Department of Communication

M.A. Student Handbook
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Facts about the University at Albany

The University at Albany, State University of New York, was the first state-chartered institution of higher education in New York in 1844. As Northeastern New York's premier academic institution and one of four university centers in the SUNY system, University at Albany offers graduate and undergraduate education in a broad range of academic fields at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree levels. The University enrolls students in nine degree-granting schools and colleges, including the College of Arts and Sciences, Schools of Business, Education, Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, Criminal Justice, Information Science & Policy, Social Welfare, Public Health, and the School of Nanosciences & Nanoengineering.

The University at Albany is the center of higher education in northeastern New York, enrolling approximately 18,000 students, including 5,000 graduate students. Nationally and internationally renowned scholars are among some 700 full-time faculty members who are committed to maintaining the high academic standards that have characterized the University at Albany.

Albany's University Library ranks among the top research libraries in the country. The University Library and the Science Library on the uptown campus, and the Thomas E. Dewey Graduate Library for Public Affairs and Policy on the Rockefeller College campus contain more than two million volumes, subscribe to 5,000 periodicals, and provide access to over 2.8 million microform items.

The University is located in New York State's capital, within minutes of the State Capitol, Legislature, courts and state agencies, and is convenient to Boston, New York City and the Adirondacks.

Department Goals and Facts

The Department of Communication provides opportunities for advanced study in communication, both theoretical and applied. The Department emphasizes the analysis and design of messages and symbol systems, and the consequences that particular messages and message strategies have in face-to-face interaction, mediated interaction, organizations, and political life. Areas of study include health communication, interpersonal/intercultural, organizational communication, and political communication. The department also sustains substantive focus on communication and information technologies within the aforementioned contexts.

Graduate students enter our program with a variety of life experiences, educational backgrounds, and goals. Some entering students are mid-career professionals who are seeking either to change careers or update their existing skills while others are recent college graduates who recognize the importance of an advanced degree to compete successfully for a challenging and responsible position in communication related fields. No specific major is required for admission to the M.A. program; as undergraduates our students have majored in a variety of subjects.
We encourage students’ participation in the intellectual life of the department and in professional activities outside the university. Graduate students have delivered papers to the International Communication Association, the National Communication Association, the Eastern Communication Association, and the New York State Speech Communication Association. We also have a weekly proseminar where faculty and students get together to discuss research that is in-progress by members of our department. We occasionally invite guest speakers to present as well.

For more information and facts on the Department of Communication, please visit us at http://www.albany.edu/communication/graduate.html. You will find a breadth of information regarding the department, faculty, career possibilities, courses, and frequently asked questions.

**Application Information**

Students may apply either for non-degree status or for admission to our Master of Arts degree program. Both non-degree and degree students may take graduate courses in our department, subject to the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies in the department. Non-degree students may apply to the degree program; however, there is no guarantee that they will be accepted. If a non-degree student who has taken courses in the department is accepted in the degree program, up to 12 graduate credits may be applied to the fulfillment of degree requirements. Successful completion of all requirements in the degree program will lead to a Master of Arts degree in communication.

**Application deadlines**

The deadline for applying to the program for fall semester is July 15th. Applications received after that date may be reviewed if there is space for new students.

The deadline for spring semester applicants is November 1st. Application received after that date may be reviewed if there is space for new students.

The deadline for applying for non-degree status for fall semester is July 15th. Applications received after that date may be reviewed if there is space for new students.

**How to Obtain an Application**

Applications for admission to the Masters of Arts Program or for non-degree status are obtainable from several locations:

- Online at [http://www.albany.edu/graduate/index.html](http://www.albany.edu/graduate/index.html) (all graduate application materials are required to be submitted online.)
- Call (800) 440-GRAD or (518) 442-3980
- Email graduate@uamail.albany.edu
Application Components

- Three letters of recommendation from academic references
- Transcripts from previous academic institutions
- Personal statement of background and goals
- Academic writing sample
- Payment to the University at Albany. Please see “Application Fee” on the Grad. Admissions website for amount: http://www.albany.edu/graduate/instructions.shtml

In addition, international students must include TOEFL scores (minimum of 580 paper-based, 237 computer-based, 92 Internet-based is required for admission) and a financial affidavit.

Master of Arts Program in the Department of Communication

The Master of Arts in Communication provides broad exposure to the field of communication, while at the same time allowing students to emphasize health communication, interpersonal/intercultural communication, organizational communication, or political communication. Students are expected to concentrate in one of those areas and to organize their studies toward the final requirements of a research seminar/practicum or a guided research project.

M.A. Concentrations

**Health Communication**

Focuses on various levels and contexts of health communication: interpersonal (e.g., patient-provider communication, healthcare and family interactions, support group communication, intercultural issues); organizational (e.g., how members of healthcare organizations communicate with one another and those they serve, and how health concerns enter into the experience of working for non-healthcare organizations); community (e.g., how organizations in communities interact with one another as well as other stakeholders to address residents' health concerns; how individuals’ local environments and available communicative resources impact their access to health care, health literacy, health behaviors, and health status); and mass media (e.g., public health campaigns, direct to consumer advertising).

**Interpersonal/Intercultural Communication**

This concentration considers the process and effects of communication in personal relationships, groups, and organizations. It addresses the influence of different cultural and social backgrounds, with special attention to the interactional and cultural foundations of what people in face-to-face encounters say and do, and how they say and do it.
Organizational Communication
This concentration studies the role of messages in achieving coordination and cooperation within organizations, as well as the interactions between organizations and their social and economic environments, through both personal and mediated channels, including both mass and computer-mediated communication.

Political Communication
This concentration addresses methods of stating and defending policy, assessing and responding to public opinion, and exchanging information and decision-making between political figures or groups and their publics. Also considers how new technologies are changing political procedures.

Program Requirements
In order to earn an M.A. degree, students in this program need to complete a minimum of 33 credits of graduate study and complete either a research seminar/practicum or a guided research project.

Courses and Credits
Students must take 6 credits of program core courses, 12 credits in the substantive (concentration) area, 9 credits of supporting electives, and 6 credits of Final Project (Research Seminar/Practicum or Guided Research Project). A maximum of 6 credits can be transferred in from another program as elective credits.

Program Core Courses (6 credits)
Communication Theory and Practice (COM 502)
Communication Research Methods (COM 525)

All students must receive grades of B- or better in these courses. Students must enroll in COM 502 when first offered following matriculation, and must complete the core courses within their first 15 credits.

Substantive Core Courses (12 credits in one concentration)

Health Communication
Health Communication (COM 560)
Plus nine credits of core electives in health communication courses

Interpersonal/intercultural communication
Interpersonal Interaction (COM 575)
Culture and Communication (COM 577)
Plus six credits of core electives in interpersonal/intercultural communication courses
Organizational Communication  
Theories and Research in Public Organizational Communication (COM 551)  
Plus nine credits of core electives in organizational communication courses  

Political Communication  
Theories and Research in Political Communication (COM 520)  
Plus nine credits of core electives in political communication courses  

Supporting Electives (9 credits)  
Any graduate course within the department can serve as a supporting elective. Core courses or electives in other substantive areas can serve as electives. Courses outside the department that are related to the student’s academic interests and objectives may count as electives if approved by the student’s faculty advisor. At least three of the nine credits must be from within the Department of Communication.  

Please see Appendix A for a complete list of core courses and core electives in the four areas of concentration.  

Research Seminar/Practicum or Guided Research Project  
(6 credits toward degree)  

Students may fulfill the requirements for the Master’s degree either by completing a Research Seminar/Practicum (COM 698) or by completing a Guided Research Project (COM 697A/697B). Students should discuss these options with their advisor to ensure the selection of the option that best suits their interests and circumstances.  

Research Seminar/Practicum  
The completion of a research seminar/practicum provides a student with experience in applying communication theory and research in business, government, or a not-for-profit enterprise. The knowledge and skills gained by engaging in a practicum are relevant to professional employment. The research seminar/practicum comes near the end of the program, after a student has completed at least 24 credits (6 credits of program core courses, 12 credits of substantive courses, and 6 credits of an elective). The practicum component of the program includes a twenty-hour a week placement in a communication internship lasting for a minimum of 12 weeks and a research project related to the placement. Students do a variety of types of internships, depending on their interests. Some are interning in state agencies, the state legislature, public relations, radio, television, advertising, personnel work, counseling, student affairs work, and fund-raising. Opportunities for internship placements are enhanced by the University's proximity to New York State government as well as by its location in the burgeoning Tech Valley region. A research seminar meets once a week to discuss the final
analytic paper, which is a formal academic document on the scholarly research project carried out during the semester. Students are encouraged to bring research and other scholarly problems to the seminar and to critique the work of other students.

**Guided Research Project**

The completion of a guided research project provides a student with the experience of conducting an original research project. The knowledge and skills gained by completing a project are valuable in doctoral studies. Students interested in conducting a guided research project should consult their advisors as soon as possible. Students who take 12 credits a semester generally need to start their guided research project in their second semester. The guided research project is typically a 2 semester sequence (COM 697A the first semester, and COM 697B the second semester).

**Student in Good Standing**

To be in good standing academically, students must maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0. If a student's G.P.A. drops below 3.0, he or she will be put on academic probation. Students on academic probation will be given one semester to bring their GPAs up to at least 3.0. Failure to do so may result in the student's termination from the program. Consistent with University policy, completion of the M.A. in Communication requires an overall average of 3.0 (B) in all resident graduate courses and credits applicable to the degree.

**Advisement and Registration**

The best way to track your progress in the program is to keep a Course Checklist Form and fill it out each semester as you complete program requirements. Forms can be obtained on the Web at www.albany.edu/communication/gradadvise.html or from Debbie Bourassa, the department secretary, in SS 340. As program requirements have changed over the years, make sure you have the appropriate form for the year you were admitted to the program.

Every M.A. student needs to be advised prior to registering. All students upon admission to the program are initially advised by the Director of Graduate Studies. The Director of Graduate Studies approves the selection of courses for the first semester, and the department secretary issues an Advisement Verification Number (AVN) and permission numbers for courses to enable students to register. All students register online at the MyUAlbany website. For information on registration procedures, go to http://www.albany.edu/myualbany/.

Continuing students are assigned to a faculty advisor in their area of interest beginning in their second semester of study. Students must consult with their faculty advisor prior to registering for their second semester of study. The faculty advisor then approves the selection of courses and the department secretary issues an AVN and course permission numbers.
**MyUAlbany**

MyUAlbany is a web-based academic records system for faculty and students at the University at Albany. From MyUAlbany, you can find the latest information about registration, course availability, and other important registration information. Students can review academic records and even request an unofficial copy of their transcripts. Students will use this site to register online.

The Personal Portfolio notifies students of any holds on their records or any ‘to do’ items assigned by a University office. If they have a hold, they will not be allowed to register. Students can also check and update personal information on file.

Students are encouraged to explore the services provided on MyUAlbany, including the tutorials and FAQs available on the main page http://www.albany.edu/myualbany/. If students have questions that are not answered there, please contact the ITS help desk at 442-3700.

Students should also check MyUAlbany throughout the semester for important announcements and reminders.

**Awards**

There is one graduate award every year in the Department, the Tompkins Award for the Outstanding Research Paper. Students are nominated by the faculty in April.
Communication Faculty and Research Areas

**Michael Barberich**, Visiting Assistant Professor (Ph.D., expected, University of Pittsburgh): historical and historicizing practices of public communication; rhetorical practices of public memory and their mediation through communicative technology.

**Alan T. Belasen**, Lecturer (Ph.D., University at Albany): Corporate communication; managerial communication; communication audits; inter-organizational communication; communication-based learning; self-management; and leadership communication.

**Barry Eisenberg**, Lecturer (Ph.D., Temple University): Health care administration and management; organizational communication; human resources management; corporate and management communication.

**B J Fehr**, Visiting Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Delaware): interpersonal and intercultural communication.

**Annis G. Golden**, Associate Professor (Ph.D., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute): health communication and minority health disparities; organizational communication; communication and the management of work-life/personal-life relationships; social effects of new information and communication technologies.

**Emilie Gould**, Visiting Assistant Professor (Ph.D., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute): organizational and intercultural communication.

**Teresa M. Harrison**, Professor (Ph.D., Bowling Green State University): computer-mediated communication; community and government information systems; communication technology and democracy; communication theory.

**William Husson**, Visiting Assistant Professor (Ph.D., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute): mass media and social practice; film; computer-mediated communication; media history.

**Matthew Matsaganis**, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Southern California): organizational communication; health communication; political communication; communication and technology.

**Anita Pomerantz**, O’Leary Professor (Ph.D., University of California, Irvine): conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, and ethnography; health communication; interactional practices used in families, friendships, and organizations.

**MiHyе Seо**, Assistant Professor (Ph.D., Ohio State University): political communication; mass communication and communication technology.
**Timothy Stephen**, Professor (Ph.D., Bowling Green State University): interpersonal and marital communication; social history of communication; automated textual analysis; historical preservation of communication scholarship.

**Jennifer Stromer-Galley**, Associate Professor (Ph. D., University of Pennsylvania): political communication; communication technology and democracy; public opinion.

**Alan Zemel**, Assistant Professor (Ph. D., Temple University): health communication; interpersonal and intercultural communication.

To find information on how to contact a specific faculty member via phone or email please go to: http://www.albany.edu/communication/faculty.html.

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**Regularly Offered Graduate Courses in Communication**

**Com 502 Communication Theory and Practice (3)**

Exploration of the interrelationship between theory and practice, employing either a general theory of communication or a theory located in one of the three departmental areas of concentration.

**Com 503 Message Design and Social Influence (3)**

Survey of theory and research on persuasion and critical analysis of persuasive messages aimed at individuals, groups, or large publics. Students will develop analytic and critical writing skills and research techniques needed for graduate study in communication.

**Com 520 Theories and Research in Political Communication (3)**

Survey of key theories and research findings in the field of political communication covering concepts such as political image, issues, agenda setting, language, debates, socialization, and advertising.

**Com 525 Communication Research Methods (3)**

Methods of gathering data and analyzing information common to most communication studies, including political polling and surveys, content analysis, interviewing, measurement, and elementary data analysis.
Com 551 Theories and Research in Public Organizational Communication (3)

Major research and theories in organizational communication including topics such as organizational structures and processes, communication network analysis, design decision making and control systems, and organizational development, with emphasis on public sector organizations.

Com 557 Communication Audits within Organizations (3)

The study of why, where, and how communication audits within organizations are conducted. Details the methodologies for conducting audits, characteristic data, and their utility for the organization. Students examine case studies, and conduct an audit in a local business or government organization.

Com 560 Health Communication (3)

Examines the role of communication in maintaining health and seeking/giving quality health care services. Reviews scholarly literature in the areas of decision-making, communicating about health between different age, ethnic, and cultural groups, information exchange between health care providers and consumers, communicating about death and dying, interaction within/among medical teams, support group interaction, the role of power in medical interaction, and ethical issues related to giving and receiving quality health care.

Com 562 Communication in Health Care Organizations (3)

The course explores the relationships between communication and a range of cultural, social, economic, ethical, and technological factors that influence health care organizations, the delivery and receipt of health care, and the health care institutional system.

Com 575 Interpersonal Interaction (3)

Examines language and nonverbal practices adopted by individuals interacting in personal relationships and professional settings. Examines participants' struggles, and shows how those are consequential for the direction of the interaction, and for the participants' identities and relationships.

Com 577 Culture and Communication (3)

An examination of interactional and ritual practices that differentiate cultural groups, and the way cultural identities and customs manifest themselves in interactional practices.

Com 585 Conversation Analysis (3)

Examines published research in Conversation Analysis and audio and video recordings of interpersonal interaction. Develops a systematic approach to observing and analyzing interaction and discourse practices in everyday activities. Students record, transcribe, and analyze
interactions.

**Com 587 Field Research Methods (3)**

Introduction to and utilization of methods for collecting and analyzing data on communication practices in natural settings. Emphasis on participation observation, informant interviewing, and video/audio-taping.

**Com 625 Mass Media Effects in Political Communication (3)**

Examination of selected topics in mass communication and political communication theory and research relating to the effects of mass media particularly regarding political processes, institutions, and publics.

**Com 626 Campaign Communication (3)**

Analysis of campaign goals and sub-goals, campaign structures and organizations, and the needs for public communication at each stage of the campaign. Prerequisites: 12 credits in communication including Com 520 or 523.

**Com 635 Topics in Political Communication (3)**

Selected topics in political communication, such as public information issues and practices, the rhetoric of political institutions, voter decision-making. May be repeated for a total of six credits with changes in topic; see specific courses listed under Com 635. Prerequisites: 12 credits in communication including Com 520 or Com 523.

**Com 635 Communication Campaign Practicum (3)**

This class is designed to give you "real world" experience developing and implementing an effective public relations campaign on the campus the University at Albany. We will emphasize the strategic aspects of public relations campaigns, with a special focus on the research, planning and evaluation needed to create and demonstrate an effective public relations campaign. Working with the Alliance for Donation, students will develop and implement a campaign to increase the number of students on campus who enroll in the NY State Registry of Organ and Tissue Donors. Students will be expected to think strategically about public relations as it relates to this campaign and others. Emphasis will be placed on research in preparation for the campaign, on developing appropriate messages and strategies, and on an implementation program.

**Com 659 Topics in Organizational Communication (3)**

Selected topics in organizational communication such as the relationship between interpersonal and organizational communication, ethics and organizations, telecommunication processes. May be repeated for a total of six credits with change in topic; see specific courses listed under Com 659. Prerequisites: 15 credits in communication including Com 551 or Com 557 and either Com 552 or Com 659.
Com 659 Corporate Communication (3)
Combining research, theory, and practice in exploring corporate communication as a strategic area of business management. Topics include: corporate communication's function and strategic framework, corporate identity, image management via mass advertising and public relations, stakeholder analyses, and crisis communication.

Com 659 Leadership Communication (3)
Leadership in organizations and the critical role communication plays in the process of moving organizational members toward shared organizational goals. Historical and current developments of leadership studies covering topics such as: teams, creating vision, initiating and facilitating change, leadership traits and styles, and shaping corporate culture through effective communication.

Com 675 Topics in Interpersonal Interaction (3)
Advanced research and theory on interpersonal interaction. Topic may vary by semester. MA students may repeat course twice with a change of topic for a maximum of 9 credits; doctoral students may repeat course with change of topic as often as advised. See specific classes offered under Com 675. Prerequisites: 6 credits in Communication.

Com 677 Topics in Culture and Communication (3)
Advanced research and theory on cultural aspects of interaction and discourse practices. Topic may vary by semester. MA students may repeat course with change of topic.

Com 697 Independent Study in Communication (2-3)
Guided research on topics in communication. May be repeated for up to six credits, with no more than three credits from the same instructor.

Com 698 Research Seminar/Practicum in Communication (6-9)
Supervised applications of communication theory in agencies of business and government. Cannot be taken until student has completed at least 24 graduate credits in communication. Requires a written final report and seminar attendance. Prerequisite: By advisement only.

Com 699 Master's Thesis (3-9)
Research leading to an acceptable master's thesis in communication. Requires a final oral examination with members of the thesis committee. Prerequisite: Consent of advisor.
Beyond the Degree

In general, an M.A. degree in Communication helps develop expertise and experience in analyzing and improving communication in particular professional and interpersonal settings. Such expertise has applicability in a wide variety of careers. The path followed by each graduate thus depends on the student's own interests, goals, and creativity about opportunities. Some of our graduates begin careers, or change to a new career, as a result of their graduate work. Others use their graduate studies to upgrade their competence and competitiveness in their existing careers.

Graduates of the Department of Communication M.A. program have pursued careers in human resources, lobbying, college administration, fund-raising, radio programming, executive training, public information, sales, management consulting, public relations, advertising, state agency administration, television production, and internal communication in not-for-profit, governmental, and business organizations. Some have college teaching or advisement positions. Others have gone on to law school, or to work on their doctorates in Communication or Information Sciences.

Resources

Professional Organizations

- National Communication Association (www.natcom.org)
- International Communication Association (www.icahdq.org)
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (www.asha.org)
- Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (www.aejmc.org/)
- American Communication Association (www.americancomm.org)
- Broadcast Education Association (http://www.beaweb.org/)

Journals

- Quarterly Journal of Speech
- Communication Monographs
- Journal of Applied Communication Research
- Journal of Communication
- Communication Research
- Electronic Journal of Communication
- New Media and Society
- Western Journal of Communication
- Communication Quarterly
- Communication Studies
- Southern Communication Journal
**Human Communication Research**
*Communication Theory*
*The Communication Review*
*Research on Language and Social Interaction*
*Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*

To see a complete list, you can go to the website of the University library (http://library.albany.edu/), click “Journals-Print & Online”, type “communication” in the “exact search”, and then submit the search.

**Websites**
Communication Institute for Online Scholarship (http://www.cios.org)
Communication, Cultural & Media Studies (http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/)
National Communication Association (http://www.natcom.org)
International Communication Association (http://www.icahdq.org)
Content Analysis Resources (http://www.car.ua.edu/)
Cultural Studies Central (http://www.culturalstudies.net/)
HealthCOMM (http://www.sla.purdue.edu/HealthCOMM/)
The Media and Communication Studies Site (http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/)
Political Communication Resources (http://depts.washington.edu/~bennett/research.html)

**Contact information**

**Tim Stephen**, Director of Graduate Studies  
Office: SS 335  
Phone: (518) 442-4878  
Fax: (518) 442-3884  
E-mail: commdgs@albany.edu

**Deborah Bourassa**, Secretary  
Office: SS 351  
Phone: (518) 442-4871  
Fax: (518) 442-3884  
E-mail: dab59@cas.albany.edu

Also, for more information, you can the visit the Department of Communication's website at:  
http://www.albany.edu/communication/graduate.html
### Appendix A: Core Courses and Electives

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<th>COURSE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>M.A. Core</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Organizational</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Interpersonal/Intercultural</th>
<th>Supporting Electives</th>
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<td>Comm Theory and Practice</td>
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<td>503</td>
<td>Message Design and Social Influence</td>
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<td>Theories &amp; Research in Pol Comm</td>
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<td>Theories &amp; Research in Pub Org Comm</td>
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<td>557</td>
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*Key* X = This course counts as a core elective in the area of concentration listed at the top of the column.

**Note:** When selecting courses beyond the program core and your required core course in your area of concentration (or courses, in the case of the IP/IC track), be sure to consult with your faculty advisor within your track. This will help you choose courses to fulfill your core elective requirements that best fit your goals and interests.