COMMUNICATION ARTS, M.A.

Specific requirements for the master’s degree vary among the four areas. Prospective graduate students should consult the department website (http://www.commarts.wisc.edu/graduate) for specific information on degree requirements in each area.

COMMUNICATION SCIENCE

Communication science is concerned with how people interact with one another in various means, modes, and contexts. It involves social scientific exploration utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. Reflecting the multi-faceted nature of the subject matter and a cross-disciplinary orientation of the field, students in communication science typically complete course work both in the department and in other social science fields. Graduate study in communication science is flexible and tailored to the individual. With a low faculty to student ratio and close collaboration with related academic units on campus, students have high access to faculty and with it, opportunities to work closely with faculty on research and broaden their horizon. Students are expected to develop fluency in at least two of the following areas:

- **Social influence** that focuses interpersonal interactions, both online and offline, as well as group and organizational dynamics. It examines information exchange, persuasion, and other influence processes in various social contexts.
- **Computer-mediated communication** that examines individuals’ uses of the media with digital, interactive, and networking features, as well as the effects of such usage on self, relationships, group dynamics, and other social processes.
- **Human development and communication** that addresses communication in relation to life cycle, focusing in particular on life cycle patterns in the means and modes of communication, as well as the effects of communicative engagement and media usage of youths and aging.
- **Political communication** that focuses on patterns and effects of communication, both face-to-face and mediated, on the democratic process. In particular it concerns how communication shapes the public sphere, how public deliberation over political issues takes place, and how the media may be related to civic and political engagement.

Students in communication science are expected to master two of the four areas.

FILM

The study of film concentrates primarily on motion picture history, theory, and criticism, approached through intensive critical analysis of individual films; research into the primary documents of filmmakers and the film industry; and the construction of theoretical models of films forms and styles, national cinemas, film genres, and the economics of the film industry. The program believes in the connection between film studies and film practice. Courses in film production enhance our understanding of motion picture history, theory, and criticism by revealing the practical decisions filmmakers confront.

MEDIA AND CULTURAL STUDIES

The media and cultural studies (MCS) program emphasizes the study of media in their historical, economic, social, and political context.

MCS courses examine the cultural forms created and disseminated by media industries and the ways in which they resonate in everyday life, on the individual, national, and global level. Focusing primarily on sound and screen media—television, new media, film, popular music, radio, video games—but reaching out across boundaries, MCS encourages interdisciplinary and transmedia research. MCS courses draw on a broad range of cultural theories spanning a spectrum of concerns all centrally relevant to the functioning of sound and screen media in a diverse and globalizing cultural environment.

RHETORIC, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

Whether speaking from the podium or chatting on Facebook, people use discourse to craft identities, enact social change, and form a shared sense of community. Seeking to better understand this social force, the study of discourse explores significant themes, trajectories, and transformations in politics and society while considering particular individuals and groups, cultures, eras, genres, and topics. Courses in this area explore issues of power, digital media, citizenship, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, globalization, religion, inclusion and exclusion, social status, and marginalization.

Graduate work in rhetoric focuses on three interrelated areas: discourse, theory, and method. All three areas of study in rhetoric, politics, and culture are united by a common commitment to understanding the role of discourse in society as we act together to engage in culture and politics. Students are encouraged to investigate a wide range of discursive phenomena as they develop expertise that will empower them to conduct significant research and to take an active role in scholarly communities.

FUNDING

The principal types of graduate student financial aid are teaching, research, and project assistantships. Most communication arts graduate students are supported by teaching assistantships and thus a high level of competency in written and spoken English is required. A limited number of fellowships are available. All students are considered for assistantships and fellowships at the time of application. No separate application is necessary.

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

To make progress toward a graduate degree, students must meet the Graduate School Minimum Degree Requirements and Satisfactory Progress (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext) in addition to the requirements of the program.

MASTER’S DEGREES

M.A.

MINIMUM GRADUATE DEGREE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

30 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE RESIDENCE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

16 credits
**MINIMUM GRADUATE COURSEWORK (50%) REQUIREMENT**

Half of degree coursework (15 credits out of 30 total credits) must be received in graduate-level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level Coursework attribute are identified and searchable in the university’s Course Guide (http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle).

**PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: GRADUATE WORK FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 9 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a Master’s degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

**PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNDERGRADUATE**

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 7 credits of graduate coursework taken as a UW–Madison undergraduate student. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree or earned ten years or more prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

**PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNIVERSITY SPECIAL**

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 15 credits of graduate coursework taken as a UW–Madison Special student. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree or earned ten years or more prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

**CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED**

10-credit maximum unless additional credits are approved by faculty advisor, up to 15

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC COURSES REQUIRED**

Varies by area of study.

**OVERALL GRADUATE GPA REQUIREMENT**

3.75 average required of all coursework taken within the department.

**OTHER GRADE REQUIREMENTS**

The Graduate School requires an average grade of B or better in all coursework (300 or above, not including research credits) taken as a graduate student unless conditions for probationary status require higher grades. Grades of Incomplete are considered to be unsatisfactory if they are not removed during the next enrolled semester.

**PROBATION POLICY**

All graduate students must stay "in good standing" in the department to be eligible for teaching assignments, awards, and fellowships, and in order to be considered to be making satisfactory progress in the program. Students whose progress is rated unsatisfactory by their faculty may face loss of funding and/or dismissal from the program.

The department’s minimum criteria for good standing are:

1. Timely progress through the program, consisting of successful completion of M.A. and Ph.D. requirements and compliance with coursework, advising, and dissertation expectations.

2. A cumulative grade point average for coursework within the department of 3.75 or above.

3. No grades of Incomplete on the student’s record.

4. Fulfillment of responsibilities for teaching/project assistantships or lectureships.

**ADVISOR / COMMITTEE**

All students are assigned an advisor when they enter the program, but may switch advisors if appropriate for their studies. While no faculty member is obliged to accept a student’s request to serve as advisor, invitations are usually accepted except where the faculty member judges that a different advisor would serve the student’s needs and interests better.

It is the student’s responsibility to meet with the advisor on a regular basis (at least once a semester), to consult with him/her on selection of courses, and to receive feedback on progress through the program, including dissertation stage. Dissertators living outside of Madison must make sure that an acceptable substitute for such a meeting is agreed upon with the advisor. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in an unsatisfactory grade in Research and Thesis, and could lead to dismissal from the program.

All students are required to complete a Professional Activities Report (PAR) each Spring.

**ASSESSMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS**

Communication Science and Rhetoric, Politics, and Culture generally require a formal thesis; Film and Media and Cultural Studies require comprehensive examinations.

**TIME CONSTRAINTS**

Master’s degrees are generally expected to be completed within five semesters of matriculation.

**LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS**

Students interested in writing a dissertation on a national cinema other than the U.S. are expected to complete two years of foreign language study.

**ADMISSIONS**

Applicants must have earned a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution with a minimum overall grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, although successful applicants usually have much higher GPAs. Students whose preparation does not meet the requirements of the area of study to which they have been admitted may be required to enroll in specific courses to remedy deficiencies.

Applicants must submit two official copies of transcripts from all institutions attended, three letters of recommendation from academic sources, official Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, official TOEFL or IELTS scores for international students whose native language is not English, a statement of purpose for graduate study, and a 15- to 20-page writing sample (in English). Although the department requires no minimum GRE scores, successful candidates typically score well on portions of the examination related to their area of study. Admission to the graduate program in communication arts is highly competitive.

The application deadline is December 15.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

• Articulates, critiques, or elaborates the theories, research methods, and approaches to inquiry or schools of practice in the field of study.
• Identifies sources and assembles evidence pertaining to questions or challenges in the field of study.
• Demonstrates understanding of the primary field of study in a historical, social, or global context.
• Selects and/or utilizes the most appropriate methodologies and practices.
• Evaluates or synthesizes information pertaining to questions or challenges in the field of study.
• Communicates clearly in ways appropriate to the field of study.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

• Recognizes and applies principles of ethical and professional conduct.

PEOPLE

Faculty: Professors Xenos (chair), Asen, Conway, Gray, Howard, Jacobs, Lucas, Mares, Murphy, Pan, Smith, Van Swol, Zaeske; Associate Professors Hoyt, D. Johnson, J. Johnson, Lopez, McKinnon, Morris, Singer, Toma; Assistant Professor Belodubrovskaya