

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Studies

The Communication Studies program offers a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the Lawrence Campus. The program in Communication Studies at the University of Kansas is research intensive and primarily designed to train students for careers doing research and teaching in the field of human communication at institutions of higher education. More specifically, our graduate program expects students to focus on one of the department's two primary areas of research, with a narrower focus on one or two of the subareas:

- Relationships & Social Interaction, with an emphasis on digital media, interpersonal, intercultural, and organizational communication.
- Rhetoric & Political Communication, with an emphasis on argumentation, democratic inclusion, digital media, political institutions, and public memory.

Across both areas of research, our department collectively focuses on communication as it relates to gender, race, social class, national identity, and other cultural indices. Moreover, the department offers training in qualitative, quantitative, and rhetorical methods.

Almost all Communication Studies graduate students are funded through the department as either Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) or Graduate Research Assistants (GRA), which both include competitive stipends, tuition coverage, and health care benefits. In addition, all GTAs and GRAs are provided annual travel assistance to attend academic conferences, and the department awards approximately \$25,000 a year in graduate awards for research, teaching, and service.

Admission to Graduate Studies

Admission Requirements

- All applicants must meet the requirements outlined in the Admission to Graduate Study (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/admission-to-graduate-study/>) policy.
- Bachelor's degree: A copy of official transcripts showing proof of a bachelor's degree (and any post-bachelor's coursework or degrees) from a regionally accredited institution, or a foreign university with equivalent bachelor's degree requirements is required.
- English proficiency: Proof of English proficiency (<https://gradapply.ku.edu/english-requirements/>) for non-native or non-native-like English speakers is required. There are two bands of English proficiency, including Admission and Full proficiency. For applicants to online programs, Full proficiency is required.

Graduate Admission

Potential students must submit a complete online graduate application (<https://gradapply.ku.edu/apply/>). In addition to admission requirements listed above, applicants are required to provide three letters of recommendation, a statement of purpose, current resume or curriculum vita, and a writing sample. The deadline to apply for admission is January 5. For all domestic or international Ph.D. applicants, please review the information on the Ph.D. Admissions webpage (<https://coms.ku.edu/admissions-phd/>) for further details.

For additional questions regarding program requirements and application processes, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Jeffrey Hall (<https://coms.ku.edu/people/jeffrey-hall/>), or the Graduate Program Coordinator, Alec Graham (<https://coms.ku.edu/staff/>).

Ph.D. Degree Requirements

The Communication Studies Ph.D. program is designed for students who have previously completed a Master's degree in communication. In addition to coursework, doctoral students will complete a comprehensive exam including both written and oral components. Following the comprehensive exam, doctoral candidates will complete a written dissertation and defend the dissertation in an oral defense. The Communication Studies Graduate Student Handbook is available on the department's website (<https://coms.ku.edu/phd/>).

Course Requirements

Code	Title	Hours
Basic Communication Theory		3
COMS 859	Introduction to Graduate Studies in Communication Studies	
Research Methodology ¹		15
Courses meet Research Skills & Responsible Scholarship requirements. See Research Skills & Responsible Scholarship below for more information about this requirement.		
COMS 851	Communication Research: Historical and Descriptive	
	or COMS 852 Communication Research: Behavioral and Social Science	
Choose 12 additional hours appropriate to the student's research/dissertation interest. A list of approved courses is provided below.		
Additional subject matter courses		18
A minimum of 18 hours of additional subject matter courses. These courses must represent 2 areas. These areas are developed by the student in consultation with the advisor and the Director of Graduate Study.		
Electives		6
Electives may be chosen from another department or any phase of the program. These hours need not be all in the same department. They may be used to broaden or intensify the program, as long as they constitute a meaningful course of study.		
Total Hours		42

¹ In lieu of 3 hours of methodological course work, a student may elect to enroll in 3 hours of applied research in which they will produce original research using one of the above methods. The final paper must meet the approval of the student's advisor and must be submitted to a professional society for presentation on a convention program or to a professional journal for possible publication.

In lieu of 3 hours of methodological course work, a student may elect to demonstrate a high level of writing competence in one foreign language if they can show that knowledge of this language directly relates to their research and academic interests. Competence levels are determined through consultation with the appropriate language department or program.

At least 30 credit hours must be taken within Communication Studies. Any adjustment to the required number of COMS course hours must be approved by the Graduate Committee through a formal petition. That petition should offer a full explanation of why the adjustment is being requested and have the full support of the advisor. If a student has received an M.A. degree from the Department of Communication Studies at KU, they will need to replace the required courses they have already taken during their MA studies (e.g., COMS 859; COMS 852 or COMS 851) with additional electives to reach 42 hours of doctoral coursework.

Research Skills & Responsible Scholarship requirement:

The University requires that every doctoral student receive training in responsible scholarship pertinent to the field of research and obtain research skills pertinent to the doctoral level of research in their field(s). These requirements must be completed by the end of the semester that the student takes the oral comprehensive exam. For students in Communication Studies, this requirement is satisfied by completion of the courses in the Research Methodology section in the course grid above.

Comprehensive Exam

Successful candidates will satisfactorily complete both a written and an oral comprehensive examination over communication theory, research methodology, and the student's two areas of emphasis. Comprehensive exams are evaluated by the student's committee. Committees should meet all requirements specified in the Doctoral student Oral Exam Committee Composition policy (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/doctoral-student-oral-exam-committee-composition/>).

The written exams may be completed in one of the formats listed below. The details of the examination

- Examination only option. Student completes four written exams over the four components (communication theory, research methodology, and two areas of emphasis).
- Paper only option. Student completes four papers over the four components (communication theory, research methodology, and two areas of emphasis).
- Blended examination and paper option. Students completes a combination of exams and papers over the four components (communication theory, research methodology, and two areas of emphasis).

After the candidate has passed all sections of the written comprehensive examination, they can take the oral examination. The student's committee will administer and evaluate the oral examination.

Post Comprehensive Exam Requirements

Upon passing the comprehensive examination, the student becomes a candidate for the Ph.D. degree and is approved to proceed with their dissertation research and project. Starting the semester following successful completion of the oral comprehensive exam, students must enroll in accordance with the Office of Graduate Studies' Doctoral Candidacy Policy (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/doctoral-candidacy/>). This enrollment includes, but is not limited to, at least 1 dissertation hour every semester until graduation. See the Doctoral

Candidacy policy for more information about this University level requirement.

Dissertation Prospectus

As soon as possible after the appointment of their advisory committee and completion of comprehensive exams, and before beginning the actual preparation of their dissertation, students should submit to the committee a proposal for their dissertation. The committee members and the student must meet collectively to discuss the prospectus and approve the project's continuation.

Dissertation and Dissertation Defense

The dissertation must be an original work of research that advances the field of Communication Studies and complies with the Office of Graduate Studies' Doctoral Dissertation policy (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/doctoral-dissertation/>).

Upon approval by the student's committee that the student's dissertation research and written document is complete, the student must defend the dissertation before all committee members in the "final oral examination," or dissertation defense. The final dissertation defense includes a public presentation of the dissertation research by the candidate and concludes with a period of questioning by the committee, faculty, and public in attendance. After posing questions to the student about the dissertation work, committee members deliberate and vote on a grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. A grade of Satisfactory requires a majority vote, and may be contingent on the completion of specific revisions by a designated due date.

Approved Methodology Courses

The following lists identify methods courses taught in and outside of the department for the two main research areas: Relationships & Social Interaction and Rhetoric & Political Communication. The faculty of the Communication Studies Department agrees that these courses qualify as methods courses toward the course requirements for doctoral candidates.

Three caveats:

1. These lists are not comprehensive. Other courses may count as methods courses provided the student receives approval from the advisor.
2. The courses on these lists are not required. These are recommended courses for training in each methods type.
3. All methods courses should be chosen with the advisor's input.

Rhetorical methods courses include but are not limited to:

Code	Title	Hours
COMS 930	Seminar in Speech: _____ (Postmodern Rhetorical Theories)	1-4
COMS 930	Seminar in Speech: _____ (Contemporary Theories in Public Address)	1-4
COMS 930	Seminar in Speech: _____ (Critical Theory as Critical Method)	1-4
COMS 930	Seminar in Speech: _____ (Feminist Theory)	1-4
COMS 951	Seminar in Movement Theory and Genre Criticism	3

COMS 952	Seminar in Mythic and Narrative Approaches to Rhetorical Criticism	3
COMS 955	Seminar in Rhetorical Criticism	3

Please consult with your advisor and other relevant faculty members about courses that may meet the research methods requirement. Courses outside of COMS may qualify as a rhetorical methods course subject to advisor approval.

In Department Qualitative Methods Courses

Code	Title	Hours
COMS 855	Qualitative Research Methods	3
COMS 930	Seminar in Speech: _____ (Analyzing Qualitative Data)	1-4
COMS 930	Seminar in Speech: _____ (Ethnography and Social Interaction)	1-4

It is recommended that graduate students complete COMS 855 prior to taking qualitative methods courses outside of Communication Studies

Qualitative Methods Graduate Courses at KU that are Not in Communication Studies:

Courses with an asterisk have been recommended by our graduate students or affiliate faculty. Please review all course selections with your advisor prior to enrolling.

Code	Title	Hours
American Studies:		
AMS 803	Research Methods in American Studies *	3
AMS 998	Seminar in: _____ (special topics) *	3
Anthropology:		
ANTH 783	Doing Ethnography *	3
Journalism:		
JOUR 829	Marketing Communications Research	3
Political Science:		
POLS 708	Qualitative Research Methods	3
Public Administration:		
PUAD 937	Qualitative Methods in Public Administration	3

* Courses with an asterisk have been recommended by our graduate students or affiliate faculty.

In Department Quantitative Methods Course

Code	Title	Hours
COMS 856	Communication Research: Quantitative Analysis	3
COMS 930	Seminar in Speech: _____ (Conditional and Indirect Effects in Statistics)	1-4
COMS 930	Seminar in Speech: _____ (Social Network Analysis)	1-4

It is recommended that graduate students complete COMS 856 (<https://catalog.ku.edu/search/?P=COMS%20856>) prior to taking quantitative methods courses outside of Communication Studies

Introductory Outside COMS Quantitative Courses

Code	Title	Hours
PSYC 790	Statistical Methods in Psychology I	3
or EPSY 810	Regression and ANOVA: General Linear Models	
PSYC 818	Experimental Research Methods in Social Psychology	3

Advanced Outside COMS Quantitative Courses

Code	Title	Hours
PSYC 791	Statistical Methods in Psychology II	3

Electives

Code	Title	Hours
COMS 741	Special Topics in Communication Studies: _____	2-3
COMS 844	Seminar in Interpersonal Communication	3
COMS 851	Communication Research: Historical and Descriptive	3
COMS 852	Communication Research: Behavioral and Social Science	3
COMS 855	Qualitative Research Methods	3
COMS 856	Communication Research: Quantitative Analysis	3
COMS 907	Seminar in Political Communication	3
COMS 910	Organizing Identity, Identification, and Stigma	3
COMS 920	Introduction to Teaching Oral Communication	3
COMS 930	Seminar in Speech: _____	1-4
COMS 945	Seminar in Social Support	3
COMS 946	Seminar in Communication and Intergroup Relations	3
COMS 948	Seminar in Organizational Communication	3
COMS 951	Seminar in Movement Theory and Genre Criticism	3
COMS 952	Seminar in Mythic and Narrative Approaches to Rhetorical Criticism	3
COMS 955	Seminar in Rhetorical Criticism	3
COMS 956	Statistical Moderation and Mediation	3
COMS 958	Comparative Theories of Speech Communication	3
COMS 998	Advanced Directed Research for Doctoral Students	1-8

Students should selective elective hours in consultation with their faculty advisor. All graduate level courses in Communication Studies, listed above, may count as an elective credit. Graduate level courses outside of Communication Studies may count toward the degree with approval of the faculty advisor.

At the completion of this program, students will be able to:

- Conduct original, ethical, and publishable research in Communication Studies independently and/or in research teams (Research).
- Demonstrate competence in at least one method for conducting research in Communication Studies.
- Demonstrate an understanding of humanistic or social science theories in Communication Studies.

- Demonstrate an understanding of how communication is shaped by and in turn shapes factors such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, age, ability, geography, and/or culture.
- Demonstrate competence in effective, ethical, and inclusive instruction within Communication Studies.