COMMUNICATION STUDIES, MA

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

The 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.

On-campus, students have the opportunity to customize a plan of study to support different interests and career goals, including advanced graduate degree work, teaching, communication consulting, and corporate or nonprofit professional leadership positions. Students have three different options for pursuing 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 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 course work completed for the degree.

The 30-hour degree program has four components:

- 12 hours of core theory courses, a theory course from each of the four areas of scholarly research, to provide a broad basis for understanding human communication
- 12-15 hours of electives in a focused area of study chosen by the student with the approval of a faculty advisor
- 3-6 hours of methods and/or applied research courses
- Completion of a capstone experience - a comprehensive exam, a thesis, or a capstone portfolio

For distance learning students, this degree program can be completed entirely online, choosing either the academic or the professional option and electing the 12-hour emphasis in Organizational Leadership.

**Admissions**

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

The following deadlines are strongly recommended for priority consideration:

- **December 1**: for fall applicants requesting departmental nomination for Graduate School fellowship opportunities
- **February 1**: for fall applicants requesting consideration for departmental assistantships
- **April 1**: for distance learners seeking summer entry
- **May 1**: for main campus applicants seeking fall term entry
- **July 1**: for distance learners seeking fall term entry
- **November 1**: for all applicants 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 undergraduates only, the Accelerated Masters Program offers majors in Communication Studies the opportunity to earn both a BACIS and an MA, 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 90 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 BACIS and the MA. 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.

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

**Plan I: Thesis option**

**Plan II: Non-Thesis option**

- **Academic (Comprehensive Exam) or**
- **Professional (Capstone Portfolio)**

Graduate students in the master of arts degree program in communication studies may 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 graduate 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.

**Core Theory Requirements**

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 55C Qualitative Research Methods in Communication

Or approved equivalent methods course

**Elective or Emphasis Coursework**

To be determined with the approval of one’s academic advisor.  
At least 6 hours must be in COM.

**Research Hours**

6

COM 599  Thesis Research

**Total Hours**

30

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

All students who choose to complete this option must complete a minimum of 30 hours of graduate coursework, including the courses specified below and others stipulated by their approved plans of study. Students who are primarily pursuing professional interests may elect this alternative plan 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.

**Core Theory Requirements**

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 55C Qualitative Research Methods in Communication

Or advisor approved equivalent methods course

**Elective or Emphasis Coursework**

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

**Research Hours**

6

COM 599  Thesis Research

**Total Hours**

30

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

All students who choose to complete this option must complete a minimum of 30 hours of graduate coursework, including the courses specified below and others stipulated by their approved plans of study, and pass a comprehensive examination. Taken during the semester in which course requirements for the master’s degree are to be completed, the examination is designed to reveal the knowledge gained by the candidate through both required theory and methods courses and elective emphasis courses taken to complete the program, as well as the candidate’s ability to express that knowledge in acceptable form. Students must take COM 510 to prepare for the exam and for the exam to be administered. The answers are evaluated by designated departmental comprehensive examination readers. See current guidelines for the comprehensive examination.

**Core Theory Requirements**

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 55C Qualitative Research Methods in Communication

**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

**Scholastic Requirements**

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.

**Plan of Study for Organizational Leadership Emphasis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Leadership Emphasis</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Leadership Emphasis (12 hrs)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM 555</td>
<td>Conflict and Negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM 560</td>
<td>Group Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>COM 571</td>
<td>Sem Organizatn Communctn</td>
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<tr>
<td>COM 572</td>
<td>Org Assessment/Intervent</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Studies Theory Core (12 hours)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>COM 525</td>
<td>Gender &amp; Political Comm (or approved equivalent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>COM 563</td>
<td>Relational Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>COM 513 or COM 575</td>
<td>Communication &amp; Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM 561</td>
<td>Tech,Culture, &amp; Human Comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods and Application Requirement (6 hours)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM 550</td>
<td>Qualitative Research Methods in Communication (or approved equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM 598</td>
<td>Professional Project May elect Comprehensive Exam option &amp; substitute an approved elective</td>
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**Capstone Portfolio:** Students will submit a final Capstone Portfolio upon completion of coursework and professional project.

**Total Hours**

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<tr>
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**Faculty**

**Interim Chair**

Darrin J. Griffin

**Professors**

Beth S. Bennett

Robin Boylorn

**Associate professors**

Meredith Bagley

Heather Carmack

Darrin J. Griffin

Sara Hartley

Leah LeFebvre

Mary Meares

Jessy Ohl

Joshua R. Pederson

**Assistant professors**

Anneliese C. Bolland

Adam Sharples Brooks

Sim Butler

Nikita Harris

Peter Jensen

Caroline S. Parsons

Cynthia Peacock

Benjamin Pyle

**Adjunct instructors**

Jane Stuart Baker

Dan Mangis

**Professor emeritus**

Thomas Harris

**Associate professors emeriti**

Frank M. Thompson, Jr.