

COMMUNICATION STUDIES, MA

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

The 30 hour master of arts degree program in communication studies is designed to promote understanding of the functions of human communication in its various forms and venues and emphasizes four substantive research areas: rhetoric and political discourse, interpersonal communication, organizational leadership, and communication and culture. The MA degree can be completed as a main campus or distance learning student.

Students have the opportunity to customize a plan of study or complete a defined concentration to support different interests and career goals, including advanced graduate degree work, teaching, communication consulting, and corporate or nonprofit professional leadership positions. Students have four different options for culminating their degree:

Academic – for students who wish to fulfill teaching requirements in communication studies or who want to pursue advanced degree work, requiring a comprehensive written examination to demonstrate proficient knowledge in communication studies.

Research – for students who plan to continue their careers in academia and pursue advanced research opportunities, requiring an original thesis project in a specific research area of interest.

Professional – for students who plan to pursue professional careers, requiring either 1) the completion of an internship or a professional project and the submission of a final Capstone Portfolio which provides a self-reflective overview of the entire body of coursework completed for the degree or 2) the completion of a capstone seminar course that synthesizes the curriculum.

Admissions

Main Campus

Applications for main campus admission are reviewed for both fall and spring term entry, though fall entry is encouraged.

Recommended Dates for Submitting Applications for Admission

- **December 1:** for fall applicants requesting departmental nomination for Graduate School fellowship opportunities
- **February 1:** for fall applicants requesting consideration for departmental assistantships
- **May 1:** for applicants seeking fall term entry
- **November 1:** for applicants seeking spring term entry

Distance Learning

Applications for distance learning admission are reviewed year-round for fall, spring, and summer term entry. Decisions for distance learning admission are made on a rolling basis, based on available space.

Recommended Dates for Submitting Applications for Admission

- **April 1:** for distance learners seeking summer entry
- **July 1:** for distance learners seeking fall term entry
- **November 1:** for distance learners seeking spring term entry

Applications received after the recommended dates listed above may still be considered, depending on the availability of space and resources, but are not assured.

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Admission for Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) in Communication Studies

Available for University of Alabama undergraduates only, the **Accelerated Masters Program** offers majors in Communication Studies the opportunity to earn both a bachelor's and master's, at the University of Alabama, within five years. For the highly motivated and high achieving student, this program offers several distinct advantages:

- Faster, more economical plan of study than earning the two degrees separately
- Richer undergraduate degree experience, fewer unrelated core courses and more courses in the major
- Stronger mentoring relationship with the faculty
- Greater opportunity to develop understanding of the field in preparation for doctoral work

Admission into the program begins, after the completion of 91 semester hours with a **3.3 GPA** or better, when the student applies for admission to the Graduate School. Upon admission to the Graduate School, the student will be allowed to take graduate-level courses and begin a program of study leading to the Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies. AMP students in Communication Studies are allowed to count up to **10 hours** of coursework dually, toward both the bachelor's and master's. For more information, consult the Graduate School policies.

Curricular Requirements

The Department of Communication Studies uses a *plan of study* for student advising. Graduate students plan their programs of study with their academic advisor, assigned or chosen, during the first semester of coursework. The plan of study must be approved by the academic advisor and filed with the graduate program coordinator by the end of the first semester of coursework. Each plan of study must meet the minimum program requirements established by the Department of Communication Studies and the Graduate School. Students can also complete the degree requirements with a recommended pathway (e.g., distance learning with emphasis in Organizational Leadership), which does not require a plan of study approval.

A master of arts degree in communication studies requires a minimum of 30 hours. Students may choose one of the following four plan options for completing their degree program:

Plan I: Thesis option (available to main campus students)

Plan II: Non-Thesis academic option - comprehensive exam (available to main campus students)

Plan II: Non-Thesis professional option - capstone portfolio (available to main campus students)

Plan II: Non-Thesis capstone seminar option (available to distance learning students)

Students may have designated pathway (e.g., Organizational Leadership Emphasis) or choose elective courses to complete their plans of study, with the approval of their academic advisors. A minimum of 24 graduate hours must be completed in the communication studies discipline. All candidates are required to give a public presentation prior to completing the master of arts degree in communication studies.

Plan I: Thesis Requirements

In addition to completing the courses specified below and electives stipulated by their plans of study, students who choose the Plan I option must successfully complete a master's thesis, orally defend that thesis, and have the thesis accepted by the Graduate School.

Code and Title	Hours
Foundation Requirement	
COM 500 Intro Graduate Studies	3
Core Theory Requirements	12
Students must successfully undertake one course from each theory area - A, B, C - plus an additional theory course from any one of the three	
A. Rhetoric and Political Discourse	
B. Interpersonal and Organizational Communication	
C. Communication and Culture	
Elective Theory Course (from A, B, or C)	
Methods Requirement	3
COM 548 Sem Rhetorical Criticism or COM 550 Qualitative Research Methods in Communication	
Or approved equivalent methods course	
Elective or Emphasis Coursework	6
To be determined with the approval of one's academic advisor.	
Research Hours	6
COM 599 Thesis Research	
Total Hours	30

Plan II: Non-Thesis Requirements - Academic (Comprehensive Exam)

Students choosing this option complete the courses specified below and electives stipulated by their plans of study and pass a comprehensive examination. Taken during the final semester, the examination allows students to demonstrate knowledge gained from theory, method, and elective emphasis courses. Students will form a committee of three faculty members who will administer and evaluate the exams.

Code and Title	Hours
Foundation Requirement	
COM 500 Intro Graduate Studies	3
Core Theory Requirements	12
Students must successfully undertake one course from each theory area - A, B, C - plus one additional theory course from any one of the three	
A. Rhetoric and Political Discourse	
B. Interpersonal and Organizational Communication	
C. Communication and Culture	
Elective Theory Course (from A, B, or C)	
Methods Requirement	3
COM 548 Sem Rhetorical Criticism or COM 550 Qualitative Research Methods in Communication	
Or approved equivalent methods course	
Elective or Emphasis Coursework	12

To be determined with the approval of one's academic advisor.
A minimum of 6 hours must be in COM.

Total Hours **30**

Plan II: Non-Thesis Requirements - Professional (Capstone Portfolio)

Students who are primarily pursuing professional interests may select this option because it requires them to include in their plans of study either COM 598 or COM 590 as professional or practical application of their academic work. Students who choose to pursue this plan must secure permission to do so by submitting a formal proposal to their academic advisor, no later than upon completion of 12 hours of graduate coursework. To complete this plan of study, students are required to submit, at the end of their coursework, a Capstone Portfolio for their advisor's approval.

Code and Title	Hours
Foundation Requirement	
COM 500 Intro Graduate Studies	3
Core Theory Requirements	12
Students must successfully undertake one course from each theory area - A, B, C - plus one additional theory course from any one of the three	
A. Rhetoric and Political Discourse	
B. Interpersonal and Organizational Communication	
C. Communication and Culture	
Elective Theory Course (from A, B, or C)	
Methods Requirement	3
COM 548 Sem Rhetorical Criticism or COM 550 Qualitative Research Methods in Communication	
Or advisor approved equivalent methods course	
Elective or Emphasis Coursework	9
To be determined with the approval of one's academic advisor.	
Applied Coursework	3
COM 598 Professional Project or COM 590 Internship	
Students must submit an approved Capstone Portfolio during their final semester of the program.	
Total Hours	30

Plan II: Non-Thesis Requirements - Capstone Seminar

Students choosing this option complete the course requirements specified below through the recommended pathway as described on the Communication Studies Graduate Program website and pass COM 580 Capstone Seminar. Taken during the final semester, the capstone seminar allows students to interpret and integrate learning from previous coursework.

Code and Title	Hours
Foundation Requirement	
COM 500 Intro Graduate Studies	3
Core Theory Requirements	12

Students must successfully undertake one course from each theory area - A, B, C - plus one additional theory course from any one of the three

A. Rhetoric and Political Discourse

B. Interpersonal and Organizational Communication

C. Communication and Culture

Elective Theory Course (from A, B, or C)

Methods Requirement

COM 550 Qualitative Research Methods in Communication 3

Elective or Emphasis Coursework 9

Can choose Organizational Leadership Emphasis courses

Capstone Requirement

COM 580 Capstone Seminar 3

Total Hours 30

Transfer Credit

Although the Graduate School permits up to 12 hours of transfer credit, the department rarely approves more than 3-6 hours of graduate course work completed in another program. No transfer requests will be considered prior to a student's entry into the MA program. After having successfully completed at least one semester in the program and with their advisor's approval, MA students may petition the department to consider transfer credit toward completing their plans of study. For approval, graduate coursework completed in another program should either correspond with a required course in the program or be approved as a relevant elective course.

Time Limits for Degree Completion Requirements

See Graduate School policy for more information

Academic Misconduct Information

See Graduate School policy for more information

Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

See Graduate School policy for more information

Academic Grievances information

See Graduate School policy for more information

Grades and Academic Standing

See Graduate School policy for more information

Graduate School Deadlines

See Graduate School policy for more information

Application for Graduation Information

See Graduate School policy for more information.

Organizational Leadership Emphasis Requirements

The following courses fulfill the Organizational Leadership Emphasis and can be combined with a recommended pathway to fulfill the Communication Studies MA degree program requirements. The

recommended pathway can be found on the Communication Studies Graduate Program website.

Code and Title		Hours
Organizational Leadership Emphasis (12 hours)		
COM 555	Conflict and Negotiation	3
COM 560	Group Leadership	3
COM 571	Sem Organizational Com	3
COM 572	Org Assessment/Intervent	3
Total Hours		12

Faculty

Interim Chair

Darrin J. Griffin

Professor

Robin Boylorn

Associate professors

Meredith Bagley

Adam Brooks

Darrin J. Griffin

Nikita Harris

Sara Hartley

Leah LeFebvre

Mary Meares

Jessy Ohl

Cynthia Peacock

Joshua R. Pederson

Assistant professors

Anneliese C. Bolland

Sim Butler

Kaylin Duncan

Peter Jensen

Jeonghyun Oh

Caroline S. Parsons

Benjamin Pyle

Jaclyn Shetterly

Professors emeriti

Beth S. Bennett

Thomas Harris

Associate professors emeriti

Frank M. Thompson, Jr.