



Department of Communication Studies

Master of Arts in Communication Studies with a  
focus on Communication and Social Justice

Graduate Handbook  
Last Updated August 2020

The purpose of a graduate student handbook is to provide guidance to students and faculty as students advance through the program. The handbook should provide the necessary information for students to understand the requirements, expectations, and opportunities associated with both the specific graduate program and the Graduate School. Students should consult the [Graduate School](#) website, [University Catalog](#), or their advisor for the most up to date information related to program requirements.

# Communication Studies M.A. Graduate Program Handbook

## Table of Contents

Getting to Know the Department of Communication Studies .....	4
Department Graduate Faculty .....	4
Organizing and Relating .....	4
Rhetoric and Critical/Cultural Studies.....	5
Department Teaching Faculty.....	6
Organizing and Relating .....	6
Rhetoric and Critical/Cultural Studies.....	6
Administrative Assistant .....	6
About the Program .....	7
Department of Communication Studies.....	7
Communication Studies M.A. Program Description .....	7
Program Objectives.....	7
Degree Requirements .....	8
Transfer Credits.....	8
Plan A: Thesis .....	9
Plan B: Comprehensive Exams.....	9
Semester-by-Semester Checklist to Degree Completion .....	10
Before Classes Begin .....	10
First Semester .....	10
Second Semester .....	10
Third Semester .....	10
Fourth Semester .....	11
Remaining in Good Standing as a Graduate Student .....	12
Academic Status.....	12
Continuous Enrollment .....	12
Probation .....	12
Dismissal .....	12
Incomplete Grades.....	12

Unsatisfactory Progress .....	13
Leave of Absence/Reinstatement.....	13
Advisor and Committee Selection .....	14
Selecting an Advisor .....	14
Selecting a Committee .....	14
Funding and Financial Assistance .....	16
Teaching Assistantships .....	16
TA Training .....	16
Performance/Dismissal from TA Position.....	17
TA resignation .....	17
Tuition/fees upon termination or resignation.....	17
University Policies and Information.....	18
Health Insurance .....	18
Academic Integrity .....	18
Graduate Student Association (GSA) .....	18
Graduate School Forms.....	18
Links to University Resources .....	18
Professional Communication Organizations.....	20
Links to Professional Associations .....	20
Presenting your Research .....	21
Competitive Papers.....	21
Poster Sessions .....	21
Panel Discussions .....	21
Solo and Ensemble Performances .....	21

## Getting to Know the Department of Communication Studies

Department of Communication Studies  
Lincoln Hall 302  
775-784-6839

Department website contains [contact information for all faculty](#).

### Department Graduate Faculty

#### Organizing and Relating

Jimmie Manning (Ph.D., University of Kansas) is Professor and Chair of Communication Studies. His research focuses on meaning-making in relationships. This research spans multiple contexts to understand how individuals, couples, families, organizations and other cultural institutions attempt to define, support, control, limit, encourage, or otherwise negotiate relationships. He explores these ideas through three contexts: relational discourses, especially those about sexuality, gender, love and identity; connections between relationships and efficacy in health and organizational contexts; and digitally mediated communication. His research has been supported by funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation and Learn & Serve America and has accrued over 30 journal publications in outlets including *Communication Monographs*, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* and *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. He recently co-authored the book *Researching Interpersonal Relationships: Qualitative Methods, Research, and Analysis* (Sage Publications) and has another solo-authored book, *Qualitative Research in Sexuality & Gender Studies* (Oxford University Press).

Sarah Blithe (Ph.D., University of Colorado Boulder) is an Associate Professor specializing in gender and organizational communication. She studies the role that discourse and communication play in shaping our social identities and organizational policies. Her research takes a social justice approach to examine inequality in organizations and occupations. Most recently, this work has focused on work-life policies in organizations, and a multi-year study of Nevada's legal brothels. Sarah also studies the impact of different pedagogical approaches, including feminist pedagogy and service-learning.

Tennley Vik (Ph.D., Ohio University) is an Assistant Professor specializing in sexuality and communication. Her research interests include family communication about sexuality and reproduction, as well as disclosure, ownership and commodification of sexuality. Her publications can be found in journals such as the *Journal of Family Communication*, *Communication Studies*, *Review of Communication*, and *Sexuality and Culture*. Dr. Vik teaches courses in small group communication, interpersonal communication and qualitative methods.

Shawn C. Marsh (Ph.D., University of Nevada, Reno) is the Director of Judicial Studies and an Associate Professor of Communication Studies and Social Psychology. He is the former Chief Program Officer for Juvenile Law at the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges where he taught extensively on topics such as implicit bias and trauma-responsive justice, and

oversaw myriad national projects focused on child welfare, juvenile justice, school engagement, and trauma/victimization. Dr. Marsh has research and teaching interests in the areas of psychology and the law, adolescent development, trauma, resiliency, and juvenile justice. His background includes working with youth in detention and correction settings as an educator and mental health clinician, and he is a licensed school counselor, professional counselor, and clinical professional counselor.

### Rhetoric and Critical/Cultural Studies

Amy Pason (Ph.D., University of Minnesota) is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies. She is a critical rhetorician studying dissent from the perspective of social movement and counterpublic theories to understand the ways dissent is enabled and constrained. She explores the structural, organizational, and material dimensions of protest in order to understand meaning-making and identity formation of dissenters. Her recent work has explored the instrumental and symbolic strategies of movement tactics related to Occupy Wall Street, strategic storytelling used in movements, and First Amendment issues related to protest.

James “Jim” L. Cherney (Ph.D., Indiana University) is an Associate Professor and current Communication Core Director. His primary area of research is the rhetoric of ableism, particularly as it operates around sport and visibility. He has published articles in such outlets as the *Western Journal of Communication*, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, and *Argumentation and Advocacy*. He frequently co-authors work on disability and sport with Kurt Lindemann of San Diego State University and he has been highly active in the Disability Issues Caucus in the National Communication Association (NCA). His book *Ableist Rhetoric: How We Know, Value, and See Disability*, was published by Penn State University Press in 2019.

Robert Gutierrez-Perez (Ph.D., University of Denver) is an Assistant Professor and southwest borderlands scholar studying performances of power, resistance, and agency through the lens culture and communication. Utilizing a variety of critical qualitative research methods, Gutierrez-Perez explores how gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning Chicanos/Xicanos in the U.S. Southwest and Mexico resist multiple systems of oppression through their everyday performances of identity, culture, and history. Other research interests include advocacy and civic engagement in higher education, queer intercultural communication, critical performance studies, and queer of color critique.

Jenna N. Hanchey (Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin) is an Assistant Professor. Her research is premised on a politics of decolonization, and attends to the intersections of rhetoric, African studies, and critical development studies. Her work is published in *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*; *Review of Communication*; *Communication, Culture & Critique*; *Women's Studies in Communication*; and *Management Communication Quarterly*, among others. She is currently working on a book project tentatively titled *The Center Cannot Hold: De/Colonial Contradictions in a Tanzanian NGO*.

Lydia Huerta (Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin) is an Assistant Professor, and holds a joint faculty position in the Department of Communication and the Department of Gender, Race, and Identity. Huerta specializes in 20th and 21st century cultural studies of the Americas, with an emphasis on the relationship between social media and narratives about the US/Mexico border. Her primary research examines the cultural production created in response to the women-killings in Ciudad Juárez since 1993. Other research interests focus on social movements, cultural narratives and public policies created in the United States and Mexico, which call attention to issues related to undocumented populations, specifically, women and LGBTQ migrants.

Ben Krueger (Ph.D., University of Maryland) is an Assistant Teaching Professor and Assistant Debate Coach. He also teaches Introduction to Communication Research, Small Group Communication, and courses in digital political rhetoric.

### Department Teaching Faculty

#### Organizing and Relating

Saralinda Kiser (M.A., University of Nevada, Reno) is Lecturer of Communication Studies. She is one of the undergraduate advisors, and teaches Fundamentals of Speech Communication as well as a variety of other courses.

Amy Arias (M.A., University of Nevada, Reno) is Lecturer of Communication Studies. She is one of the undergraduate advisors, and teaches a variety of courses, including Interpersonal Listening and Issues in Interpersonal Communication.

#### Rhetoric and Critical/Cultural Studies

Phil Sharp is Director of Forensics and Lecturer of Communication Studies. In addition to coaching our award-winning undergraduate debate team, Phil teaches Intercollegiate Debate and Forensics, Public Speaking, and Argumentation and Debate.

#### Administrative Assistant

Amilia Culpepper manages the main office of the department and assists the department chair in all the forms, paperwork, and scheduling for the department.

## About the Program

### Department of Communication Studies

Communication studies focuses both on the practice and developing skills for competent communication, as well as analyzing and studying how people create shared meanings and interpretations of the world around them. As a discipline, communication studies focuses on how political, cultural and social discourses create meaning, distribute resources and organize behavior. In the spirit of the liberal arts, the study of communication cultivates the qualities necessary to be effective citizens by developing problem-solving and advocacy skills, as well as fostering an understanding and appreciation of the multiple perspectives, cultures, and individuals that constitute democracy. The Communication Studies Department is a member of the [School of Social Research and Justice Studies](#) that is part of the [College of Liberal Arts](#).

### Communication Studies M.A. Program Description

The M.A. Program in Communication Studies focuses on communication and social justice, and prepares students to create responsible communication to achieve greater equity and inclusion in interpersonal relationships, workplaces, and society. The curriculum prepares students for careers in academia or for careers as socially conscious workers in non- or for-profit organizations. Students will leave with expertise in Communication Studies, and also with expertise in social justice theories and techniques for effective advocacy, just policy development, and ethical interpersonal interactions.

### Program Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify theories, concepts, and figures in the communication studies discipline and how the study of communication is applied to academic and non-academic settings with emphasis on social justice.
2. Students will be able to explain different communication contexts and situations as well as appropriate communication strategies to understand difference and analyze power.
3. Students will be able to integrate and synthesize theory and research from across disciplines in order to make ethical social justice interventions.
4. Students will be able to apply systematic inquiry and research methods specific to communication studies in developing and answering questions related to social justice and related communication topics.
5. Students will be able to examine their own communication preferences and biases and demonstrate reflexivity in order to engage in ethically-based communication.

## Degree Requirements

Consult the [University Catalog](#) for the most up-to-date information on program requirements and listing of courses.

### Required Courses:

- COM 701 - Introduction to Graduate Studies in Communication (3 units)
- COM 760 - Seminar: Communication Theory (3 units)
- One approved Research Methods Course within or external to department (3 units)
- Plan A (Thesis) students require at least 6 units in COM 797 – Thesis (1 to 6 units)
- Plan B (Comprehensive Exam) students require at least 3 units in COM 795 Comprehensive Examination (1 to 3 units)

### Electives: 17-20 additional units

- Students with a teaching assistantship or any student wishing to teach should take COM 705: Critical Pedagogy.
- Students may take electives within communication studies or other departments. Students should speak with their advisor on appropriate courses.
- Students may also pursue graduate certificate programs as part of their electives. Students in the program have received certificates in Gender, Race, and Identity or Social Justice.

Total credits needed: A minimum of 32 graduate level credits/courses at the 600-700 level must be taken.

- At least 18 of the 32 credits must be at the 700 level.
- At least 18 of the 32 credits must be in COM

A maximum of 12 credits can be transferred into the degree program through Graduate Special Status or transfer credit, using [this form](#).

All graduate courses must be completed with a grade of "C" or better in order to satisfy graduate program requirements. Grades of a "C-" or below are considered failing grades in graduate school and will not count in a student's program of study.

## Transfer Credits

These are credits transferred from another institution. Credits completed at UNR in another program or as a graduate special do not need to be transferred. Transfer credit can be requested on the [Graduate Credit Transfer Evaluation Request form](#) available on Graduate School website, and must be signed by the student, major advisor, and graduate director. Transfer credits applied to a master's program must comply with the time limitation on master's work (6 years). Thus, if a student took a course five years prior to admission, they would have to complete the degree within one year for the course to apply to the degree.

Credits from a completed master's degree will be exempt from the 8-year time limitation for those students pursuing a doctoral degree.

### Plan A: Thesis

Students completing the thesis option must complete an original, independent research project investigating a problem, issue, or question regarding communication. Graduate students who intend to complete the thesis option should identify their research interests and ask a faculty member who shares their research interests to serve as their advisor. Students wishing to pursue a PhD are advised to consider the thesis plan as projects can lead to publishable research. The thesis plan consists of an orally defended research prospectus/proposal, written thesis, and final oral presentation/defense with the thesis committee (see page 14 for details about committees). Advisors will not allow students to defend their prospectus or thesis unless they deem it "defensible" and feel it contains the basic elements required to pass. Committees may approve, approve with revisions, or reject the thesis prospectus. Committees may pass or fail the final thesis, require it to be revised and resubmitted, or require the student to make revisions before passing the thesis. Students completing the thesis option are encouraged to start the process by the end of the first year in order to have time to complete the necessary data gathering, analysis, and writing required of independent research. Consult with your advisor for more detailed instructions and thesis evaluation rubrics.

### Plan B: Comprehensive Exams

The Comprehensive Exam option is designed for students to demonstrate the knowledge in their chosen specialization area. Students will develop reading lists around topics in their specialization from course work and additional resources. Students will be asked to respond to questions developed from the specialization areas/reading lists and typically are designed to show expertise in a theoretical area, methodological approach, communication context, and/or application/case analysis. The comprehensive exam consists of timed take-home written exams and oral defense with the examination committee. Students should be prepared to do the equivalent of a regular graduate course in terms of reading and organizing information in preparation for the written exams. Consult with your advisor for more detailed instructions and exam evaluation rubrics.

Exam answers are each assigned either pass or fail by majority vote of the examination committee. Failing answers can be re-written and re-submitted one time. Students must be given feedback from the committee, through the advisor, about what to focus on for the re-write. Students are allowed to re-write only answers that were failed. Students who receive a failing evaluation twice for the written exams are dismissed from the program.

Additionally, students will defend their written exam answers in an oral exam. The oral exam evaluates students' abilities to explain and defend their written exam answers, as well answer theoretical questions about their work. Committee members evaluate the performance of the oral exam as pass or fail by majority vote.

## Semester-by-Semester Checklist to Degree Completion

### Before Classes Begin

- Get [Wolf Card ID](#)
- Register for classes on [MyNevada](#)
- Activate [NetID](#) and UNR [student email](#)
- Attend Graduate School Orientation [optional], Graduate School TA training (GRAD 701) [required for TAs], and Department Orientation

### First Semester

- Take up to 9 credits, including COM 701: Introduction to Graduate Studies in Communication.
- Meet with potential advisors/get to know graduate faculty in the program.
- Start considering research/specialization topics for your thesis or comprehensive exams.
- Meet with your advisor or graduate studies director to plan courses for the following semester.

### Second Semester

- Take up to 9 credits, if not already taken, students should explore required methods course options.
- Formally select an advisor and turn in [Declaration of Advisor](#)/Major Advisor/Committee Chair form by the end of the semester.
- With your advisor, select the rest of your committee.
- If you plan to write a thesis that involves human participant research, you should work with your advisor to complete required [IRB approval](#).

### Third Semester

- Take up to 9 credits, if not already taken, students should take a required methods course or COM 760: Theory. Students can decide if they wish to take some of their thesis and/or comprehensive exam credits in this semester.
- By the end of the third semester (often in conjunction with a thesis prospectus defense or comprehensive exam meeting), complete and turn in the [Program of Study form](#).
- If you are writing a thesis:
  - Write your prospectus
  - Schedule the prospectus defense at least two weeks after sending the prospectus to your committee.

- Decide whether or not you would like to apply for Ph.D. programs (applications due starting Dec. 1)
- If you are doing comprehensive exams:
  - Meet with your advisor and committee members to discuss topics, reading lists, and potential questions.
  - Plan the timeline for taking exams in the Spring

#### Fourth Semester

- Take up to 9 credits including thesis/comprehensive exam credits. Note: All required courses should be taken before this semester.
- Early in the semester, submit your [Application to Graduate](#).
- If you are writing a thesis:
  - Finish writing your thesis with the guidance of your advisor
  - Schedule the defense at least two weeks after sending the thesis to your committee
  - Successfully defend your thesis
  - Make any necessary revisions
  - Make certain to have your committee sign the Notice of Completion Form and your advisor sign the Final Review Approval Form found on the [Thesis Filing Guidelines site](#).
  - Pay the \$85 processing fee at the cashier's office and bring the receipt to the Graduate School
  - Turn in the thesis online
- If you are taking comprehensive exams:
  - Finalize your questions with the committee
  - Schedule your exam
  - Successfully complete your comprehensive exam answers
  - Schedule your exam defense at least two weeks after sending your answers to your committee
  - Successfully defend your comprehensive exams
  - Make certain to have your committee sign the Notice of Completion Form found on the [Thesis Filing Guidelines site](#).
- Take the [Graduate School Exit Survey](#).

You can find an updated list of forms and requirements on the [Graduate School website](#).

## Remaining in Good Standing as a Graduate Student

### Academic Status

All graduate students must maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0. If their GPA drops below 3.0 they are either put on probation or dismissed.

### Continuous Enrollment

To maintain “good standing” all graduate students are required to enroll in a minimum of three (3) graduate credits each fall and spring semester until they graduate. International students may be required to enroll in nine graduate credits each fall and spring semester depending on the requirements of their visa. All students holding teaching or research assistantships are required to enroll in a minimum of six (6) graduate credits each semester they hold the assistantship.

### Probation

Students whose cumulative graduate GPA is between 2.99 and 2.31 are on probation. Students are placed on academic probation for one semester. If they fail to raise their cumulative GPA to 3.0 by the end of one semester, they are dismissed from their graduate program. Keep in mind that thesis, dissertation, undergraduate courses, S/U graded courses, and transfer credits have no impact on a student’s GPA.

### Dismissal

Students whose cumulative graduate GPA is 2.30 or lower are dismissed from graduate standing. Dismissed students are no longer in a graduate program and but may take graduate-level courses as a Graduate Special. Students wishing to complete their degree must obtain approval to take graduate-level courses, raise their graduate GPA to at least 3.0 and then re-apply to their graduate program. Any courses taken to raise their GPA will be included in the graduate special/ transfer credit limitation (9 credits for master’s degrees). Dismissal recommendations other than GPA (i.e. failure to progress) can be forwarded from the program to the Graduate School and if approved by the Graduate Dean, the student will be notified. The Office of Admissions and Records will also be notified that the student is dismissed from graduate standing. Students can appeal their dismissal from graduate standing by submitting a formal letter to the Dean of the Graduate School and to the Graduate Program Director. The letter must be submitted within 10 working days following notification of the dismissal.

### Incomplete Grades

If a student is unable to satisfactorily complete the work for a class, but has been demonstrating consistent attendance and a high degree of effort throughout the semester, the student may be allowed to take an incomplete grade. Incompletes are only given for extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control (such as in the case of serious injury or

illness). Whether or not to grant an incomplete is at the discretion of the course professor. If a student is taking an incomplete, they must notify the Director of Graduate Studies.

Incomplete grades must be resolved by the end of the fall or spring semester following the incomplete, or the incomplete will turn into an F. It is the student's responsibility to find out the professor's requirements for completing the work and to meet all necessary deadlines.

### Unsatisfactory Progress

If, at any time, a graduate student fails to make satisfactory progress toward the degree, the student may be denied permission to continue in the program. The Communication Studies graduate faculty will meet each spring to discuss the progress of each graduate student and to determine the student's ability to continue in the program. In addition, the Director of Graduate Studies, course professors, and course directors overseeing funded students will meet regularly to discuss any performance issues.

Students who receive two "C" grades will be placed on academic warning and will receive written notification. A student will be dismissed from the degree program if she/he receives an "F" in any graduate course or three "C" grades in the graduate program.

### Leave of Absence/Reinstatement

Students in good standing may request a leave of absence by completing a [Leave of Absence Form](#) during which time they are not required to maintain continuous registration. Usually, a leave of absence is approved for one or two semesters. The leave of absence request may be extended by the student filing an additional leave of absence form. Students applying for a leave of absence should not have any "incomplete" grades which could be changed to "F" and have a detrimental impact on their cumulative GPA. Requests for leave of absences must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the leave is to begin.

When a student has been absent for one semester or more without an approved leave of absence, he or she may request reinstatement via the [Reinstatement Form](#). This form allows the program the option to recommend the student be re-admitted to their graduate program based on their previous admission OR require the student to re-apply for admission which would require students to submit a new application for admission and pay the application fee. The Notice of Reinstatement to Graduate Standing must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the reinstatement is to begin.

All course work must be completed within six years preceding the awarding of the degree. That is, you have six years after completing coursework to complete your thesis or comprehensive exams.

## Advisor and Committee Selection

### Selecting an Advisor

Perhaps the most important decision you make as a graduate student is the selection of your permanent advisor. A good advisor will help you to reach graduation, will sponsor your thesis or comprehensive exams, helps you select courses, and is an integral part of your professional development—even after graduation. Advisors will often be available for writing letters of recommendation for Ph.D. programs or job applications.

To identify potential advisors, read about each faculty member, take classes with a variety of people, read their publications, and set up meetings with people to discuss your interests and their research or teaching. First and foremost, your advisor should be someone with the expertise to help direct the research you are doing for your thesis or comprehensive exams. In addition, you might consider: whether you would like to go on to a Ph.D. program, into the nonprofit world, or into business with your degree; how much you direction or independence you need; and what kind of feedback is the most useful for you.

After you decide who you would like to be your advisor, schedule an in-person meeting with them to ask whether or not they will advise you. Be prepared to explain your research interests, the potential focus of your thesis or comprehensive exams, and why you think this person would be the best advisor for you and your project. Don't be discouraged if your first choice says no; they may have too heavy a load of advisees already, or feel they wouldn't be the best to support you in what you need.

If you select an advisor, but later realize that someone else might be able to support your project better, it is possible to switch advisors. If you would like to do so, have an upfront conversation with your current advisor, to make sure they understand why you would like to change.

### Selecting a Committee

Students must have three graduate faculty on their committees (thesis or exam), including:

- Their Advisor (faculty member in Communication Studies who serves as the committee chair)
- Committee Member (faculty member in Communication Studies)
- Graduate School Representative (faculty member from UNR but outside of Communication Studies)

Note: Students may wish to add a non-UNR faculty member to the advisory committee. This external member must be approved by the Graduate School Dean. This external faculty cannot be the Graduate School Representative.

The committee members should, like the advisor, be chosen for expertise that supports the thesis or comprehensive exams project. As the advisor should be an expert in the primary area of research study, the best committee members should add depth of knowledge in supplementary aspects undergirding the project. Most faculty who are asked to be on the committee will expect the student to have taken a class with them. Student advisory committees must be approved by the Graduate Director and the Graduate Dean.

## Funding and Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available through graduate assistantships, loans and other programs offered at UNR. Review all funding opportunities on the [Graduate School website](#).

Graduate students in Communication Studies may also be qualified for other assistantships on campus, and should review the assistantship jobs posted on [UNR's jobs website](#).

The Department of Communication Studies offers a limited number of competitively selected teaching assistantships. An application to the M.A. program in Communication Studies does not automatically place students under consideration for an assistantship. To be considered for a teaching assistantship, students must indicate their interest in their letter of intent upon application. If funding becomes available during an academic year, the Graduate Program Director will solicit applications from current interested students.

## Teaching Assistantships

Applicants for teaching assistantships should demonstrate:

- an interest in teaching communication studies
- the maturity to assist faculty responsibly
- an ability to work with students effectively
- organizational skills essential to balancing academic and graduate assistant duties.

General information for graduate assistantships can be found on the [Graduate School Website](#), and so can the [Graduate Assistantship handbook](#).

In order to keep funding, Teaching Assistants must:

- maintain a 3.0 GPA
- take 9 credit hours per semester
- remain in good standing with the department

Teaching assignments will be determined each semester by the Chair, with the advice of the Graduate Director and Communication Core Director.

## TA Training

First-time graduate teaching assistants (TAs) are required to satisfy TA training requirements by enrolling in GRAD 701S (Preparing Future Faculty: College Teaching I) during their first semester as a TA. GRAD 701S is an orientation and training session that includes instruction in academic standards and student conduct, professionalism, sexual harassment prevention and FERPA compliance, and is held on the Thursday, the week before the start of classes in both fall and spring semesters. For more information on scheduling, check MyNevada or contact the Graduate School.

All TAs are also required to take COM 705: Critical Communication Pedagogy at least by their first semester as a TA, unless specifically exempted from this requirement by the Communication Core Director (CCD). We also recommend that graduate students who plan to teach during their career or who hope to be selected for a TA position in the future take the class at their earliest opportunity. Students who have successfully passed COM 705 may receive preferential consideration when applying for a TA position.

All TAs must attend a orientation at the beginning of the school year and any meetings set throughout the semester with the CCD. COM 101 TAs will also meet regularly with the CCD as part of their position responsibilities.

### Performance/Dismissal from TA Position

Teaching assistantships are valuable learning opportunities for students, and give them valuable experience if they wish to continue teaching university level courses upon graduation or in their Ph.D. program. The position also comes with responsibility whether your position is assisting another faculty member in their course or in teaching your own section of a course. You will be guided by the Communication Core Director and/or the faculty you are assisting, but will be expected to complete the duties assigned to you. If the Communication Core Director or the lead faculty have concerns about your performance (or if your students submit a complaint to the Department Chair), the Department will evaluate whether you can continue serving in your TA position. In cases where issues cannot be improved or adequately addressed, you may be terminated from your TA position. [View the termination policy in the University Administrative Manual.](#)

### TA resignation

The decision to resign your TA position, especially in the middle of an appointment period, can have significant financial, academic, and personal implications. TAs are encouraged to consult with their supervisor, Department Chair, Program Director or the Graduate School before making the decision to resign. A written statement is required to resign your appointment and must be sent to the hiring department with a copy sent to the Graduate School. Please cite the effective date of your resignation and, to the extent possible, a reason for the resignation.

### Tuition/fees upon termination or resignation

Tuition and fees for terminated assistantships will be prorated based on the number of weeks completed. The department will remain financially responsible for the weeks during which the student was employed in a graduate assistantship. The student will become financially responsible for the prorated portion of the tuition and fees for the remainder of the semester. The department retains the option to pay all or an additional portion of the tuition and fees via an IPO. Any tuition charges that are deemed to be unallowable costs on a sponsored account will become the responsibility of the department that hired the student.

## University Policies and Information

### Health Insurance

All domestic degree seeking graduate students, who are enrolled in six or more credits (regardless of the course level) in a semester, will be automatically enrolled and billed for the University sponsored health insurance for each term they are eligible (fall & spring/summer). If a student has other comparable coverage and would like to waive out of the student health insurance, it is the student's responsibility to complete the University online waiver form prior to the deadline. If approved, a health insurance waiver is good for the current academic year only. A new waiver must be submitted each academic year. All international graduate students are required to carry student health insurance, and the cost will be automatically added to your student account. Any international graduate students with insurance questions must contact the [Office of International Students and Scholars \(OISS\)](#) directly. Please see the [Graduate School page on health insurance](#) for more information.

<http://www.unr.edu/oiss>

### Academic Integrity

Graduate students must adhere to high standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. See the [UNR policy](#).

### Graduate Student Association (GSA)

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) represents all graduate students and promotes the welfare and interests of the graduate students at the University of Nevada, Reno. The GSA works closely with appropriate university administrative offices, including the Graduate School and Student Services and reports to the President of the University. The GSA government functions through the Council of Representatives, Executive Council, and established committees. See the [GSA website](#) for more information.

### Graduate School Forms

Necessary forms to progress through the MA and graduate may be found on the [Graduate School website](#).

### Links to University Resources

[The Graduate School](#)

[Parking Services](#): Find information here about parking pass, using your WolfCard for Reno Busses, and other transportation information.

[Disability Resource Center](#)

[Writing and Speaking Center](#) The WSC not only offers consultations to help you improve your papers and presentations, but you can also apply to work as a consultant.

[Math Center](#)

[Joe Crowley Student Union \("The Joe"\)](#) Contains UNR Bookstore, food court, movie theatre, and many resources for students.

[Knowledge Center \(Library\)](#)

[Library Perks for Graduate Students](#)

[The Center: Every Student, Every Story](#)

[GradFit \(Inclusive Training for Diverse Grad Students\)](#)

[Office of International Students and Scholars](#)

[Graduate Student Clubs and Organizations](#)

[Student Health Center](#)

[Fitness & Recreational Sports](#)

[Human Resources](#)

[Counseling Services](#)

[Equal Opportunity and Title IX](#)

[Sexual Assault Reporting](#)

[UNR Police Services](#)

[Dean of Students Office](#)

## Professional Communication Organizations

There are numerous professional associations that meet for annual conventions and conferences that may be of interest to you. Most of these associations have student rates for membership and means of volunteering that subsidize or significantly reduce conference registration rates for students. You are encouraged to get involved in the discipline through membership and participation in professional associations. Consider talking with faculty about submitting your course papers to conferences for formal presentation.

### Links to Professional Associations

#### [National Communication Association](#)

Submission Date: Mid-March

Conference: Mid-to-late November

#### [International Communication Association](#)

Submission Date: November 1

Conference: Late May, Early June

#### [Western States Communication Association](#)

Submission Date: September 1

Conference: Mid February

#### [Southern States Communication Association](#)

Submission Date: September 1

Conference: Early April

#### [Eastern Communication Association](#)

Submission Date: October 15

Conference: Late April

#### [Central States Communication Association](#)

Submission Date: October 1

Conference: Mid April

#### [Rhetoric Society of America](#)

Submission Date: July 15

Biennial Conference: Late May

#### [Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender](#)

Submission Date: June 1

Conference: Mid October

## Presenting your Research

Research presentations are good for students planning to go on to doctorate programs AND those planning to go into careers after the MA. There are a few ways to present your work at communication conferences.

### Competitive Papers

Usually, competitive paper sessions will group together 4-6 papers into a themed panel. Each participant gets 8-12 minutes to present the synopsis and findings of the paper.

### Poster Sessions

If your work is selected for a poster session, you will prepare an actual poster to bring to the conference that summarizes the main parts of your project. Poster events are excellent networking opportunities. The event is usually held in a large hall. Poster presenters stand near their posters as visitors walk through the gallery, talking with the participants.

### Panel Discussions

Sometimes groups of people submit a proposal for a panel discussion on a particular topic. These kinds of presentations range greatly, but might include 3-5 minutes for 12 people, or the panel chair might provide participants with a list of questions for general (public) discussion.

### Solo and Ensemble Performances

Solo/ensemble performances can assume various modes (e.g., critical/cultural, indigenous, queer, feminist, poetic, personal narrative, performance (auto)ethnography, multimedia, digital, etc.), but typically, scholar-artists are invited to submit completed scripts or video clips to be scheduled onto panels throughout the conference. Performance includes, but is not limited to, durational performances, installations, performance interruptions, site-specific performances, community-based performances, and off-site performances.