



# Graduate Student Handbook

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2010-2011

Department of Communication Studies  
Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Getting accepted into the program



# STAGE I

How do I apply for admission in the graduate program?  
How do I obtain financial aid?

# Stage I

- **How do I apply for admission?**
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# How do I apply for admission?

- **Educational requirements**

- You must have earned a Bachelor's degree, or equivalent from a foreign country.
  - *If you are currently finishing your Bachelor's degree, please note the anticipated graduation date on the application and you can be provisionally admitted.*
- A cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.75 or better in overall Bachelor's degree undergraduate coursework is required, with a 3.0 or better in undergraduate coursework in the last two years.
  - *Once admitted, you must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher in all coursework to have it count to a graduate degree program*
  - *If you do not meet these GPA requirements, you can still apply and request to be accepted on a provisional basis – these appeals will be handled individually.*

- **Application process**

- When you apply, you need to send information to two departments on campus: (1) the College of Graduate Studies and Research and (2) the Communication Studies department.
  - ***If you are an international student, you will need to meet some additional requirements – contact the link below for further information regarding additional forms, admission policies and procedures:***  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/international/newstudents/admissions/>
- When you apply you will need to identify the program of study you wish to pursue in the department

- **Special Note:**

- No GRE scores are required to apply to our graduate program.
- TOFEL scores of at least 61 are required of non-native speakers.

## Steps to complete in the application process:

### (Step 1) College of Graduate Studies and Research – must receive the following:

- (1) A completed application for graduate study
  - Find form at: <http://grad.mnsu.edu/forms/appforgradstudy.pdf>
- (2) 2 official transcripts from the institution(s) through which you have earned your Bachelor's degree
  - *If an applicant does not meet the GPA requirements, provisional admission may be granted on a case-by-case basis.*
- (3) A completed immunization form
  - Find form at: <http://grad.mnsu.edu/forms/immunization.pdf>
- (4) A \$40 fee paid to the “College of Graduate Studies and Research”

Send this information to:

College of Graduate Studies and Research  
115 Alumni Center  
Mankato, MN 56001

### (Step 2) Department of Communication Studies – must receive the following:

- (1) A letter of recommendation from three (3) individuals qualified to speak to your academic potential as a student in graduate school
  - These should be sent directly to the department.
- (2) A sample of your writing that demonstrating research, sound analysis, organization and evidence (e.g., a term paper, convention paper, professional report)
- (3) A statement of your personal, educational, and professional goals\*  
**(\*students applying for a certificate need only send #3, not #1 or #2)**

Send this information to:

Department of Communication Studies  
230 Armstrong Hall  
Mankato, MN 56001

Roughly 2-3 weeks after all of the above information is received a decision regarding acceptance will be sent to the waiting student.

## Choosing the right program when you apply:

### **Graduate Certificate in Communication Education (GC-CE)** (16-credit ONLINE program)

*This certificate is designed for individuals interested in teaching at technical and community colleges. Minnesota and many other states have a standard requirement that community and technical college faculty must hold a master's degree and a minimum of 16 credit hours in-discipline. This graduate certificate provides a means for anyone who holds a master's in another discipline to obtain a certificate in communication studies to enable them to teach in this area.*

#### **Major Core Courses - 6 credits**

CMST 602: Communication Pedagogy (3 cr.)

CMST 633: Communication for Professionals (3 cr.)

#### **Major Restricted Electives - choose 10 credits**

CMST 515: Topics in Rhetoric and Culture (3 cr.)

CMST 545: Conflict Management (3 cr.)

CMST 535: Forensics Pedagogy (3 cr.)

CMST 550: NFL Pedagogy (1-3 cr.)

CMST 551: NFL-Introduction to Debate (1-3 cr.)

CMST 552: NFL-Advanced Debate (1-3 cr.)

CMST 553: NFL-Basics in Forensics (1-3 cr.)

CMST 554: NFL-Introduction to Interpretation (1-3 cr.)

CMST 555: NFL-Advanced Interpretation (1-3 cr.)

CMST 556: NFL-Introduction to Argumentation (1-3 cr.)

CMST 557: NFL-Advanced Argumentation (1-3 cr.)

CMST 620: Modern Rhetorical Criticism (3 cr.)

CMST 621: Advanced Interpersonal Communication (3 cr.)

## Choosing the right program when you apply:

### **Graduate Certificate in Professional Communication (GC-PC)** (12-credit ONLINE program)

*Employers routinely cite the need for effective oral, interpersonal and group communication skills. The Graduate Certificate in Professional Communication integrates communication theory, research and practical skills to provide students with the necessary abilities to succeed in a variety of professional arenas.*

*This certificate was developed primarily for working professionals who are unable to enroll in a traditional face-to-face graduate program. The graduate certificate program is offered entirely online. Prospective students can complete the program while continuing to work, and need not travel to Mankato for coursework. There is no residency requirement for this certificate.*

#### **Major Core Courses: 6 credits**

CMST 604: Communication Training & Development (3 cr.)

CMST 633: Communication for Professionals (3 cr.)

#### **Major Restricted Electives - Choose 6 credits**

CMST 512: Organizational Communication (3 cr.)

CMST 515: Topics in Rhetoric and Culture (3 cr.)

CMST 545: Conflict Management (3 cr.)

CMST 601: Communication Research Methods (3 cr.)

## Choosing the right program when you apply:

### **Master of Arts in Communication (MA)**

(Thesis Option – 33 Credits or Alternate Plan Option – 35 Credits)

*This degree is primarily sought by individuals who want to gain additional expertise through coursework, who are interested in conducting research, and who are considering a job in industry or possibly continuing on for a Ph.D. degree.*

*The capstone project associated with an MA is based on a research project that is designed by a student to investigate a topic of curiosity he or she would like to know more about. This project could be used in a portfolio for an interview or in an application to a Ph.D. program.*

### **Major Core Courses – 9 credits**

CMST 600 Seminar in Communication Theory (3 cr.)

CMST 601 Communication Research Methods (3 cr.)

CMST 602 Communication Pedagogy (3 cr.)

CMST 603 Strategies: Basic (0 cr.) [*required only of Graduate Teaching Assistants*]

CMST 650 Capstone Prospectus (0 cr.)

### **Major Restricted Electives - 12-15 credits**

CMST 500-698

Choose 5/600 level courses in consultation with advisor.

### **Major Unrestricted Electives - 6-9 credits**

Any Discipline 500-699

Choose 5/600-level courses in consultation with advisor.

*Fifty percent (50 %) of all coursework must be at the 600 level, not including thesis or alternate plan credits.*

### **Capstone: Thesis or Alternate Plan Paper - 2-6 credits**

CMST 694 Alternate Plan Paper (2 cr.)

CMST 699 Thesis (3-6 cr.)

## Choosing the right program when you apply:

### **Master of Science in Communication (MS)**

(36 Credits - option to complete degree ONLINE or on campus)

*This degree is primarily sought by individuals who want to gain additional expertise through coursework, who are not interested in conducting primary research, and who desire to go directly into industry after graduation, and do not want to pursue a Ph.D.*

*The capstone project associated with an MS is based on an internship experience that is designed by the student to gain direct experience in a specific organization or industry in which he/she wants to obtain a job.*

### **Major Core Courses – 9 credits**

CMST 600 Seminar in Communication Theory (3 cr.)

CMST 601 Communication Research Methods (3 cr.)

CMST 602 Communication Pedagogy (3 cr.)

CMST 603 Strategies: Basic (0 cr.) [required only of Graduate Teaching Assistants]

CMST 650 Capstone Prospectus (0 cr.)

### **Major Restricted Electives - 12-15 credits**

CMST 500-699

Choose 5/600 level courses in consultation with advisor.

### **Major Unrestricted Electives - 6 credits**

Any Discipline 500-699

Choose 5/600 level courses in consultation with advisor.

Fifty percent (50 %) of all coursework must be at the 600 level, not including internship credits.

### **Capstone: Required Internship - 6-9 credits**

CMST 697 Internship (6-9 cr.)

# Choosing the right program when you apply:

## **Master of Fine Arts—Forensics (MFA)** (48-credit terminal-degree program)

*The Master of Fine Arts Forensics degree is a terminal degree for forensic professionals. Students who wish to teach and direct forensics programs at the college level will find the MFA is considered an appropriate, tenurable degree at many four-year institutions. The degree certifies intense study of the theory and practice of communicative public performance for students whose career aspirations are outside of collegiate forensics and teaching. Students will find the degree appropriate training for careers such as a communication consultant, a motivational speaker and/or a communication trainer.*

### **Major Core Courses – 21-24 credits**

CMST 509 Performance Studies (3 cr.)

CMST 535 Forensics Pedagogy (3 cr.)

CMST 600 Seminar in Communication Theory (3 cr.)

CMST 601 Communication Research Methods (3 cr.)

CMST 602 Communication Pedagogy (3 cr.)

CMST 603 Strategies: Basic (0 cr.) [Note: 603 is only required of graduate teaching assistants]

CMST 650 Capstone Prospectus (0 cr.)

CMST 651 Comprehensive Exams (0 cr.) [Note: Read more about this later]

CMST 630 Forensics Practicum (3 cr.)

### **Major Restricted Electives – 12 credits**

Organization/Conflict - Choose 1 course

CMST 512 Organizational Comm (3 cr.)

CMST 545 Conflict Management (3 cr.)

Intercultural/Interpersonal - Choose 1 course

CMST 613 Advanced Intercultural Comm (3 cr.)

CMST 621 Advanced Interpersonal Comm (3 cr.)

Rhetoric - Choose 1 course

CMST 515 Topics in Rhetoric & Culture (3 cr.)

CMST 620 Modern Rhetorical Criticism (3 cr.)

Professional - Choose 1 course

CMST 504 Teaching of Speech Comm (3 cr.)

CMST 633 Communication for Professionals (3 cr.)

### **Major Electives in Department - 9 credits**

CMST 500-699

Choose 5/600 level courses in consultation with advisor.

### **Major Unrestricted Electives - 6 credits**

Any Discipline 500-699

Choose 5/600 level courses in consultation with advisor.

Fifty percent (50 %) of all coursework must be at the 600 level, not including thesis credits.

### **Capstone: Thesis – 3-6 credits**

CMST 699 (3-6 cr.)

Any discipline recognized research method may be used, consult with your advisor to determine the best approach.

# MFA only – CMST 65 I, Comprehensive Exams

## **Enrollment Requirements:**

- A student must complete 36 graduate credits before enrolling in CMST 65 I-Comprehensive Exams.
- A student must successfully pass CMST 65 I before enrolling in CMST 699-Thesis.

## **Procedure:**

- At least eight weeks prior to the anticipated exam date, a student will notify the advisor and departmental capstone committee members of intent to take the comprehensive exam.
- The committee will prepare three questions for the exam. The questions will relate to the student's program of study and capstone project. The questions will address the following areas:
- Q1: Communication theory relating to the program of study.
- Q2: Research methods relating to the anticipated capstone project.
- Q3: Specialized content area relating to the anticipated capstone project.
- A student will be given the three questions and have 168 hours (7 days) to draft answers to all three questions. The committee may impose specific restrictions (e.g., page length, word length, sources).

## **Evaluation:**

- The advisor and departmental capstone committee member(s) will evaluate the responses to each question.
- Each question will be evaluated Pass/No Pass.
- A Pass means the student has successfully met the expectations for the question.
- A No Pass means the answer did not meet expectations and must be rewritten or supplemented to correct deficiencies.
- Rewrites will be done with guidance from your committee.
- The committee will determine the nature and scope of a rewrite.
- A rewrite must be completed the semester a student is taking CMST 65 I.
- Receiving a No Pass on any rewritten question will require retaking CMST 65 I.
- CMST 65 I may only be retaken once. A No Pass on any of the questions required in retaking CMST 65 I will result in a student failing the course and the student will not be eligible to earn the MFA-Forensics degree.

## **Preparation:**

- The nature and content of the questions is determined by the advisor and departmental capstone committee members. The committee may at their discretion consult with the student or other faculty members when developing the questions.
- The student has the responsibility to contact the advisor and committee members to determine how to best prepare for the exam. The student should make sure he/she has a clear understanding of what is expected on the exam.

# How do I obtain financial aid?

Read below to gather information on each method for obtaining financial aid to attend graduate school.

## Graduate Assistantship

- An assistantship is a position offered specifically through a department, students are hired for one (1) academic year to either assist faculty in teaching introductory level communication courses or to assist faculty in an existing research project.
- Assistantship positions are typically awarded to graduate students in the spring semester for the upcoming academic year (no positions may be awarded until budget approval is granted from the university administration).
- Applications for a graduate assistantship are available online at (<http://grad.mnsu.edu/>)
- Applications are accepted throughout the year, however, it is usually in February or March when all completed applications received to date are reviewed and positions are then offered for the following year.
- An assistantship position includes a full tuition waiver (that means, free tuition), a stipend of roughly \$9,000 to be paid out roughly from September through May, and an agreement from the student to assist in either teaching or research responsibilities assigned through the department.
- Can a graduate student ever teach over the summer?
  - *Typically, no – since there are fewer courses taught and there are plenty of faculty who are willing to take these teaching assignments. However, students interested in summer teaching may submit: 1) a letter of interest that explains the student's educational preparation to teach the topic of interest, 2) copies of current teaching evaluations, and 3) a vita if they want to be considered for a summer teaching position.*

## Federal/State Financial Aid Programs

- The state and federal financial aid programs are discussed in detail on the university website at <http://www.mnsu.edu/campusub/programs/>
- This website describes the application process for the different governmental aid programs, and also reviews how to accept financial aid awards that you receive.
  - *There are many federal and state aid programs – we encourage all students to apply for these aid programs. It is possible for a graduate student to have an assistantship funded through a federal/state aid programs – and the assistantship carries with it the same benefits (tuition waiver, stipend, and teaching/research responsibilities).*

## Scholarships

- Various scholarships and grants are described at <http://www.mnsu.edu/campusub/programs/>
- Additional information regarding international student scholarships may be found at <http://www.mnsu.edu/international/scholarship/>

## Scheduling the coursework



# STAGE II

How do I plan the courses I will take to complete my program?

What is the typical timeline for completing the program?

## Stage II

- **How do I plan the courses I will take to complete my program?**
  - Working with a faculty advisor
  - Completing a “Plan of Study”
  - *Tentative* course availability
- **What is the typical timeline for completing a graduate program?**
  - Fulltime Students
  - Part-time Students

# How do I plan the courses I will take to complete the program?

The university allows each graduate student six (6) years to complete a graduate program (starting with the first semester in which graduate courses are registered). A **simple form called a “Plan of Study” should be filled out** by each student to insure that the appropriate courses are taken to meet the standards required by the department and the graduate school to complete a program.

A student may begin taking coursework as soon as they are formally accepted into a program.

## Working with a faculty advisor

- Each graduate student is assigned a general advisor as they enter the program – this general advisor is available to answer questions each student has as they begin taking coursework.
- Students seeking a Graduate Certificate (e.g., GC-CE or GC-PC) will be assigned an advisor to consult with as they complete their program.
- Students seeking a Masters of Science, Arts, or Fine Arts (e.g., MS, MA, or MFA) *must identify a faculty member to advise his or her capstone project.*
  - When thinking about who to ask to advise your capstone, consider:
    - Which faculty member am I most comfortable talking to?
    - Which faculty member has special expertise related to my project topic?
    - Which faculty member has special expertise related to the method I want to use to complete my capstone project?

## Completing a “Plan of Study” form

- A “Plan of Study” form is available at <http://grad.mnsu.edu/forms/planofstudy.html>
- **Each graduate student should complete this form by the time they have completed ½ of the credits required in the program. For example:**
  - Fulltime students seeking degrees – during the second semester in the program
  - Part-time students seeking degrees – after 10 credits are completed in the program
  - Students seeking certificates – after 6 credits are completed in the program



# How do I plan the courses I will take to complete the program?

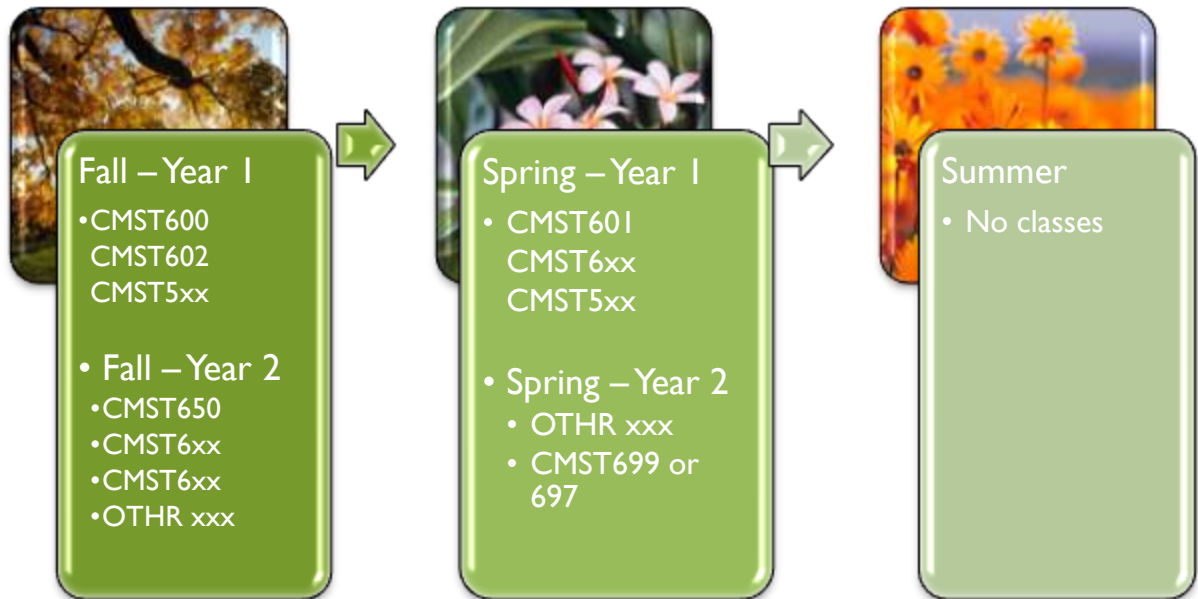
<b>Tentative Course Schedule</b>	<b>Typically offered: (F = fall, SP = spring, SU = summer)</b>
<b>Interpersonal/Intercultural Courses</b>	
CMST 503 Gender and Communication (3 cr.)	F – on campus; SU – on campus
CMST 613 Advanced Intercultural Communication (3 cr.)	F – on campus; SP – on campus
CMST 621 Advanced Interpersonal Communication (3 cr.)	SP – online
<b>Pedagogy/Education Courses</b>	
CMST 504 Teaching of Speech Communication (3 cr.)	F – on campus
CMST 530 Directing Forensics (3 cr.)	SP – alternates on campus/online
CMST 535 Forensics Pedagogy (3 cr.)	F – on campus; SU – online
CMST 550 NFL-Pedagogy (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – online
CMST 553 NFL-Basics in Forensics (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – online
CMST 602 Communication Pedagogy (3 cr.)	F – on campus; SP – online
CMST 603 Strategies: Basics (0 cr.)	F – on campus
CMST 630 Forensics Practicum (3 cr.)	F SP SU – online
<b>Performance Courses</b>	
CMST 509 Performance Studies (3 cr.)	SP – on campus
CMST 551 NFL-Introduction to Debate (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – online
CMST 552 NFL-Advanced Debate (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – online
CMST 554 NFL-Introduction to Interpretation (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – online
CMST 555 NFL-Advanced Interpretation (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – online
CMST 556 NFL-Introduction to Argumentation (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – online
CMST 557NFL-Advanced Argumentation (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – online
<b>Organizational/Professional Courses</b>	
CMST 512 Organizational Communication (3 cr.)	SP – alternates on campus/online
CMST 5xx Communication Technology & Culture (3 cr.)	F – online
CMST 545 Conflict Management (3 cr.)	SP – alternates on campus/online
CMST 604 Communication Training & Development (3 cr.)	F – online
CMST 633 Communication for Professionals (3 cr.)	SP – online
<b>Rhetoric Courses</b>	
CMST 515 Topics in Rhetoric and Culture (3 cr.)	F SP – alternates on campus/online
CMST 620 Modern Rhetorical Criticism (3 cr.)	F – alternates on campus/online
<b>Additional Course Options</b>	
CMST 540 Special Topics (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – alternates on campus/online
CMST 640 Special Topics (1-3 cr.)	F SP SU – alternates on campus/online
CMST 677 Individual Study (1-6 cr.)	F SP SU – online
CMST 690 Workshop (1-4 cr.)	F SP SU – alternates on campus/online
<b>Mandatory/Core Courses</b>	
CMST 600 Seminar in Communication Theory (3 cr.)	F – alternates on campus/online
CMST 601 Communication Research Methods (3 cr.)	SP – alternates on campus/online
CMST 694 Alternate Plan Paper (1-2 cr.)	F S SU
CMST 697 Internship (1-12 cr.)	F S SU
CMST 699 Thesis (3-6 cr.)	F S SU

## What is the typical timeline for completing a graduate program?

A graduate student is allowed up to six (6) years to complete the necessary coursework to earn a graduate degree.

- **Fulltime Students:** A student is considered fulltime if they are enrolled in at least 6 credits per semester.
  - Graduate Degrees –
    - Typically, a student must register for 9 credits per semester in order to complete an MA or MS degree in two years, and an MFA in three years.
  - Graduate Certificates –
    - Typically, a student seeking a certificate fulltime is able to complete online coursework within 9-18 months. Online students must plan coursework carefully to insure that all appropriate courses are available online during the time they will be enrolled – or completion of the certificate may be delayed.
- **Part-time Degree Student:** A student is considered part-time if they are enrolled in 1-5 credits per semester.
  - A student can switch between full- and part-time as he or she needs each semester.
  - Degree/certificate completion will vary for students who are attending part-time.

# MA or MS – Fulltime Estimated Completion



**The above diagram illustrates how a student could enroll in courses to complete either an MS or an MA degree in two years, going fulltime. Attending part-time would extend the completion time.**

## **Important points to keep in mind when planning your coursework:**

- (1) it is best to take the required core courses as soon as possible
- (2) course scheduling is tentative, but typically follows a pattern from year to year. Be sure to look at the tentative course schedule when you begin to plan your coursework
- (3) you can take courses over the summer, however, remember the offerings are limited.
- (4) you must be enrolled in at least one (1) course credit the semester you graduate.
- (5) If you know what you want to do for your internship, the summer is a great time to complete that experience.
- (6) **CMST 650 is required to be taken at least one (1) semester before you graduate.**

**\* Don't forget to submit your Plan of Study by the end of your second semester in the program (roughly ½ way through your coursework).**

# Certificate – Fulltime Estimated Completion



**The above diagrams illustrate how a student could enroll in courses to complete a certificate going fulltime. Attending part-time would extend the completion time.**

## **Important points to keep in mind when planning your coursework:**

- (1) it is best to take the required core courses as soon as possible
- (2) course scheduling is tentative, but typically follows a pattern from year to year, Be sure to look at the tentative course schedule when you begin to plan your coursework
- (3) you can take courses over the summer, but the offerings are limited. Taking summer classes is a great way to decrease the time it takes to complete the certificate award.
- (4) you must be enrolled in at least one (1) course credit the semester you graduate.
- (5) remember – students earning a certificate do not need to complete a capstone project.

Getting the most out of graduate school



## **STAGE III**

How can I participate in the department and in the discipline?

How can I get involved in research projects?

# Stage III

- **How can I participate in the department and in the discipline?**
  - Semester Colloquium Events
  - National Communication Association (NCA)
  - Conferences Dates
- **How can I get involved in research projects?**
  - Working with faculty
  - Advancing an area of research
  - Publishing your research

# Participation in the department

Being in graduate school is about much more than just taking classes. In graduate school, you are socialized to represent an area of the communication discipline, you are taught the importance of conducting research to investigate research questions and find answers, and you are expected to participate in various activities along the way to enhance your graduate school learning experience.

Beyond the regular standards of getting good grades (maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or higher), attending class and making progress toward your degree – a specific requirement of great importance is student attendance at Colloquium Events.

## Semester Colloquium Events

- When? 3-4 times a semester, on a Wednesday from 12:00-12:50, usually in AH 334
  - **If you are a graduate student on campus, you are expected to attend these events!**
- Why should you attend these events?
  - *In the fall*, the colloquium events are an opportunity for the department faculty and graduate students to meet as a community to discuss topics of interest. These sessions are encouraged to be interactive and are designed each year by the members of the Colloquium Committee. Topics may include preparation for conference attendance, teaching issues, research talks, online versus on-campus teaching techniques, etc.
  - *In the spring*, the colloquium events serve a very specific purpose of showcasing the graduating student capstone presentations. These sessions vary in topic depending on the student presenters, and are a great way for the department community to learn what everyone has been working on for their capstone project. These sessions also are a great opportunity for students not advanced in the program to gain ideas and feedback regarding what a capstone project looks and sounds like.
- Other opportunities strongly encouraged for student professional development and growth include involvement on campus:
  - through the honor society of Lambda Pi Eta (for more details, go to <http://www.natcom.org/index.asp?bid=21>),
  - with the graduate student counsel,
  - on the Internal Review Board (IRB),
  - Serving on department committees,
  - judging for the Forensic tournaments,
  - participating in faculty ongoing projects.

If you are interested in being an active graduate student, ask a faculty member in the department about opportunities for you to become more involved on campus.

# Participation in the discipline

- National Communication Association (NCA)
  - If you haven't already been familiarized with the communication discipline's largest representative organization, you will definitely hear about it in graduate school. The National Communication Association, otherwise referred to as "NCA," is the most commonly attended conference all year. Most faculty in the department focus on presenting at this conference, in addition to conferences that cater to special interests and research programs. NCA holds its annual conference in November (every other year it is in Chicago, a nice benefit for us living in the midwest). Yet, this is not the only organization in the discipline, there are many others that hail the attendance of communication folk throughout the year.
- List of discipline organizations
  - There are many discipline organizations that hold conferences each year that focus on communication studies.
    - *The conferences vary in focus* (from very broad – across all interests in the discipline, to very narrow – e.g., a conference specific to rhetorical analysis).
    - *The conferences vary in level of participation* (from state level – e.g., Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota annual conference in September, to regional level – e.g., Central States Communication Association conference in April, to national level – e.g., National Communication Association conference in November, to international level – e.g., International Communication Association annual conference held in May).
    - *There are interdisciplinary conferences* that are attended because of specific interests students and faculty pursue. Examples of these include the Palo Alto conference held out west focusing on argumentation, the International Association of Relationship Researchers conference held every other year in the U.S. during July, the Theater of the Oppressed workshop held each May that focuses on Augusto Boal's performance studies work.
  - A list of organizations that sponsor conferences, their websites, and event dates are provided for you to review in anticipation of submitting one of your class papers or capstone project for presentation. These conferences are also a great way to get out and meet people from other departments, especially if you are interested in pursuing a Ph.D. degree after you finish your masters work.

## Participation in the discipline (via conferences)

Communication Discipline Organizations & Conference Dates	Typical Submission Date:	Typical Conference Date
National Communication Association (NCA) <a href="http://www.natcom.org">www.natcom.org</a>	Feb 1	Nov 15
International Communication Association (ICA) <a href="http://www.icahdq.org">www.icahdq.org</a>	Sept 14	May 24
Central State Communication Association (CSCA) <a href="http://www.csc-net.org">www.csc-net.org</a>	Sept 1	Apr 5
Western States Communication Association (WSCA) <a href="http://www.westcomm.org">www.westcomm.org</a>	Sept 1	Feb 21
Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) <a href="http://www.sca.net">www.sca.net</a>	Sept 1	Apr 1
Eastern Communication Association (ECA) <a href="http://www.csc-net.org">www.csc-net.org</a>	Sept 1	Apr 22
Communication and Theater Association of MN (CTAM) <a href="http://www.natcom.org/SAC/memberstates.htm">www.natcom.org/SAC/memberstates.htm</a>	Apr 1	Sept 16
Basic Course Conference <a href="http://www.csc-net.org">www.csc-net.org</a>	Oct	Sept 22
International Association of Relationship Researchers (IARR) <a href="http://www.iarr.org">www.iarr.org</a>	Dec 1	July 6
Organization for the Association of Women and Communication (ORWAC) <a href="http://www.orwac.org">www.orwac.org</a>	??	??
Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender (OSCLG) <a href="http://www.osclg.org">www.osclg.org</a>	Jun 1	Oct 16
Rhetoric in Society <a href="http://www.rhetoricandsociety.nl/rhetoricinsociety">www.rhetoricandsociety.nl/rhetoricinsociety</a>		Jan 21
Theater of the Oppressed Workshop - Augusto Boal <a href="http://www.ptoweb.org/">http://www.ptoweb.org/</a>		May 18
Graduate Research Conference – MSU, Mankato <a href="http://grad.mnsu.edu/research/grc/">http://grad.mnsu.edu/research/grc/</a>	March 1	Apr 8

# Involvement in Research

## Working with faculty

- Once a student begins coursework, he or she will need to consider who they will work with in an advisory role to complete the capstone project. A student is encouraged to seek out and talk with a variety of professors in the department to learn about research projects and how current projects may have things in common with a student's interest.
- Remember that all faculty in the department are resources that you can seek out to learn more about the research process. It is suggested that you seek opportunities to get involved in an ongoing project. This typically occurs by a student having a conversation and showing interest in a faculty member's research or creative work. The conversation develops from there to establish opportunities for students and faculty to work together.

## Advancing an area of research

- While students are likely to learn about different research methods in CMST 601, there are multiple ways to expand individual interest in research topics by talking with faculty members. Conversations are a great way to highlight new areas to pursue, understand what research has been conducted, and to identify plausible ways to develop individual research projects.

## Publishing your research

- Even though the research process may seem daunting at first, graduate students are highly encouraged to develop and present their research at campus, state, regional, and national conferences in the discipline. Each year our department has a number of graduate students who present at the state (CTAM) conference in September, at the national (NCA) conference in November, at our campus (GRC) in April, and at various other conferences throughout the year. These presented projects are often then sent off for publication review at various journals.

Completing a capstone project & graduating



## **STAGE IV**

What is the difference between capstone projects?  
What do I need to do to graduate?

# Stage IV

- **What is the difference between capstone projects?**
  - Completing the Capstone Project
  - How long can a student take to complete their project and their degree?
- **What do I need to do to graduate?**
  - What forms are required?
  - When are the forms due, and to what office?

# What is the difference between capstone projects?

*[Do students seeking a graduate certificate need to read this part about the capstone project? – No!! Feel free to skip to the last section regarding the graduation process.]*

So, you have made it through your MA, MS, or MFA coursework, you have potentially presented some of your work at a conference with some fellow students or a faculty member, maybe you even have gotten involved in a few committees on campus or within the discipline, and now you need to complete the capstone project that will conclude your masters program. First you need to know the difference between the different projects.

## What is the difference between a thesis, APP, and Internship paper?

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Thesis	APP project	Internship
(primary research)	(secondary research)	(applied research)

### Thesis Capstone

- A thesis project involves collecting your own data (it is a primary research project) – meaning, you identify a research question(s), compose a literature review of existing research, design an appropriate method to investigate your topic, collect data, analyze the data, and draw conclusions and implications for future applications and research to be conducted in the future.

### Alternate Plan Project (APP) Capstone

- An APP project involves reviewing the data collected by other researchers (it is a secondary research project) – meaning, you compose a literature review of the existing research, describe the trends found in the research, and apply the research to draw new conclusions regarding a specific communication phenomenon (e.g., context, industry, relationship, type of communication, etc.).

### Internship Paper Capstone

- An Internship paper involves reviewing your experiences and applying a literature review to a topic of curiosity that you had while completing the internship. This is not a research project in the typical sense – it is focused and specific to a student’s direct experience during the internship. Yet, similar to the APP, this capstone project also requires a literature review of the existing research, a description the trends found in the research, and discussion of the application of the current research to draw conclusions regarding the student’s experience in the internship.

# Capstone Prospectus (the proposal)

Each student seeking a masters degree of MA, MS, or MFA must complete a capstone project before graduation. There are two different stages to this project: 1) preparation and discussion of the proposal, and 2) implementation of research plan and defense of written project.

## ***CMST 601 & 650: Preparing the Prospectus and Working with an Advisor***

- **Stage 1** begins in CMST 601, Research Methods, and ends with CMST 650. In CMST 601, you have to identify a topic of curiosity that you want to investigate regarding human communication.
  - **During CMST 601**, you will compile a literature review that reflects the current knowledge available pertaining to your topic of curiosity and then explore different methods through which you could conduct research to investigate questions you pose related to the topic. By the end of CMST 601 you will have completed a draft of your “Capstone Prospectus Proposal” – a document that summarizes what your capstone project will involve, the literature review, the method, and the timeline to completion.
  - **During CMST 650**, you will take the “Capstone Prospectus Proposal” to your advisor for final revisions, and once completed it will then it will be distributed to the additional members of your capstone committee for review. You will hold a formal meeting with the committee to receive feedback on your proposal, and to obtain permission to then move forward and complete the project. (*No data can be collected for the project until your proposal has been approved by your committee and, if necessary, IRB approval has been formally attained*).

***Following is a template of the sections that should be included in the Capstone Prospectus document.***

# Capstone Prospectus - Template

## **Template for creating the Capstone “Prospectus” document:**

**Title Page** – including date, title of capstone project, student name, e-mail address, degree sought, and anticipated semester to graduate

**Body of the document** – includes the following subheadings:

- *Review of the Problem Statement:*
  - Identify the topic of curiosity and explain the problem and its significance for the communication discipline and how it will build upon or add to existing knowledge
    - Discuss the purpose of the study, and clarify the goals of the project, state the research question(s) you seek to answer, and identify all hypotheses anticipated to be tested.
- *Preliminary Literature Review:*
  - Attach a literature review of the existing research relevant to your topic of curiosity that discusses the theoretical and conceptual components involved in your investigation.
- *Justification for Methodological Procedure(s):*
  - Compose a detailed description of the design or procedural plan you will follow to gather the data for your capstone project, include:
    - Identify and justify the method and procedures you have chosen.
    - Describe the data you will obtain: from who or where will you obtain it? *Be specific* and identify the tools/instruments likely to be used during data collection.
    - If you will interact with humans to collect data, complete an IRB Application for the Conduct of Research involving Human Participants/Volunteers/Subjects (<http://grad.mnsu.edu/irb/onlineproposal.html>) and include it as an appendix.
- *Précis of Chapters in Thesis:*
  - Provide brief description of expected chapters and what shall be addressed within each chapter.
- *Unique Requirements:*
  - As appropriate, provide details as to how specific sources of pertinent literature, specific equipment and cooperating agency approval will be handled.
- *Timeline for project completion:*
  - Provide a detailed timeline for completion of the thesis (e.g., literature review, data collection, analysis, submission to committee, defense date).

**Appendices** – (1) a signature page for the advisor and each committee member to sign approval of the prospectus, (2) a completed IRB application to be submitted for review prior to any data being collected, (3) any/all tools or instruments anticipated to be used in the study to collect data.

# Capstone Project Completion

After completing the Capstone Prospectus and successfully defending it, a student must complete a capstone project before graduation. This involves Stage 2 of the capstone process - implementation of research plan and defense of written project.

## **CMST 699/697/694**

- **Stage 2** of the capstone process involves the data gathering/collection, analysis, and written summary of the capstone project.
  - Working closely with your advisor, you will need to complete the formal writing of the capstone project, and then distribute the project to your committee for them to read and review. You must allow your committee at least two weeks to review your project before the defense date. At the capstone defense meeting with your advisor and committee members, it will be decided if you have met the criteria to complete the project successfully, or if you need to make further revisions to refine the document before submitting it to the graduate school for graduation.

## **What does the final capstone document look like once it is completed?**

- The final document format will be dictated in part by the method used to pursue the data that was collected and analyzed in the project.

## **How many pages is a capstone project?**

- Page length of the document will vary as well.

To get a better idea of what a capstone project looks like, go to the “Bullpen” (AH 206B) in the department and review a couple of past capstone projects authored by previous students in the department. This will give you a great idea of what past projects have involved, what they look like, project type and length.

# Formatting the capstone project to meet the Graduate School requirements

- Graduate School required formatting for the capstone project
  - The graduate school will be the final office to which you must turn in your advisor/committee-approved capstone project. The graduate school has a specific way in which they want you to format and print out your final capstone document.
  - To review these standards, please go to <http://grad.mnsu.edu/capstone/>. To read the specific criteria to follow when preparing and printing the final draft of the capstone project, please go to <http://grad.mnsu.edu/capstone/guidelines.html>.

# What must be done in order to graduate?

## Reviewing the graduation process

- What forms are required?
  - Application for graduation can be found at
    - <http://grad.mnsu.edu/forms/appforgraduation.pdf>
  - Completed capstone document, printed according to graduate school specifications:
    - <http://grad.mnsu.edu/capstone/guidelines.html>
  - Recommendation for Awarding the Degree
    - <http://grad.mnsu.edu/forms/recommendcertificatedegree.pdf>
- When are the forms due, and to what office?
  - See schedule of due dates at
    - <http://grad.mnsu.edu/importantdates.html>
    - Usually, the Graduate school requires students to apply for graduation by the second or third week of classes during the semester they want to graduate. Keep an eye out for this deadline!
- If you want to walk through ceremonies, you can register to do so by going to the graduate school website at:
  - <http://www.mnsu.edu/graduation/>

Additional Information



# APPENDICES

Photos of our students and faculty

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**Graduation is  
a time to  
celebrate your  
success with  
faculty and  
staff**

Katie Ishkin (MA, 2007) and Dr. Kristi Treinen after spring graduation ceremony, Bresnan Arena, Taylor Center.