

Department of Communication Graduate Student Handbook

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Introduction

This handbook is designed to serve as a reference guide for the graduate program in Communication. In these pages, you will find general guidelines for the timely completion of your graduate degree, information on campus and department resources and funding, and forms published by the graduate school and our department, which you will need to submit as you complete your degree. Please note that this handbook is a work in progress. It will be revised regularly with input from faculty and students to reflect changes in protocol and procedures. As such, the handbook is meant to supplement, not replace, good communication with your temporary or permanent advisor, the graduate director, and the graduate program assistant, as well as consultation of USF graduate school procedures and requirements and the USF Graduate Catalog.

Degree Requirements

M.A. Degree Requirements: 36 Credit Hours

Thesis Track—

Core Requirements (6 credit hours):

COM 6001, Histories and Theories of Communication (3 credit hours). This course must be taken the first time it is offered after the student is admitted to the graduate program.

COM 7325, Qualitative Methods *or* COM 7325, Critical Methods, depending on your interests (3 credit hours)

Additional Requirements (30 credit hours):

24 credit hours of elective coursework, 6 hours of which *may* consist of a course or courses from other departments within this or other universities (pending advisor approval)

SPC 6971, Thesis Hours (6 credit hours minimum)

Each student must also write and successfully defend a thesis.

Non-Thesis Track—

Core Requirements (3 credit hours):

COM 6001, Histories and Theories of Communication (3 credit hours). This course must be taken the first time it is offered after the student is admitted to the graduate program.

Additional Requirements (33 credit hours):

33 credit hours of elective, 6 hours of which *may* consist of a course or courses from other departments within this or other universities (pending advisor approval)

Each student must also write and successfully defend comprehensive examinations.

Thesis or non-thesis? Some things to consider: Most M.A. students in our department elect not to write a master's thesis, preferring instead to take additional coursework and complete a comprehensive exam. When deciding which path to take, talk to student colleagues and faculty about each option. The thesis option requires the student to produce a piece of work that is longer than the typical 15- to 20-page research paper. Some faculty and students feel this is a good experience for those seeking an in-depth research experience and/or those intending to pursue doctoral-level research programs (and a precursor to writing a dissertation). Others believe that writing a thesis may unnecessarily prolong an M.A. program (and thus delay the start of doctoral or other work). For students who intend for the M.A. to be a terminal degree, the thesis option may be less of a consideration.

Doctoral Degree Requirements: 51 total credit hours beyond the M.A. degree (45 course credit hours minimum plus 6 credit hours of doctoral dissertation work)

Core Requirements (6 credit hours):

COM 6001, Histories and Theories of Communication (3 credit hours)

COM 7325, Qualitative Methods *or* COM 7325, Critical Methods (depending on your interests) (3 credit hours)

Additional Requirements (45 credit hours):

6 credit hours of research tools related to area of dissertation

6 credit hours in courses from other departments within this or other universities (pending advisor approval)

27 credit hours of elective coursework in Communication, 12 credit hours of which *must* be Ph.D. Seminars

6 credit hours of Dissertation hours

Ph.D. students enrolled full-time tend to complete coursework in three years; a minimum of one-year continuous residency is required.

General Timeline for Completing Your Degree

This timeline is structured around a two-year program plan. Students enrolled full time typically complete coursework and a culminating requirement (comprehensive exams or thesis) in 4 semesters. The first two semesters are identical for every M.A. student. In the third semester, these timelines and activities diverge. For those who decide to take 33 hours and coursework and complete comprehensive exams, your timeline is outlined in the M.A. Non-Thesis Option. For those who decide to write a thesis, your timeline is outlined in the M.A. Thesis Option. Students enrolled full-time tend to complete coursework in 5-6 semesters.

M.A. Non-Thesis Option

First Semester:

- Meet with your temporary advisor to discuss course selection and, toward the end of this semester, begin selection of permanent advisor.
- Consider taking only classes offered within Communication to allow time to acclimate to the department and get to know your colleagues. One of these courses must be COM 6001, Histories and Theories of Communication.

Second Semester:

- Meet with your temporary advisor to discuss course selection and permanent advisor.
- Once you have done this, inform the graduate program assistant via email of your decision.
- Before the end of this semester, schedule a meeting with your chosen permanent advisor and discuss the formation of your committee. The committee must include three members (including the advisor), at least two of whom (one plus the advisor) are members of the faculty of the Department of Communication. Also during this time, discuss with your advisor what culminating requirement (comprehensive or thesis) seems most appropriate for you to pursue, given your research and career goals.
- Once you have spoken with all of the selected committee members and each has agreed to serve, complete and file the Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Appointment Form with the graduate program assistant (see the department website for this form). Should you need to make changes to the composition of your committee, complete the Changes to the Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Member form (see the department website for this form).
- Create and complete a plan of study (see the Developing Your Plan of Study section of this handbook for more information on creating your plan of study).
- Once your advisor has approved your plan of study, distribute a hard copy of and collect the signature of each committee member. Please note: Your advisor may ask you to distribute your plan of study to each committee member for comment before you submit it for signatures.

- Your committee should be officially appointed and your plan of study formally approved before you have **completed 18 hours of coursework**.

Third Semester:

- Meet with your permanent advisor to discuss your comprehensive exam process and schedule.
- Following the meeting with your advisor, it is typical to meet with each member of your supervisory committee to discuss comprehensive exam questions. These questions typically focus on reviewing what you have learned about communication in completing your coursework.
- You are eligible to take comprehensive exams during the semester in which you **complete 27 credit hours, although most students take the exam in their final semester**.

Fourth Semester:

- **Apply for graduation by completing the Master's EDS or Ph.D. Graduation Application form (see the department website for this form) according to the deadlines posted on the graduate school website (<http://www.usf.edu/admissions/index.aspx>).**
- Once you have completed the written portion of the exam, prepare and distribute copies of **all** of your questions and responses to **each** committee member to review.
- An oral defense meeting will be scheduled no sooner than **two weeks** following distribution of your responses.
- Receive Master's degree!

M.A.: Non-Thesis Timeline

1st Semester:

 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with temporary advisor- Discuss course selection- Select permanent advisor	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Suggestion: COM courses only- Enroll: COM 6001, Theories & Histories of Communication
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2nd Semester:

 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with temporary advisor- Discuss course selection- Meet with and select permanent advisor	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inform graduate program assistant of chosen permanent advisor	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with permanent advisor- Discuss formation of committee
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with committee members- File Grad Student Supervisory Committee Appointment Form	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create plan of study- Seek approval of plan from advisor- Collect signature of each committee member	

3rd Semester:



- Meet with advisor
- Discuss comprehensive exam process/schedule

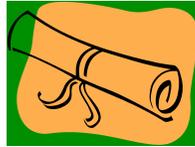


- Meet with each committee member and discuss comprehensive exam questions

4th Semester:



- Apply for graduation
- Complete exam
- Deliver copies of responses to each committee member
- Complete oral defense



- Graduate!

M.A. Thesis Option

First Semester:

- Meet with your temporary advisor to discuss course selection and, toward the end of this semester, begin selection of permanent advisor.
- Consider taking only classes offered within Communication to allow time to acclimate to the department and get to know your colleagues. One of these courses must be COM 6001, Histories and Theories of Communication.

Second Semester:

- Meet with your temporary advisor to discuss course selection and permanent advisor.
- Once you have done this, inform the graduate program assistant via email of your decision.
- Before the end of this semester, schedule a meeting with your chosen permanent advisor and discuss the formation of your supervisory committee. The committee must include three members (including the advisor), at least two of whom (one plus the advisor) are members of the Department of Communication. Also during this time, discuss with your advisor what culminating requirement (comprehensive or thesis) seems most appropriate for you to pursue, given your research and career goals.
- Once you have spoken with all of the selected committee members and each has agreed to serve, complete and file the Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Appointment Form with the graduate program assistant (see **the department website for this form**). Should you need to make changes to the composition of your committee, complete the Changes to the Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Member form (see **the department website for this form**).
- Create and complete a plan of study (see the Developing Your Plan of Study section of this handbook for more information on creating your plan of study).
- Once your advisor has approved your plan of study, distribute a hard copy and collect the signature of each committee member. Please note: Your advisor may ask you to distribute your plan of study to each committee member for comment before you submit it for signatures.
- Your committee should be officially appointed and your plan of study formally approved before you have **completed 18 hours of coursework**.

Third Semester:

- Work with your advisor to develop and write a formal thesis proposal (when doing so, you may register for 3 hours of SPC 6971, Thesis). The proposal must be approved by the committee **no later than the semester immediately preceding** the one in which the thesis is submitted and approved.
- Once the proposal is complete, distribute copies to your committee. Schedule a meeting to review and approve the proposal for no sooner than **two weeks** following this distribution.

- If you are working with human subjects, you must apply for and receive USF Institutional Review Board approval of your research (which includes submission of your approved proposal, completion of the IRB application, and completion of investigator education courses by you **and your advisor**). For more information, see the Office of Research's Research Integrity and Compliance guidelines and requirements at <http://www.usf.edu/research-innovation/about-usfri/policies.aspx> .
- Once you have received the approval of your committee on your proposal and the IRB, if applicable, you may begin conducting your research and writing your thesis.

Fourth Semester:

- Apply for graduation by completing the Master's EDS or Ph.D. Graduation Application form (see the department website for this form) according to the deadlines posted on the graduate school website <http://www.usf.edu/admissions/graduate/index.aspx>.
- Submit the thesis format check documents to the graduate school according to the deadlines posted on the graduate school website. Note that the graduate school has very [specific requirements for the format of the thesis document](#). Please become familiar with the format requirements well in advance of the thesis deadline.
- Write thesis (and register for 3-6 hours minimum of SPC 6971, Thesis).
- Once your thesis has been approved by your advisor, prepare and distribute review copies for your committee members, allowing at least **two weeks** before scheduling a thesis defense date.
- On the scheduled date, complete an oral examination of your completed thesis.
- After making all revisions requested by your committee (and please, make sure you allow enough time prior to the graduate school's final submission deadline to do so), submit a final copy of the thesis to the graduate school in accordance with their criteria for final check (these deadlines are posted on the graduate school website). More information is available at: http://www.grad.usf.edu/newsite/faq/etd_format_check.asp
- Please also submit one bound hard copy of the final document for department use and send an electronic copy of the final document to your committee members.
- Receive Master's degree!

M.A.: Thesis Option Timeline

1st Semester:

 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with temporary advisor - Discuss course selection - Select permanent advisor 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggestion: COM courses only - Enroll: COM 6001, Theories & Histories of Communication
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2nd Semester:

 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with temporary advisor - Discuss course selection - Select and meet with permanent advisor 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inform graduate program assistant of chosen permanent advisor 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with permanent advisor - Discuss formation of committee
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with committee members - File Grad Student Supervisory Committee Appointment Form 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create plan of study - Seek approval of plan from advisor - Collect signature of each committee member 	

3rd Semester:

 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with advisor- Write formal thesis proposal	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Complete IRB (if applicable)- Distribute copies of proposal to committee members- Seek approval of proposal from committee members	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Begin writing thesis
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4th Semester:

 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Apply for graduation- Complete online formatting course- Register for SPC 6971, Thesis	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Seek approval of thesis from advisor- Distribute thesis copies to committee members- Advisor will set date for oral defense	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Complete oral defense- Make revisions suggested by committee members- Submit final thesis to the Graduate school	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Graduate!
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Ph.D.

This timeline is structured around a four-year program plan. Students enrolled full-time tend to complete coursework in 5-6 semesters. Although each graduate student's experience is unique and may differ from this timeline, it represents a typical and recommended sequence of work and decision making.

First Semester:

- Meet with your temporary advisor to discuss course selection and, toward the end of this semester, begin selection of permanent advisor.
- Consider taking only classes offered within Communication to allow time to acclimate to the department and get to know your colleagues. One of these courses must be COM 6001, Histories and Theories of Communication.
- If a methods course of interest to you is offered, consider taking this course as well.
- Talk and meet with faculty who share your interests, and discuss whether they would be willing and able to work with you.

Second Semester:

- Select and meet with a permanent advisor.
- Once you have done this, inform the graduate program assistant of your decision via email.

Third Semester:

- If you have not done this already, Discuss selection of your supervisory committee with your advisor. The committee must include at least four people, three of whom are members of the Communication Department (including your advisor) and one of whom is outside of the department and who has expertise in an area in which you have interest.
- Once you have spoken with all of the selected committee members and each has agreed to serve, complete the Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Appointment Form and file with the graduate program assistant (see **the department website for this form**). Should you need to make changes to the composition of your committee, complete the Changes to the Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Member form (see **the department website for this form**).
- Create and complete your plan of study (see the Plan of Study section of this handbook for more information on creating your plan of study)
- Once your advisor has approved your plan of study, distribute a hard copy and collect the signature of each committee member. Please note: Your advisor may ask you to distribute your plan of study to each committee member for comment before you submit it for signatures.
- Your committee must be officially appointed and your plan of study formally approved before you have **completed 27 hours of coursework**.

Fourth Semester:

- You are eligible to take qualifying exams during or after the semester in which you complete **36 hours** of coursework. These exams are designed to assess expertise in your areas of interest and methodological competence. First, consult with your advisor about the scheduling and format of the exams.
- Prior to discussion of your qualifying exam questions, your advisor may request that you prepare a brief (1-2 pages) statement of purpose for your dissertation research and writing.
- Meet with each member of your committee to discuss your exam questions. These questions typically focus on your ability to integrate what you have learned about communication into your proposed research questions and agenda.
- Once you have completed the written portion of your exam, prepare and distribute copies of **all** of your questions and responses to **each** committee member to review.
- An oral defense meeting will be scheduled no sooner than **two weeks** following distribution of your responses.
- Prior to completing your oral defense, work with the program assistant to prepare the Admission to Doctoral Candidacy form (see **the department website for this form**). Please note: the deadline to submit this form is the last day of classes of the semester in which you wish to be advanced to candidacy. Also note that in order to advance to candidacy you must have completed and submitted your Plan of Study and Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Appointment Form and that you may not have any outstanding incomplete (I) or missing (M) grades on your transcript.
- Upon filing and recording of these forms, the graduate school will officially designate you a candidate for the Ph.D. in Communication (candidacy). You are now ABD!

Fifth Semester:

- Meet with your advisor and begin work on your dissertation proposal (prospectus).
- Once the proposal is complete, distribute copies to your committee.
- Schedule a meeting to review and approve the proposal for no sooner than **two weeks** following this distribution.
- If you are working with human subjects, you must apply for and receive USF Institutional Review Board approval of your research (which includes submission of your approved proposal, completion of the IRB application, and completion of investigator education courses by you **and your advisor**). For more information, see the Office of Research's Research Integrity and Compliance guidelines and requirements at <http://www.research.usf.edu/cs/irb.htm> .
- Once you have received the approval of your committee on your proposal and the IRB, if applicable, you may begin conducting your research and writing your dissertation.

Sixth/Seventh Semesters:

- Continue and complete work on your dissertation. Work closely with your advisor during this process, advising him or her of your progress.
- Note that while you are working on your dissertation—each semester, every semester—you are required to register for at least **2 hours** of SPC 7980, Dissertation. This includes fall, spring, and summer semesters (at least **6 hours per year**). If, for whatever reason, you do not register for at least 2 hours of SPC 7980, you must request a leave of absence (see **the department website for this form**). You must register for at least 2 credit hours in the semester you expect to graduate.
- Graduate Teaching Assistants must enroll in 9 hours each semester in order to receive a tuition waiver (this requirement is reduced to 6 hours in the summer). Also, a word about time limits (from the Graduate Catalog, 2008-2009):

All requirements for doctoral degrees must be completed within eight (8) calendar years from the student's date of admission for doctoral study. Students have four (4) years from the date of admission to complete all required coursework, pass the qualifying examination, and be admitted to doctoral candidacy. Students then have four (4) years from the date of doctoral candidacy to complete degree requirements.

In the event that a student nears the end of the time limitation as specified above, but the student needs more time to complete the degree, the student may submit a request for an extension using the *Time Limit Extension Request Form*, available on the Graduate School website http://www.grad.usf.edu/newsite/forms/grad_forms.asp. Requests must include the reasons for the delay in completion, the anticipated time needed for completion, and endorsements from the graduate faculty advisor, graduate program, and College Dean or designee, prior to submission to the Graduate School for approval. Students who exceed the time limitations may have their registration placed on hold until a request for extension has been approved.

Final Semester:

- Apply for graduation by completing the Master's EDS or Ph.D. Graduation Application form (see **the department website for this form**) according to the deadlines posted on the graduate school website (<http://www.grad.usf.edu/newsite/main.asp>).
- Submit the dissertation format check documents to the graduate school according to the deadlines posted on the graduate school website. Note that the graduate school has [very specific requirements for the format of the thesis document](#). Please become familiar with the format requirements well in advance of the submission deadline.
- Once you and your advisor agree that your dissertation is ready for review and the oral examination, prepare and distribute review copies to your committee.
- Once your committee has had at least **two weeks** to review your completed dissertation and has indicated to your advisor that it is ready to examine, work with your advisor and the graduate program assistant to select an Outside Chair, identify a defense date and

time, and complete the Request for the Dissertation Defense form (see **the department website for this form**).

- The program assistant will complete the Doctoral Defense Announcement or Doctoral Defense Announcement with Co-Chairs, depending on your situation (see **the department website for this form**) and advertise the oral examination time, date, and location (the announcement must also be posted in a public forum for a minimum of twenty-four hours to comply with statute requirements for a public meeting). Please note that this process takes **at least two weeks**.
- As such, you must allow **at least one month** to secure an outside chair, complete and file the Request for the Dissertation Defense form with the graduate school, and advertise your oral examination date and time following the rules and timetable of the graduate school. This is a minimum. Often, this process takes much longer. Your advisor and the graduate program will assist you in this process, but you must be aware of the time requirements and plan your work accordingly.
- After you successfully complete and pass the oral examination of the dissertation, the graduate program assistant will complete and file the Successful Completion of the Ph.D. Oral Exam form (see **the department website for this form**).
- After making all revisions requested by your committee (and please, make sure you all enough time prior to the graduate school's final submission deadline to do so), submit a final copy of the dissertation thesis to the graduate school in accordance with their criteria for final check (these deadlines are posted on the graduate school website). More information is available at: http://www.grad.usf.edu/newsite/faq/etd_format_check.asp
- Please also submit one bound hard copy of the final document for department use and send an electronic copy of the final document to your committee members.
- Receive Doctoral degree!

Ph.D. Timeline

1st Semester:



- Meet with temporary advisor
- Discuss course selection



- Suggestion: COM courses only
- Enroll: COM 6001, Theories & Histories of Communication
- Consider taking a methods course
- Find faculty members who will work with you

2nd Semester:



- Meet with and select permanent advisor (if you are ready)



- Inform graduate program assistant of chosen permanent advisor

3rd Semester:

 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with advisor (or select if you have not already done so)- Select supervisory committee	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with committee members- File Grad Student Supervisory Committee Appointment Form	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create plan of study- Seek approval of plan from advisor and committee members- Collect signature of each committee member
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4th Semester:

 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with advisor- Discuss qualifying exams- Prepare statement of purpose for dissertation	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with each committee member to discuss exam questions	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Complete exam- Deliver copies of responses to each committee member
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meet with graduate program assistant- Prepare Admission to Doctoral Candidacy form- Complete oral defense		

5th Semester:



- Meet with advisor
- Begin work on proposal



- Complete proposal
- Distribute copies to each member of committee



- Seek approval of proposal from advisor and committee members
- Complete IRB (if applicable)
- Begin research and dissertation

6th & 7th Semesters:



- Continue work on dissertation
- Work closely with advisor



- Register for at least 2 hours of SPC 7890, Dissertation per semester

Final Semester:

 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply for graduation - Complete online formatting course 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek approval of dissertation from advisor - Distribute copies to all committee members 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After committee approval, advisor selects Outside Chair and sets defense date - Complete Request for Dissertation Defense form with Graduate program assistant
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program assistant will complete Doctoral Defense Announcement 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete and pass oral examination of dissertation - Graduate program assistant will complete and file Successful Completion of Ph.D. Oral Exam form 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make revisions suggested by committee - Submit final dissertation to Graduate School
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graduate! 		

Dual Degree Option

From the USF Graduate School: A student may wish to pursue two degrees simultaneously (for example, students may pursue MA degrees in Communication and Women's Studies). Upon approval by the appropriate College Dean(s) and Dean of the Graduate School, a prescribed number of courses (generally no more than nine (9) hours of core or basic courses) required for one degree may be applied to another degree that requires the same courses, without repetition or alternative courses (USF Graduate Catalogue, Section 7 of Academic Policies)

Procedure for Applying for a Dual Degree: Students must complete the included form and submit it to the Graduate School after being admitted to their first major program. Students must carefully work with each department to ensure that all specific requirements are fulfilled for each degree.

Advising

Whether you're an M.A. or Ph.D. student, here are some helpful guidelines to keep in mind regarding advising.

1. Temporary advisors serve as resources to new graduate students and consultation with this faculty member is essential. Speak to your temporary advisor about course selection, questions you may have about the department or university, and selection of a permanent advisor. Please recognize that temporary advisor assignments are made based on general interests and expertise, among other factors. You are in no way obligated or required to select your temporary advisor as your permanent advisor, though you may do so.
2. When selecting a permanent advisor, consider the connection of your interests and the faculty member's research, your experience of the faculty member in class and in exchanges about your work, your experience of your general compatibility (working styles, writing preferences and habits, etc.). Once you have a faculty member in mind for permanent advising, schedule an appointment with him or her to discuss your interests and the direction you believe your work is taking. Please keep in mind that these decisions are mutual and should be worked out between you and your chosen advisor.
3. Once you've selected a permanent advisor, it is a good idea to discuss advising preferences and protocol. For instance, some faculty have preferences regarding advising meetings (when to schedule and how often), communication (Is email best? Phoning?), and how to handle requests for letters of recommendation and other materials (How much notice does he require? In what form would she prefer to receive information and materials?). In general, keep in mind that your advisor is as busy with his or her work as you are, and the more notice you give regarding meetings and needed information, the better. Likewise, the more prepared you are for these meetings and the more information you can provide, the more productive your meetings can be. For example, when asking for letters of recommendation, providing a brief summary of the purpose of the letter, your reasons for applying for and your fit with the position/fellowship, and any materials you've prepared for submission are very helpful to your letter writers. In addition,

providing addresses, required forms, and addressed envelopes helps streamline the process. The key, of course, is to be thorough, timely, and thoughtful.

Developing Your Plan of Study

In collaboration with your permanent advisor, you will create a plan of study for your degree program. This plan will then be approved by your advisor, your supervisory committee, and the graduate director. The plan of study should be undertaken as soon as you have selected a permanent advisor and you have collaborated to select a supervisory committee. The plan of study should be completed and signed by the committee and the graduate director before **M.A. students complete 18 hours** or **Ph.D. students complete 27 hours** of study.

M.A. students, your plan of study should show that you have achieved:

- Understanding of and facility with one or more domains of communication study
- Understanding of and facility in using at least one research methodology

Ph.D. students, your plan of study should show that you have achieved:

- Expertise in two or more domains of communication study
- Expertise in the research methodologies needed to carry out original research in the specialized area of concentration
- 6 hours of coursework in an area of study outside the department

Sample Plan of Study

Plan of Study for Karl Marx

The first section of your plan of study should consist of an explanatory paragraph or two identifying your general area of study, prospective thesis (if applicable) or dissertation area, and areas of interest. This is also the space to offer justification for choices of methodology, as well as how coursework from other departments fits into your research agenda. The goal? For M.A. thesis option and Ph.D. students to demonstrate their preparation for conducting their research and writing their theses/dissertations. For M.A. students who choose to write comprehensive exams, the plan of study demonstrates expertise in an area of inquiry and methodology and guides the scope of the comprehensive exams. In this case, your general statement will focus on your studies and expertise, rather than your preparation for researching and writing a thesis or dissertation.) For example, a plan of study for the Ph.D. might read:

I have always had an interest in the relationship between our ideas of morality and our economic circumstances. Contrary to prevailing academic thought, I suspect that our economic conditions, as found codified in our notions of social class, play a much larger role in determining our ideological and metaphysical assumptions than is usually deemed the case. The consequences of this phenomenon are that people seem to possess ideas of morality and social justice that are directly in conflict with their own interests. In short, I believe that the general system of ideas in our culture serve to legitimize the power of the ruling classes, and cause lower classes to acquiesce to the prevailing class structure, making them unwilling to revolt. An examination of our cultural ideas and ideals, and how they perform the labor of oppression through continual interpellation, is an important theoretical topic as well as a pertinent method to develop strategies to resist the will of the economic and political elite.

My dissertation will cover the general conceptions of the workings of ideology and cultural critique, focusing in particular on continental thought, although at this time there is latitude as to the exact manifestation of this. The areas of communication research most relevant to these topics appear to be critical and cultural studies, as well as organizational communication. In order to provide myself with the proper methodological background and skill sets, I will register in courses on critical methods, rhetorical criticism, ethnography, and semiotics. The combination of on-site studies of workers conditions, cultural text of dominant ideology, and the basic operation of cultural metaphors will aid me in discovering the condition of alienation and oppression through systematic analysis of communication based phenomena. I plan to finish coursework in the fall of 2009, and take my comprehensive examinations at the end of the summer sessions, 2009.

The second section of your plan of study will outline your coursework according to some rationale. For example, you could organize your coursework according to major and minor areas of interest, with a third section on methods/research tool (see below). Another way to approach this is to organize the plan by theme or theory, for example, "Postcolonial Thought, Cultural Studies, and Cultural Critique" In this case, whatever "methods" courses (among the

required courses, courses in cultural and critical studies, etc.) would be included under these three major section headings (often with a fourth category for “other” coursework).

<u>Major Area: Critical and Cultural Studies</u>	<u>Credit Hours</u>	<u>Professor</u>	<u>Grade</u>
SPC 7933: Postmodern Rhetoric (Spring 2008) *	3	Payne	A
COM 7930: Culture and Critique (Fall 2007)	3	Butchart	A
SPC 7933: Kenneth Burke Seminar (Spring 2008) *	3	Payne	A
COM 6345: Contemporary Cultural Studies (Fall 2007)	3	Butchart	A
PHM 6105: Seminar in Social Philosophy (Fall 2008) #	3	Ariew	A
PHI 6305: Seminar in Epistemology (Spring 2009) #	3	Kukla	A
SPC 6903: Directed Reading (Continental Theory) (Summer 2008)	3	Butchart	A

Minor Area: Organizational Communication

Com 6121: Organizational Communication (Spring 2008)	3	Eisenberg	A
Com 7933: Communication and Identity (Fall 2008) *	3	Eisenberg	A
Com 7933: Communicating Structures (Spring 2008) *	3	Eisenberg	A
Com 6418: Communication and Systems Practice (Spring 2009)	3	Steier	A
COM 6045 Communicating Leadership (Fall 2009)	3	Eisenberg	A

Other Coursework

COM 6001: Intro to Graduate Studies (Fall 2007)	3	Payne/Steier	A
COM 7325: Writing Workshop (Summer 2009)	3	Ellis	A

Methodology

COM 7325: Critical Methods (Spring 2008)	3	Dubrofsky	A
SPC 6682: Rhetorical Criticism (Fall 2008)	3	Payne	A
SPC 6214: Ethnography of Communication (Spring 2009)	3	Holman Jones	A
COM 7933: Semiotics* (Fall 2009)	3	Butchart	A

*Fills PhD requirement

Total: 54 Hours

#Fills Outside of Department Requirement

The third section of your plan of study consists of the signature page for your committee and the graduate director.

_____	_____
Dr. Garnet Butchart, Major Professor	Date
_____	_____
Dr. David Payne, Committee Member	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Fred Steier, Committee Member	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Rebecca Kukla, Committee Member	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Stacy Holman Jones, Graduate Director	Date

Directed Readings and Research

There are instances where students may choose to work one on one with their advisor or a faculty member for course credit. Two possible options for this type of arrangement are Directed Readings and Directed Research. The purposes and evaluation differ for each option. These differences are outlined below:

Directed Research

Students usually sign up for directed research hours in a summer term (although they may enroll during fall and spring semesters). Directed Research courses can be used for the following purposes. 1.) To accomplish a tangible goal that doesn't fall under the heading of a substantive course of study or project. For example, many people elect to enroll in directed research hours as they prepare for comprehensive or qualifying exams. 2.) To meet enrollment requirements for a summer term. In order for funded students to teach in the summer and receive benefits (tuition waivers and payment), they must be enrolled in six hours of coursework during one of the summer sessions. Those students who are nearing qualifying or comprehensive exams might use directed research hours to meet this requirement and get some work accomplished at the same time. Students are evaluated in terms of S (Satisfactory)/ U (Unsatisfactory) for their final grade. These hours are not included in a student's plan of study (or the total number of hours toward the degree).

Directed Readings

Directed Readings courses are similar in scope and scale to taking a graduate seminar. Students might want to do a series on a topic/question or theme and produce a substantive work product or products (a seminar paper, etc.). In some instances, these are courses you design in collaboration with a faculty member around an area of interest and expertise that might not come in the form of a course or seminar that is currently offered. For example, a student and faculty member may choose to do a Directed Readings course on the work of a particular scholar. These courses may also help students investigate topics that are part of their dissertation, thesis, or other ongoing research project. These courses are highly work-intensive for students and faculty members and should be planned well in advance. If a student is not able to enroll in a regularly offered seminar during a fall or spring semester, they may also use directed readings as an option to take that course over a summer. However, they will not be able to have the opportunity to gain insight or feedback from colleagues as they would in the seminar sessions. These courses can be meaningful and useful, but they are not and cannot be substitutes for taking the regular, organized, and structured courses the department offers. Students are evaluated in the form of a letter grade. These hours can be included in a student's plan of study, but students should not plan on including more than six hours of Directed Readings work on their plans of study.

Funded Assistantships

The Department of Communication offers a limited number of funded assistantships to newly accepted graduate applicants each year. In general, offers of graduate assistantships are accompanied by a tuition waiver (excluding student fees).

M.A. assistantships are offered for 2 years, or four consecutive regular semesters (fall, spring). *Ph.D. assistantships* are offered for a period of 4 years, or eight consecutive regular semesters (fall, spring). Summer teaching is generally available but is not guaranteed in the offer of assistance.

Students who accept and hold funded assistantships must:

- Be enrolled full-time in 9 hours of coursework a semester (6 hours if teaching in the summer)
- Make adequate progress toward the degree
- Complete course work with a 3.0 grade average or better
- Participate in teacher training provided by the department
- Be observed in the classroom by a faculty supervisor responsible for a yearly written evaluation.

Tuition Waivers

Tuition waivers for students on assistantships funded by the department and fellowship administered by the graduate school waive tuition for 9 hours of graduate coursework. Students are responsible for student fees. Students may be eligible for a waiver for up to 12 credit hours with permission of the student's advisor, the department graduate director and chair and approval of the graduate school.

Working Outside of the Department

Doctoral graduate students in the Department of Communication at USF who are employed .50 FTE by the Department may not accept work elsewhere, on or off campus, without the permission of their major professor, the Graduate Director, and the Department Chair. The decision to approve additional employment will be based on the student's academic standing and progress and performance in the graduate program, as well as the amount of the proposed work. These decisions will be documented and placed in the student's file. Failure to comply with this policy could result in the loss of the department assistantship.

Annual Self-Assessment and Faculty Evaluation

Early in the spring semester, graduate students in the department are asked to complete a self-assessment form. The faculty use the information provided to evaluate the progress of students in the program, to recognize student accomplishments, and to make recommendations for the upcoming year.

Graduate Communication Association (GCA)

The GCA is designed to provide access to services, activities, and information that will benefit the students enrolled in the graduate programs of the Department of Communication. Specific goals of the GCA include promoting academic community, assisting in personal development, dissemination of key information and policy changes, and providing a liaison between graduate students and graduate faculty.

Every degree-seeking graduate student admitted to the Department of Communication is a member of GCA. There is an e-mail list serve that keeps members of the GCA informed of various activities and important information. The list serve is where graduate students can share information about teaching, coursework and other issues that interest our community. It is important to become a member of this listserv so that you can stay aware of what is going on within your graduate community. Contact your GCA co-presidents for instructions on joining the listserv.

Graduate Assistants United

If you are a graduate assistant, you are encouraged to join Graduate Assistants United (GAU). GAU is the official labor union at USF representing all 1,600+ graduate employees. This includes all graduate assistants (GAs), teaching assistants (TAs), and research assistants (RAs). GAU is the graduate chapter of the United Faculty of Florida, which is the union representing faculty at USF. The Department of Communication has a proud tradition of activism with the GAU. It is important to note that being a GA does not automatically make you a member of GAU. In order to join, you must complete and sign a form that authorizes payroll to deduct 1% of each pay check for membership dues. Joining GAU increases the size of the bargaining unit and provides GAU with more leverage to improve stipends, health insurance, and working conditions.

Office Support Personnel

Our office staff consists of Velencia Russell, Sheri Plummer, and Anne Copeland. These staff members provide graduate students with assistance regarding tuition waivers, offices, mail, teaching assistantships, and graduate school and university procedures. As you complete the various milestones towards getting your degree, be sure to be in close communication with

Velencia Russell, the graduate program assistant, to ensure that the proper paperwork and processes are followed.

Travel Funding and Reimbursement

Many graduate students travel to present their scholarly work at academic conferences and conventions. There are numerous ways to secure funding for these types of activities. Although it is rare that the entire cost of the trip is reimbursed by the university, or the department, most graduate students who are traveling to a conference that they are presenting work at are eligible for some type travel funding.

Student Government/Graduate and Professional Student Council-Supported Travel

You must be a registered USF graduate student both at the time you complete the Grant Application form and at the time you travel to your conference. If you are traveling during the summer semesters, you are not required to be registered. However, you must have been registered the previous semester and also must register for the following semester. Otherwise, the USF Student Government will require you to reimburse the funds that you were paid for travel.

The Grant Application must be received by the Student Government Administrative Services, completed, signed, and accompanied by the required documentation as indicated on the front of the form no less than 2 weeks prior to your departure. ***Late applications will not be processed nor will applications submitted after travel has commenced.***

Funding from this program is available only for those actually presenting or otherwise actively participating at a conference. Active participation includes presentation of scholarly papers, research abstracts, creative endeavors and performances (such as poetry readings, art exhibitions, musical and theatrical performances). This does not include assisting with physical setup or supervision of a conference. "Active participation" is the guiding principle for funding consideration. If you are in doubt as to whether or not your work fits this criterion, contact the GPSC for clarification. For information on this funding source, see the Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) website at: <http://www.gpsc.usf.edu/money.html>

When you travel, you must complete two forms: The Travel Authorization Request (TAR) is prepared by the graduate program assistant. It must be completed and signed **at least two days prior to** your travel. When you return, work with the graduate program assistant to complete your Travel Expense Report (TER). To do so, submit receipts for your travel and hotel (note that the hotel receipt must show a zero balance). No receipts are needed for food.

Department of Communication-Supported Travel

The Department of Communication is committed to supporting travel to present at regional and national conferences. As funds are available, you will be notified about opportunities for travel reimbursement. As with all university-related and supported travel, you must complete both the TAR and TER forms.

Forms

Please note that many of the forms referenced in this handbook (and others) can also be obtained on the Department of Communication website at: <http://communication.usf.edu/graduate/> (just select the Forms tab). You can also access the Graduate Catalog and forms at the [Graduate School](#) website and the [Office of the Registrar](#)). You can access these forms on the Graduate Studies/Forms section of the Department website at: <http://www.cas.usf.edu/communication/programs.html>

Forms Referenced in this Graduate Handbook:

Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Appointment

Changes to the Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Member

Admission to Doctoral Candidacy

Master's, EDS or Ph.D. Graduation Application

Request for the Dissertation Defense Form

Doctoral Defense Announcement

Doctoral Defense Announcement with Co-Chairs

Leave of Absence Request

Other Frequently Used Forms

Graduate Transfer Course Form

Graduate Petition (Add/Drop/Change Hours)

Contract for Graduate Directed Reading and Graduate Directed Research

Certification of Degree Letter (in case you defended the thesis/dissertation, but have not been granted the actual degree by the university)

Application for a Dual Degree

Reinstatement of Admission Request