication that is of interest to you. Then, please discuss how you could study this research question using:

1. a qualitative research design
2. a quantitative research design

Be sure to discuss all of the relevant components of research design, such as the sample, procedures of sample selection, measures or study instruments used, and procedures of data collection – for each of the two design types. Then please discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each design you came up with – in terms of how well it can help you answer your research question. Finally, please specify which of the designs you would prefer using and justify your decision based on your consideration of strengths and weaknesses of each design.

**Example 2:** Communication theorists have identified an important theoretical concept known as “cognitive complexity.” Specifically, cognitive complexity refers to an individual’s ability to perceive others in complex ways. Basically, if you have cognitive complexity, you see others as multi-dimensional, complex human beings. If you lack cognitive complexity, you tend to see others in very simplistic, stereotypical ways. Research in the communication field suggests that cognitively complex individuals are generally better communicators. For my research, I am interested in looking at how a particular subset of communication skills relate to cognitive complexity. Specifically, I want to uncover the relationship between cognitive complexity and persuasion skills. Here is the specific research question that I am interested in answering: **RQ: Is there a relationship between individuals’ level of cognitive complexity and their ability to construct effective persuasive messages?**

In relation to the above research question, please answer the following questions:

1. Would you choose to use a qualitative method, a quantitative method, or a combination of qualitative/quantitative methods? Explain your choice, and in your

explanation be certain to refer to the strengths/weaknesses of quantitative/qualitative methods.

2. From the methods discussed in the research course (experiments, surveys, interviews, ethnography, focus groups, content analysis), which specific method(s) would you utilize for this study? Explain your choice and be certain to include a discussion of the strengths/weaknesses of that method(s) in your justification.

3. Once you have selected your method(s), show me step-by-step how you would conduct the study. As you move through this step-by-step discussion, be certain to explain your decisions.

4. From the methods discussed in the research course (listed above), discuss which method would be the **worst** method to employ for this study. Justify your response by highlighting the weaknesses of this particular method.

### Theory

**Example 1:** Compare and contrast two major theoretical approaches to the subject of \_\_\_\_\_ (this could be media use, close relationships, persuasion, etc.).

Example 2: Trace the history of \_\_\_\_\_ research. Note changes in major theoretical shifts, criticisms, and developments. Focus and speculate on reasons for each change. What have researchers focused on in the last decade? What future directions do you foresee?

### Applied Area

**(Media)** You are in charge of media purchasing for the advertising campaign of a presidential candidate. (You pick the candidate.) Identify three specific pieces of information that would be essential for you to determine in order to make your media buy, and explain, in detail, the research methodologies you would employ to determine this information.”

**(Interpersonal)** What are the fundamental tenets of qualitative, quantitative, and rhetorical/critical approaches to interpersonal communication research? How do researchers know which major line of methodology to select? Defend your answer by citing articles, class readings/text, etc.

**(Criticism & Public Influence)** On March 8, 2004, President Bush delivered a speech at the Fairmont Hotel discussing issues of leadership (speech attached). Do you believe that this speech is a strong or weak (or perhaps a little of both) rhetorical effort? To support your answer to this question, use **three** of the following five rhetorical theories. 1 - Fantasy Theme Analysis, 2 - Dramatism, 3 - Narrative Theory, 4 - Functional Analysis, and 5 - Stylistic Criticism. In supporting your response, be sure to draw explicitly from readings in the COM 505 Course. From the five theories listed above, which do you believe is the best (in general) rhetorical theory? Justify your response (note: in answering this question, you are given a lot of latitude in how you define “best.” That is, you can establish your own standard, but you do need to show how the theory you choose satisfies that standard).

**(Persuasion)** Describe in detail a situation where you wish persuade. Explain four theories of persuasion relevant to your persuasive situation. Give accurate details of each theory’s viewpoint. Describe how each theory would direct you to exercise an effective persuasive strategy for your persuasion challenge. Which theory gives you the best direction? Why? For instance, what are limitations in the alternative theories that your most preferred theory addresses? Drawing upon the

above theories and additional persuasion concepts, list at least five principles that you can mentally carry with you for confronting future persuasive challenges.

#### **STEP VI: Take the Exams on the Scheduled Date/Time.**

- To take these Exams, meet in the assigned room. You will be notified of the room in advance once the reservation is confirmed.
- If you do not have a current parking pass, please plan to park in the Sharpless Street garage. You will pay a fee to park there for the day (but that fee is much less than the cost of a parking ticket).
- During the exam itself, you will be able to type on your own laptop and are asked to turn off the wifi and only utilize the open Word Document.
- While taking the exams, you will **not** be allowed to access any notes (i.e. it's not an open book/notes exam). You are not permitted to access any online materials either.
- The Graduate Coordinator may bring a flash drive or other device on which students can save a copy of their work. Alternatively, the graduate coordinator may ask you to email your response (and will then confirm receipt of your answer). It is the student's responsibility to save their answers in a compatible format. Students should save files with their own last name and the question (e.g., Jones-Theory).
- Different students take different approaches to essays, so you should write in a way that accentuates your strengths. However, you may benefit by taking the first few minutes after you get the exam to ORGANIZE your thoughts into a set of key ideas that you want to express in the essay before getting into the actual writing. You might also want to take the last portion of your time (ten to fifteen minutes works for most students) to go back and review, edit, and reorganize your work so that it is as cogent, clear, and error-free as possible.
- Your committee members will expect that you follow APA format. Although this means you will be expected to cite literature, it is usually a safe bet that your members will **not** expect you to memorize the full reference information for the sources you cite. Therefore, the responses must incorporate evidence – this evidence will include class readings and/or texts, and it also may include readings that you may have done for other class papers, etc. Responses without adequate cited evidence to support the claims you make in response to the examination questions may not “pass” (see below). The more varied evidence from which you can draw (to show that multiple experts in the field agree with your ideas), the more convincing your answer is likely to be considered.

#### **STEP VII: The Grading of Exams.**

Faculty members have three options in grading a question: (1) pass; (2) fail; and (3) re-write.

1. A “passing” grade indicates that you have successfully completed the question.

2. A “failing” grade means that your answer to the question is so inadequate that you will not be given a chance to re-write your response.
  - a. If you receive a “failing” grade on any of your answers, you will need to go through the entire comprehensive exam process again during the next administration time for those exams (i.e. the following fall or spring semester).
3. A “re-writing” grade indicates that your answer, while basically adequate, needs improvement before warranting a passing grade.
  - a. If a rewrite is necessary, your answer will be returned to you along with any guidance the faculty member wishes to give you on revising your answer. Re-writes may be major or minor. Minor re-writes can include but are not limited to being asked to add more material (e.g., additional references). Major re-writes may include responding to the same question or responding to a new question.
  - b. You will only receive one opportunity to re-write a particular question.
  - c. Re-writes take place off campus. In other words, you can work on re-writing an answer from home, and you are permitted to access materials (class notes, books, etc.) in the re-writing process.
4. You must ultimately receive a “passing” grade on three questions to successfully complete the Comprehensive Exam process.

## **VI. OTHER REQUIREMENTS BASED ON STUDENT PROGRAM**

### **A. Internships**

M.A. students may secure internships ranging from 3 to 6 semester hours of credit. To qualify for an internship, students must have completed twelve credit hours in Communication Studies and the Degree Candidacy form obtained through the Graduate School website (See Section V, B). Completion of this form and approval from the Graduate Coordinator are required for internship consideration. Internships can be arranged with area radio and television stations, businesses, government agencies, and service organizations. In addition, internships also may be available to work with a faculty member in one of their undergraduate course offerings. Contact the graduate coordinator for more information on internships.

### **B. Directed Study**

M.A. students may request 3 semester hours of credit for Directed Study. To qualify for a directed study, students must have completed twelve credit hours in Communication Studies and the Degree Candidacy form obtained through the Graduate School website (See Section V, B). Exceptions may be made with the approval of the Graduate Coordinator. 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 to learn more about the full process of conducting research.

### **C. Conference Attendance and Presentations**

Conferences are an opportunity for students to showcase their own research projects either by participating in poster sessions, panel presentations, or competitive paper

presentations. It is an excellent way for both non-thesis and thesis students to highlight their project management abilities. Students may apply for funding to attend conferences. Additional funding may be available when students also present their own research at conferences. One source of funding is available through West Chester University's Graduate Student Association. The form is available online through the Graduate School website. Students may look for additional sources of funding, and the Graduate Coordinator will alert students to potential funding sources whenever possible. Please note that research projects that involved the use of human subjects must have had approval through the University's Institutional Review Board prior to data collection.

#### **D. Theses**

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). The 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.

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 subjects, it is the obligation of the student to secure clearance through the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data.
5. It is the discretion of the thesis chairperson whether the student must submit a prospectus for the thesis (the first two chapters of the literature review and proposed methodology).
6. At a time mutually agreeable to the student and committee members, 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 can be questioned by committee members about the research. Committee members will vote to "pass" or "fail." Committee members must vote unanimously to pass the thesis. Conditional stipulations may be made by the committee regarding changes, additions, or deletions in the final draft of the thesis.
7. All members of the thesis committee must receive copies of the thesis at least one full week before the selected thesis defense meeting.

8. 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.
9. After the oral defense, committee members will sign the signature page, which will be forwarded to the Dean of the 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.
10. After all signatures have been provided, the student is responsible for binding the thesis, and information about this process is available on the University's Graduate School webpage. A student may want a bound copy of their own, but the student also will provide a copy of the thesis to the Department of Communication and Media. Remember that should you choose to have additional copies bound, you will need additional signature pages.

## **VII. OTHER POLICIES AND HELPFUL INFORMATION**

### **A. Departmental Advisement**

M.A. students will be assigned an advisor, in most cases the graduate coordinator. The advisor will assist students in managing the sometimes confusing situations students may face during their time at the university. Advisors can be especially helpful with discussions of course content, course requirements, and career options. Please be aware that having an advisor does not absolve students from responsibility for knowing and meeting University requirements for graduation. Ultimately, the responsibility for meeting requirements is up to each student, and students will bear the cost of errors which are made. When students meet with their advisor, they should review their academic progress. Students should come for advising sessions with their advisement sheet as complete as possible (advising sheets are found on the last two pages of this handbook). Students are responsible for keeping their file accurate and up-to-date. Students may select a different advisor from their initially assigned advisor once they have been admitted to degree candidacy (see section V, D, 1).

### **B. 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) will be used in the GPA calculation. Receipt of any C+, C, or C- grade applies toward the probation and dismissal policy.

### **C. 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.

## **D. 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.

## **E. Academic Integrity**

### **1. 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 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](http://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](http://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.**

## **2. 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.
- If in doubt, cite sources.
- Sources should be cited for oral assignments. Always cite quoted material.
- Sometimes source material is so extensive that an oral assignment becomes boring to the listener. In such cases, a brief reference can be made concerning the source that can then be supported by a detailed reference if one is requested.
- 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.
- Students should retain all notes or other materials prepared by them to meet the assignment until a grade has been received.
- If an instructor chooses, and so indicates at the beginning of a semester, all work submitted to meet course requirements becomes the property of the department. (Students who wish to retain copies of such work should duplicate the material prior to its submission.) This is not to imply that students cannot present, share, or publish their work, but they ought to acknowledge their affiliation with WCU.

## **F. 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.

### **G. Departmental Recommendations for Email Etiquette**

Be sure to use a respectful tone and language in every email, and always remember that email ultimately is a public venue and can be read by anyone, anywhere. Furthermore, it is expected that all email correspondence will be conducted in a professional manner. Any abusive email either to the instructor or a classmate is considered academic misconduct and will not be tolerated (see below). Some professors answer class-related questions only during office hours, although many faculty members welcome emails from students. Please allow a minimum of 24 hours for responses to an email, and remember that some instructors may not check email daily, over weekends, and during vacation periods. Therefore, email should not be used for last minute questions about assignments or for questions that ask for an immediate response. In addition, when using email please adhere to the following rules:

- **Identify yourself on your messages.** If students use an account with a name other than theirs or they use a nickname, type the student name in the 'Subject' line.
- **Be Polite.** Do not be abusive or verbally aggressive in messages.
- **Use appropriate language.** Do not swear, use vulgarities, or any other inappropriate language.

### **H. 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](mailto:ossd@wcupa.edu), and their website is at [www.wcupa.edu/ussss/ossd](http://www.wcupa.edu/ussss/ossd).

**I. 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](http://www.wcupa.edu/wcualert). To report an emergency, call the Department of Public Safety at 610-436-3311.

**J. Summer Correspondence**

Please remember that not all faculty members have summer contracts. This means that they are not required to be on campus or to respond to work-related emails. However, most of them continue to check email and are willing to meet with students over the summer.

**VIII. GRADUATE COURSE OFFERINGS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES****COM 500: Communication and Leadership**

Exploration of the interconnections between communication principles and the theory and practice of leadership.

**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. Students will be required to design and execute a research project.

**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 506: Communication in Small Groups**

An examination of traditional and contemporary research which pertains to various dimensions of small group communication including, but not limited to, the following topics: structure, size, tasks, goals, systems, and leadership.

**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 525: American Public Address**

Critical and theoretical examination of significant speeches in American history (from early American history to contemporary times).

**COM 530: Advances in Nonverbal Communication**

This course investigates recent advances and controversies in nonverbal communication theory and research.

**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 550: Listening: Verbal Nonverbal Perception**

A survey of research in listening behavior and related nonverbal variables. Identification of important characteristics of effective listeners. Application to communication activities in the classroom.

**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 570: Conceptual Foundations for Training & Development**

This course examines major schools of thought in organizational training and development. Each viewpoint is explored for its diagnostic guidance, leaning implications, and training technologies.

**COM 571: Practicum in Communication, Training & Development**

Participants will review and practice the leading training technologies in communication and organizational development. Each participant will design and deliver a training workshop.

**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 DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA M.A. THESES**

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](http://communication.wcupa.edu)**

## Appendix A: Advising Sheet (Non-Thesis)

### COMMUNICATION STUDIES M.A. PROGRAM ADVISING SHEET 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)

#### 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

- \_\_\_\_\_ After completing 12 credits in program 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 Option)****COMMUNICATION STUDIES M.A. PROGRAM ADVISING SHEET****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)

**Three Elective Graduate Courses**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate Level Course  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate Level Course  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate Level Course

**Degree Candidacy**

\_\_\_\_\_ After completing 12 credits in program of which at least 9 credits are within the department, students must complete a Degree Candidacy form (form available on Graduate School Web Site). 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 major 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 Theory, 2 hours on Communication Research, and 2 hours on an Applied Area (Area of Specialty).

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

**Successful Completion of Thesis**

\_\_\_\_\_ Must assemble Thesis Committee (3 members).

\_\_\_\_\_ Must submit Examination Committee form to Graduate School.

\_\_\_\_\_ Must submit Thesis Research Compliance form to Graduate School.

\_\_\_\_\_ 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 Library for Binding.