

# GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

## Department of Communication Studies

August 2011

### **Our Mission Statement**

We research, teach, and practice communication to cultivate the ethical voices of people that speak in critical, constructive, and transformative ways to identities, relationships, and communities.

### **Philosophy of Scholarship**

We believe that communication is formative and foundational to human identities, relationships, and communities--and that ethical and strategically effective communication can be the means of critiquing, constructing, and transforming identities, relationships, and communities.



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction.....	4
Profile of a successful graduate student.....	5
General guidelines for graduate study.....	6
Progress through the program.....	6
Full-time status.....	6
Continuous enrollment.....	6
Leaves of absence.....	6
Time limits for completion of the program.....	6
Transfer credits.....	6
Checklist of Graduate School requirements for graduation.....	7
Graduate student governance.....	7
Contact information.....	8
Advising.....	8
 Financial Assistance	
Teaching Assistantships.....	9
Graduate Assistantships.....	9
University Speaking Center.....	10
Resident Hall Staff Positions.....	10
Loans; Grants; and Other Aid.....	10
The John Andrew and Margaret E. Robinson Fellowship.....	10
The Glenn-Tedford Fund.....	11
 Plan of Study	
Introduction.....	12
General Requirements.....	12
Elective Coursework.....	13
MA Plan of Study.....	14
 Independent Studies.....	15
 Outline of Plan for Independent Study.....	16
 Capstone Experience in Communication.....	17
The Final Research Project.....	17
Timeline.....	17
Annotated Bibliography .....	17
Development of the research project.....	18
Completing the capstone .....	19
Format.....	19
Structure.....	19
Public Presentation of Project.....	20
Presentation timeline.....	20
Format.....	20
Final Reflection.....	20

Capstone: Final Research Project Timeline and Agreement.....	21-22
Final Reflection – MA Program.....	23
Criteria for Assessment.....	23
APPENDICES.....	24
1 - Graduate Faculty; Department of Communication Studies.....	25
2 - GSA Application for Professional Development Funds .....	26
3 – Sample Application for Graduation for Graduate Students .....	27

## **Department of Communication Studies General guidelines and information**

Welcome to the MA program in Communication Studies. Faculty offer this handbook in the hope it will provide you with useful information to help guide you toward a successful experience in the program. Please refer to the handbook throughout your time with us and feel free to ask about any of the information in it with the Director of Graduate Studies and any other member of the graduate faculty. A list of the graduate faculty is included on page 25.

### ***Department of Communication Studies Mission Statement***

We research, teach, and practice communication to cultivate the ethical voices of people that speak in critical, constructive, and transformative ways to identities, relationships, and communities.

### ***Philosophy of Scholarship***

We believe that communication is formative and foundational to human identities, relationships, and communities--and that ethical and strategically effective communication can be the means of critiquing, constructing, and transforming identities, relationships, and communities.

We engage in communication scholarship in the form of research, teaching, and service that:

- Integrates dialogue and other approaches to communication as the foundation for scholarly inquiry and application to the world
- Cultivates diversity and respect for differences
- Promotes change that leads to more democratic, just, and peaceful relationships and communities
- Engages creative partnerships of faculty, students, and other stakeholders in addressing contemporary challenges and opportunities for improving communication

### ***Scholarly Focus Areas***

These beliefs and values are articulated in the following ongoing scholarly focus areas of the department:

- **Public Voice**  
How can communication scholarship help us to understand and improve the quality of public discourse in the world around us?
- **Voices of Change, Diversity and Difference, and Conflict**  
How can communication scholarship help people to engage with diversity, differences, and divisions in ways that promote understanding and collaborative/democratic change?
- **Voices of Identity and Relationships**  
How can communication scholarship help us understand how people create and sustain desired identities and healthy relationships?
- **Voices of Discovery**  
How can communication scholarship help us understand how people learn to co-construct, share, and critique knowledge?

## Profile of a successful graduate student

Successful graduate students are intellectually curious, self-directed, and deeply committed to their development as masters of communication. They are open to lifelong learning to cultivate their effective and ethical voices in their public, professional, and personal communicative practices.

A graduate degree is much more than a collection of courses and grades. Successful graduate students maintain a high degree of involvement in shaping a professional identity and core research interests. Faculty stand ready to guide you and the Director of Graduate Studies will advise you regularly on curricular and graduate school requirements, but the need to sustain a commitment to your development as a master of communication rests with you.

The department offers almost all of its coursework in 3 semester hour seminars that meet one evening per week. In addition, throughout the academic year, lectures, colloquia, social, and research opportunities are available to enrich your graduate experience. We take as given that you will attend seminars prepared to participate meaningfully. We expect that you will attend a range of extracurricular events designed to cultivate your professional identity and membership in the department community.

Another aspect of professional socialization into the field of communication studies involves attendance, when possible, at professional meetings and conferences. We encourage you to attend at least one conference during your studies and we encourage advanced students to submit research for presentation at the annual meetings of our professional associations. Some of these include:

National Communication Association

<http://www.natcom.org>

International Communication Association

<http://www.icaheadq.org>

Southern States Communication Association

<http://www.ssca.net>

Central States Communication Association

[http://associationdataase.com/aws/CSCA/pt/sp/home\\_page](http://associationdataase.com/aws/CSCA/pt/sp/home_page)

Eastern Communication Association

<http://www.ecasite.org>

Western States Communication Association

<http://www.westcomm.org>

Carolinas Communication Association

<http://www.carolinascommunication.org>

## General guidelines for graduate study

The Graduate School dictates a set of university-wide requirements for the completion of a master's degree for all UNCG graduate students. Here are the basics to keep in mind.

### Progress through the program

Graduate students are enrolled unconditionally or provisionally. Students who are admitted provisionally need to fulfill the requirements as laid out in their acceptance letters in order to remain in the program. Provisional students need to meet their conditions of enrollment by the time they complete 15 semester hours of graduate credit.

### Full time status

At UNCG, graduate students are considered full-time students when enrolled for 6 semester hours per semester. Graduate students may take a maximum of 12 hours per semester, although almost all full time students in our department usually take no more than 9 hours. Teaching Assistants and Graduate Assistants are required by the university to be full-time students and in satisfactory academic standing (minimum overall GPA of 3.0).

Full-time students can complete our program in two years. Students who work full-time, and take 3 to 6 hours per semester, will take longer to complete their degree.

### Continuous enrollment

Once admitted to the program, graduate students must be continuously enrolled for two semesters per year and graduating students need to be enrolled in the semester they plan to graduate. Normally, this means enrollment in fall and spring semesters but can also include enrollment in fall or spring plus a summer session.

### Leaves of absence

Graduate students who need to step out of the University for more than one semester should apply for a leave of absence to avoid the need to reapply for admission to a master's program. If special circumstances necessitate a temporary leave, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies to explore your options.

### Time limits for completion of the program

The Graduate School sets a limit of 5 years from the student's date of matriculation to fulfill all the requirements of the MA degree. In other words, the 5-year time limit begins from the date of the first course carrying graduate degree credit listed on the student's plan of study. This includes any transfer credits carrying graduate credit at UNCG.

### Transfer credits

At the master's level, credit may be given for graduate work at other accredited universities (including the Greater Greensboro Consortium and UNCG's Division of Continual Learning). Some Graduate School restrictions apply as a way to ensure the intellectual integrity of our degree programs. These include the following:

- Transfer credit may not exceed one third of the number of hours required by a department's program
- Transfer credits used to complete the requirements for another degree cannot be applied
- Transfer work needs to be taken within the 5-year time limit for all coursework
- Students need to have earned a grade of B (3.0) or better on transfer credits, as documented on an official transcript from the accrediting institution
- Transfer credits must be necessary to meet specific degree requirements

- Coursework eligibility will be determined by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Dean of the Graduate School
- Only hours, not grades, transfer

Please talk to the Director of Graduate Studies for specific instructions to follow if you want to consider transfer credit for graduate level coursework taken at another institution.

Checklist of Graduate School requirements for graduation

- A plan of study, submitted by the completion of 15 hours of coursework
- A final plan of study, filed by the end of the first week of classes of the semester in which you plan to graduate
- Application for graduation and payment of graduation fee, also completed by the end of the first week of classes of the semester in which you plan to graduate
- Satisfactory completion of all course requirements for the degree
- A 3.0 overall average
- Satisfactory completion of the capstone experience
- Payment of all accounts

Please be aware that the Graduate School rarely accepts late applications to graduate. Be sure to pay attention to deadlines outlined in the university's Calendar of Events for specific dates.

Graduate student governance

All departments are invited to nominate graduate student delegates to the University Graduate Student Association (GSA). The Association meets several times a year to discuss graduate program policies and student concerns. The Association also allocates funds to students to attend and participate in professional meetings. Students who want to apply for funding need to meet the Association's periodic deadlines and should apply before applying to the department.

Here is general information about the Association, taken from their homepage:

The Graduate Student Association has existed in various forms since 1964. All graduate students at UNCG are considered full members of the GSA. Our mission and goals focus on education, service, and advocacy. To forward these, we convene a graduate student legislature composed of representatives from the university's 45 graduate programs. This group meets regularly several times each semester with a four-person executive board. The GSA also appoints delegates to faculty and staff senates as well as other committees and groups throughout the university. We annually award over \$30,000 to assist with graduate student travel and work on theses and dissertations. Currently, we are working to affiliate with and develop graduate student groups throughout the university.

For more information about GSA activities and professional development support, go to their website at:

<http://www.uncg.edu/student.groups/gsa/>

If you would like to be nominated as a delegate, and are committed to attending the meetings on a regular basis, please see the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss your interests. A copy of the application for GSA professional development funds is included (Attachment 2).

### ***Contact information***

All graduate students have a UNCG email address, which is the address faculty use for paperless contact, both individually and collectively. In addition, students have a mailbox “cubby” in the office at 102 Ferguson for hard copy communication. A graduate student bulletin board, opposite 102 Ferguson, features news about students, upcoming events, and other goodies.

### **Advising**

#### Permanent Academic Adviser

In our program, the Director of Graduate Studies serves as the permanent academic adviser to all graduate students. Students should plan to meet with the Director at least once each semester throughout the program to discuss coursework selection for the plan of study, professional development, progress toward a capstone project, and any problems or concerns.

#### Incoming Faculty Mentor

In addition to an adviser, all incoming students are paired with an incoming graduate faculty mentor, based on mutual research interests or more general academic interests. Mentors provide guidance into the conceptual underpinnings of research, suggested readings for the first segment of the capstone annotated bibliography assignment, and the potential to participate in ongoing faculty research projects and colloquia. When students' specific capstone focus takes shape, they should seek out a faculty member whose research background aligns with this focus to direct the final capstone project. This capstone director can be any graduate faculty member, including the incoming faculty mentor or academic advisor. For more on the Capstone, see pp. 17-23.

#### Graduate Student Buddy

Finally, all incoming graduate students are paired with a buddy, who is a continuing graduate student in our program. Buddies help new students acclimate to graduate student life at UNCG and ease their transition to a new town. They are a rich experiential resource for advice on how to become a successful and confident graduate student.

Please take advantage of our relatively small program to make good use of all of these resources to connect you to the program and its possibilities for you.

## Department of Communication Studies Financial Assistance

Financial assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis to qualified, full-time graduate students. University-wide, UNCG provides assistantships to approximately 70% of all graduate students. Our program's funding rate has met or exceeded that average over the past several years.

### Teaching Assistantships

Stipends for graduate teaching assistants in our MA program are currently set at \$11,000 for the academic year, which includes student health insurance. In addition, some stipends include a tuition waiver.

Stipends assume a 20-hour per week workload, the normal maximum allowed for funding full-time students. To fulfill their teaching contract, teaching assistants are required to teach two breakout sections of CST105: Introduction to Communication Studies in the fall and spring semesters, under the direction of the Basic Course Director.

The role of a teaching assistant is an important one in serving the educational goals of our department and of the university. Our department has a significant role in the Speaking Across the Curriculum component of UNCG undergraduate education. CST105 is a core course for undergraduate majors in communication studies. It is also a course undergraduate students across the university take in partial fulfillment of their General Education Curriculum. UNCG requires that students satisfactorily complete 2 Speaking Intensive courses for graduation; one in General Education (CST105) and one in their major. As a result, our department serves both our majors and students in diverse areas of study in multiple offerings of the CST105 course.

The department takes seriously its commitment to provide teaching assistants the conceptual and practical skills they need to succeed in the CST105 classroom and to ensure a positive classroom experience for instructors and their students. To meet this commitment to skillful pedagogy; all incoming teaching assistants enroll in CST599: Communication Pedagogy, in their first semester in the program (fall).

In CST599, which is taught by the Basic Course Director, teaching assistants engage the materials for teaching CST105, including a common textbook and syllabus. They also engage relevant readings and practice. Throughout the course, and in regular meetings with the Basic Course Director, teaching assistants learn effective and engaging teaching strategies to develop their skills and strengthen their confidence in the classroom.

As currently structured; the teaching assistant program asks first-year Teaching Assistants to assist with CST 105 by attending the large lecture one day a week and running two breakout sections two days a week. Second-year Teaching Assistants will, generally, teach their own stand-alone sections of CST 105. However, to be eligible to teach a stand-alone section in their second year, graduate students must satisfactorily complete 18 hours of Communication Studies coursework during their first year. Please note that we cannot guarantee that all qualified graduate students will be assigned a stand-alone section in their second year as such teaching assignments must depend on the needs of our undergraduate students and available funding.

### Graduate Assistantships

University-wide, graduate assistantships are awarded competitively to full-time students who meet the qualifications for the assignment. Positions range from one to several semesters, depending on the funding source of the stipend and generally equate, on an hourly basis, to a teaching stipend. Positions range from administrative support in centers and departments to research and administrative support for faculty research projects.

Students seeking a graduate assistantship are free to investigate opportunities in any department, office, or center at UNCG. Very often, students who are diligent in their search are successful. In addition, the Director of Graduate Studies maintains a list of our graduate students interested in these assistantships and will contact students when announcements of opportunities become available.

### University Speaking Center

The University Speaking Center provides one-on-one tutoring and instructional workshop services for UNCG students, faculty, employees, and members of the Greensboro community. Assistance is offered in the preparation and delivery of speeches, development of knowledge and skill in interpersonal communication, and group or team communication. The staff includes both undergraduate and graduate student tutors from departments across the university including communication studies.

Some graduate assistantships may be available. Interested students with previous speaking center or communication lab experience should contact the Director of the Speaking Center, Kim Cuny.

More information about the Speaking Center, including contact information, can be found at: <http://speakingcenter.uncg.edu>

### **Resident Hall Staff Positions**

A limited number of residence hall staff positions are available to qualified graduate students. Address inquiries by mail or phone to:

Director of Resident Life  
UNCG  
PO Box 26170  
Greensboro, NC 27402-6170  
Phone (336) 334-5636

More information about resident life can be found at: [www.uncg.edu/rli](http://www.uncg.edu/rli)

### Loans, Grants, and Other Aid

Address inquiries by mail or phone at:

Office of Financial Aid  
UNCG  
PO Box 26170  
Greensboro, NC 27402-6170  
Phone (336) 334-5702

More information about financial aid can be found at: [www.uncg.edu/fia](http://www.uncg.edu/fia)

The John Andrew and Margaret E. Robinson Fellowship in Communication Studies

The John Andrew and Margaret E. Robinson Fellowship in Communication Studies is awarded each spring to a continuing full-time graduate student on the basis of merit. In recent years, the amount of the award has been approximately \$1500 a year, or about \$750 each semester.

Information regarding the application process can be found at:

[http://www.uncg.edu/cst/inc\\_unit/scholarships/RobinsonScholarship.html](http://www.uncg.edu/cst/inc_unit/scholarships/RobinsonScholarship.html)

The Glenn-Tedford Fund

This fund, begun in honor of former department faculty members Ethel Glenn and Tom Tedford, provides modest financial support for the scholarly development of graduate students. For more information on funds available, contact the Director of Graduate Studies.

Information about the fund's origin can be found at:

[http://www.uncg.edu/cst/inc\\_unit/scholarships/Glenn-Tedford%20Fund.htm](http://www.uncg.edu/cst/inc_unit/scholarships/Glenn-Tedford%20Fund.htm)

As mentioned in the "General Guidelines" section of the Handbook, under "Graduate student governance," the GSA also has some funds available for graduate student development.

## **Department of Communication Studies Plan of Study**

### Introduction

Our master's program holds to the university's broad objective to offer students a reasonable and comprehensive mastery of a chosen field of study. In Communication Studies, we subscribe to that objective through a program that emphasizes our mission statement goals and faculty foci in research and teaching.

The plan of study is designed to help students structure and tailor their studies in ways that serve their particular research and learning goals within that broad objective. Students and their adviser, who is the Graduate Studies Director, begin to formulate a plan of study upon a student's admission to the program.

Submission of a completed plan of study is due in the Graduate School before students complete 50% of the program (15 hours). If any changes are made to the plan subsequent to the submission, the Graduate Studies Director and student will complete a revised plan to submit to the Graduate School.

### General Requirements

The plan of study consists of required and elective coursework choices to accommodate diverse theoretical and research interests in the program. The minimum number of semester hours required for a Master of Arts in Communication Studies is 30. The structure of the program is as follows:

- Required core coursework: 6 hours, consisting of the core courses, CST601 and 602
- Required capstone project: 3 hours, taken in three 1-hour segments
- Elective coursework: 21 hours, to be taken within the Department of Communication Studies

The core is structured to help prepare students to think intelligently and critically about their own research projects and is designed to position students to gain a more meaningful experience in their elective coursework choices.

Given the core's significant role in the program, all incoming full time graduate students are required to complete the core courses during their first year as graduate students. As a reminder, full time graduate students at UNCG are defined as students enrolled in 6 semester hours of coursework. The core is offered in a seminar format one evening per week, in the following sequence:

CST601: Engaging Communication Theory, fall semesters only

CST602: Engaging Communication Research Methodology, spring semesters only

Teaching Assistants are also required to enroll in CST599, Communication Pedagogy during their first semester, to fulfill a condition of their teaching contract. This course fulfills three hours in the elective coursework category on the plan of study. CST599 is offered during fall semesters only, generally twice weekly, late afternoon.

Part time students, defined as those enrolled in fewer than 6 semester hours, are strongly encouraged to complete the core during their first year. If professional and/or personal obligations prevent taking these 6 hours the first year, please remember that CST601 and CST602 are offered only in the fall and spring, respectively, which means that some students might need two years to complete their core coursework.

The second component of required work for graduate students is satisfactory completion of the final research project. Students enroll in CST698 - Capstone Experience in Communication in three one-hour segments during their final three semesters in the program. A full discussion of the capstone project follows in the "Capstone Experience in Communication" section of the Handbook (pp. 17-23).

The core courses and capstone project make up the 9 required hours, which leaves 21 hours available for elective coursework.

Elective Coursework (21 semester hours in graded courses, to be taken within the Dept. of Communication Studies)

Elective coursework gives students the flexibility to refine their interests and prepare for the capstone final research project. Some constraints apply in these 21 hours to ensure academic strength and a coherent plan tailored to students' research foci. These include:

**500-level coursework**

A maximum of 9 hours of coursework may be taken at the 500-level. This means students can take up to three courses at the 500 level.

500-level courses at UNCG are "bridge" courses, open to selected senior undergraduates and all graduate students. A separate syllabus for graduate students in 500-level courses sets out higher order learning objectives and assignments consistent with graduate education expectations.

At UNCG, 100-level through 400-level courses are undergraduate offerings, so no graduate credit can be given for these courses in the plan of study nor can they be included in the 30-hour requirement for graduation.

***Optional cognate coursework in other disciplines***

Graduate students may also pursue relevant graded cognate courses in other disciplines. Credit for these courses is not calculated in the minimum 30-hour plan of study, but are credited to a student's overall coursework record. This flexibility recognizes the interdisciplinary nature of many research inquiries and, at the same time, acknowledges the need to preserve the coherence of a master's degree awarded in communication studies.

***Independent study***

Independent study hours do not count toward the minimum 30-hour plan of study.

**Master of Arts Plan of Study  
Department of Communication Studies**

Graduate Student: \_\_\_\_\_ ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Term/Year entered program \_\_\_\_\_ Date plan approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate Studies Director/Advisor signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total minimum program hours: 30**

- 1) **Total Required core coursework and capstone research project: 9 hours**
- 2) **Required core coursework (6 semester hours):**

<u>Course</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Semester taken</u>	<u>Grade</u>
CST601	Engaging Communication Theory	Fall	_____
CST602	Engaging Communication Research Methodology	Spring	_____

**Required capstone research project (3 semester hours, taken in 3 1-hour credit hours during the last three semesters of study):**

<u>Course</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Semester taken</u>	<u>Grade</u>
CST698	Capstone Experience in Communication	Spring	1-hour S/U
		Fall	1-hour S/U
		Spring	1-hour S/U

**Elective coursework: (21 semester hours in Communication Studies graded courses)**  
Of these 21, a maximum of 9 hours may be at the 500-level.

<u>Course</u>	<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Semester taken</u>	<u>Grade</u>
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____
CST _____	_____	_____	_____

**Related cognate courses (optional, not included in the minimum 30 hours required):**

<u>Course</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Semester taken</u>	<u>Grade</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

## **Department of Communication Studies Independent Studies**

The function of an independent study is to give students an opportunity to pursue a more focused, in-depth examination of specific communication theories, methods, and practices that align with their research interests and those of a faculty member. An independent study can be a useful addition to a plan of study in those rare occasions when scheduled coursework cannot fulfill a student's progression toward a specific capstone project. Students need to have completed the core courses and some elective coursework in order to know if more depth might be needed as they move toward a final research project. As with coursework outside the department, credit hours earned in an independent study are not calculated in the minimum 30 hours required for the degree.

An independent study consists of a graded course in guided readings and research under the instruction of a graduate faculty member. Readings and assignments are designed to provide students a level of knowledge in an area of communication scholarship not available in a regularly scheduled course in the graduate curriculum or in guided readings during the first 2 hours of the capstone project assignment. They do not function as a substitute for regularly scheduled coursework.

Generally, students find that the focused readings and conceptual work associated with the first 2 hours of the capstone project provide considerable conceptual depth of study and are sufficient to prepare students for the completion of their projects.

In those cases in which a student and faculty member see the value of an Independent study in addition to the above, the study is arranged with the permission of a graduate faculty member who agrees to direct the study. The requirements of a 3-hour independent study are equal to the rigor in any other 3-hour graded course and are adjusted, accordingly, in studies of 1- and 2-hour credit. The graduate school needs to approve all requests for independent studies in graduate programs.

Students are eligible to enroll in independent study when they have met the following requirements:

- Completed the 2 core courses (6 hours) and at least 3 electives (9 hours) for a total of 15 hours
- Earned a minimum of 3.0 GPA overall
- Enrolls for no more than 3 credit hours in independent study during a semester

If a faculty member agrees to direct an independent study, and you have met the academic eligibility requirements, complete the Outline of Plan for Independent Study, which follows.

Please give a copy of the completed Plan and the application to enroll to the Director of Graduate Studies for inclusion in your file and submission to the graduate school for approval.

Department of Communication Studies  
Outline of Plan for Independent Study

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty instructor \_\_\_\_\_

Dates student completed core coursework:

CST601 \_\_\_\_\_

CST602 \_\_\_\_\_

Dates student completed electives:

CST \_\_\_\_\_

CST \_\_\_\_\_

CST \_\_\_\_\_

GPA:

Course Title-CST650: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit hours: \_\_\_\_

Statement of purpose:

Course description:  
(Attach course outline)

Approved by:

Faculty instructor \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Graduate Studies \_\_\_\_\_

## **Department of Communication Studies Capstone Experience in Communication**

In lieu of a comprehensive examination or thesis, graduate students are required to complete a satisfactory capstone experience in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree in communication studies.

What is a capstone? The term is borrowed from architectural building design. A capstone on a building is a finished cover or cap at the top of a construction, originally made of stone.

This image of a capstone is apt. Faculty regard graduate students as emerging scholars and professionals who embark on their own construction of themselves as masters of communication studies. The "building" begins with a program that offers a rich intellectual and experiential foundation for this construction of the graduate. The culminating building experience, or capstone, enables students to build on the program's foundation in order to conceptualize, design, and bring shape to their communicative voices.

Finally, architects and builders rarely stop with one construction. Like them, students will continue to build and rebuild themselves in public, professional, and personal contexts.

Satisfactory completion of the capstone experience includes three requirements:

1. Completion of a final research project
2. Public presentation of the project to department faculty and other students
3. Completion of the final reflection on the MA program

### **1. The Final Research Project (CST698 – 3 semester hours)**

Timeline:

The capstone final research project is a focused, in-depth inquiry and analysis of a communicative practice. To help students move productively and thoughtfully through their projects, the capstone assignment progresses in three 1-hour segments over the final three semesters in the program. For full-time students who are on track to complete the program in two years, the capstone progresses as follows:

- Spring semester, first year: 1 hour
- Fall semester, second year: 1 hour
- Spring semester, second year: 1 hour

Part-time students also enroll in the first 1-hour segment of CST698 during the first of their final three semesters in the program. The graduate studies director will collaborate with students on their plan of study to determine when to begin CST698 enrollment. The graduate studies director assesses and grades the first hour and the student's capstone director assesses and grades the second and third hour segments.

#### **CST698 – First 1-hour segment – Annotated Bibliography**

Most full time students hoping to complete the program in two years will not have a clear commitment to a specific capstone project, nor do faculty encourage them to have such a commitment, during the spring semester of their first year. For most students, then, the first hour of the capstone consists in completing an extensive annotated bibliography of academic readings for three levels of interest: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Often, these three levels of interest are related and provide students their first opportunity to think

through and begin to narrow the range of their interests for a project along some paths and not others. For example, students generally begin to notice if they are interested and intrigued about patterns and issues that arise in contexts of:

- Public communication (politics, community, social change, media)
- Personal communication (identity, conflict, relationships)
- Organizational communication (structures, patterns, change)
- Conflict negotiation (interpersonal, organizational, public, or mediated discourse)
- Health communication (public, organizational, clinical, interpersonal)
- Intercultural communication (diverse cultural voices)
- Gendered communication
- Communication ethics

To help students complete satisfactory work in this first hour, a student's advisor, faculty mentor, and coursework instructors can provide guidance for reading selections based on these interests. Students may want to extend the completion of this first hour of the capstone over the summer, if necessary, to read more widely. Please note that students need to satisfactorily complete the first hour prior to beginning the second hour.

### **CST698 – Second 1-hour segment – Development of the Research Project**

Full time students should begin to arrive at a more focused area of interest when they begin their second year in the program. Part time students, similarly, should be focused on an area of research as they begin their final two semesters in the program.

Specifically, the second hour involves several steps to focus a research project.

Students on track to graduate in the spring of an academic year should begin to develop a communication research question or questions for their projects during the fall of that academic year. Development of the research project begins with narrowing the focus of research interest, drawing on the literature examined and summarized in the first hour and interests that emerged in subsequent coursework.

After identification of a context or contexts of interest, begin to consider the following:

1. Identify questions of communicative interest and relevance in one or more of these contexts.
2. Identify the communication discourse or artifact you want to examine.
3. Identify the theoretical frameworks that might inform your approach to this question or questions.
4. Identify the research methodology or methodologies that might be well suited to examine your research question and communication phenomena.

With a general grasp of these four, students identify a graduate faculty member whose research foci align with their own conceptual and methodological interests, and who expresses a willingness to serve as the director of a project. Together, you will refine the questions of communicative interest; identify the communication discourse or artifacts for analysis; identify the theoretical frameworks that guide the analysis; and, identify the research methodology or methodologies suitable to guide the analysis.

The faculty project director and student collaborate to identify a second faculty member who will serve as a second reader of drafts and the final research document. The second reader may also contribute to theoretical and methodological approaches to the project, and suggest additional readings once the project and research question are defined. The second reader may also serve as a co-director. By the end of this semester, structure a capstone

agreement with your director (a sample capstone agreement form is included at the end of this section).

Capstone directors assess and grade this segment. Completion of this hour includes satisfactory progress toward the following, as determined by the capstone director:

- A clear research question(s) is situated in current literature to address a gap in the literature and/or to deepen and extend conceptual understanding of a communicative practice.
- A comprehensive literature review is underway to situate and support the project in theoretical and methodological terms. This review expands the work begun in the first hour of the capstone, or involves a new literature review to support a shift in research interest.
- A set of specific data to address the research question and the methodological approach to follow is located. IRB approval if needed, is secured.
- A timeline for meetings, drafts, and due dates is established.

### **CST698 - Third 1-hour segment – Completing the Capstone**

During this final hour, students complete the written capstone, present an oral summary of the project to dept. faculty and students, and complete a written reflection on their program.

Capstone final research projects vary significantly in their theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches. Even so, satisfactory projects exhibit some commonalities.

The following outlines a process all students need to follow, however different their questions and methods are from one another.

#### **1. Capstone Format**

The capstone form is a scholarly essay, 25-30 pages in length. Satisfactory projects are suitable for submission for presentation at a local, regional, or national conference. Sometimes, capstones are revised for submission for publication in local, regional, or national journals, but this is not a condition for the satisfactory completion of a project.

#### Structure:

- A. Introduction. In this section, identify a relevant research question and articulate a thesis to be defended in addressing the question.
- B. Conceptual framework: Situate your question in the broader context of communication research. What is the theoretical rationale that grounds your question? What do you hope to find?
- C. Methodology and method: Articulate a methodology and defend the method you will employ to analyze and interpret your data.
- D. Analysis: Articulate ways in which the conceptual framework helps to illuminate and interpret the data examined.
- E. Implications: Summarize your findings, including the strengths and limitations of your project. Speculate about some directions for future research into this question by communication scholars. Emphasize what other Communication scholars may learn from your work.
- F. References: Use APA guidelines to list all sources cited in the essay.

## **2. Public Presentation of Project**

### Presentation timeline

All graduating students present a summary of their capstone project in the semester they graduate. Historically, presentations are made at the end of classes, on the day after Reading Day in May or in December. Almost all of our capstones are presented in May.

### Format

The format for the presentation follows a conference panel model. The audience consists of department faculty, other graduate students, and any other interested faculty or community members.

Presenters take 10-15 minutes to summarize the key points of their projects. After all presentations are made, a question and answer period of 30 minutes or so follows. During Q & A, anyone in the audience can direct questions or comments to any of the presenters.

## **3. Final Reflection**

All graduating students complete a written final reflection on the MA program, to be given to the Director of Graduate Studies by the deadline for posting final grades for the semester. Since this date varies slightly with academic calendars, the Director will provide specific dates to students each semester. A sample of suggested questions to consider in this reflection is included at the end of this section.

**Department of Communication Studies**  
**Capstone: Final Research Project Timeline and Agreement**  
Please give a copy of this agreement to the Director of Graduate Studies

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Faculty Director \_\_\_\_\_

Second Reader \_\_\_\_\_  
or Co-director

Project topic \_\_\_\_\_

---

Timeline for completion of draft components:

Refine research question by \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Complete literature review by \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Secure IRB approval, if required, by \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Gather data by \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Complete first draft by \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Complete subsequent drafts, as needed, by \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Complete final draft by \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Meeting Schedule  
Dates:

Faculty Director: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Second Reader: \_\_\_\_\_  
or Co-director Signature

Student: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Final reflection – MA Program

This is the third and final component of the Capstone Experience in Communication. To complete the assignment, please answer the following questions, using as much space you see fit.

1. What you do view as the strengths of our program?
2. What would you change in the program?
3. How well did the program serve your future goals?
4. What was your experience of the capstone final research project, in terms of your own work and faculty direction?
5. What else would you like to say about the program?

When complete, please turn in a hard copy to the Director of Graduate Studies by the deadline for posting grades for graduation. Since this deadline date varies slightly with the Academic Calendar, the Director of Graduate Studies will email the deadline date to you as soon as it is available for the relevant semester.

### Criteria for assessment

#### *Grading*

Capstone projects are graded as either “S” for satisfactory or “U” for unsatisfactory. If a student receives an unsatisfactory grade on the first attempt to satisfy the capstone requirement, one additional attempt to achieve a satisfactory grade is permitted. If a student fails to meet the department’s minimal criteria for assessing a satisfactory capstone, the Graduate School is notified and will send the student a letter of dismissal from the program.

#### *Assessment rubrics*

More specific assessment criteria used to evaluate the final research project, public presentation, and final reflection on the program will be provided when you enroll in CST698 – Capstone Experience in Communication

Appendices:

- 1- Graduate Faculty, Department of Communication Studies
- 2- GSA Application for Professional Development Funds
- 3- Sample Application for Graduation for Graduate Students

## Appendice 1

### Graduate Faculty Department of Communication Studies

#### **Professor**

Roy Schwartzman, PhD

Figurative language; rhetoric of science and technology; computer-mediated communication; critical theory; Holocaust studies; public address

#### **Associate Professors**

Sharon L Bracci, PhD

Public deliberation and decision-making; communication ethics; argumentation; health communication; biomedical ethics

David Carlone, PhD

Organizational communication; social and cultural theory; cultural studies of work and organization (Director of Graduate Studies)

Spoma Jovanovic, PhD

Communication and communities; communication ethics; social justice; service learning

Peter M. Kellett, PhD

Conflict analysis and management; narrative methodology

Etsuko Kinefuchi, PhD

Intercultural communication; language and culture; cultural identity and identity negotiation

Elizabeth J. Natalle, PhD

Gender and communication theory; interpersonal processes; feminist criticism

Loreen Olson, PhD

Gender; family communication; relationships

Christopher N. Poulos, PhD

Relational communication; ethnography; philosophy of communication; film; dialogue (Department Head)

#### **Assistant Professors**

Cerise Glenn, PhD

Cultural identity and identity negotiation; African-American communication and culture; occupational socialization and identification of diverse groups; organizational culture; third wave feminism

Marianne LeGreco, PhD

Health communication; healthcare institutions; public health policy

#### **Lecturer**

Jessica Delk McCall, PhD

Communication pedagogy; small group communication; relational communication; educational philosophy (Basic Course Director)

**Appendix 2**

GSA Application for Professional Development Funds  
<https://sites.google.com/a/uncg.edu/gsa/funding/funding-forms>

**Graduate Student Association Application  
Professional Development Funds (PDF)**

Please use the following checklist to complete the PDF application.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Fill out application completely (no initials or abbreviations please).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Include appropriate signatures.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Include conference flyer, program, or letter with applicant's name listed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Maintain a copy of the application for your records.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Submit complete form, signatures, and supporting documents to Vice President of Finance, Graduate Student Association, 222U EUC, UNCG no later than 5:00 PM two (2) weeks prior to the opening date of your conference

Please remember that funds will be disbursed *after* you return from your conference and that an application is formally received when a GSA officer date-stamps it.

**A. Application information**

Applicant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Dept. mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number(s) Office: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Description of conference**

Name of conference: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date conference begins: \_\_\_\_\_ Date conference ends: \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Estimated expenses** (Note: all expenses are subject to UNCG travel policies)

Registration fee: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation: \_\_\_\_\_ Type of transportation  
(air, rail, car, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Lodging: \_\_\_\_\_ How many nights? \_\_\_\_\_

Meals: \_\_\_\_\_ How many meals? \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix 3**

Sample Application for Graduation for Graduate Students

page 1 of 2

<http://www.uncg.edu/grs/forms/Gradapp.pdf>

(also available on-line through UNCGenie)



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
**GREENSBORO**

The Graduate School

**APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

Student ID No: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail or bring the application to The Graduate School, UNCG, 241 Mossman Building, 1202 Spring Garden Street, Greensboro, NC 27412 or fax to (336) 256-0109 **by the end of the first week of classes of the term in which the degree will be granted.** The graduation fee (\$60 for master's and Specialist in Education; \$75 for combined M.S./Ed.S.; \$60 for doctorate) will be added to your student account. **After** the fee is posted to your account, payment should be made to the Cashiers and Student Accounts Office, UNCG, 151 Mossman Building, 1202 Spring Garden Street, Greensboro, NC 27412 . There is no charge for Certificate candidates.

Degree or Certificate: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Date you expect to graduate:  December \_\_\_\_\_  May \_\_\_\_\_  August \_\_\_\_\_  
(year) (year) (year)

Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(first name) (middle name) (last name)

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(to which diploma will be mailed—notify if change occurs) No. and Street or P.O. Box No.

Daytime Phone No.: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Area Code City State Zip Code

Local Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(if different from permanent address) No. and Street or P.O. Box No.

City State Zip Code

Student's Alternate E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**FINAL PLAN OF STUDY:** If changes have been made to the Plan of Study, all Specialist in Education and master's degree candidates must submit a final plan of study by the end of the third week of classes. Certificate candidates are also required to submit a final plan of study by the end of the third week of classes.

**DEADLINE FOR THESES/DISSERTATIONS:** All doctoral candidates and master's candidates who are preparing a formal thesis should be aware of the following deadlines (see the University's Academic Calendar [www.uncg.edu/reg/Calendar](http://www.uncg.edu/reg/Calendar)):

- (1) Final oral examination in defense of doctoral dissertation. Master's thesis candidates should check with their thesis committee chair.
- (2) Submission of thesis/dissertation to The Graduate School for approval.
- (3) Submission of final, approved thesis/ dissertation to The Graduate School.

(OVER)

(OVER)

(OVER)

## Appendix 3 - continued

Sample Application for Graduation for Graduate Students

page 2 of 2

<http://www.uncg.edu/grs/forms/Gradapp.pdf>

(also available on-line through UNCGenie)

### DEADLINES FOR GRADUATION

This application must be filed with The Graduate School by the end of the first week of classes of the term in which the degree will be granted ([www.uncg.edu/reg/Calendar](http://www.uncg.edu/reg/Calendar)). Degree and/or certificate candidates must comply with all deadlines set forth in The Graduate School calendar. Failure to do so will delay the candidate's graduation. These deadlines are necessary to enable everyone involved with the candidate's degree clearance to complete the process in an orderly and academically sound manner. Candidates who apply for a given graduation and fail to qualify must reapply for a later graduation. Diplomas and transcripts of students owing money to the University will be held until the account is cleared.

### REMOVAL OF INCOMPLETE GRADES

Policy concerning incomplete grades is frequently misunderstood. No grade of incomplete (I) may be carried beyond graduation, *including incompletes in courses not required for the degree*. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that a final grade has been submitted prior to graduation. If a final grade has not been recorded by the deadline date for degree clearance, it is the student's responsibility to check with The Graduate School to determine his/her status. A GRADE OF I CANNOT BE REMOVED WITH A GRADE OF W.

### FORMATTING AND SUBMISSION OF DISSERTATION

The dissertation must be formatted and submitted according to the instructions provided in the *Guide for the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations*. A copy of the guide can be obtained from The Graduate School or from the following University Web site: [www.uncg.edu/grs/html/dissertation\\_manual.html](http://www.uncg.edu/grs/html/dissertation_manual.html). Deadline dates for submission of the dissertation are listed on the University's Academic Calendar ([www.uncg.edu/reg/Calendar](http://www.uncg.edu/reg/Calendar)) and in *The Graduate School Bulletin* under Calendar of Events.

### FORMATTING AND SUBMISSION OF THESIS

The thesis must be formatted and submitted according to the instructions provided in the *Guide for the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations*. A copy of the guide can be obtained from The Graduate School or from the following University Web site: [www.uncg.edu/grs/html/dissertation\\_manual.html](http://www.uncg.edu/grs/html/dissertation_manual.html). Deadline dates for submission of the thesis are listed on the University's Academic Calendar ([www.uncg.edu/reg/Calendar](http://www.uncg.edu/reg/Calendar)) and in *The Graduate School Bulletin* under Calendar of Events.

### COMMENCEMENT

Degrees are awarded after each semester and the second summer term. A commencement ceremony is held in December for Summer Session and Fall Semester graduates and in May for Spring Semester graduates. Diplomas will be mailed to the student's permanent address as it is listed on the Application for Graduation unless a new address is provided.

### SCHOOL LICENSURE APPLICATION OR UPGRADE

Students seeking professional school licensure or upgrading their licensure should contact The Teachers Academy, Room 319, Curry Building, (336) 334-3414.

08/19/09