

Graduate Studies Handbook

Ph.D. in Mass Communications
M.A. in Media Studies

2026-27



Welcome

When you enter the realm of graduate study, you enter a world in which the questions you ask are as important as the answers you discover. We welcome you to graduate education in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications at Penn State. As you review the materials of this handbook, we hope you gain a sense of the wide-ranging interests as well as the spirit of our college.

No handbook will cover everything for you. However, we hope that these guidelines are helpful in answering many of the questions you have about graduate work in Bellisario College. Your adviser, the Associate Dean of Graduate Programs, Research, & Faculty Affairs, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the graduate program coordinators can help you secure answers to questions you might have.

The graduate catalog, *Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin* is your best source of information on the procedures and regulations of the Fox Graduate School. It is available on the web at: <https://bulletins.psu.edu>

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Master of Arts in Media Studies

The Master of Arts in Media Studies is an academic program that involves students in the systematic study of mass media. The objective of the program is to enable students to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the systems, processes, networks, cultures, and information associated with mass media. The program prepares students for doctoral study in mass communications and for positions in business and government requiring a comprehensive understanding of the historical, social, and political implications of the media.

Students graduating from this program will be especially well qualified to organize research projects, to critically evaluate research reports and to directly influence mass media practices by the application of research findings.

M.A. MEDIA Thesis Option	M.A. MEDIA Non-Thesis Option	Integrated Undergraduate/Graduate MEDIA
36 credits	36 credits	36 credits at the graduate level, 120 credits at the undergraduate level, with up to 12 credits double counted
30 credits of course work	33 credits of course work	*see thesis/non-thesis requirements
6 credits of thesis research (COMM 600)	3 credits of master's paper/project research (COMM 596)	*see thesis/non-thesis requirements
3 credits of either COMM 506 or COMM 511 (Research Methods; students may take both)	3 credits of either COMM 506 or COMM 511 (Research Methods; students may take both)	3 credits of either COMM 506 or COMM 511 (Research Methods; students may take both)
At least 18 credits at the 500-600 level	At least 18 credits at the 500-600 level	At least 18 credits at the 500-600 level
3 credits of COMM 515 (MA Proseminar)	3 credits of COMM 515 (MA Proseminar)	3 credits of COMM 515 (MA Proseminar)
1 credit of COMM 590 (Colloquium)	1 credit of COMM 590 (Colloquium)	1 credit of COMM 590 (Colloquium)
Formal meetings: program plan, thesis proposal, defense of the thesis	Formal meetings: program plan, paper/project proposal, defense of the paper	*see thesis/non-thesis requirements
Satisfactory completion of course work and thesis requires two years	Satisfactory completion of course work and paper/project require two years	*see thesis/non-thesis requirements

Media Studies Thesis Option

Candidates must complete COMM 515 (MA proseminar), COMM 590 (Colloquium), and at least 3 credits of research methods by taking either COMM 506 (Research Methods in Communications) or COMM 511 (Mass Communications Research Methods II). The remaining credits are selected from the graduate courses listed in this guide (Pg. 47). Students are expected to consult with their adviser in making course choices.

Candidates must complete a minimum of 36 credits, including 6 for the thesis (COMM 600) but not counting Colloquium. At least 18 credits must be at the 500-600 level. Coursework offered by departments outside the College may be scheduled as part of the student's program with approval of the student's academic committee. In some cases, students may be required to take additional credits in order to make up deficiencies in undergraduate coursework.

Students are required to schedule three separate, formal meetings with their advisers and academic committees for:

1. Discussion and approval of the general program plan
2. The thesis proposal
3. The defense of the thesis

In most cases satisfactory completion of coursework and thesis requires two years for a full-time student.

Summary of Master of Arts in Media Studies Degree Requirements

1. Demonstrates understanding of a broad range of theories and issues connected to the study of media
2. A minimum of 36 credits
3. A minimum of 18 credits at the 500-600 level
4. A minimum of 18 credits in communications
5. At least three credits of coursework in communications research methodology
6. COMM 590 (Colloquium), including completion of Responsible Conduct of Research training. Credits earned for Colloquium may not be used to fulfill minimum credit requirements.
7. No more than nine credits earned in independent study (596) and directed study (594). Six credit maximum of independent study (596). (*Normally 596 should not be used for work directly related to thesis research and writing. 600-level credits should be used for that purpose.*)
8. A total of six credits of COMM 600 (Thesis Research) within the minimum 36 credit hours
9. An oral examination in defense of the thesis

MA in Media Studies - Thesis Option

Program Outline

Core

- COMM 515 MA Proseminar in Mass Communications
- COMM 590 Colloquium (1 credit—does not count to fulfill minimum credit requirements)

Research Methods

- COMM 506 Research Methods in Communications
(emphasis on quantitative approaches)
and/or
- COMM 511 Mass Communications Research Methods II
(emphasis on qualitative approaches)

Ethics and Professional Responsibility

- Responsible Conduct of Research certification
- 5 additional hours of research ethics education (This requirement is met in COMM courses.)

Supporting Courses in Communications (minimum of 12 credits)

- Choose in consultation with your adviser/committee

Courses Outside the College

Some programs outside of Communications have restrictions on course enrollment and will not allow our students to enroll via LionPATH. Often students may be added with permission of the professor of the course. In such cases, student should (1) email the professor of the course as soon as registration is open to express interest in the course and ask if it is possible to be added, and (2) in the note, emphasize the student's relevant background to match the courses' content.

Thesis Credits (6 credits maximum)

- COMM 600

Media Studies - Non-Thesis Option

In consultation with and with approval from the student's committee, a master's paper/project may be deemed more appropriate based on the student's career aspirations. Students who choose to write a master's paper/project instead of a thesis will still be required to earn 36 credits. Students choosing to write a thesis will be required to take 6 credits of COMM 600 Thesis Research, and students choosing to write a master's paper/project will be required to take 3 credits of COMM 596. Therefore, the students choosing to write a master's paper/project will need to take an additional class, for 33 credits of course work, in addition to 3 credits of COMM 596 for the master's paper.

The scope and scale of the master's paper will follow Graduate Council's expectations for original scholarly work that advances knowledge, such as a manuscript suitable for journal publication. The master's paper should not be considered or used as a lesser intellectual activity than a thesis but should be used only when it is appropriate to the type of research the student is doing as a capstone for their master's degree. The student should be able to articulate his or her case for writing a master's paper instead of a thesis. Bellisario College will require a student who chooses to write a master's paper to hold a final defense of his or her paper. It is expected that a Master's student who plans to continue on to a Ph.D. will complete a thesis.

The final decision of whether a student will write a thesis or a master's paper/project will be made at the student's program plan meeting.

Summary of Master of Arts in Media Studies Degree Requirements

1. Demonstrates understanding of a broad range of theories and issues connected to the study of media.
2. A minimum of 36 credits (33 credits of course work, 3 additional credits of COMM 596)
3. A minimum of 18 credits at the 500 level.
4. A minimum of 21 credits in communications.
5. At least three credits of coursework in communications research methodology.
6. COMM 590 (Colloquium), including completion of Responsible Conduct of Research training. Credits earned for Colloquium may not be used to fulfill minimum credit requirements.
7. No more than nine credits earned in independent study (596) and directed study (594) for course work. Six credit maximum of independent study (596) that is not associated with final paper/project.
8. An additional 3 credits of 596 for non-thesis option.
9. An oral examination of the project or paper.

MA in Media Studies - Non-Thesis Option

Program Outline

Core

COMM 515	MA Proseminar in Mass Communications
COMM 590	Colloquium (1 credit—do not count to fulfill minimum credit requirements)

Research Methods

COMM 506	Research Methods in Communications (emphasis on quantitative approaches)
and/or	
COMM 511	Mass Communications Research Methods II (emphasis on qualitative approaches)

Ethics and Professional Responsibility

- Responsible Conduct of Research certification
- 5 additional hours of research ethics education (This requirement is met in COMM courses.)

Supporting Courses in Communications (minimum of 15 credits)

Choose in consultation with your adviser/committee

Courses Outside the College

Some programs outside of Communications have restrictions on course enrollment and will not allow students to enroll via LionPATH. Often students may be added with permission of the professor of the course. In such cases, student should (1) email the professor of the course as soon as registration is open to express interest in the course and ask if it is possible to be added, and (2) in the note, emphasize the student's relevant background to match the courses' content.

Paper/Project Credits (3 credits maximum)

COMM 596

Integrated Undergraduate-Graduate Degree Program Guidelines for Application Process and Advising

Bellisario College offers academically qualified students enrolled in one of our BA programs the opportunity to earn both the BA and MA in five years of study. The IUG program in Media Studies facilitates the advanced study of communications research and thesis or paper/project development through a carefully organized selection of undergraduate courses, graduate seminars and directed research projects. The program accelerates and enhances undergraduate students' appreciation of graduate-level scholarship by involving them in seminars, research activities and the scholarly discourse of the College's community of MA and Ph.D. level scholars.

Students interested in the IUG program need to meet the following requirements to apply:

- Undergraduate major in Bellisario College
- At least a 3.5 GPA
- At least one COMM course at the 400 level
- At least 90 credits earned toward undergraduate degree by the end of Spring semester of the third year

Applications will be accepted with all other graduate applications for Fall admission.

Application process and requirements:

- Apply on-line through the Fox Graduate School: <http://www.gradschool.psu.edu/index.cfm/apply/>
- Narrative Statement
- 3 letters of recommendation (at least one from a Bellisario College of Communications faculty member)
- Writing sample
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is optional

Graduate faculty IUG adviser:

Graduate Faculty Adviser

Undergraduate Adviser (Program Proposal Meeting)

IUG Degree Requirements

120 credits are required for the BA

36 credits are required for the MA (Includes COMM 600-thesis option)

18 credits at the 500-600 level

COMM 515	MA Proseminar	3 credits	required
COMM 506 or 511	Research Methods	3 credits	required
COMM 5xx		3-6 credits	

Supporting and related courses

COMM 600	Thesis credits	6 credits	required-thesis option
COMM 596	Non-thesis credits	3 credits	required non-thesis option
COMM 590	Colloquium	1 credit	required (<i>not used to fulfill minimum credit requirement</i>)

12 credits may apply to both the MA and BA (*6 credits of these must be at the 500 level*)

12 credits (thesis)/15 credits (non-thesis) of coursework beyond the required proseminar and research course (*not including COMM 600 for thesis or COMM 596 for non-thesis*) must be in Communications

An integrated undergraduate/graduate semester report needs to be filled out at the end of each semester enrolled in the IUG program (page 90). Form is also available online at:

<http://www.gradschool.psu.edu/faculty-and-staff/forms/ges/>

Written Thesis (6 credits of COMM 600)

Thesis proposal meeting with a three-member graduate faculty committee (*at least two in the College of Communications*)

Formal oral defense of thesis

Non-Thesis Option (3 credits of COMM 596)

Oral Exam of paper/project.

Possible 500-level courses that can be double counted (*with adviser's approval*)

COMM 504	Seminar in the History of Mass Communications
COMM 505	International Communications Problems
COMM 506	Introduction to Mass Communications Research
COMM 507	News Media & Public Opinion
COMM 510	Comparative Theories of Press Systems
COMM 511	Mass Communications Research Methods II
COMM 512	Government and Mass Communications
COMM 513	Constitutional Problems of the News Media
COMM 514	Political Economy of Communications
COMM 515	MA Proseminar in Mass Communications
COMM 516	Introduction to Data Analysis in Communications
COMM 517	Psychological Aspects of Communication Technology
COMM 518	Media Effects
COMM 520	Theory and Application of Strategic Communications
COMM 521	Advertising/PR Research Seminar
COMM 522	Social and Cultural Aspects of Advertising
COMM 550	Film Theory and Criticism
COMM 553	Special Problems in Film and TV

COMM 556	Close Textual Analysis-Film and Video
COMM 580	Telecommunications Seminar
COMM 582	Ethics and Emerging Communications Technology
COMM 585	Media & Telecommunication Industries
COMM 594	Directed Studies
COMM 595	Communications Internship
COMM 596	Independent Studies
COMM 597X	Special Topics

400 level courses may also be double counted with the approval of IUG committee.

Juris Doctor (J.D.) and M.A. Program

Bellisario College (COMM) and Penn State Law (PSL) offer a joint degree leading to a Juris Doctor (J.D.); and a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Media Studies.

Students interested in the J.D./M.A. program need to meet the following requirements to apply:

- Students applying to the joint degree program must be admitted separately into both PSL and COMM.
- Students must first be admitted to the law school and must complete the required first-year curriculum in the J.D. program before commencing the Media Studies M.A. component.
- Application to the M.A. program in Media Studies is through the Fox Graduate School Application. Formal admission to the M.A. program would normally take place during the student's first year of law, but COMM may extend provisional admission to the M.A. program at the time an applicant applies to PSL particularly where an applicant's law school choice depends upon admission to the J.D./M.A. joint degree program.

College Specific Admission Requirements

- Penn State Law: The PSL admissions process considers academic transcripts, leadership activities, community activities, work experience, personal background, letters of recommendation, personal statement, LSAT scores and the LSAT writing sample. An admissions committee identifies candidates who are academically prepared for law study and who will contribute to the promotion of diversity and excellence in the student body and the legal profession. There is no standard prescribed undergraduate curriculum. The following are required of J.D. degree applicants: a completed application form, LSAT score, LSDAS report, a one-page personal statement and two letters of recommendation.
- Bellisario College: The COMM Media Studies M.A. admissions process is guided by a selection committee, which seeks students with the greatest potential for success, based on academic performance (a bachelor's degree is required), GRE scores, motivation, and leadership potential. All applicants must submit a completed graduate school application, including three letters of reference, a statement of purpose, current resume, standardized test scores (GRE), a writing sample, and a transcript from each institution attended. Official transcripts showing degree conferral will be required when the applicant is recommended for admission and accepts the program offer. At the student's request, the LSAT may replace the GRE for joint degree admissions purposes.

All international applicants whose first language is not English or who have not received baccalaureate or master's degrees from an institution in which the language of instruction is English must take the Test of English as a Second Language (TOEFL) and submit the results of that test with the application for admission. A combined TOEFL score of 4.5 on the Internet-based test with a minimum of 4.5 on the speaking portion (For tests taken prior to January 21, 2026: overall all score of at least 80 with a minimum speaking score of 24.) Or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with a minimum composite score of 6.5 and a minimum of 7.5 on the speaking portion is required for admission.

Residency: A typical J.D./M.A. joint degree student will be in residence at PSL for six semesters and at COMM for two semesters.

Inter-program Transfer of Credits

Students must fulfill all requirements for each degree in order to be awarded that degree, subject to the double-counting of credits as outlined below.

Penn State Law: A maximum of twelve (12) 500-level credits for Media Studies M.A. course work may be transferred for credit toward the J.D. degree at PSL. Students must obtain a grade satisfactory to PSL for the course work to be credited toward the J.D. degree. The following COMM courses may qualify for credit toward the PSL J.D.: COMM 504, COMM 505, COMM 506, COMM 511, COMM 513, COMM 516, COMM 517, COMM 518, COMM 580, COMM 582, COMM 585, and COMM 587.

COMM Media Studies: A maximum of twelve (12) credits of PSL course work will be counted for credit for the minimum requirements for a master's degree. These courses must be approved by the student's advisory committee and Joint Degree Program Faculty Adviser in COMM, normally during the Program Proposal Meeting.

Note: The J.D. seminar requirement and the Media Studies thesis requirement must be fulfilled separately, using unique research topics.

Possible 500 level courses that may qualify toward the J.D./M.A.:

COMM 504 – Seminar in the History of Mass Communication

COMM 505 – International Communication Problems – Legal and communications problems of the international flow of news and opinion; international press codes.

COMM 506 – Research Methods in Communications – The scientific method; survey of basic concepts of theoretical and empirical research; variety of methodology; criteria for adequate research.

COMM 511 – Mass Communications Research Methods II – Problems of bibliographical research; evaluation of sources and materials in mass communications history, biography, structure, ethics, and other areas.

COMM 513 – Constitutional Problems of the News Media (3) Problems involving conflict between guarantees of press freedom in the First and Fourteenth Amendments and rights and privileges of others.

COMM 516 – Introduction to Data Analysis in Communications (3) To understand and be able to use data analysis techniques common to research in communications.

COMM 517 – Psychological Aspects of Communication Technology (3) Investigation of psychological aspects of human-computer interaction (HCI) and computer-mediated communication (CMC).

COMM 518 – Media Effects (3) Advanced study of the effects of media messages and technologies via theories and empirical evidence pertaining to processes of effects.

COMM 580 – Seminar in Telecommunications (3) Study of the historical and contemporary issues and problems in telecommunications.

COMM 582 – Ethics and Emerging Communications Technology (3) Identification and analysis of ethical issues raised by electronic communications technologies.

COMM 585 – Media & Telecommunications Industries (3) Study the structure and performance of media, telecommunications, and information industries applying principles and ideas from microeconomics, finance, and communications.

COMM 587 – Internet Law & Policy (3) Examination of legal, policy and business developments in Internet-mediated communications emphasizing the impact on regulatory and economic models.

Sequence of Study

The sequence of courses will be determined by the student and their adviser(s). However, students must successfully complete the first-year curriculum with PSL before beginning the M.A. Media Studies program. In compliance with ABA Standards and Rules law students may not enroll for more than 17 credits per semester at Penn State as a law student; the maximum credit load for graduate students is 15 credits per semester. It is expected that most joint degree students will complete the first two semesters of the M.A. consecutively in either the first or second year after completion of the first-year curriculum with Penn State Law.

Recommended Program of Study and Advising

All students in the program will have two advisers, one from PSL and one from COMM; the adviser from COMM may be any member of the Graduate Faculty in the College. Periodic interaction between the two advisers is encouraged. A program of study is developed for each student, taking into account the fact that some courses at both locations are offered on a rotating or intermittent basis. Many courses are offered every year, but some are offered every two or three years. Advisers will have available a list of projected relevant courses or educational experiences in order to work with the student on an individualized program of study. The standard committee structure will apply to the COMM M.A. program.

Fulfillment of Degree Requirements and Graduation

A student in the program may complete the requirements for one of the degrees and be awarded that degree prior to completing all the requirements for the other degree; provided, however, that the student shall have successfully completed at least two semesters of work towards the other degree. All courses in one program that will count towards meeting the requirements of the other must be completed before the awarding of either degree. Students will be required to fulfill all requirements for each degree in order to be awarded that degree, subject to the inter-program transfer of credits. If students accepted into the joint degree program are unable to complete the J.D. degree, they are still eligible to receive the M.A. degree if all M.A. degree requirements have been satisfied.

Important Note: If the joint degree student is using law (900-level) credits toward the graduate degree during their last semester of enrollment, they should be prepared to extend their graduate degree graduation to a subsequent semester (the following semester at a minimum). This is due to the graduate degree approval deadline falling before the law (900-level) course grading processes are complete. If students accepted into the joint degree program are unable to complete the J.D. degree, they are still eligible to receive the M.A. degree if all M.A. degree requirements have been satisfied.

Masters-Level Advisory Committee and Evaluation Procedure

Maintaining Satisfactory Scholarship

Every semester your progress within the program will be evaluated by at least one of the following: your adviser, the associate dean, the professors supervising your assistantship, and all professors in the College of Communications whose courses you took.

All master's students at Penn State must maintain a 3.00 or B average to remain eligible for a degree. Grades are reviewed at the end of each grading period. The maximum time for completion of degree requirements is eight (8) years from first enrollment, but experience amply demonstrates that those who do not meet the requirements while in residence often do not complete the degree. You are urged, therefore, to fulfill all the requirements while you are in residence, usually two years.

Graduate Faculty Advisory Committee

You will meet initially with the College's associate dean, Director of Graduate Studies, and the Coordinator of the M.A. Program at a formal orientation workshop. You will also meet with your temporary adviser and begin a plan of study that satisfies requirements for the degree program to which you have been admitted. By the end of the second week of the second semester, or the completion of 10 credits (whichever comes first), you should select a permanent academic adviser from among the graduate faculty. You should approach the faculty member and discuss your reasons for wanting them to work with you. The usual reason is the faculty member's background, research, and teaching interests. Until you have chosen a permanent adviser, you will be assigned a temporary adviser—who may, if you wish, become your permanent adviser. The main role of the adviser will be to assist you in planning your progress through the requirements and electives. To the extent possible, they will help you select courses and possible thesis or paper/project ideas that fit with your specific needs, interests, and goals. The responsibility for keeping in touch with your adviser is yours.

Your permanent adviser will help you schedule and prepare for your first committee meeting (program plan meeting) in your second semester of study. The purpose of this meeting is to review your plan of study in terms of its logic, availability of courses, and usefulness for your objectives. It is the adviser's responsibility to ensure that work does not begin until the committee's recommendations are incorporated into the plan of study.

When you are near the end of your coursework, a second meeting of the committee is convened to discuss and approve your thesis or paper/project proposal. Your adviser can help you with an outline of your proposal. Once you have written your thesis or paper/project proposal and have had it approved tentatively by your adviser, it is time to set the meeting for your committee. Generally, you should give your committee members at least two weeks to read your proposal. It is your responsibility to contact individual members of the committee to set up the meeting. Once you have set up the meeting with your committee members, contact the Coordinator of the M.A. Program for formal notification of the meeting and reservation of a room.

Guidelines for Organizing and Managing Graduate Faculty Committee

One of the most important dimensions of your graduate program is the recruitment and management of your graduate faculty committee. Your skills as interpersonal communicator, time manager and diplomat are all required in this endeavor. Your reputation as a responsible student and the College's reputation among the university community of faculty will be influenced by your ability to manage and deal responsibly with your faculty committee. Your faculty adviser will help guide you in selecting and organizing this committee. The structure and functions of the committee are outlined in this handbook. However, it is largely up to you to be sure that you are following expected protocol when working with your committee. Your graduate program's success depends on how carefully you select your faculty committee and how you manage your schedule so that your committee can, in turn, be given ample time to effectively share its expertise with you.

Recruiting the Committee

Here are key points to guide the selection and management of your graduate faculty committee:

- After you decide who will be your permanent adviser, you should begin to recruit graduate faculty for your committee. Your adviser can and should assist you in this process by sharing their knowledge of the faculty at this university. MA students should select a permanent adviser early in the second semester of residency. Notify the Coordinator of the M.A. Program about your choice of permanent adviser.
- Only faculty who have been approved by the Fox Graduate School as Graduate Faculty can serve on your committee. The list of College of Communications Graduate Faculty can be found in the Fox Graduate School Bulletin. The updated list is available through the Coordinator of the M.A. Program.
- Your committee should be in place in time for your first formal meeting; for the MA, that's the Program Proposal Meeting early in your second semester.

Changes to Faculty Committee

While it is sometimes necessary to change the composition of your committee because of faculty leaves or a major shift in the direction of your scholarly program, changes should be made with great care and with the full advice and consent of your adviser. Contact the Coordinator of the M.A. Program with any changes in your committee.

Required Committee Meetings

- **Program Proposal meeting**, to be held immediately after completion of 9-12 credits or in the student's second semester, whichever comes first. The program proposal meeting is to discuss the courses the student plans to take during their two years of study (30 credits of course work, 6 thesis credits, 1 credit of Colloquium for thesis or 33 credits of course work, 3 credits of COMM 596, 1 credit of Colloquium for paper/project) and to begin discussion of the student's thesis or paper/project topic.
- **Thesis or Paper/Project Proposal meeting** should be held at the beginning of the third semester (last semester of course work). The student is expected to work closely with their adviser in the preparation of the thesis or paper/project proposal—a formal written document in which a topic for study is clearly identified. The proposal includes a justification for the significance of that topic for master level study, a formal summary and/or comprehensive review of the literature(s) associated with the topic, and a detailed description of the research method and procedures to be used. An outline and/or chapter abstracts of the thesis or paper/project should be included with the proposal. This document will be delivered to your committee **at least two weeks** before a meeting at which the committee may approve or request modifications to or reject the proposal. The committee has the right to require another meeting to review the modified proposal.
- **Final oral defense of master's thesis or paper/project** (The Fox Graduate School has deadlines for intent to graduate, thesis format review, last date to defend, and last date to submit final thesis or paper/project. Contact the Coordinator of the M.A. Program early in the semester before you intend to graduate for these dates.)

Students are responsible for assuring that all required paperwork relating to their graduate program is submitted to the Coordinator of the M.A. Program.

Scheduling Committee Meetings

- Every committee meeting is scheduled through the Coordinator of the M.A. Program, who will provide you and your chair with the appropriate paperwork. Each meeting must be formally recorded and, where appropriate, approved by the Fox Graduate School. Therefore, the Coordinator of the M.A. Program must be fully consulted during the planning stages of your proposed committee meetings.

Documentation and other Paperwork Associated with Committee Meetings

- Written documents, proposals, forms, and other paperwork will be required for each of your committee meetings. The Coordinator of the M.A. Program will help orient you to the administrative paperwork required by the College and the Fox Graduate School. Your adviser will instruct you in preparing the scholarly materials including your academic program proposal, your qualifying exam packet, your thesis or paper/project proposal and the final thesis or paper/project exam.
- Allow your committee to have adequate time to review the written materials you prepare for the program plan meeting of your committee. This means two weeks' lead time at a minimum.
- Plan each phase of your program carefully. Schedule your work so that your committee is not put in a position of rushing to judgment on incomplete or poor-quality proposals, and thesis or paper/project drafts. Do not shift the burden of poor planning or unexpected changes in your program to your committee. If you have fallen behind schedule in your academic program it is not fair to shift pressures to meet a graduation deadline to your committee. Doing so will not only unfairly burden your committee but will also have long-term consequences for our ability to recruit faculty to serve on graduate committees.

Final Oral Examination

Upon completion of a thesis or paper/project, you will make an oral presentation and defense of your work (referred to below as the thesis examination) at a separate formal meeting of the committee. Committee members will have evaluated the work carefully prior to the meeting. It is your responsibility to schedule this meeting and to make the work available to the committee at least two weeks in advance of the meeting so committee members have time to evaluate it thoroughly. The longer you wait, the less likely you will be able to schedule your meeting for the time you desire. The chair of your committee will verify that the recommendations and changes suggested by the committee are made before the thesis or paper/project is finally approved. In cases where the work is deemed unacceptable to the committee, the adviser will inform you of the appropriate procedures to follow (see below). With the advice of the committee chair, you will be responsible for seeing that the thesis or paper/project conforms to the guidelines of the College of Communications and the Fox Graduate School and that all deadlines are met.

Please notify the Coordinator of the M.A. Program of your scheduled thesis or paper/project examination and confirm the reservation of a meeting room.

Favorable votes from at least two members of a three-member committee are required in order to pass the thesis or paper/project examination. A report of the committee's decision, bearing the signature of each committee member, must be filed immediately with the College's Coordinator of the M.A. Program.

Possible outcomes of the final oral examination are:

- Approval of the thesis or paper/project as presented;
- Approval pending minor, specified revisions, supervision of which is delegated to the adviser;
- Conditional approval pending revisions that will be circulated to the committee for approval;
- Delayed approval pending revision and another meeting of the committee;
- Failure of the final examination.

If the final examination is failed, it is the responsibility of the committee to determine whether another examination may be taken. If the committee decides not to allow the student to retake the final examination, or the student fails the examination for a second time, the committee chair can start the procedure for termination of the degree program. Information on the procedures for filing the termination can be viewed in the Graduate Bulletin - Appendix III—Procedures for Termination of the Degree Program of a Graduate Student for Unsatisfactory Scholarship:

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-800/gcac-803-procedures-termination-unsatisfactory-scholarship/>

Summary of Master of Arts Requirements – Thesis

Prior to Orientation Session

Person Responsible

- ☐ Assign faculty member to serve as temporary faculty adviser

DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Second Semester

By second week of second semester

- ☐ Choose permanent adviser and notify Coordinator of the M.A. Program

STUDENT

Early in second semester

- ☐ Choose program committee members and notify Coordinator of Graduate Education (See Appendix III)

STUDENT, under direction of
faculty adviser

Second semester (OR after completion of 9-12 credits if before second semester)

- ☐ Schedule Program Proposal Meeting

STUDENT

Immediately following Program Proposal Meeting

- ☐ Submit signed Program Proposal Form to Coordinator of the M.A. Program COMMITTEE CHAIR
(See Appendix IV for form)*

Third Semester

Beginning of third semester

- ☐ Schedule Thesis Proposal Meeting

STUDENT

Immediately following Thesis Proposal Meeting

- ☐ Submit Thesis Proposal and signed Thesis Proposal Form
to Coordinator of the M.A. Program

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Last Semester (Semester student intends to graduate)

Beginning of last semester

- ☐ Activate intent to graduate through LionPATH

STUDENT

- ☐ Request copy of Graduate Programs/Thesis Office Calendar
from the Coordinator of the M.A. Program

STUDENT

Early in last semester

- ☐ Submit draft of thesis to committee chair or faculty adviser

STUDENT

After draft of thesis has been approved by committee chair or faculty adviser

- ☐ Submit copies of thesis to committee members
(at least two weeks prior to final exam)

STUDENT

As soon as thesis is approved by committee for a Final Oral Examination

- ☐ Final Oral Examination

STUDENT

- ☐ Submit signed oral exam form verifying Final Oral Examination
(see Appendix X)*

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Before Leaving Campus

- ☐ Exit interview with Associate Dean and Coordinator of the M.A. Program

STUDENT

- ☐ Clean office area (if student is a Graduate Assistant)

STUDENT

- ☐ Return keys to the Facilities Manager (17A Carnegie Bldg.)

STUDENT

- ☐ Complete Transfer/Separation Checklist (if student is a Graduate Assistant)

STUDENT

- ☐ Turn in Penn State I.D. card to Graduate Program office

STUDENT

Upon Completion of the Program

- ☐ Upload final thesis on the Thesis Office website

STUDENT

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/submission-procedure>

- ☐ Follow all guidelines and deadlines of the Fox Graduate School's Thesis Office

STUDENT

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations>

* Note: All forms can be found on line at: <https://www.bellisario.psu.edu/faculty-staff-resources/graduate-student-resources/documents-and-forms>

Summary of Master of Arts Requirements - Non-Thesis

Prior to Orientation Session

Person Responsible

- ☐ Assign faculty member to serve as temporary faculty adviser

DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Second Semester

By second week of second semester

- ☐ Choose permanent adviser and notify Coordinator of the M.A. Program

STUDENT

Early in second semester

- ☐ Choose program committee members and notify Coordinator of Graduate Education (See Appendix III)

STUDENT, under direction of
faculty adviser

Second semester (OR after completion of 9-12 credits if before second semester)

- ☐ Schedule Program Proposal Meeting

STUDENT

Immediately following Program Proposal Meeting

- ☐ Submit signed Program Proposal Form to Coordinator of the M.A. Program COMMITTEE CHAIR
(See Appendix IV for form)*

Third Semester

Beginning of third semester

- ☐ Schedule Paper/Project Proposal Meeting

STUDENT

Immediately following Paper/Project Proposal Meeting

- ☐ Submit Paper/Project Proposal and signed Paper/Project Proposal Form to Coordinator of the M.A. Program

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Last Semester *(Semester student intends to graduate)*

Beginning of last semester

- ☐ Activate intent to graduate through LionPATH
- ☐ Request copy of Graduate Programs/Thesis Office Calendar from the Coordinator of the M.A. Program

STUDENT

STUDENT

Early in last semester

- ☐ Submit draft of paper/project to committee chair or faculty adviser

STUDENT

After draft of thesis or paper/project has been approved by committee chair or faculty adviser

- ☐ Submit copies of paper/project to committee members
(at least two weeks prior to final exam)

STUDENT

As soon as thesis or paper/project is approved by committee for a Final Oral Examination

- ☐ Final Oral Examination
- ☐ Submit signed oral exam form verifying Final Oral Examination
(see Appendix XI)*

STUDENT

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Before Leaving Campus

- ☐ Exit interview with Associate Dean and Coordinator of the M.A. Program
- ☐ Clean office area (if student is a Graduate Assistant)
- ☐ Return keys to the Facilities Manager (17A Carnegie Bldg.)
- ☐ Complete Transfer/Separation Checklist (if student is a Graduate Assistant)

STUDENT

STUDENT

STUDENT

STUDENT

- ☐ Turn in Penn State I.D. card to Graduate Program office

STUDENT

Upon Completion of the Program

- ☐ Submit paper/project to Coordinator of the M.A. Program

* Note: All forms to be completed can be found online at: <https://www.bellisario.psu.edu/faculty-staff-resources/graduate-student-resources/documents-and-forms>

Summary of Master of Arts Requirements - IUG

Prior to Orientation Session

- ☐ Assign faculty member to serve as temporary faculty adviser

Person Responsible

DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES/
ASSOCIATE DEAN

First Semester

By the end of the first semester

- ☐ Choose permanent adviser and committee.
Deliver Committee Appointment Form to Coordinator of the M.A. Program (See Appendix)

STUDENT

- ☐ Schedule Program Proposal Meeting (College undergraduate adviser must attend). Notify Coordinator of the M.A. Program of meeting.

STUDENT

Immediately following Program Proposal Meeting

- ☐ Submit signed Program Proposal Form to Coordinator of the M.A. Program (See Appendix VI for form)*

COMMITTEE CHAIR

- ☐ Submit signed IUG Semester Report to Coordinator of the M.A. Program (See Appendix VII for form)

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Second Semester

By the end of the second semester

- ☐ Submit signed IUG Semester Report to Coordinator of the M.A. Program (See Appendix VII for form)

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Third Semester

Beginning of third semester

- ☐ Schedule Thesis or Paper/Project Proposal Meeting

STUDENT

Immediately following Thesis or Paper/Project Proposal Meeting

- ☐ Submit Thesis or Paper/Project Proposal and signed Thesis or Paper/Project Proposal Form to Coordinator of the M.A. Program

COMMITTEE CHAIR

By the end of the third semester

- ☐ Submit signed IUG Semester Report to Coordinator of the M.A. Program (See Appendix VII for form)

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Last Semester (Semester student intends to graduate)

Beginning of last semester

- ☐ Activate intent to graduate through LionPATH
- ☐ Request copy of Graduate Programs/Thesis Office Calendar from the Coordinator of the M.A. Program

STUDENT

STUDENT

Early in last semester

- ☐ Submit draft of thesis or paper/project to committee chair or faculty adviser

STUDENT

After draft of thesis or paper/project has been approved by committee chair or faculty adviser

- ☐ Submit copies of thesis or paper/project to committee members (at least two weeks prior to final exam)

STUDENT

As soon as thesis or paper/project is approved by committee for a Final Oral Examination

(Early enough to meet published Fox Graduate School deadlines- two weeks' notice required)

- ☐ Final Oral Examination

STUDENT

- ☐ Submit signed oral exam form verifying Final Oral Examination (see Appendix X or XI)

COMMITTEE CHAIR

☐ Refer to page 17 for the Thesis option and page 19 for Paper/Project Option *STUDENT*

Before Leaving Campus

☐ Exit interview with Associate Dean and Coordinator of the M.A. Program *STUDENT*

Bellisario College

Ph.D. Program in Mass Communications

Bellisario College offers advanced study leading to the Doctor of Philosophy degree in mass communications. The purpose of the program is to prepare graduates for entry into college and university teaching and research and for a variety of communications-related professions. The program integrates preparation in teaching and research as complementary endeavors. Doctoral students begin the program in the fall semester and, during the first year, complete two semesters of the doctoral proseminar, colloquium, and typically at least one course in communications research methodology. By the end of the first year, doctoral students must form a committee of faculty members to guide their subsequent course of study. The remainder of the Ph.D. program is determined, in close consultation with the student, by their doctoral committee, which is responsible for the formal approval of the proposed program.

The College's graduate program emphasizes the following six areas of academic strength around which doctoral students and their committees may wish to organize the selection of courses and program plans:

- Critical and Cultural Media Studies
- International, Global and Development Communications
- History, Law, Government and Politics
- Media Effects
- Science, Health, and Environmental Media
- Strategic Communications
- Telecommunications, Technology, and Information Policy

These are not formal options and do not have required courses or dedicated faculty. Rather they represent areas of scholarly expertise of the College's graduate faculty. Doctoral students may—and are strongly encouraged to—integrate coursework across more than one of these areas.

Admission into the Mass Communications Ph.D. Program without a Master's Degree

In most cases, a completed master's degree is required for admission into the doctoral program in Mass Communications. However, in exceptional cases, the graduate committee may admit an applicant with a bachelor's degree but without a master's degree or substantial graduate work. In such circumstances, the following guidelines shall apply:

- Those admitted into the program under these circumstances should be placed in the doctoral proseminar during their first semester of coursework. If an applicant is not academically prepared to succeed in the doctoral pro-seminar, they may be admitted into the MA program and (depending on success there) later re-apply to the Ph.D. program.
- The qualifying examination must be taken after completing at least 18 credits of coursework.
- The College normally commits to two years of assistantship/fellowship funding (with the usual caveats and conditions) for such students. Upon successful completion of their qualifying exam, the students are eligible for two more years of funding. If they do not successfully complete the qualifying exam, they may complete the requirements of the MA degree.
- Because of the efficiencies of merging master-level and doctoral-level work into one program, the total number of credits and time-to-degree could be less than the minimum for the two degrees separately. In other words, instead of 2 + 4 years spent completing the MA and Ph.D. programs separately, a direct B.A. to Ph.D. candidate may complete the doctoral program in 4 years.
- These students need not write an MA thesis or otherwise meet the requirements for an MA degree in order to continue in the doctoral program. However, they may do so with the approval of their doctoral committees.
- All other requirements, policies and guidelines regarding the Mass Communications doctoral degree apply.

Degree Requirements and Program Plan

Doctoral education in the College of Communications is committee-driven and highly flexible. Each program plan is tailor-made to meet the individual needs of the doctoral candidate while maintaining the high standards and expectations of Bellisario College and the Fox Graduate School.

The number of credits that a committee might require for a Ph.D. in Mass Communications varies, depending primarily on the prior academic preparation of the doctoral candidate. For someone with a master's degree in communications, a Ph.D. program plan normally will require:

- At least 36 credits of coursework in communications and related areas combined (not including Colloquium or credits earned at other universities).
- Normally a minimum of 24 credits (of the 36 credits above) in communications coursework.
- In addition to the above, fulfillment of the language/research skill requirement. (Normally an intermediate knowledge of a foreign language or 12 credits of research methods or a cognate area. See page 28 for policy statement.)
- No more than nine credits of independent study (596) and directed study (594). Six credit maximum of independent study (596). (Normally 596 should not be used for work directly related to dissertation research and writing. 600-level credits should be used for that purpose.)

Therefore, for those with a master's degree in communications, a typical doctoral program will be 36 to 48 credits depending on how the language/research requirement is fulfilled. This is the equivalent to two years of full-time study, including summers, before the comprehensive examination.

The minimum course load for a half-time Graduate Assistant is 9 credits per semester. Three to six credits during the first two summers is recommended.

Other specific requirements for the doctoral degree are:

- Mass Communications Proseminar COMM 501.001 and 501.002 fall and spring of first year
- COMM 590 Colloquium (taken first semester in program)
- Complete Responsible Conduct of Research education (See page 39 for policy statement and details.)
- A minimum of two research methods courses, at least one of which must be COMM 506 or 511
- The seminar in Pedagogy in Communications (COMM 502) or another approved pedagogy course
- A program plan, ideally within the first year after entry into the program. For students in dual title programs or other atypical circumstances, the program plan may be delayed at the discretion of the adviser and/or graduate committee.
- A successful qualifying examination after completion of 18 credits or the first two semesters of coursework, whichever comes second.
- Completion of the Fox Graduate School residency requirement: two semesters (not including summer) of full-time study at the University Park campus
- A written and oral comprehensive examination after the completion of coursework
- A written dissertation proposal presented at a meeting of the candidate's committee
- A Ph.D. dissertation
- An oral examination in defense of the dissertation

Although there are few specific requirements, all doctoral program plans should strive to include the following important elements while leaving the specific categorization of coursework to the discretion of individual committees:

Introduction

A broad introduction to the field. Summative survey of the various ideological, theoretical, and methodological traditions in mass communication scholarship, especially as represented in the proseminars and methods seminars. **Goal:** Mastery of basic ideas, concepts and values underlying the work of the College faculty.

Core:

COMM	501.1	_____
COMM	501.2	_____
COMM 590 (Colloquium)		_____

Communications Research Methods:

A minimum of two research methods courses, at least one of which must be COMM 506 or COMM 511. This requirement should be fulfilled in relationship to the Language/Research Skill Requirement below to ensure both depth and breadth of research skills learned.

COMM 506 and/or COMM 511

Ethics and Professional Responsibility:

Develop good academic citizenship. Learn the core values of the discipline and the codes of ethical scholarship.

Human Subjects Research certification (online IRB training) _____

Responsible Conduct of Research certification (Collaborative Instructional Training Initiative)–social/behavioral or humanities online training)

5 additional hours of Responsible Conduct of Research education
(See policy statement for details—Page 41)

Immersion

Define an area of concentration and develop a focus. This is where the candidate moves from a breadth experience to a depth experience and attempts an advanced understanding of specific, rather than general, sets of theories and methods. Goal: Comprehensive knowledge of a specialized area of communication.

List Communications coursework in area of specialization:

Exploration and Integration

Look beyond one's area of specialization to find courses and influences that hold intellectual appeal for the candidate, being always mindful of their implications for one's primary research focus. To this end, candidates should take communications coursework outside their specialization to ensure, as appropriate, a breadth of understanding of mass communications. Further, some of these courses should be from outside the College. Develop the ability to integrate knowledge across disciplines and subfields and explore the social consequences of discovery and research. Goal: Drawing meaningful connections between ideas and concepts in other disciplines and subfields and understanding how one's subfield fits into a larger framework of knowing.

List Communications coursework outside specialization:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Research Skill Requirement

Proficiency in applying an appropriate set of tools for studying mass communications and familiarity with other methodologies used in the field. Goal: Obtain a superior capability of inquiry and advancement of knowledge.

Intermediate knowledge of a foreign language, an equivalent research skill, or cluster of related courses outside the major. Twelve credits are normally required. Courses in Communications may be used in part to fulfill this requirement. The means of fulfilling the language/research requirement should be reasonably related to the candidate's program plan and area of research.

List courses:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Contribution

Specialized expertise is brought to bear on a particular issue, the investigation of which will lead to advancement of knowledge in that area or should be an original inquiry with the clear goal of adding to the existing literature. **Goal**: Candidate's dissertation makes a significant contribution to advancement of knowledge in the field.

Dissertation

COMM 600/610	_____
COMM 601/611	_____

Pedagogy

Conceptual knowledge of and practical preparation in pedagogy in communications along with supervised experience in college teaching. **Goal:** Becoming an effective teacher. (See "Supervised Experience in College Teaching" – page 30)

COMM 502 (or other appropriate coursework in pedagogy approved by the committee)

Required of Graduate Assistants and Fellows:

COMM 602

COMM 602

List undergraduate course or courses in the College that the candidate should be prepared to teach by the end of their doctoral program:

(The coursework in this program plan should prepare the candidate to teach said courses.)

Committee Members

A doctoral committee will consist of four or more members of the graduate faculty, the majority of whom must be members from the College of Communications graduate faculty. The committee chair often, but not always, serves as adviser. Committee members are appointed by the Dean of the Fox Graduate School upon recommendation of the College's Associate Dean.

Committee Chair:

Committee Adviser:

Committee Members:

Committee Outside Members:

Required Meetings

For any of the required meetings of a student's doctoral committee to be official, all members must be present and participate. The only exception to this requirement is the qualifying examination meeting, which may preclude the inclusion of an outside member because it takes places so early in the student's program. Consequently, at the qualification examination meeting, all members except the outside member must be in attendance.

Important note: The comprehensive oral and final oral examinations are authorized by the Fox Graduate School and, therefore, must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance.

Enter the semester expected for these required meetings:

Qualifying Examination:

Comprehensive Oral Exam:

Dissertation Proposal:

Final Oral Defense:

Areas for Comprehensive Examination

Purpose of the Comprehensive Examination:

- To demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the field of mass communications and an area of specialization as defined by the committee.
- To evaluate the ability to integrate knowledge across subfields, understand how one's subfield fits into a larger framework of knowing, and to explore the social consequences of discovery and research.
- To determine whether the graduate student is ready for dissertation research.

At the qualifying examination, the committee, in conversation with the candidate, should decide on the general areas in which the candidate will be examined at the time of comprehensive examination and assign each member of the committee an area of responsibility. It is important that the coursework in this program plan adequately prepares the doctoral candidate to successfully answer comp questions drawn from these areas. If this is not the case, the program plan should be appropriately revised. Please list the areas of examination and responsible faculty:

Committee Member	Area

Doctoral Policies and Procedures

Advising and Faculty Committee

- Graduate students should have a permanent adviser designated no later than the second week of the second semester in residence or the completion of 10 credits, whichever comes first. Permanent advisers are responsible for monitoring student progress in the program.
- The chair (usually the same person who is serving as the permanent adviser) of your committee is responsible for conducting the meetings appropriate to the degree. These are:
 - Qualifying Examination, to be completed by the end of the student's first year
 - Comprehensive Examination, to be taken after the completion of the student's coursework
 - Dissertation Proposal Meeting, to be completed after comprehensive exam and completion of written dissertation proposal
 - Final Oral Examination
- Permanent advisers, supervisors of assistantships and instructors of courses taken by graduate students are responsible for returning completed reports of students' work to the Associate Dean's office promptly each year.
- In cases where the candidate has partly or provisionally passed the final oral exam, the permanent adviser is responsible for promptly and explicitly reporting in writing the requirements for successful completion of the examination to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program in the College, who will immediately forward them to the Fox Graduate School.

Advisory Committee

Your advisory committee is an important and integral component of your doctoral program. When you enter the program, your temporary adviser will be the chair of your Doctoral Program Committee. You

should begin at once to interview faculty members in your own area of special interest with a view to selecting a permanent adviser and committee chair. Candidates select their own committees, within these general requirements:

- A committee shall have a least four members, all of whom must be members of the Graduate Faculty; normally, the committee chair and the adviser are the same person
- One member of the committee must be an “outside field and unit” member. (See Fox Graduate School policy) <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-602-phd-committee-formation/> An adviser should be chosen no later than the first two weeks of the second semester of study

Guidelines for Organizing and Managing Graduate Faculty Committee

One of the most important dimensions of your graduate program is the recruitment and management of your graduate faculty committee. Your skills as interpersonal communicator, time manager and diplomat are all required in this endeavor. Your reputation as a responsible student and the College’s reputation among the university community of faculty will be influenced by your ability to manage and deal responsibly with your faculty committee. Your faculty adviser will help guide you in selecting and organizing this committee. The structure and functions of the committee are outlined in the handbook. However, it is largely up to you to be sure that you are following expected protocol when working with your committee. Your graduate program’s success depends on how carefully you select your faculty committee and how you manage your schedule so that your committee can, in turn, be given ample time to effectively share their expertise with you. Below are key points to guide the selection and management of your graduate faculty committee.

Recruiting the Committee

- When you decide who will be your permanent adviser, you should begin to recruit graduate faculty for your committee. Your adviser can and should assist you in this process by sharing their knowledge of the faculty at this university. Ph.D. students will have their permanent adviser named by the time the Qualifying examination is scheduled. Notify the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program about your choice of permanent adviser.
- Only faculty who have been approved by the Fox Graduate School as Graduate Faculty can serve on your committee. The list of College of Communications Graduate Faculty can be found in the Fox Graduate School *Bulletin* and herein. The updated list is available through the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program.
- You must provide a rationale for your choice of outside field and unit committee member. Faculty outside your area of study must be approved by the Associate Dean. (See Appendix XVI)
- Your committee, with the possible exception of the member outside your area of study, should be in place in time for your qualifying exam meeting, which occurs once the student has completed 18 credits.
- Prior to scheduling the written portion of the comprehensive exam, an official committee appointment form must be submitted and approved by the Fox Graduate School (semester before comprehensive exams are scheduled). The Fox Graduate School’s policy on committee appointments and the appointment form are available online at : <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-602-phd-committee-formation/> . The form needs to be given to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program for the Associate Dean’s approval before being submitted to the Fox Graduate School.

Changes to the Faculty Committee

- While it is sometimes necessary to change the composition of your committee, changes should be made with great care and with the full advice and consent of your adviser or associate dean. Please notify the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program of any changes in your committee.

Scheduling the Committee Meetings

- Every committee meeting is scheduled through the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program, who will provide you and your chair with the appropriate paperwork. Each meeting must be formally recorded and, where appropriate, approved by the Fox Graduate School. Therefore, the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program must be fully consulted during the planning stages of your proposed committee meetings. The Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program will meet with each student to ensure all requirements are met before proceeding with each meeting.
- Please note that the comprehensive and final oral examinations are authorized by the Fox Graduate School and, therefore, **must be scheduled at least three weeks in advance**. (One week for College Approval and two weeks for Fox Graduate School approval). No exceptions.

Documentation and other Paperwork Associated with Committee Meetings

- Written documents, proposals, forms, and a host of other paperwork are required for each of your committee meetings. The Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program will help orient you to the administrative paperwork required by the College and the Fox Graduate School. Your adviser will instruct you in preparing the scholarly materials including your academic program proposal, your qualifying exam packet, dissertation proposals and the final dissertations.
- Allow your committee adequate time to review the written materials you prepare for each formal meeting of your committee. This means at least two weeks in advance of your meeting.
- Plan each phase of your program carefully. Schedule your work so that your committee is not put in a position of rushing to judgment on incomplete or poor-quality proposals, dissertations drafts. **Do not shift the burden of poor planning or unexpected changes in your program to your committee. If you have fallen behind schedule in your academic program, it is not fair to shift pressures to meet a graduation deadline to your committee.** Doing so will not only unfairly burden your committee but will also have long-term consequences for our ability to recruit faculty to serve on graduate committees.

Program Plan Meeting

The program planning meeting is very important and in the path toward a doctoral degree. It is conducted by your committee chair/adviser and at least two other committee members from the Bellisario College graduate faculty. The outside unit and field member of the committee should participate if they have been appointed at this stage. The oral portion of the program plan evaluation meeting should take place by the end of the first academic year, with some exceptions for students in dual-title programs or other atypical situations, in which case the student and adviser should identify the appropriate timing for the program plan meeting in consultation with the Bellisario College graduate administration. The purpose the program meeting is to:

- Assess your academic strengths and weaknesses and determine an appropriate program of study that will enable you to pass comprehensive examinations and complete a doctoral dissertation. This diagnostic component of the program planning meeting is especially important and should result in a plan of coursework leading to a high-quality doctoral education.
- Decide on the general areas in which you will be examined at the time of comprehensive examinations and assign each member of the committee to an area of responsibility.
- Evaluate English language and other basic skills needed to complete the degree. If any shortcomings are identified, a plan for remediation must be drafted and implemented.

Guidelines for the Program Plan Meeting

The program planning meeting in Mass Communications consists of a written and oral portion and should be scheduled prior to the end of the student's first academic year. Exceptions due to unusual circumstances are possible, upon consultation with the adviser and Bellisario College graduate administration.

In preparation for the oral portion of the program plan meeting, you (in consultation with your chair/adviser) shall prepare a written portfolio that demonstrates your broad and preliminary understanding of the field of mass communications and typically contains the following:

- A completed copy of the Mass Communication Ph.D. Program Plan, listing all courses taken and proposed in order to fulfill program requirements and complete the degree;
- Curriculum vita that includes earlier degrees, academic work, and relevant graduate coursework taken at other universities;
- Short statement describing your background, academic goals, and developing area(s) of interest in communications;
- A sample of your best written academic work completed since beginning the doctoral program.

The portfolio should be distributed to all committee members at least two weeks prior to the oral portion (a copy needs to be submitted to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. program for your file). You and your chair/adviser must work closely with the Coordinator of the Ph.D. program to set the date and reserve a room for the evaluation. Obtain the "Ph.D. Program Plan Form" from the documents and forms section located on the Graduate Student Resources page of the website. You and your chair will complete this form and submit it to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. program after the program plan meeting.

Committees typically agree to a student's program plan by consensus. If problems occur, the chair/adviser should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that, because of scheduling considerations or changing academic interests and needs of the doctoral student, minor changes within the spirit of the program plan may be authorized by the adviser/chair. If significant changes are required, the committee should reconvene to discuss and approve the changes, and a new program plan should be submitted to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program.

Variations within the spirit of this policy are acceptable at the adviser/chair's discretion and with prior knowledge of the doctoral student.

Guidelines for the Qualifying Exam

The qualifying exam is to be administered after the student has completed at least 18 credits of graduate coursework, typically after completion of the second semester of full-time doctoral study. The exam represents an assessment by the Qualifying Exam Committee of whether the student's written work and classroom performance meet the standards for doctoral study and are based upon evidence provided by the instructors for the first-year proseminar and the student.

The Committee shall consist of three faculty chosen by the Graduate Programs Chair in consultation with the graduate faculty. An alternate member shall also be identified in cases where there may be a potential conflict of interest or other concerns, most notably if a member of the committee is the advisor for a student undergoing review. The instructors of 501 shall not be members of the committee.

The instructors of 501 shall provide an example of a term paper or similar in-depth student writing for each first-year student along with a brief written statement assessing whether the student shows appropriate levels of mastery in the core topics included in the field of Mass Communication. In addition, the student shall provide an additional example of writing from a class other than 501 that

they believe demonstrates their content mastery. For both student writing samples, the student may submit an edited version of their original work based upon instructor feedback, with the changes indicated, if desired. Students should also provide an updated version of their personal statement from the program plan meeting and a copy of their current graduate transcript.

The Committee will review these materials for evidence of student mastery and vote on whether the material provides sufficient evidence to pass the student. In the case that a majority of Committee members agree that the student meets the qualifying standard, the student shall pass the exam. If most Committee members require additional data, they may request a conversation with the course instructors, advisor, or student, as applicable. Decisions should be reached no later than October 1 of the review year, so both students and committee members should be prepared to schedule meetings, if necessary, prior to that date.

If most Committee members conclude that a student does not meet the qualifying standard, they must then vote on whether to permit a probational semester. In a probational semester, the student will complete one additional semester of work and provide the best evidence of mastery from their coursework that semester, at which point the Committee will convene to review the additional evidence in the context of the original decision and either vote to pass the student or to terminate the student from the doctoral program. Decisions based on this probationary semester should be made by January 15.

In the case that the Committee does not support a probational semester or that it concludes after such a semester that the student does not meet the qualifying criteria, then the Committee will consult with the advisor to explain their concerns and the next steps for the student. On the recommendation of the Committee and consent of the advisor and student, the student may be allowed to complete the necessary steps for an MA degree, including the remaining coursework and a thesis as applicable. In such a case, the student would not be eligible for subsequent entry into the doctoral program.

For students in dual-title programs, the qualifying exam process may differ, such as by requiring additional time until the qualifying exam, the inclusion of faculty from the dual program, or the addition of other requirements. Students in dual-title programs should consult with their adviser and the specific language describing their chosen dual-title degree.

Residency Requirement

There is no required minimum of credits or semesters of study, but over some twelve-month period during the interval between admission to the Ph.D. program and completion of the Ph.D. program you must spend at least **two semesters** (not including summers) after the qualifying exam as a registered full-time student engaged in academic work at University Park. Full-time University employees must be certified by the department as devoting half-time or more to graduate studies and/or thesis research to meet the degree requirements.

English Proficiency

A high level of competency in both spoken and written English is *essential* for successful participation in the Doctoral Program in Mass Communication. English competency is assessed at four critical points: (1) admission, (2) annual evaluations, (3) qualifying exam, and (4) comprehensive exam.

English Proficiency: Admission Evaluation

A vital component of pre-admission screening is assessment of every applicant's ability to communicate correctly and effectively in English. The admissions procedure requires submission of several indices to measure this.

- Performance on the verbal component of the Graduate Record Examination.
- For non-native applicants for whom English is a second language, performance on the Test of

English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS). A minimum score of 4.5 (TOEFL) or 7.5 (IELTS) in the (speaking section) is required by the College. (For TOEFL tests taken prior to January 21, 2026: a minimum speaking score of 24 is required.)

- A statement (in English) written by the applicant describing the applicant's background and goals in seeking a doctoral degree in mass communications.
- Three letters of recommendation from individuals in a position to comment on the applicant's training and abilities.
- A sample of the applicant's writing in English, done in connection with an academic program, such as a term paper or part of a master's thesis.

English Proficiency: Evaluations, Qualifying Exam and Comprehensive Exam

Prior to the beginning of the first semester, all international students are required to take the American English Oral Communicative Proficiency Test (AEOCPT). Based on the score of the test, the student may be required to take English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. Information on the AEOCPT and ESL courses can be found: <http://aplmg.la.psu.edu/programs/about-the-aecopt>

Students will be evaluated for their English proficiency at three key junctures during their Ph.D. studies. Each year, students are required to meet with their advisers for an **annual assessment**; part of the written form (See Appendix VII) requires an evaluation of the student's "written and oral English language skills." At the student's **qualifying examination**, the committee also provides an assessment of English competence; failure to demonstrate "high-level English language competence" can result in not being admitted into candidacy. Finally, the student's English proficiency is assessed at the **comprehensive exam**; the Fox Graduate School requires that the candidate have demonstrated English competence in order to take the exam.

Language (Research Skill) Requirements

The language (research skill) requirement may be satisfied by study of a foreign language to the intermediate level (12 credits), or by study of a research skill or subject matter outside the major approved by the candidate's committee. If the candidate passes this requirement by examination, the expectation of at least 36 credits of graduate coursework beyond the MA degree at Penn State remains, with the additional expectation that at least 12 credits of coursework will be from outside the College. The means of fulfilling the language/research skill requirement should be reasonably related to the candidate's program plan and area of research. For example, if students enter the program already with facility in a second language but intend to write a dissertation on a topic not directly related to that language, they normally would be required by their committees to take at least 12 additional credits of coursework to prepare them to conduct research in their area of concentration.

In practice, what counts as a "research skill" to satisfy the language (research skill) requirement may be highly individualized to meet the student's research needs, and might include, for example, statistics and research design; computer science; research methods; ethnographic research methods; textual analysis; and so on. Courses used to fulfill the 12-credit requirement do not have to all come from outside the College or field of study. "In-house" courses in Communications may be used to fulfill this requirement.

Supervised Experience in College Teaching

The Graduate Faculty of the College of Communications is committed to the scholarship of teaching and learning and believes that it should be an integral component of our doctoral program. Excellence in teaching requires the mastery of theory and literature of the discipline. It also requires knowledge about and practice in pedagogy. As such, all graduates of the Mass Communications Ph.D. Program should be well prepared in the theory and practice of pedagogy in communication through coursework, supervised teaching experience, workshops, and mentorship.

Doctoral committees should design program plans for their graduate students that prepare them to be effective teachers and periodically evaluate how well they are achieving that goal. In other words, doctoral committee chairs accept the responsibility of ensuring that their advisees make good progress in teaching as a complement to preparation of candidates for competence in research productivity.

- All Mass Communications doctoral candidates are required to successfully complete COMM 502 (Pedagogy in Communications). Candidates may complete other appropriate or additional coursework in pedagogy with the approval of their committees.
- **The TA-ship:** Consistent with the undergraduate teaching mission of Bellisario College, doctoral students should have supervised experience in teaching before completing their degrees. This experience should precede or overlap with enrollment in COMM 502. Faculty supervisors – who are instructors of record – should endeavor to mentor their teaching assistants regarding pedagogical approaches to the subject matter and, to the extent possible, offer them opportunities to apply what they have learned under controlled circumstances. Specifically, a faculty member in their role as instructor-of-record should expose the doctoral student to the steps leading to content development and the teaching methods appropriate to a particular course. The doctoral student or candidate may have limited / agreed-upon opportunities to learn syllabus development, guest-lecture selected subjects, and/or carry out other teaching activities under the supervision of the faculty member.
- **Supervised Experience in College Teaching:** Otherwise known as the COMM 602 experience should – as much as possible – follow a TA-ship. In this instance, a doctoral student or candidate would have the opportunity to serve as instructor of record in their own assigned course, and should enroll in COMM 602. A variation of this experience is when a doctoral student/candidate has significant student contact hours in a course taught by a faculty member – that is lead a LAB section of a course taught by a faculty instructor. In both cases (instructor of record and LAB instructor), the supervisor or a mentor who routinely teaches the course would carry out a review of the doctoral candidate's teaching materials, visit a class, and evaluate their progress in developing teaching skills. In sum, the two required COMM 602 experiences must involve a significant opportunity to learn and practice the pedagogy of communications under the supervision of a standing faculty member.
 - Each time a student is registered for COMM 602, they will receive a quality grade that would – in part – be informed by a short evaluation written by their assistantship supervisor or teaching mentor. A faculty member who teaches the course being taught by the doctoral student will observe the student and provide a short-written evaluation. The grade that will appear on their transcripts will not be used in calculating their grade point average.
 - COMM 602 (typically 1 credit each for two registrations) will count toward the minimum/maximum number of credits to retain one's assistantship but will not count toward fulfilling any specific credit requirement for the doctoral degree.
 - Those registered for COMM 602 are encouraged to attend occasional assessment seminars. By attending these seminars, COMM 602 students will share perspectives on their own teaching experiences, work together to solve tactical and course administrative problems, and integrate what they have learned in COMM 502 (or other such coursework) with actual and ongoing classroom application.
- **The Graduate School Teaching Certificate:** Doctoral students or candidates who complete COMM 502 and develop a Web teaching portfolio in addition to the two COMM 602 experiences would have fulfilled the requirements for the Graduate School Teaching Certificate. Such candidates should be encouraged to apply for the Teaching Certificate. Candidates might also be eligible for the Teaching with Technology Certificate.
- **Procedure to receive a grade for COMM 602:**
 - Schedule a time for an experienced instructor in the course you are teaching to come observe you teach a class.

- Ask the observer to write a letter of evaluation and send it to the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, Research, & Faculty Affairs.
- Contact the Coordinator of the Ph.D. program to schedule an appointment with the Associate Dean to discuss the evaluation letter and your teaching experience.
- Allow time for these steps to be undertaken before the semester ends.

Comprehensive Examination

The candidate for the comprehensive exam must have completed all required coursework. The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to evaluate whether the doctoral candidate has successfully achieved the following core competencies and, therefore, is adequately prepared for dissertation research:

- Broad knowledge of the field of mass communications and appropriate cognate fields and a specialized and comprehensive knowledge of at least one subfield of mass communications as defined by the committee.
- Intellectual and research skills needed to discover and advance knowledge.
- Communication skills to disseminate knowledge effectively.
- Ability to integrate knowledge across subfields, understand how one's subfield fits into a larger framework of knowing, and to explore the social and ethical consequences of discovery and research (Upham).

The comprehensive exam is given and evaluated by the doctoral candidate's entire committee. The exam consists of written responses to particular questions from each member of the committee and a follow-up oral examination session with the full committee. A favorable vote of at least three members of the committee members is required for passing. The exam may be retaken once. The student needs to meet with the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program to ensure all requirements have been met before submitting the paperwork for processing to the Fox Graduate School.

The administration of the comprehensive exam is under the jurisdiction of the Fox Graduate School. The oral portion of the exam is scheduled and announced officially by the Dean of the Fox Graduate School upon recommendation of the College's Associate Dean. It is important for the student to meet with the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program to ensure all paperwork and other requirements are met before processing the exam paperwork to be submitted to the Fox Graduate School. **The Fox Graduate School requires at least two weeks' lead time to formally schedule the meeting date and process the necessary paperwork. Therefore, the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program needs three weeks' notice of the exam date.** While the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program will assist in scheduling the exam times and submitting the paperwork to the Fox Graduate School, it is the responsibility of the student and their committee chair to initiate this process well in advance of the anticipated date.

The Fox Graduate School requires that, before the exam is given, the candidate must have:

- Completed all (or substantially all) coursework.
- Satisfied the English competence and the communication and foreign language requirement.
- A minimum grade-point average of 3.00 for work done at the university, and no missing or deferred grades.
- Registered as a full-time or part-time student for the semester (including summers) in which the comprehensive exam is taken.
- Fox Graduate School's approval of committee.

The comprehensive examination should be completed no later than one semester after finishing full-time coursework. Barring exceptional circumstances, those who have not successfully passed the exam during this time period normally are deemed by the College not to be making expeditious academic progress for purposes of awarding fourth year funding and other optional financial support.

The doctoral committee chair is responsible for ensuring that the exam achieves the above-stated purpose and follows Fox Graduate School policies (See "Graduate Student Committee Procedures and Responsibilities" in the **Academic Policies and Information** section). It is also important to note that

the Fox Graduate School requires formal reporting in LionPATH from the chair and the student's doctoral committee that will testify to the date of the exam, the fact that it has taken place and that all committee members were present. The LionPATH form, access to which will come in an official email from the Fox Graduate School to each committee member, will provide the mechanism for committee's evaluation of the student's performance on the written and oral portions of the exam.

Portfolio

Doctoral candidates must submit a portfolio that is reviewed as an integral part of the comprehensive examination. The portfolio should be a greatly expanded version of what was submitted for the qualifying examination and should include, for example, an updated vita, publications, conference papers, grant proposals, awards, teaching materials and other content that demonstrates comprehensive and specialized knowledge in the field, readiness to conduct dissertation research, and preparation for a scholarly career.

The portfolio (PDF, website, or other approved format) is to be turned in to the graduate office with the written responses of the comprehensive exam.

Written Portion of the Exam

The subject areas of the examination should be roughly mapped out at the qualifying examination and normally include questions that adequately address theory, methodology, specialization, and cognate areas, as appropriate.

The final questions should closely match those previously agreed-upon subject areas.

Questions should be drawn from the content covered in the candidate's program of study. It is usually not appropriate to expect a doctoral candidate who has completed their coursework and fulfilled the requirements of their program plan to learn substantial new content areas and be tested on them in their comprehensive examination, unless the committee decides that the purposes of the examination can only be fulfilled with additional reading.

Every member of the committee is expected to provide a question or a set of related questions that evaluate the doctoral candidate's overall understanding of the discipline and/or research component specified as the area of responsibility for that committee member at the earlier qualifying exam meeting. Questions should go beyond the content covered in a specific course.

The exam may include dissertation-related questions but not to the exclusion of the primary purpose of the exam.

It is the doctoral candidate's responsibility to contact all committee members well in advance of the exam to discuss the written questions and expectations for answering them. Committee members should brief the candidates on the general nature of the question and may offer suggestions for background reading. Typically, committee members do not provide the specific question to the candidate prior to the examination.

All draft questions should be submitted to the committee chair, who should ensure that the final questions – in the aggregate – adequately gauge whether the doctoral candidate has successfully achieved the core competencies outlined at the beginning of this section. The committee chair should request that committee members revise their questions if necessary to achieve this goal.

The committee chair will send the questions to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program in the College's Graduate office to release the questions to the student at the beginning of the written exam. The candidate usually receives all of the questions at the beginning of the examination period. The examination period typically will be one week and usually is open book, at the discretion of the committee.

Each response should be prefaced by a brief abstract that highlights the essence of the answer to the question, with particular emphasis on the unique angle of the response, conveying the originality of the candidate's synthesis of the topic.

The answers normally are written in the style of a scholarly review essay. The answers should be original,

concise, and emphasize depth of understanding and critical analysis of the literature within a limit of not less than 10 and not more than 15 pages, not including references (double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margin).

Committee chairs have flexibility in the approach used to administer the exam consistent with Fox Graduate School regulations, the spirit of this policy, and the high academic standards of the program. Written exams should be administered when the University is open, and not during holidays when staff are unavailable to attend to any issues which may arise.

Oral Portion of the Comprehensive Exam

The oral examination must be **held no earlier than two weeks after the written examination is completed**. This allows sufficient time for the committee members to review the written answers prior to the oral examination. **Meet with the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program more than two weeks prior to the oral exam date to ensure all requirements are met.** The Coordinator must submit the request for the oral exam date to the Fox Graduate School **no later than two weeks before the date, so attention to timing is critical**. The Coordinator can assist with reserving a room and/or providing a Zoom link for the exam.

This portion of the comprehensive exam allows for extended discussion and further evaluation of the answers to the written exam and, in most cases, serves as a forum for a discussion of a range of issues associated with the material covered for the written portion of the exam. At the conclusion of the exam, the chair will solicit written evaluations and signatures on the appropriate Fox Graduate School form for that purpose and will give that form to the College's Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program.

The Fox Graduate School strongly encourages the comprehensive and final oral examinations to be held fully in-person but allows for these exams to be fully remote via Zoom, or a hybrid of in-person and remote. **The student and the chair must agree on the mode of the examination in advance of the examination.** See [GCAC-606](#) and [GCAC-608](#). Contact the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program to create a Zoom link if the chosen mode is remote or a hybrid of remote and in-person.

Favorable votes from at least three members of the committee are required in order to pass the comprehensive exam. The Fox Graduate School sends each committee member an email the morning of the exam with a link to complete the evaluation in LionPATH. Each committee member must authenticate to login to LionPATH and file their decision immediately following the exam. If a candidate fails, it is the responsibility of the doctoral committee to determine whether another examination may be taken.

If the committee decides not to allow the student to retake the comprehensive exam, or the student fails the exam for a second time, the committee chair can start the procedure for termination of the degree program. Information on the procedures for filing the termination can be viewed in the Fox Graduate School website -GCAC-803—Procedures for Termination of the Degree Program of a Graduate Student for Unsatisfactory Scholarship: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-800/gcac-803-procedures-termination-unsatisfactory-scholarship/>

The dissertation proposal presentation (see below) and the oral comprehensive examination normally are separate meetings, although it is possible ~ under exceptional circumstances ~ to combine them into a single meeting. The decision to combine the oral comprehensive with the formal presentation of the dissertation proposal is at the discretion of the candidate's chair and committee. If the dissertation proposal meeting is to be held on the same day as the oral exam, copies of the dissertation proposal should have been distributed to the committee at least **two weeks** in advance to allow sufficient time for the committee's review and comments. The Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program should be notified that the dissertation proposal will be reviewed at the oral examination meeting.

Dissertation Proposal

You are expected to work closely with your adviser in the preparation of the dissertation proposal—a formal written document in which a topic for study is clearly identified. The proposal includes a justification for the significance of that topic for doctoral level study, a formal and comprehensive review

of the literature associated with the topic, and a detailed description of the research method and procedures to be used. An outline of the dissertation project should be included with the proposal. This document will be delivered to your committee **at least two weeks** before a meeting at which the committee may approve or request modifications to the proposal. The committee has the right to require another meeting to review the modified proposal. Obtain the “Dissertation Proposal Form” from the documents and forms section on Graduate Student Resources page of the website. Complete and submit the form with a copy of the approved proposal to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program.

Guidelines for ABD Registration

According to the *Graduate Bulletin*, “A candidate for the Ph.D. degree is required to register continuously for each semester from the time the comprehensive exam is passed and the two-semester residence requirement is met until the dissertation is accepted by the doctoral committee, regardless of whether work is being done on the thesis during this interval.”

Note: This means you will also have to be registered as a full or part-time student the semester you take your final exam. (This includes summers.)

There are two phases to your dissertation work requiring two separate registration numbers. You must register for a minimum of 1 credit for each semester (excluding summers). Phase one (pre comps) is labeled *Thesis Research*. For that phase you will use COMM 600 for on-campus work or COMM 610 for off-campus work. Phase two (post comps) is *Dissertation Preparation* and requires registration via either COMM 601 (full-time student) or COMM 611 (Part-time student). Students may self-enroll in these credits.

As an all but dissertation (ABD) student, you need not be registered for the summer, unless you are defending your dissertation.

You and your adviser decide the appropriate number of total credits (beyond the minimum required by the Fox Graduate School), to satisfy your committee’s expectation for total credits in your particular program.

Final Oral Examination

Upon completion of the dissertation, each member of the committee should receive a complete and fully edited copy of the dissertation in final form. The adviser is responsible for ensuring that the dissertation is complete and of sufficient quality to be defended at the meeting. It is appropriate for the chair and/or dissertation adviser to contact committee members prior to the meeting to confirm the judgment of each member that the dissertation is of sufficient quality to be formally defended. **No earlier than two weeks** after delivery of these copies, the student will meet with the committee for what is traditionally a “defense of dissertation.” **The Fox Graduate School requires at least two weeks’ lead time to formally schedule the meeting date and process the necessary paperwork. Therefore, the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program needs three weeks’ notice of the exam date.**

The doctoral student must be registered full-time or part-time for the semester (including summers) in which the final dissertation exam is taken.

The final oral examination is governed by the Fox Graduate School and should follow its guidelines abstracted herein: The exam consists of an oral presentation of the dissertation by the candidate and a period of questions and answers. These questions will relate, in large part, to the dissertation but may cover the candidate’s entire program of study, because a major purpose of the examination is also to assess the general scholarly attainment of the candidate. Any formal oral presentation of the dissertation is open to the public. However, attendance at the question-and-answer period is normally restricted to invited members of the College's scholarly community and is at the discretion of the committee.

Normal outcomes of the dissertation defense are:

- Approval of the dissertation as presented;
- Approval pending minor, specified revisions, supervision of which is delegated to the adviser;
- Conditional approval pending revisions that will be circulated to the committee for approval;

- Delayed approval pending revision and another meeting of the committee.

Favorable votes from at least three members of the committee are required in order to pass this final exam. A report of the committee's decision, bearing the signature of each committee member, must be filed immediately with the Fox Graduate School via the College's Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program. If a candidate fails, it is the responsibility of the doctoral committee to determine whether another examination may be taken.

If the committee decides not to allow the student to retake the final exam, or the student fails the exam for a second time, the committee chair can start the procedure for termination of the degree program. Information on the procedures for filing the termination can be viewed in the Fox Graduate School website.

GCAC-803—Procedures for Termination of the Degree Program of a Graduate Student for Unsatisfactory Scholarship: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-800/gcac-803-procedures-termination-unsatisfactory-scholarship/>

Maintain Satisfactory Scholarship and Annual Assessment

The Fox Graduate School defines unsatisfactory scholarship as follows: A graduate student who fails to maintain satisfactory scholarship or fails to make acceptable progress in a degree program will be dropped from the University. One or more failing grades or a cumulative grade-point average below 3.0 for any semester or session or combination of semesters and/or sessions may be considered as evidence of failure to maintain satisfactory scholarship. Action may be initiated by the department or committee in charge of the graduate major or by the chair of the student's doctoral committee.

Advisers will annually assess their doctoral students and discuss the results with them, with the report submitted to the Graduate Dean, chair, coordinator, and the student's committee. (See GCAC-603).

Summary of Doctoral Program Requirements

Prior to Orientation Session

Person Responsible

- ☐ Assign faculty member to serve as temporary faculty adviser

DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES/
ASSOCIATE DEAN

Second Semester

By second week of second semester

- ☐ Choose permanent adviser and notify Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program. STUDENT
Remainder of the committee (inside members) should be chosen immediately thereafter.

Before the end of the first academic year (Generally by the end of spring)

- ☐ Schedule Qualifying Examination (contact Coordinator of Graduate Education when meeting is scheduled) STUDENT

Immediately following Qualifying Examination

- ☐ Submit signed qualifying exam form and required documentation to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program (See Appendix XIII)* COMMITTEE CHAIR

After Qualifying Examination

Between Qualifying and Comprehensive Examination

- ☐ Complete Residency Requirement (2 consecutive semesters-excluding summer) STUDENT

Semester before Comprehensive Examination

- ☐ Have complete committee established (paperwork signed by all committee members and submitted to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program). The Committee Appointment/Signature Form will need to be obtained from the College's graduate office. STUDENT

Final Semester of Coursework

- ☐ Schedule Comprehensive Exam (Meet with Coordinator of Graduate Programs for scheduling the exam and to ensure all requirements have been met.) STUDENT

Immediately following Comprehensive Exam

- ☐ Submit signed Comprehensive Exam Form to Coordinator of Graduate Programs COMMITTEE CHAIR

After completion of Comprehensive Exam

- ☐ Schedule Dissertation Proposal Meeting (Meet with Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program for scheduling the exam and to ensure all requirements have been met.) STUDENT

Immediately following Dissertation Proposal Meeting

- ☐ Submit Dissertation Proposal and signed Proposal Form to the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program COMMITTEE CHAIR

Semester Student Intends to Graduate

Beginning of semester

- ☐ Activate intent to graduate through LionPATH STUDENT
- ☐ Request copy of Graduate Programs/Thesis Office Calendar from the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program STUDENT

Early in last semester

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| ☐ Submit draft of dissertation to committee chair or faculty adviser | STUDENT |
| ☐ Submit copies of dissertation to committee members
(at least two weeks prior to Final oral exam) | STUDENT |
| ☐ Schedule <u>Final Oral Exam</u> (Meet with Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program for scheduling the exam and to ensure all requirements have been met) | STUDENT |
| ☐ Submit signed <u>Final Oral Exam Form</u> to the Coordinator of Graduate Education. Submit <u>Doctoral Approval Page</u> signed by the committee
(Graduate office will hold paperwork until final edits are made) | COMMITTEE CHAIR |

Before Leaving Campus

- | | |
|--|---------|
| ☐ Exit interview with Associate Dean and Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program | STUDENT |
| ☐ Clean office area | STUDENT |
| ☐ Return keys to the Facilities Manager (17A Carnegie Bldg.) | STUDENT |
| ☐ Complete Transfer/Separation Checklist | STUDENT |
| ☐ Turn in Penn State I.D. card to Graduate Program office | STUDENT |

Fox Graduate School's Thesis Office Information

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations>

Dual Degree in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS)

If interested, students in our Ph.D. and master's programs can work with the department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies to obtain a dual degree. It is important to apply for dual degree enrollment before completing your qualifying exam at the end of your first year.

Our dual-title master's and Ph.D. degrees provide students with conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical training in the field of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The WGSS graduate program embraces intersectional and transnational feminist approaches to knowledge production, pedagogy, and community engagement. Faculty and graduate students in WGSS integrate interdisciplinary theoretical frames and research methods to investigate topics and questions whose histories and impacts reach across academic fields in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Students will be considered for admission to the master's or Ph.D. programs by the WGSS graduate admissions committee. Because this degree is combined with a master's or Ph.D. from one of our partner departments, students graduate well-prepared to produce cutting-edge, interdisciplinary scholarship; to teach across both disciplines; and to excel in a career in either field. Featured graduate courses include feminist theory, transgender people of color critique, and global Black feminist thought.

Academic Policies and Information

Graduate Teaching/Research Assistantships

There are a limited number of half-time graduate assistantships available each year in the College. Assistantships are awarded after admission decisions have been made in the spring to those the admissions committees judge to be the best qualified. Invariably, there are more deserving applicants than there are available assistantships, so the committee must make difficult decisions. Rejection of an applicant for financial assistance does not imply any judgment of their scholarly and professional promise.

The aid package offered to each candidate is a carefully considered combination of stipend, research and teaching assignments, conference expenses, fee remissions, and access to non-monetary resources. It is tailored to each student. Each student is considered in relation to the College's budget and the several factors that make up the student's unique profile as a candidate. Support for one student in any of these areas may differ from another student. This is normal.

Half-time graduate assistants are responsible for 20 hours per week of service. Graduate student TA responsibilities are determined by the Associate Dean.

Fox Graduate School regulations stipulate that the holder of a half-time assistantship may enroll for no more than an average of 12 academic credits per semester.

The holder of an assistantship receives a stipend during the fall and spring semesters plus remission of tuition for those semesters and the following summer session if approved. No stipend is paid during the summer months. If the assistantship holder wishes to take advantage of the summer tuition remission, they must apply for it during the preceding spring semester.

PhD. Students receive four years of funding through an assistantship/fellowship. To receive funding for the fourth year, the student must have completed the comprehensive exam by the end of their third year and must reside in the state of Pennsylvania.

If the holder of an assistantship elects to relinquish the assistantship or if the assistantship contract is rescinded, all benefits are relinquished as well. The stipend, tuition remission and benefits are inseparable parts of the assistantship budgetary support package.

The performance of graduate assistants is closely monitored by the faculty member to whom the assistant is assigned and by the Associate Dean. Failure to provide the assistance stipulated in the contract may result in revocation of the assistantship. Deficient scholarship (dropping below the 3.0 grade point average) may also result in revocation.

Graduate Student Committee Procedures and Responsibilities

The following is a summary of Fox Graduate School policy regarding doctoral committees. For a complete list of doctoral committee policies, please refer to the Graduate Bulletin or online at <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-602-phd-committee-formation/>

Although master's programs vary widely across the University and differ from doctoral programs, departments and programs are urged to follow the spirit of the Procedures for Doctoral Students (points 1-7), when appropriate, for graduate committees of master's students.

Justification: A graduate student's committee is responsible for approving a student's program of study; providing constructive input to help guide the student's research/scholarship; promoting effective communication among the graduate student, committee chair/ adviser, and other members of the committee; and more generally, for helping to promote the successful completion of the student's program. The committee should be appointed as soon as possible in a master's program, and immediately after the doctoral student's successful completion of the qualifying examination. The following **Doctoral Committee Policies and Procedures** are intended to help achieve these goals, to minimize misunderstandings, and help foster a collegial relationship among the graduate student, the

committee chair, and the members of the committee throughout the graduate student's program. **Each doctoral student, chair and committee member should receive a copy of these policies and procedures.**

Policies and Procedures for Doctoral Students and Committees:

1. The **doctoral chair** should meet with the student **at least once per year** to (1) provide guidance, (2) finalize and approve the research proposal of the student so that there is a clear understanding of the research goals and objectives, (3) assess the quality and progress of the research, and (4) discuss programmatic issues (e.g., course requirements).
2. Both the **chair** and the **student** are responsible for providing a copy of the final draft of the dissertation to the committee **at least 2 weeks** prior to the scheduled date of the final oral examination. The chair should schedule a date for the examination with the College's Graduate Office **at least 3 weeks** prior to the examination. If the 3-week notice is not given, the Fox Graduate School will not approve the exam request.
3. Both the **chair** and the **student** are responsible for ensuring the completion of a final draft of the dissertation, and **for adequate consultation** with members of the doctoral committee, well in advance of the final oral examination. Major revisions of the dissertation should be completed before this examination. The dissertation should be complete and in its "final" form, with correct and polished content and style, appropriate notes, bibliography, tables, etc., at the time it is distributed to the committee members. **If committee members find that the draft submitted to them is not in this form, the chair is notified, and postponement of the examination is considered.**
4. **If a committee member finds that the "final" draft is not correct and polished with respect to content and style, it is their responsibility to notify the committee chair (or adviser) at least one week in advance of the final oral examination date.** The **committee member** should indicate their concerns regarding the draft and recommend consideration of postponement of the examination to the committee chair (or adviser). The **committee chair** (or adviser), in consultation with committee members, is responsible for notifying the student and assessing whether the student can make the necessary revisions to the "final" draft before the examination date. If it is determined that revisions cannot be made in time, the examination should be postponed. If differences exist among committee members, the **department head** or **program chair** should be consulted to hear the expressed concerns and determine whether the examination should be postponed.
5. **If the dissertation is deemed unsatisfactory at the time of the examination by at least two-thirds of the committee, the student will fail the examination.** If a candidate fails, it is the responsibility of the committee to determine whether another examination may be taken by the student.
6. The chair or at least one co-chair must be a member of the graduate faculty of the specific doctoral program in which the candidate is enrolled. A retired or emeritus faculty member may chair a doctoral committee if they began chairing the committee prior to retirement and have the continuing approval of the department head or program chair. The primary duties of the chair are: (1) to maintain the academic standards of the doctoral program and the Fox Graduate School and to assure that all procedures are carried out fairly, (2) to ensure that the comprehensive and final examinations are conducted in a timely fashion, (3) to arrange and conduct all meetings, and (4) to ensure that requirements set forth by the committee are implemented in the final version of the thesis.
7. A doctoral committee must consist of four or more active members of the Graduate Faculty, which includes at least two faculty members from the student's major field. The dissertation adviser must be a member of the doctoral committee. The dissertation adviser usually serves as chair, but this is not required. If the candidate is also pursuing a dual-title field of study, a co-

chair representing the dual-title field must be appointed. In most cases, the same individual (e.g., dissertation adviser) is a member of the Graduate Faculty in both the major and dual-title fields, and in such cases may serve as sole chair. At least one regular member of the doctoral committee must represent a field outside the candidate's major field of study in order to provide a broader range of disciplinary perspectives and expertise within the committee. This committee member is referred to as the "Outside Field Member." In cases where the candidate is also pursuing a dual-title field of study, the dual-title representative to the committee may serve as the Outside Field Member. If the candidate has a minor, that field must be represented on the committee by a "Minor Field Member." (See also Major Program and Minor Field under D.Ed.—Additional Specific Requirements in the Graduate Bulletin.) A person not affiliated with Penn State who has particular expertise in the candidate's research area may be added as a "Special Member," upon recommendation by the head of the program and approval of the Graduate Dean (via the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services). A Special Member is expected to participate fully in the functions of the doctoral committee.

Ethics and Professional Responsibility

The College of Communications is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards in the scholarly pursuits of all its faculty and graduate students. Since the creation of the College, ethics and professional responsibility have been integral components of all its degree programs and are deeply embedded in its curriculum and co-curricular activities. The College seeks to instill in all of its doctoral and MA students the core values of scholarly integrity and professional responsibility and to develop good academic citizenship. To this end, students in all graduate degree programs offered by the College must demonstrate a thorough understanding of and grounding in research ethics and professional responsibility.

All graduate students at Penn State are required to complete the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) program that offers training in the responsible conduct of research and other learning opportunities to further that goal. Consequently, the program plans of all doctoral and master's candidates in the College must include the follow two requirements from the RECR program:

During the first year of enrollment, completion of the Responsible Conduct of Research online training program provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Communications graduate students may complete either the Social and Behavioral course or the Humanities course. (Although many lessons in both versions of the training program are appropriate for all sub-disciplines in Communications, some are not. Students and their committees, therefore, should select the one that best – although potentially not perfectly ~ matches their research field.) The online training program can be accessed at the RECR Resource Portal on the Office for Research Protections (ORP) website (<https://researchsupport.psu.edu/orp/education/citi/>). CITI training and certification are course requirements for COMM 590 (Colloquium).

Prior to degree completion, an additional 5 hours of discussion-based education in Responsible Conduct in Research. This requirement is flexible and may be fulfilled with coursework in the College or in other units, coursework or co-curricular experiences, and universal or discipline-specific material.

In almost all cases, graduate students in the College will satisfy this requirement by successfully completing the core coursework in their respective programs. Graduate committees may assume that students receive at least three hours of discussion-based education in research ethics in COMM 506 (Introduction to Mass Communications Research) and COMM 511 (Mass Communications Research Methods II) and each semester of COMM 590 (Colloquium). The required proseminars also include a substantial amount of ethics-oriented content.

In addition, graduate committees may require or encourage additional coursework and co-curricular experiences in ethics and professional responsibility. Some possibilities follow:

The vast majority of the 500-level seminars offered by the College have a substantial amount of material regarding professional ethics and social responsibility of the media woven into the course content. Extensive co-curricular opportunities in the College are coordinated by Don Davis Program in Ethical

Leadership. <https://www.bellisario.psu.edu/research/centers/don-davis-program-in-ethical-leadership>

The University's responsible and ethical conduct of research (RECR) program offers a variety of workshops, online resources, and individualized consultation that can be tailor-made to fulfill or supplement the RECR requirement. <https://researchsupport.psu.edu/orp/education/recr/>

Colloquium (Communications 590)

Colloquium is a continuing series of seminars and presentations that introduce new doctoral and master's students in the College of Communications to graduate studies and serves as a forum for scholarly exchange among all graduate students and faculty. All graduate students entering the College are required to complete one semester of Colloquium; however, the credit earned for Colloquium may not be used to fulfill minimum credit requirements for any degree program.

Continuing graduate students are strongly encouraged to attend Colloquium when the topics are appropriate their educational and professional goals.

The objectives of Colloquium are to:

- Develop good academic citizenship
- Help build a scholarly community and foster camaraderie among entering graduate classes
- Learn the codes and pathways of graduate education and the specific policies and expectations of the College's graduate programs
- Introduce new graduate students to the College's faculty and their research interests
- Stir intellectual ferment in the college
- Facilitate the flow of information among graduate students and faculty

In addition to an array of scholarly subjects, Colloquium routinely covers important topics in the realm of academic professionalism, such as:

- Importance and meaning of academic freedom
- Professional responsibility and scholarly etiquette
- Research ethics
- Teaching and learning
- Thesis and dissertation research and writing
- Scholarly publishing and conference presentations
- Human subjects' protections and approval process
- Performance of assistantship responsibilities
- Applying for grants, fellowships, and scholarships
- Preparing for the academic and professional job markets
- The importance and meaning of academic tenure

Registration

Registration as a full-time student is required for each student receiving assistantship support. All assistantships in the College of Communications are classified as half-time assistantships (20 hours of service per week). Therefore, to be enrolled as a full-time student, students must register for 9-12 credits each during the Fall and Spring semester (excluding Colloquium).

Some programs outside of Communications have restrictions on course enrollment and will not allow our students to enroll via LionPATH. Often students may be added with permission of the professor of the course. In such cases, student should (1) email the professor of the course as soon as registration is open to express interest in the course and ask if it is possible to be added, and (2) in the note, emphasize the student's relevant background to match the courses' content.

All graduate students are required to maintain continuous registration by registering for each Fall and Spring semester until all degree requirements have been met. If, however, all degree requirements,

including thesis/ submission and/or defense, are completed prior to the first day of classes of the semester in which the student will be graduating, then the student is not required to register for that semester. Upon completion of all coursework, in order to maintain continuous registration, a student should be registered in one of the following classes:

COMM 600 (Thesis Research ~ on campus)

COMM 610 (Thesis Research ~ off campus)

Ph.D. candidates who have passed the comprehensive exam and met the two-semester residency requirement should register for:

COMM 601 (Thesis Preparation ~ full-time)

COMM 611 (Thesis Preparation ~ part-time)

For registration of 600 level courses, contact the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program in the College's graduate office.

Some programs outside of Communications have restrictions on course enrollment and will not allow our students to enroll via LionPATH. Often students may be added with permission of the professor of the course. In such cases, students should (1) Email the professor of the course as soon as registration is open to express interest in the course and ask if it is possible to be added, and (2) in the note, emphasize the student's relevant background to match the course's content.

Dropping Courses

All requests to drop courses should be approved by your faculty adviser. Students on an assistantship award should realize that if a course is dropped, because of the tuition waiver that is offered as a benefit of your assistantship, the tuition paid cannot be recovered and reduces funds available for continuing support. A student on assistantship should be enrolled for at least nine credits and no more than 12 credits.

Normal Academic Progress

Students in all graduate programs are required to maintain a 3.00 GPA. Students who fall below this standard will be considered to be on academic probation. If a student remains below this standard for two consecutive semesters, the student may be terminated.

Resolution of Academic Conflicts

There are prescribed University and College procedures for resolving student complaints over classroom conduct by instructors such as: unjustified cancellations of classes, frequent absenteeism or late arrival, absence during designated office hours, early completion of semester, grade disputes and allegations of plagiarism.

Students should first attempt to resolve such problems and conflicts through discussion with the instructor involved. If resolution is unsuccessful at this level, the appropriate channels include: your adviser, a program chair of that program, the Associate Dean in the College, or the Dean of the College. Students will, in an informal manner, be advised of their rights and the procedures open to them to pursue their concerns.

Graduate Student Ombudspersons

A program of the Fox Graduate School, Graduate Student Ombudspersons are exclusively available to consult with Penn State graduate students. Graduate students may request to meet with any of the ombudspersons. They provide a safe environment for graduate students to discuss issues and concerns. They assist students in identifying or creating options for resolution, understanding relevant policies, connecting with resources for support and assistance, and making referrals to formal channels with investigatory powers. For more information on this Fox Graduate School program, go to <https://gradschool.psu.edu/student-support/addressing-concerns/ombudsperson-program>.

Important Policies and Resources Online

Academic Integrity

For College guidelines regarding academic integrity, please refer to the appendices. University policies and rules can be found at <https://integrity.psu.edu/academic-integrity>

General Standards of Professional Ethics (Policy AD47)

<https://guru.psu.edu/policies/ad47.html>

Addressing Allegations of Research Misconduct (Policy RA 10)

<https://guru.psu.edu/policies/RP02.html>

Co-authorship of Scholarly Reports, Papers and Publications (Policy IP02)

<https://guru.psu.edu/policies/ip02.html>

The Use of Human Participants in Research (Policy RP03)

<https://guru.psu.edu/policies/rp03.html>

Sexual and/or Gender-Based Harassment and Misconduct (Including Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, Stalking and Related Inappropriate Conduct) (Policy AD85)

<https://guru.psu.edu/policies/ad85.html>

Information Assurance And IT Security (Policy AD 95)

<https://guru.psu.edu/policies/ad95.html>

Acceptable Use of University Information Resources (Policy AD96)

<https://guru.psu.edu/policies/ad96.html>

Graduate Assistants Payroll (GSAD-901 – formerly Policy PR06)

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad/gsad-900/gsad-901-graduate-assistants>

University Vehicle Operations or Use (Policy BS20)

<https://guru.psu.edu/policies/PSU/BS20.html>

Administrative Policies and Guidelines for Funding Graduate Students' Professional Development

Enabling graduate students in Bellisario College to travel to academic conferences contributes both to their professional development and to the visibility of the College. Therefore, to the extent possible, within financial constraints, the College should support graduate student travel.

With budget constraints and a relatively small travel fund, it is imperative that Bellisario College allocate its travel resources carefully; this is made more important by the size of our graduate program.

However, we acknowledge that there are circumstances that may alter the need for travel funds. Generally, it is assumed that students will cover many of their expenses. The College's graduate program travel fund does not support graduate student travel to conduct research; **the funds are meant to support the presentation of (refereed) research.**

These travel guidelines are designed to add a measure of transparency to the disbursement of travel funds, provide information for students that will be useful for planning their conference participation, and allow flexibility for both the student and the College in the case of exceptional circumstances.

Disbursement of general College funds, for the fiscal year that begins July 1 and ends June 30, will be guided by the following:

Priority for funding will go to:

- Students on assistantship;
- Advanced Ph.D. students (students who have reached qualification in the program).

Students can expect the following maximum disbursements; these totals, of course, are subject to budgetary changes/constraints in the College and are re-evaluated annually:

- 1st-year Ph.D.: \$500
- 2nd-year Ph.D.: \$900
- 3rd-year Ph.D. students: \$1000
- 4th-year Ph.D. students: \$1100
- 2nd year MA students on assistantships: \$600

With Dean's approval, funding that is unused in a fiscal year will be available for use in the next fiscal year. A student's expenses should not exceed the total amount of funding (PhD = \$3,500) that is given across the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years.

Given that the College offers limited funding to each graduate student, it is important to consult closely with your academic adviser on what conferences are best suited for you.

All students will be required to submit a Graduate Funding Request form for conference/travel before attending an event. Your adviser will need to sign this document in support of your conference attendance.

All first-year students who are not on assistantship may apply for funding for specific conference travel. Decisions will be based on the availability of funds.

Any student can apply for additional travel funding (international conferences, for example); however, such requests will be granted on a case-by-case basis considering the availability of funds and the necessity for attendance.

Graduate students will be notified (based on the second bullet point) by mid-July of the amount they will be allocated for the fiscal year. See page 47 for University requirements for international travel.

Reimbursement Procedures

Students requesting travel funding to attend conferences must have received an invitation to present. A copy of the invitation email must accompany the Graduate Funding Request Form.

Anthony Travel through SAP Concur is required to book airfare. The link is: [Penn State SAP Concur](#)

Graduate students adding personal travel must submit a travel comparison that includes the cost of round-trip travel that does not include personal travel. Round Trip must be from State College to venue of conference within one day prior to and after conference dates. The College will not reimburse students for the personal portion of travel.

If traveling by car, the start location and venue must be included in the report. Mileage will be calculated electronically by the system. If additional stops are taken, the locations of these stops must be included. The University will reimburse for mileage, not gas. The current rate is 62.5 cents per mile. For those who carpool, the graduate student whose vehicle is being used will be reimbursed (the amount per student will be divided among those who are carpooling). The choice of flying versus driving is influenced by distance, time, cost, and one's preference. When flying is the economical choice, but one chooses to drive and the round-trip mileage is 750 miles or more, the reimbursement may not exceed the cost of the lowest available air transport for the same points of origin and destination. The traveler must provide appropriate price quotes from either Anthony Travel or an acceptable travel agency, obtained at the time of the decision to drive vs. fly, to document the appropriate airfare for comparison.

To receive the total amount of funding requested, all detailed receipts must be submitted with a completed [Travel Reimbursement Checklist - CONUS](#) Or [Travel Reimbursement Checklist - OCONUS](#) within five business days of the conference's end. If this is not possible, please contact the Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program. Reimbursements will be processed first received first completed.

Receipt submission should include:

- Fully executed Travel Reimbursement form (CONUS or OCONUS)
 - This includes all expenses that are to be reimbursed to the traveler.
- Provide all the details of the trip even if you are not asking for reimbursement.
 - Who traveled?
 - Why did they travel?
 - What did they travel for?
 - When did they travel?
 - Where did they travel?
 - How did they travel?
- If traveling by air. Airfare confirmation (Anthony Travel) which includes:
 - Full itinerary of travel (This includes time and date of departures and arrivals)
 - Total amount of travel including all taxes and fees
 - Which Airline traveled on (Delta, US Airways, United, etc.)
- If traveling by vehicle, starting address, and all points traveled to.
- Detailed Conference registration with amount paid.
- Itemized lodging expense.
- Membership if required for reduced conference registration.
- Conference or event program or flyer.

- Any other pertinent travel details.

Guidelines for Lodging

Lodging expenses must not exceed the single occupancy rate unless two or more employees are staying in the same room. Staff, faculty, or students who are spouses/partners, immediate family members, or of the same sex may be asked to share a room, provided a separate bed/cot is available for everyone in the room. The University does not expect, nor does it condone University staff, faculty or students sharing a bed while on travel sponsored in whole or in part by the University (Spouses/partners are excluded if they so choose). If an individual presents as a gender different from one's birth sex, individuals may not be compelled to share a room but may do so if all individuals agree.

Hotel lodging and taxes are reimbursed only. (Internet connection, phone calls or room service – even if on the receipt ~ will not be covered.) If sharing a room, it is recommended that individual receipts are secured for each person. If this is not possible, list the names of the people sharing the room on the receipt and the amount each person paid. If one person paid the entire bill, confirmation will be needed from the other students. International lodging will be reimbursed per diem.

Meals will be paid based on per diem (the University lists the amount per day for all the towns and cities in the US and other countries.). First and last day of travel is 75% of meal per diem. If meals are provided by a conference, host or as part of hotel accommodations, then meal per diem will be adjusted to correspond with meals provided.

All reimbursements will be processed through SAP Concur. After the receipts are input by staff in the Graduate Office, the student will receive an email from SAP Concur, indicating that the request is ready for review and submission.

The chain for the reimbursement is:

1. Entered by Grad Office staff
2. Graduate Student submits the request through SAP Concur (www.sapconcur.psu.edu). Penn State user ID and password will be needed to log into the system.
3. Budget Assistant approves
4. Assistant to the Financial Officer approve
5. Financial Officer approves
6. Accounting Office approves

Note: Reconciliation can take several days to several weeks after the student submits the report for the reimbursement to be deposited into the student's bank account.

Reimbursements during the **summer months** run through the same process. The main difference for reimbursement during the summer is any student not receiving wages will need to fill out a Non-Employee Information Form [Non-Employee Travel Form](#).

Poster Costs

The College will pay for the printing of one poster per accepted conference presentation. Students making poster presentations must contact the Graduate Office on how to print posters.

International Travel Policy

All students, faculty, and staff traveling either in a group or individually for University purposes (with a club, organization, team, college, or department) or with University funding must record international travel in the Global Safety Network (GSN) database prior to departure as outlined in the [University's International Travel Requirements Policy](#). This includes travel for international research, conferences, and internships.

Complete a new travel record for each of your university-affiliated international trips at least 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) before you depart. For each travel record, the GSN system will identify which forms you need to complete. Once you have completed all the web-based forms in the GSN system for your travel record and attended an Emergency Preparedness Workshop (if applicable), your record will be reviewed for completeness by university experts, and you will receive a GSN confirmation email once reviewed. The review process may take up to a few weeks before you receive your final confirmation.

International travel reimbursement will not be approved without a receipt from the GSN confirming registration, completion of the Emergency Preparedness Workshop and HTH insurance coverage.

The GSN Staff may be reached via email (globalsafety@psu.edu) or via phone (814-863-8788).

International Travel Requirements Policy:

<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/tr01>

GSN:

<https://global.psu.edu/landing/gsn>

HTH Worldwide:

<https://www.hthstudents.com/ge.cfm?ac=dyi-7719>

Penn State Travel Policy/Insurance:

<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/tr02#I>

Office and Key Assignments

The Graduate Assistant Office is in 008 Carnegie Building on the ground floor. Shared desk space is available in the main area of the office. If you must hold office hours as a requirement of your teaching assignment, you must work out a schedule that will be compatible with your colleagues. Please do not remove any furniture from these offices. All furnishings are inventoried.

There are several computers available with limited printing facilities. These computers are for your use and must be shared by all. Please be considerate of others by sharing the working time.

Keys will be assigned by the Facilities Manager, 17 Carnegie Building.

Graduate students have mailboxes in the 115 Carnegie Building. **All mail will be sent to your office mailbox rather than to your home address**, so please be sure to check your mailbox on a regular basis.

Graduate students must return all keys assigned to them upon completion of their graduate assistantship (or completion of a specific teaching/research assignment if other keys are assigned). Keys are not to be loaned to **anyone**. If a key is lost, there is a \$20 charge to replace the key. If re-coring of a door is necessary to change the locks due to a lost key, additional costs will be incurred. Also, it is unlawful to duplicate these keys. Doors are to be kept locked when the office is vacant.

Room Reservations

If you need to reserve a room in the Carnegie Building, please contact the Administrative Support Assistant at the front desk of the Dean's office or the Coordinator for Graduate Programs.

Bellisario College Graduate Courses

The following is a list of 500-level courses offered by Bellisario College. Some 400 courses are also appropriate for some graduate degree programs. Graduate students should consult with their academic adviser to determine the suitability of a course for a particular area of study:

- COMM 501 **PROSEMINAR IN MASS COMMUNICATIONS**
Overview of the paradigms in mass communications research.
- COMM 502 **PEDAGOGY IN COMMUNICATIONS (3)**
Focuses on the unique characteristics of undergraduate education as well as the need for the integration of teacher preparation at the doctoral level.
- COMM 504 **SEMINAR IN THE HISTORY OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS**
Explores the history of mass communication, focusing primarily on the United States.
- COMM 505 **INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS**
Legal and communications problems of the international flow of news and opinion; international press codes.
- COMM 506 **INTRODUCTION TO MASS COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH**
The scientific method; survey of basic concepts of theoretical and empirical research; variety of methodology; criteria for adequate research.
- COMM 507 **NEWS MEDIA & PUBLIC OPINION**
Problems in the function, techniques, and responsibilities of press, radio, and television in forming and interpreting opinion.
- COMM 510 **COMPARATIVE THEORIES OF PRESS SYSTEMS**
Institutional structure and normative functions of press systems in modern societies as shaped by prevailing world view and social organization.
- COMM 511 **MASS COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH METHODS II (3)**
Problems of bibliographical research; evaluation of sources and materials in mass communications history, biography, structure, ethics, and other areas.
- COMM 512 **GOVERNMENT AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS (3)**
Problems of freedom of information; governmental efforts to control mass communication agencies; government news coverage; public information agencies.
- COMM 513 **CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS OF THE NEWS MEDIA (3)**
Problems involving conflict between guarantees of press freedom in the First and Fourteenth Amendments and rights and privileges of others.
- COMM 514 **POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATIONS (3)**
Structure and functions of United States and global media systems and their relationship to political and economic systems.
- COMM 515 **MA PROSEMINAR IN MASS COMMUNICATIONS (3)**
An introduction to graduate studies for MA students in Media Studies and Telecommunications Studies. Prerequisite: First semester enrollment in MEDIA or TELECOM M.A. programs.

- COMM 516 **INTRODUCTION TO DATA ANALYSIS IN COMMUNICATIONS (3)**
To understand and be able to use data analysis techniques common to research in communications. Prerequisite: COMM 506 or consent of program.
- COMM 517 **PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**
Investigation of psychological aspects of human-computer interaction (HCI) and computer-mediated communication (CMC). Prerequisite: COMM 404 or COMM 506
- COMM 518 **MEDIA EFFECTS (3)**
Advanced study of the effects of media messages and technologies via theories and empirical evidence pertaining to processes of effects.
Prerequisite: COMM 506 or equivalent
- COMM 520 **THEORY AND APPLICATION OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS (3)**
A practical study of strategic communications through examination of theoretical and conceptual fundamentals within the advertising/public relations industries.
(Proposed new title and description)
- COMM 521 **ADVERTISING/PR RESEARCH SEMINAR (3)**
Exposure to important research in the advertising and public relations field and its implications in research development.
(Proposed new title and description)
- COMM 522 **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF ADVERTISING (3)**
Examination of the social and ethical impact of advertising and public relations; social responsibility; regulatory concerns and the ethical conduct of the industry. *(Proposed new title and description)*
- COMM 550 **FILM THEORY AND CRITICISM**
Advanced studies in traditional and contemporary film theory and criticism.
- COMM 553 **SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN FILM AND TELEVISION**
Advanced studies in current theoretical paradigms in film and television studies.
- COMM 555 **MEDIA AND CULTURE**
An overview and history of critical theories that aim to explain the relationship between media and culture.
- COMM 556 **CLOSE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS-FILM AND VIDEO (3)**
Using theoretically informed, close textual analysis approach, course will explore the way films and videos generate meaning. Prerequisite: COMM 501
- COMM 580 **TELECOMMUNICATIONS SEMINAR**
Study of the historical and contemporary issues and problems in telecommunications.
- COMM 582 **ETHICS AND EMERGING COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**
Identification and analysis of ethical issues raised by electronic communications technologies.
- COMM 584 **INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TRADE POLICY**
An interdisciplinary perspective that investigates contemporary debates and ongoing or anticipated conflicts in international telecommunications and trade policy.

- COMM 585 **MEDIA & TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRIES (3)**
Study the structure and performance of media, telecommunications and information industries applying principles and ideas from microeconomics, finance, and communications.
- COMM 590 **COLLOQUIUM**
Continuing seminars that consist of a series of individual lectures by faculty, students, or outside speakers.
- COMM 594 **DIRECTED STUDIES**
Supervised student activities on research projects identified on an individual or small-group basis.
- COMM 595 **COMMUNICATIONS INTERNSHIP**
Supervised off-campus, non-group instruction, including field experiences, practicums, or internships. Written and oral critique of activity required.
- COMM 596 **INDEPENDENT STUDIES**
Creative projects, including non-thesis research, which are supervised on an individual basis and which fall outside the scope of formal courses.
- COMM 597 **SPECIAL TOPICS**
- COMM 601 **Ph.D. DISSERTATION FULL-TIME**
- COMM 602 **SUPERVISED EXPERIENCE IN COLLEGE TEACHING**
- COMM 603 **FOREIGN ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**
- COMM 610 **THESIS RESEARCH OFF CAMPUS**
- COMM 611 **Ph.D. DISSERTATION PART-TIME**

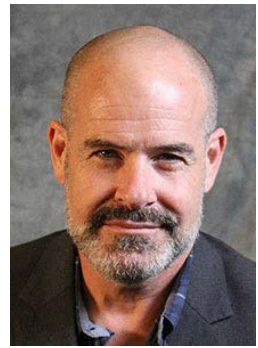
Lee Ahern

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Research Interests:

Ahern's research focuses on the description, analysis and ethics of strategic messages, primarily in the context of science, environmental and health communications.

Biography:

Ahern has close to 20 years of industry experience to complement his teaching and research. Most recently he was marketing manager for an international custom publishing company, where he also oversaw development and implementation of all new media products.

After beginning his career as a financial writer in New York, he worked in various communications capacities on Wall Street for over a decade. For several years thereafter, Ahern and his wife (Colleen Connolly-Ahern) ran their own marketing communications company serving clients in financial services and advertising.

Ahern has more than 25 refereed journal articles, book chapters and conference papers. He has also published on leading blogs, include CommPro.biz and GreenBiz.com. His current research focuses on the description, analysis and ethics of strategic messages, primarily in the context of science, environmental and health communications. In particular, he has explored psychological effects and cognitive processing implications of different environmental message factors.

Ahern is the Director of the Science Communication Program and Coordinator of the Digital Trends and Media Analytics minor.

Selected Publications:

Ahern, L., Connolly-Ahern, C. & Hoewe, J. (2016). Worldviews, issue knowledge, and the pollution of a local science information environment. *Science Communication*, 38(2), 228-250.

Ahern, L., Bortree, D.S. & Nutter-Smith, A. (Available online, 2012). Key trends in environmental advertising across thirty years in National Geographic Magazine. *Public Understanding of Science*.

Ahern, L. (2012). The role of media system development in the emergence of postmaterialist values and environmental concern: A cross-national analysis. *Social Science Quarterly*.

Connolly-Ahern, C., Ahern, L. & Bortree, D. (2010). The effectiveness of stratified constructed week sampling for content analysis of electronic news source archives: AP Newswire, Business Wire and PR Newswire. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 86(4), 862-883.

Christopher Ali

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Research Interests:

Media/Communication/Telecommunications Policy and Regulation;
Broadband Policy, Planning & Deployment; Localism; Local Media;
Local News; Rural Communication; Public & Community Media; Critical Theory;
Critical Political Economy; Critical Geography; Qualitative Research Methods



Biography

Dr. Christopher Ali is the Pioneers Chair in Telecommunications and Professor of Telecommunications in the Bellisario College of Communications at Penn State. He holds a Ph.D. in communication studies from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania (2013). Ali uses critical, qualitative methods to research broadband policy, planning, deployment, and digital equity in the United States. Presently, he has a series of projects dedicated to “broadband stories,” where he is researching how community-based stories can influence public policy. These projects involve interviews, focus groups, surveys, and field work to better understand the qualitative and narrative experiences of those people, places, and organizations facing digital insecurity.

A national expert on broadband deployment, policy and planning, he is the author of the book *Farm Fresh Broadband: The politics of rural connectivity* (MIT Press, 2023) and is currently drafting a new book tentatively titled *If these maps could talk: Tales from the digital divide*. Based on his expertise, Dr. Ali was called to testify before the US Senate Commerce Committee in 2021 on broadband funding and policy programs. He has also briefed members of the House Democrats Task Force on Rural Broadband, the New York State Blue Ribbon Commission on Re-Imagining New York, the Federal Communications Commission, and has presented before numerous state and county governments. In addition to his academic writing which is published in numerous high impact peer-reviewed journals, his writing has been published in *The New York Times*, *The Hill*, *Realtor Magazine*, *Law & Political Economy*, *Digital Beat*, *GovTech*, *Zocalo Public Square*, *Washington Monthly*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *The Conversation*. He is the co-founder and co-director of the Pennsylvania Broadband Research Institute. At Penn State, Dr. Ali teaches COMM 180: Survey of Electronic Media and Telecommunications and COMM 486: Telecommunications Ethics. He regularly works with graduate students in the capacities of advisor, committee member, and mentor.

Selected Publications:

Books

Puppis, M. & Ali, C. (Eds). (2023). *Public Service Media’s Contribution to Society*. Nordicom.

Ali, C. (2021). *Farm fresh broadband: The politics of rural connectivity*. MIT Press

Ali, C. (2017). *Media localism: The policies of place*. University of Illinois Press.

Katz, E., Ali, C. & Kim, J. (2014). *Echoes of Gabriel Tarde: What we know better or different 100 years later*. USC Annenberg Press.

Journal Articles:

Ali, C. & Forde, S. (2025). Public Media Lobbying: The case of APTS. *Frontiers in Communication*.
<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/communication/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1548625/full>

- Ali, C., Van den Bulck, H, & Kropko, J. (2025). An Island of Trust: Public Broadcasting in the United States. *Journal of Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqaf009>
- Ali, C. (2025). People, Power, Praxis: A critical qualitative reminder to policy scholars and makers. *Canadian Journal of Communication*. <https://cjc.utppublishing.com/doi/10.3138/cjc-2024->
- Ali, C. & Katz, V. (2024). Evidence-based pathways for leveling digital access in higher education during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Information Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jinfopoli.14.2024.0019>
- Ali, C. (2023). Telecommunications Localism: The fight for control over local communication networks in the United States. Media International Australia.
- Ali, C. (2023). Lived Policy: Towards the humanization of telecommunications. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2023.2218954>
- Ali, C., Simmerman, A., & Lansing, N. (2022). Towards a connected commonwealth: The role of counties in Virginia broadband deployment. *Community Informatics*. <https://openjournals.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/JoCI/article/view/4806/5555>
- Mathews, N. & Ali, C. (2022). “Come on fu~er, just load!” Powerlessness, waiting and life without broadband. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmac020>
- Mathews, N. & Ali, C. (2022). Desert Work: Life and Labor in a News and Broadband Desert. *Mass Communication & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2022.2093749>
- Ali, C. (2020). The politics of good enough: Rural broadband and policy failure in the United States *International Journal of Communication*. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/15203/3285>

Denise Bortree

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Research Interests:

Research interests include nonprofit organization communication and environmental sustainability.

Biography:

Denise Bortree is a professor in the department of advertising/public relations and the director of the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication. Her research focuses on ethical dimensions of communication in the contexts of nonprofit organizations and environmental sustainability. She has authored more than 40 peer-reviewed journal articles, which have been published in journals such as *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *Public Relations Review*, *International Journal of Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Marketing*, among others. She has been a guest editor for special issues of four journals, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Journal of Public Relations Education*, *Public Relations Journal*, and *PRism*. In 2011 she consulted for the United Nations on the State of the World's Volunteerism study. Bortree earned a master's degree in mass communication, a master's in education with a focus in education psychology, and a Ph.D. in mass communication from the University of Florida.

Selected Publications:

- Bortree, D.S., Vafeiadis, M., Diddi, P., Harrison, V. (2025, accepted). The role of self-transcendent emotions and empathy in motivating nonprofit audiences toward social and environmental issues. *Journal of Philanthropy*
- Eng, N.J., Troy, C.L., & Bortree, D.S. (2024). Symbolic and Substantive Legitimation: Examining Corporate Commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 12. *Journal of Communication Management* 28(1), 74-92
- Troy, C.L., Norman, M.P., Eng, N.J., Freeman, J., & Bortree, D.S. (2023). Effects of climate CSA and CSR messaging: the moderating role of green consumer identity. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 28(6), 873-892.
- Xiao, A., Huang, Y., Bortree, D. S., & Waters, R. D. (2022). Designing social media fundraising messages: An experimental approach to understanding how message concreteness and framing influence donation intentions. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 51(4), 832-856.
- Bortree, D.S., Ahern, L., Dou, X. Smith, A.N. (2012). Framing the environmental movement: A study of advocacy messages in National Geographic Magazine. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 17(2), 77-99.
- Bortree, D.S. (2010). Exploring adolescent-organization relationships: A study of effective relationship strategies with adolescent volunteers. *Journal of Public Relations Research*. 21(1), 1- 25.

Jiyoung Cha

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Research Interests:

Media management, media industries, communication technology, consume behavior



Biography:

Jiyoung Cha, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Telecommunications and Media Industries at Penn State. Her research aims to understand the competitive dynamics of the media marketplace, the business principles of media firms, how new media change audiences' media consumption patterns, and why audiences adopt or reject new communication technologies.

She has researched the dynamic and symbiotic relationship between video streaming platforms and traditional video platforms as well as innovative ways to finance media for producing and distributing content. Other research projects have investigated social media usage, the business models of social media platforms, social media influencer marketing, and the credibility of social media. She has also explored the use of AI-powered recommendation algorithms and algorithm aversion. Her research has appeared in peer-reviewed journals, including the International Journal of Communications, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, Telematics and Informatics, the International Journal on Media Management, the Journal of Media Economics, the Journal of Media Business Studies, the Journal of Media Management and Entrepreneurship, the Journal of Electronic Commerce Research, and the Journal of Advertising Research among others.

Currently, Cha is an editorial board member of the Journal of Media Economics, the Journal of Media Business Studies, the Nordic Journal of Media Management, and the Korean Journal of Communication. She received best research paper awards from the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) among others. She also served as the head of the Media Management, Economics, and Entrepreneurship Division of AEJMC. Jiyoung Cha earned her M.A. in television, radio and film from Syracuse University and Ph.D. in mass communication with a minor in marketing from the University of Florida.

Colleen Connolly-Ahern

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Research Interests:

International Strategic Communication, Political Communication, Health Communication, Content Analysis, Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies

Biography:

Colleen Connolly-Ahern joined the Penn State faculty in Fall 2004. She brings a mix of teaching, research and public service that match well with the College of Communications' mission to train future communications professionals for careers and for life.

Connolly-Ahern's research interests include international political advertising and health communications, as well as issues of culture, framing and media access in strategic communications. She has published more than a dozen peer-reviewed articles, as well as one law review article, and her work has appeared in journals such as *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, and *Communication, Culture and Critique*. Since coming to Penn State, she has presented more than 25 papers at academic conferences. She is a former head of the Public Relations Division of AEJMC, a member of the editorial board of *JPRR*, and has served as a member of the Advisory Board for the Penn State Yearbook, *La Vie*. Connolly-Ahern teaches a wide range of undergraduate advertising and public relations classes and serves as the course co-coordinator for COMM 420 Advertising and Public Relations Research. She also teaches graduate seminars (COMM 511 Qualitative Research Methods and COMM 597 International and Intercultural Strategic Communications).

Colleen Connolly-Ahern graduated from Georgetown University with an undergraduate degree in medieval history, but because Romanesque cathedrals are scarce in the United States, she took a job in the advertising industry. Among other positions, she worked as managing editor for *Marine Log Magazine* and promotion manager for *USA Today* before starting her own marketing communications firm, Abbey Lane Marketing.

Selected Publications:

Connolly-Ahern, C., Schejter, A., & Obar, J.A. (2012). The Poor Man's Lamb revisited: Assessing the state of LPFM at its 10th anniversary. *The Communication Review*, 15, 21-44.

Connolly-Ahern, C., & Castells i Talens, A. (2010). The role of indigenous people in Guatemalan political advertisements: An ethnographic content analysis. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 3(3), 310-333.

Benjamin W. Cramer

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Research Interests:

Telecommunications Law, Media Law, Environmental Policy



Biography:

Ben Cramer joined the Bellisario College in 2010 as a post-doctoral fellow and served as managing editor of the *Journal of Information Policy*. He was promoted to Teaching Professor in 2023.

His research focuses on media law and telecommunications policy, with concentrations in government transparency, democratic theory, privacy/surveillance, and the political economy of communications. Environmental law is a significant outside interest. He teaches courses in telecommunications law, media law, environmental policy and writing.

He previously served as a visiting professor at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. He has published more than 20 peer-reviewed/refereed journal articles, presents research regularly at leading scholarly conferences, and published the book *Freedom of Environmental Information* in 2011.

Cramer also has nearly a decade of experience as a curriculum designer and as a classroom instructor in the information technology field and is the author/editor of eight general interest books about outdoor recreation.

Selected Publications:

Critical Shrinking: The Perils of Opaque and Undefined Critical Infrastructure Policy in American Communications, *Journal of Civic Information* (2024)

Polluters Anonymous: How Exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act Contradict American Environmental Law, *Journal of Environmental Law and Litigation* (2024)

Paranoid Androids: Free Speech vs. Privacy in America's Resistance against Intrusive Robocalls, *Communication Law & Policy* (2023)

Entity of the State: The Transparency of Restricting Telecommunications Firms as Threats to America's National Security, *Notre Dame Journal of Emerging Technologies* (2023)

The Moral Hazard of Lax FCC Land Use Oversight for Advanced Network Infrastructure, *Telecommunications Policy* (2021)

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Research Interests:

1. Persuasive effects (mostly message factors) in strategic communications, consumer behavior, corporate communications, and sociopolitical contexts.
2. Effects of brand placement in interactive media and videogames.
3. Corporate social responsibility.

Biography:

Dr. Dardis is an associate professor and has been at Penn State since 2003, when he received his Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina. He received both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Florida. His current research encompasses two main areas: the persuasive effects of message factors, and the effects of brand placements in interactive media. He is a Faculty Affiliate of Penn State's Media Effects Research Laboratory, at which he conducts most of his research, and is a Senior Research Fellow at the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication. He also is Associate Editor of *Journal of Promotion Management* and sits on the Editorial Boards of *Journal of Interactive Advertising* and *Mass Communication and Society*. In addition to teaching numerous undergraduate courses, Dr. Dardis teaches a graduate seminar in strategic communications and persuasion (COMM 520) and an online M.P.S. course in strategic communications (COMM 531), and serves on multiple Master's and Doctoral committees. Prior to working in academia, Dr. Dardis worked in the marketing and advertising departments of several large corporations, including an Anheuser-Busch subsidiary, a golf course/real estate developer, and a professional baseball team.

Selected Publications:

Dardis, F. E., Haigh, M. M., Overton, H., & Bailey, E. (2025). Optimizing brand perceptions by aligning corporate communication strategy with message framing strategy in CSR messages. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 1-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2025.2484713>

Maksi, S. J., Keller, K. L., Dardis, F. E., Veechi, M., Freeman, J., Evans, R. K., Boyland, E., & Masterson, T. D. (2024). The food and beverage cues in digital marketing (FBCDM) model: Special considerations of social media, gaming, and livestreaming environments for food marketing and eating behavior research. *Frontiers in Nutrition*, 10, 1-15. DOI: [10.3389/fnut.2023.1325265](https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2023.1325265)

Dardis, F. E., Schmierbach, M., Sherrick, B., & Luckman, B. (2019). How game difficulty and ad framing influence memory of in-game advertisements. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 36(1), 1-11.

Dardis, F. E., Schmierbach, M., Sherrick, B., Waddell, F., & Aviles, J., Kumble, S., & Bailey, E. (2016). Adver-where? Comparing the effectiveness of banner ads and video ads in online video games. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 16(2), 87-100.

Jo Dumas

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Research Interests:

Ethics and social responsibility in AI, social media, gaming and information and communication technology policy, practice, access and media effects.
Communications and knowledge sharing on progress toward United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and achievement by 2030.



Biography:

Education includes:

PhD: Penn State University, Mass Communications
MA: Penn State University, Telecommunications
Certificate in Filmmaking. New York University
BSEE: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Electrical Engineering
ASES: Dutchess Community College, Engineering Science

Professional Experience includes:

Associate Teaching Professor: Penn State University, University Park, PA, 2003-present
Consultant, Communications and Outreach: WSIS Gender Caucus, 2003
Project Associate: bridges.org, Capetown, South Africa, 2003
Guest Lecturer: University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, 2002- 2003
Associate and Graduate Fellow: Institute for Information Policy, PSU 1998-2003
Instructor: Pennsylvania State University, College of Communications, 1998-2002
Research Assistant: Pennsylvania State University, 1996-1998
Broadcast Engineer: Fox Television, WNYW -TV, NYC, 1981-1997
Project Engineer: Harris Corporation, Poughkeepsie, NY, 1979-81
Engineering Technician: IBM, Product Assurance Lab, Poughkeepsie, NY, 1979
TV Production Workshop Coordinator: Nassau County BOCES, NY, 1987-1998

Selected Publications:

Dumas, Ann (2009) Information and Communications Technology and Gender Equity Policy: Lessons of the Mali telecentres. VDM Verlag Dr Muller.
Dumas, J. Ann. (2006) The Beijing World Conference on Women, ICT Policy and Gender. In Eileen Trauth, Ed. Encyclopedia of Gender and Information Technology. Harrisburg, PA: Idea Group, Inc.
Gender ICT and Millennium Development Goals. In Eileen Trauth, Encyclopedia of Gender and Information Technology. Harrisburg, PA: Idea Group, Inc.
WSIS, Gender and ICT Policy. In Eileen Trauth, Ed. Encyclopedia of Gender and Information Technology. Harrisburg, PA: Idea Group, Inc.

Katie Fitzgerald

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Research Interests:

Narrative, media psychology, well-being



Biography:

Kaitlin (Katie) Fitzgerald is an assistant professor in the Department of Film Production and Media Studies in the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications at Penn State. Her research and teaching focus on narrative and media effects. She studies how stories and other media messages shape individuals' emotions, information processing, attitudes, and behavior. Her research examines the psychological processes underlying narrative persuasion and media effects, with an emphasis on how entertainment media can promote health, well-being, and prosocial outcomes. Her work has examined restorative narratives, moral and prosocial storytelling, and social media use, as well as the role of media in shaping audiences' responses to grief, resilience, and other complex social issues.

Her research has appeared in journals including *Media Psychology*, *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Research*, and *Mass Communication and Society*. Before joining Penn State, she earned her Ph.D. in Communication from the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, completed postdoctoral appointments at KU Leuven and Cornell University, and served as a lecturer in Cornell University's Department of Communication.

Selected Publications:

Fitzgerald, K., Francemone, C.J., Green, M.C., Grizzard, M., & Frazer, R. (2023). The Emotional Flow Scale: Validating a measure of dynamic emotional experiences in message reception. *Media Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2023.2215447>

Fitzgerald, K., Francemone, C.J., & Grizzard, M. (2022). Humor and poignancy: Exploring narrative pathways to face death and bereavement. *Frontiers in Communication*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2022.973239>

Fitzgerald, K., Paravati, E., Green, M.C., Moore, M.M., & Qian, J. L. (2019). Restorative narratives for health promotion. *Health Communication*, 35, 356-363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2018.1563032>

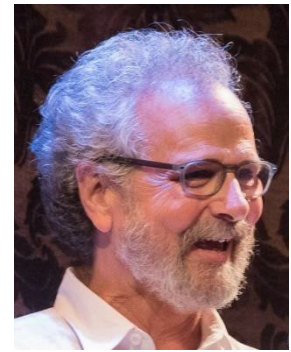
Russell Frank

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Research Interests:

Journalism ethics; literary journalism; Internet folklore; folklore in the news/the news in folklore

Biography:

Russell Frank is a folklorist by training (MA, UCLA; PhD, UPenn) and a journalist by trade. He worked as a reporter and editor for newspapers in California and Pennsylvania for 13 years before joining the journalism faculty at Penn State, where he has been teaching newswriting, feature writing, column writing, literary journalism and journalism ethics since 1998. In addition to his scholarly writing on journalism ethics, literary journalism and Internet folklore, he maintains his connection to the journalism world as a freelance and as a regular columnist for Statecollege.com. His columns were awarded first place in the 2019 Keystone SPJ Spotlight Contest. He spent the 2019-2020 academic year teaching at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece as a Fulbright Scholar. He has twice been a Fulbright Scholar: in Ukraine in 2012-13 and in Greece in 2019-20.

Selected Publications:

“The Refugees Who Stayed in Greece When Others Moved West,” *New Lines*, Winter 2024.

“Making Visible the Invisible: George Orwell’s ‘Marrakech.’” In *Social Justice and Literary Journalism*, Robert Alexander and Willa McDonald, eds., Springer International Publishing (in press).

“Field-Truthing a Dream,” *Hidden Compass*, January 2021.

<https://hiddencompass.net/story/fieldtruthing-a-dream/>

“Fake News vs. ‘Foke’ News: A Brief, Personal, Recent History,” *Journal of American Folklore* 131, (Fall 2018).

Among the Woo People: A Survival Guide for Living in a College Town. Penn State Press (2017).

“Invasion of the Red Bull Zombies,” *New York Times*, Nov. 5, 2017.

Newslore: Contemporary Folklore on the Internet. University Press of Mississippi (2011).

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Research Interests:

My research interests converge within the fields of Journalism, Communication and Political Science. Generally, how do new technologies, digital, social media, and algorithms, and AI, affect people's daily lives? What are the mechanisms that explain the ways people participate politically, and civically? In a potentially fragmented and polarized (social) media context, and with fake news and misinformation unabated, how do citizens become informed and discuss politics today? What is the role of new technologies, digital, and social media, in these processes? My scholarly work seeks to improve our understanding of all these processes and hopefully, contributes to creating a healthier, more informed, participatory, and egalitarian democracy.

Biography:

Along with his duties as Distinguished Professor at Penn State, Gil de Zúñiga is a Distinguished Research Professor in Political Science at University of Salamanca, where he directs the Democracy Research Unit, and a Senior Research Fellow at Universidad Diego Portales, Chile. Prior to these appointments he was the Medienwandel Professor at University of Vienna, an Associate Professor at the University of Texas – Austin, and a Research Fellow at several Institutions (i.e., Center for Information Technology Policy at Princeton University, Nieman Journalism Lab at Harvard University, etc.). He has published several books with prestigious academic publishers, including his latest book *Social Media Democracy Mirage* with Cambridge University Press. Likewise, his work (nearly 200 articles) has been published in JCR indexed academic journals, receiving research awards from the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR), the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), the International Communication Association (ICA), and the American Political Science Association (APSA).

Gil de Zúñiga serves as ad hoc reviewer for over 80 scientific journals and sits at over 20 journal editorial boards. He is an ICA Fellow, recipient of the Penn State University Outstanding Achievement Medal, the Kriehbaum Under-40 Award, the Baskett Mosse Award at AEJMC, and was included in Clarivate's list in 2020 and 2022 (Wos/JCR) as Highly Cited Scholar.

Selected Recent Publications:

Gil de Zúñiga, H., González-González, P., & Goyanes, M. (2025). Pathways to Political Persuasion: Linking Online, Social Media, and Fake News with Political Attitude Change Through Political Discussion. *American Behavioral Scientist* 69(2), 240–261.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Goyanes, M., & Durotoye, T. (2024). A Scholarly Definition of Artificial Intelligence (AI): Advancing AI as a Conceptual Framework in Communication Research. *Political Communication* 41(2), 317–334.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Scheffauer, R., & Zhang, B. (2024). Cable News Use and Conspiracy Theories: Exploring Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC Effects on People's Conspiracy Mentality. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 101(4), 889–910

Pearl Gluck

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Research Interests:

Cultural and ethnic influences on contemporary television and film, the rise of the Hollywood studio system, the use of comedy as social critique, and representations of gender, class, and faith in cinema.

Biography:

A filmmaker with a valuable mix of professional and teaching experience, Pearl Gluck joined the College of Communications faculty in 2014.

She previously taught at Ohio University, Indiana University, Emory University and Rutgers University. She has taught courses on screenwriting, production, directing, film criticism, film studies and Jewish studies. She has also conducted independent studies for graduate and undergraduate students and has advised thesis projects.

Through her classes and her filmmaking, she explores themes such as cultural and ethnic influences on contemporary television and film, the rise of the Hollywood studio system, the use of comedy as social critique, and representations of gender, class, and faith in cinema.

Selected Media, Film, and Production:

Where is Joel Baum (2012), Director/Producer

Short Narrative film starring Lynn Cohen, Tibor Feldman, and Arthur French

Premier: Starz Denver Film Festival, 2012

Recipient: Hadassah Brandeis Institute Grant, Temple University Research Grant

Winner, Best Actor at the Starz Denver Film Festival

Winner, Best Film at the Female Eye Film Festival

The Boogie (2011), Director and Writer

WTIU (PBS affiliate), The Weekly Special Short documentary on a local motorcycle boogie

Behind Closed Door (2012), Editor

Narrative short directed by Academy Award Nominee, Joan Stein

Profiles in Great Teaching (2006-2011), Director/Producer

Short documentary films produced for The Covenant Foundation featuring: David Gregory, NBC News; Martha Minnow, Harvard Law School Dean; Liz Lerman, The Dance Exchange; Rabbi Yakov Horowitz, Sex Educator; Jan Darsa, Facing History and Ourselves

Kevin Hagopian

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Research Interests:

Kevin's research specialties are cinema history and theory, pedagogy, and cultural history and the media. His research approach is grounded in institutional histories and the historical poetics of the cinema.

Biography:

Kevin Hagopian is a media studies generalist and a cinema studies specialist. He has published articles on a variety of topics in cinema history and theory, in areas such as parody, postcolonialism, race, and whiteness, as well as an edited anthology on higher education pedagogy. His book manuscript entitled *Hollywood Exceptionalism: Institutional Self-Promotion and National Identity in the American Film Industry, 1936-1945* is under consideration by a university press.

Hollywood Exceptionalism: Corporate Self-Promotion and Nationhood in the American Film Industry, 1936-1945.

Kevin teaches a variety of undergraduate courses in the critical/cultural wing of the department, including Comm 150: Introduction to the Art of the Cinema, Comm 250: Film Theory and History, Comm 333: Film History from its Beginnings to 1960, Comm 433: Film History from 1960-present, Comm 453: International Cinema, Comm 454: The Documentary Cinema, and Comm 411: Cultural Aspects of the Mass Media. Kevin also teaches our graduate seminar Comm 502: Pedagogy of Communications. He has served on a variety of graduate thesis and dissertation committees in Bellisario College on topics such as Afrofuturism and Black Panther, media representations of Appalachia, and Frankfurt-style theory applied to music streaming. He regularly presents at conferences, including the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, and has published many book reviews and encyclopedia entries. Kevin also works on programming for the Centre Film Festival, an international film festival now in its sixth year. He is a past winner of the College's Dean's Excellence in Teaching Award, and the College's Alumni Society Award for Excellence in Teaching, and the first winner of the Thomas W. Briggs Award for Distinguished Teaching at the University of Memphis, where he taught African American studies.

Selected Publications:

"Toma to Baretta: Mediating Primetime White Ethnicity in the Post Civil Rights Era" *Italian-American Review* 6 (2016), 229-267.

"The Melodrama of the Hacienda: Luis Bunuel's *Abismos de Pasión* as Postcolonial Trans\Plantation" in Shouhua Qi & Jacqueline Padgett, eds., *The Bronte Sisters in Other Worlds* (New York: Palgrave/MacMillan, 2014)

David Knowlton & Kevin Hagopian, eds., *From Entitlement to Engagement: Affirming Millennial Students' Egos in the Higher Education Classroom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013)

"Flint and Satyriasis: The Bond Parodies of the 1960's," in Jeremy Packer, ed. *Secret Agents: Popular Icons beyond James Bond* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 21-52.

“How You Fixed for Red Points?” Anecdote and the World War II Home Front in *The Big Sleep* (1946),” in Alain Silver and James Ursini, eds. *Film Noir Reader 4: The Crucial Themes and Films* (New York: Limelight, 2004), 33-52.

Virginia Harrison

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Website:



Research Interests:

nonprofit communication, stewardship, corporate social responsibility, sports public relations

Biography:

Virginia Harrison is an associate professor in the Bellisario College of Communications. She teaches undergraduate public relations courses in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations.

Her research centers around the concept of stewardship, primarily in the context of nonprofit-donor relationships. She aims to better define, measure, and understand how dialogic stewardship plays a role in deepening nonprofit donor engagement and to explore its value in other contexts with attention to ethical donor relations. Her secondary area of interest is better understanding how corporate social responsibility and athlete advocacy impacts sports stakeholder relationships.

Before earning her Ph.D. from Penn State, she spent seven years in public relations and fundraising practice. Dr. Harrison's work has been published in top public relations, nonprofit, and sports communication journals, such as *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Public Relations Review*, and *Communication & Sport*. She has presented numerous papers at International Communication Association and Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conferences, where she has won top paper awards. She is a three-time Page/Johnson Legacy Scholar from the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication (2022, 2024, 2026) and has been invited to present her work to fundraising professionals. She joined the Bellisario faculty in 2026.

Selected Publications:

Harrison, V. S. (2025). Virtually raising the paddle: Examining the role of online nonprofit stewardship in the post-COVID era. *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. Ahead-of-print: <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640251396012>.

Harrison, V. S., Overton, H., & Vafeiadis, M. (2024). Perceptions of athlete activism and contentious issues: Parasocial relationships, involvement, and athlete-cause fit as motivation for cause support. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 36(6), 494–512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2024.2385318>.

Harrison, V. S. (2023). Why relationships fail: Donor insights on defining and understanding successes and failures in nonprofit stewardship. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 35(4), 236-258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2023.2198237>.

Harrison, V. S. (2023). The communicative power of nonprofit actions and values: A pilot study of dialogic stewardship. *Public Relations Review*, 49, 102280.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102280>.

Yujin Heo

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Research Interests:

Strategic Communication, Digital Advertising, Consumer Psychology, Persuasion, Media Psychology

Biography:

Yujin Heo is an assistant professor in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations. Her research focuses on strategic communication, digital advertising, consumer psychology, and persuasion. Specifically, she investigates how the shifting media landscape impacts consumer responses to advertising and how message characteristics drive persuasion and behavior.

Her work has been published in leading academic journals, including the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *Mass Communication and Society*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, and *Journal of Health Communication*. Her scholarship has received both national and international recognition, including a top paper award and a research award from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

She earned a B.S. in mathematics and an M.A. in mass communications from Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, South Korea, and a Ph.D. in mass communications from the University of South Carolina.

Selected Publications:

Heo, Y., Moon, J., Jones-Jang, S. M., & Chung, S. (2025). Why Do People Underestimate Polling Effects? Examining the Gap Between Actual and Perceived Polling Effects. *Mass Communication and Society*, 28(2), 276-300.

Heo, Y., Choi, C. W., Overton, H., K. Kim, J., & Zhang, N. (2022). Feeling connected to the cause: The role of perceived social distance on cause involvement and consumer response to CSR communication. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 99(1), 213-236.

Jones-Jang, S. M., Heo, Y. J., McKeever, R., Kim, J. H., Moscovitz, L., & Moscovitz, D. (2020). Good news! Communication findings may be underestimated: Comparing effect sizes with self-reported and logged smartphone use data. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 25(5), 346-363.



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Research Interests:

Intellectual property, First Amendment, communications law, and telecommunications regulation with an emphasis on copyright, free speech and the relationship between law and new technologies



Biography:

Matt Jackson teaches copyright and intellectual property, telecommunications policy, communications and advertising law, and media programming strategies at Penn State University. His research focuses on how copyright law shapes communication networks and impacts free speech. He also studies how the First Amendment and other legal issues affect the Internet and other media and telecommunications industries.

Professor Jackson has published articles in numerous outlets including *Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Cardozo Arts & Entertainment Law Journal*, *Federal Communications Law Journal*, and *Communications Law and Policy*. He also writes the chapter on cable regulation for *Communication and the Law*.

From 2004-2006, Professor Jackson served as chair of the Law and Policy division of the International Communication Association. In 2006, he was a Visiting Senior Lecturer at the University of Otago in New Zealand and a Research Fellow at the Centre for Media and Communications Law at the University of Melbourne in Australia.

Selected Publications:

Jackson, Matt. (2022). Regulating cable communications. In W. Wat Hopkins (Ed.), *Communication and the Law* (205-223). Vision Press.

Jackson, Matt. (2010). Copyright. In Wolfgang Donsbach (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Communication* (pp. 998-1002). Oxford: Blackwell.

Jackson, Matt. (2007). Finding safe harbors for speech: Internet service providers. In Peter Yu (Ed.), *Intellectual Property and Information Wealth*, Vol. 1 (pp. 307-320). London: Praeger.

Jackson, Matt. (2006). Protecting digital television: Controlling copyright or consumers? *Media and Arts Law Review*, 11, 3.

Jackson, Matt. (2006). *The technological revolution will not be televised: Canadian copyright and internet transmissions*, *Michigan State Law Review*, 1, 133-152.

Krishna Jayakar

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Research Interests:

Universal broadband policy; media economics (international distribution of film and television programs), political economy of copyright



Biography:

Dr. Krishna Jayakar is a Professor and Head of the Department of Telecommunications and Media Industries in Bellisario College. He serves as the co-Director of the Institute for Information Policy at Penn State University, and as Affiliate faculty in the School of Public Policy. He is the author (with Dr. Chun Liu) of *Making Policy for the New Information Economy: Comparing China and India* (2023) as well as of numerous journal articles, conference presentations and invited talks on telecommunications policy and media economics. He is the Co-Editor of the *Journal of Information Policy*, founded in 2011. Dr. Jayakar has received research grants from the National Science Foundation, the Pacific Telecommunications Council, Time Warner Cable, the Free Press Foundation, AT&T, etc.

He teaches courses in telecommunications management and media economics, including a graduate seminar, Comm 585, Media and Telecommunications Industries. He was the 2020 recipient of the Barry Sherman Award for media economics education from the Media Economics, Management and Entrepreneurship Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. He also leads the Information Policy Research Group, that meets once every two weeks during the academic year.

Before his academic career, Dr. Jayakar was a research officer in India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, drafting research reports and position papers on media policy. Dr. Jayakar received his undergraduate degree in engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology-BHU, India, and masters and PhD from Indiana University, Bloomington.

Recent Publications:

Zhang, P., Jayakar, K., Taylor, R., & Liu, C. (forthcoming, 2025). Same goal, different paths: Contrasting approaches to AI regulation in China and India. *Telecommunications Policy*.

Jayakar, K., & Mishra, S. (forthcoming, 2025). Predictors of Innovation Adoption by Small Healthcare Firms in India: The Case of Web Accessibility Standards. *Vikalpa, The Journal for Decision Makers*.

Wang, R. Y., & Jayakar, K. (2024). Learning from the neighbors: The diffusion of state broadband policies in the United States. *Telecommunications Policy*, 48(7), 102809.

Jayakar, K., & Liu, C. (2023). *Making policy for the new information economy: Comparing China and India*. New York, NY: Routledge.

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Research Interests:

Dr. Jordan's research explores how popular media forms and media technologies are used to constitute and reify aspects of personal identity and cultural ideology.



Biography:

Matt Jordan is head of the Department of Film Production & Media Studies and a critical media scholar who works on the role of media in everyday culture. He majored in History and English at Allegheny College and received an MA from Drew University in Modern European Intellectual History. His doctorate from Claremont Graduate University is in European Studies.

His work blends a Frankfurt School critical sensibility with a concern for power and ideology drawn from British Cultural Studies to understand the expansion of media into all aspects of everyday life. He has written extensively on the ways in which cultural ideologies are constructed by way of ongoing conversations in and about popular culture in Europe, Britain, and America. His latest book, [*Danger Sound Klaxon: The Horn that Changed History*](#), details how the vanguard marketing of klaxon horn technology in the early days of the Automobile changed the public's perception of its uniquely loud noise by associating this communication technology with safety. His essays on emerging issues and trends in media culture, their history and their implications for democracy, have appeared in *The Conversation*, *Quartz*, *The Washington Post*, *Fortune*, *Smithsonian*, *The Huffington Post*, *Scroll*, and elsewhere. He is the Executive Producer of the PSU Humanities Institute's documentary series "[*HumIn Focus*](#)," and director of Penn State's News Literacy Initiative, for which he hosts the podcast "[*News over Noise*](#)."

Selected Publications:

Jordan, M (2025). "The Many Voices of Harry Shearer: Radio *Ethopoeia*, Satire, and Learning to Hear the Right-Wing Voice." *Resonance*, 6(2): 227-41

Jordan, M (2023). *Danger Sound Klaxon: The Horn that Changed History*, (University of Virginia Press).

Jordan, M. (2020). "Noise," in *Information: Keywords*, Abel, J., Frederick, S. and Kennerly, M. eds. (Columbia University Press).

Jordan, M. (2017). "Becoming Quiet: On Mediation, Noise Cancellation, and Commodity Quietness," in *Conditions of Mediation: Phenomenological Approaches to Media, Technology and Communication*, Rodgers, S. & Markham, T., eds. (Peter Lang).

Jordan, M. (2014). "Canned Music and Captive Audiences: The Battle over Public Soundspace at Grand Central Terminal and the Emergence of the New Sound." *The Communication Review*, 17: 286-310.

Jordan, M. (2013). "Obama's Ipod: Popular Music and the Perils of Post-Political Populism," *Popular Communication*, 11 (2): 99-115.

Sara Liao

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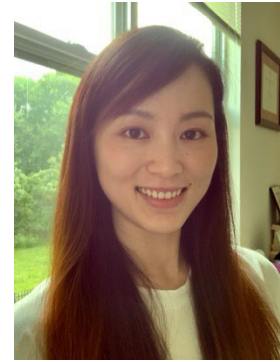
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Research Interests:

Feminist media studies, critical cultural studies, globalization, digital labor, East Asian popular culture, social movements and digital activism



Biography:

I am a media scholar and feminist. I got my Ph.D. in media studies from the Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas. I have worked at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) as an assistant professor before joining Penn State. My research investigates how media technologies, the state, consumerism, and gender dynamics are imbricated in the production of culture and the various forms of identities in a transnational setting, with a focus on broader Chinese societies. This body of work is interdisciplinary and transnational, with not only my commitment to gender equality and social justice, but also my efforts to collaborate with academics, activists, and students across disciplinary and geographical borders.

My current book project, *Unpopular Feminism*, offers a media-centered analysis of the rising discourses and practices about feminism and anti-feminism in the pull and push of marketization, platform capitalism, and techno-nationalism. Focusing on postsocialist China, this book explores gender politics amid the technological transformations of the state-market complex, examining contemporary feminist activism alongside the commodification of feminism and anti-feminism in the digital economy. I argue that feminism in China today is both a popular genre to be consumed and a minority political pursuit clinging to survival in the face of surveillance capitalism and nationalist sentiments. *Unpopular Feminism* highlights the broad spectrum of feminist thought and practices amid a platform-based and technology-aided sexist and patriarchal system, showing the convergence and divergence of feminism and misogyny that are both neoliberal and postsocialist.

Selected Publications:

Liao, S. (under contract). *Unpopular Feminism: Popular Media, Technocultures, and Gender Politics in China*. University of Washington Press.

Liao, S. (2024). Women politicians, social movements, and misogyny in democratic struggles. *Global Storytelling: Journal of Digital and Moving Images*, 4(1): 1-7.
<https://doi.org/10.3998/gs.5623>

Liao, S. (2024). Unpopular feminism: Popular culture and gender politics in digital China. *Communication & the Public*, online first, 1-8.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20570473241268066>

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Research Interests:

Public Relations, Activism, Crisis Communication, Intersectional Feminism,
Women in Politics, Qualitative and Rhetorical Methodologies



Biography:

Dr. Stephanie Madden is an associate professor in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations and an affiliate faculty member in the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and has a passion for advocacy and social justice issues. Her research focuses on amplifying marginalized voices and bringing stigmatized issues, such as gender-based violence, into a larger discussion within public relations. Her research, teaching, and service focus on using public relations to drive positive social change and build community at both organizational and societal levels through trauma-informed approaches.

Prior to pursuing her Ph.D., Madden was a full-time researcher at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence. During this time, she helped to develop a FEMA-accredited risk and crisis communication training and conducted research on FEMA's Wireless Emergency Alert system.

Selected Publications:

Madden, S., & Beykont, Y. (2025). "You're dealing with kids": Trauma-informed communicative resilience within school public relations. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990251336382>

Madden, S., & Guastaferro, K. (2024). "Public relations isn't all rainbows and butterflies": Student experiences in developing a child sexual abuse prevention campaign. *Journal of Public Relations Education*, 10(2), 8-41. <https://journalofpreducation.com/2024/10/01/public-relations-isnt-all-rainbows-and-butterflies-student-experiences-in-developing-a-child-sexual-abuse-prevention-campaign/>

Madden, S., & Levenshus, A. (2021). Broadening the umbrella of women's leadership and public relations: an ethnographic case study of a women's political leadership development program. *Journal of Public Relations Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2021.2015354>

Madden, S., & Alt, R. A. (2021). Know her name: Open dialogue on social media as a form of innovative justice. *Social Media + Society*, 7(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120984447>

Martin Marinos

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Research Interests:

Global and comparative media studies, political economy of media, media theory, and race and nationalism.



Biography:

Martin Marinos' research and teaching areas include global and comparative media studies, political economy of media, media theory, transnational television history, critical cultural studies, socialist and postsocialist media, race, and nationalism. Using a multi-method approach—archival research, ethnographic observation, and interviews with journalists, media managers, and politicians—his book *Free to Hate: How Media Liberalization Enabled Right-Wing Populism in Postsocialist Bulgaria* (University of Illinois Press, Nov. 2023) explores how media commercialization in Central and Eastern Europe helped fuel the far-right's rise. His work has appeared in *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *Journalism Studies*, *Communication, Capitalism and Critique*, *Global Media Journal*, *VIEW Journal of European Television, History, and Culture*, *Digital Icons*, *Social History*, *Radical Philosophy*, and *Southeastern Europe*. At PSU, he teaches graduate seminars in global media and undergraduate courses including *Global Media, Culture, and Society*, *Political Economy of Communication*, and *Comparative National Media in a Global Context*.

Marinos earned his Ph.D. in Communication and a Ph.D. Certificate in Cultural Studies from the University of Pittsburgh in 2016. His dissertation received multiple awards, including the Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship, a University of Pittsburgh Andrew Mellon Predoctoral Fellowship, and a Dissertation Fellowship from the American Research Center in Sofia, Bulgaria. From 2017 to 2019, he was a postdoctoral research scholar at Columbia University's Harriman Institute, where he also taught in the School of International and Public Affairs.

Marinos also explores theory through creative practice. He was the screenwriter of *Flame*, an award-winning short documentary about a Bulgarian artist who self-immolated during the 2013 protests against utility costs. The film received the Audience Award at the Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival and screened internationally. He is currently co-producing a second documentary on the Bulgarian "Kukeri" mumming tradition and rural decline.

Selected Publications:

Books

Marinos, M. (November 2023) *Free to Hate: Media Liberalization and Right-Wing Populism after 1989* (Champaign, IL, University of Illinois Press).

Articles

Marinos, M. "Ethnography of Media Production: An Endangered Species?" International Journal of Communication, online first.

Marinos, M. "The People's Advocate: Exploring Journalistic Roles in Socialist Bulgaria," Journalism Studies, online first.

Marinos, M. and Spassov, O. (Special Issue Editors) "The Media in Southeastern Europe – Socialism, Transition, Capitalism: An Introduction," Southeastern Europe 47 (August 2023)

Marinos, M. "Roma, Race and Socially Engaged Television on the Fringes of Europe," VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture 10, n.19 (2021).

Marinos, M. "New Media, New Habits: Socialist Television and the Struggle for 'Harmonious' Consumption," Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European Media 15 (October 2016), 37-55.

Matt McAllister

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Research Interests:

His research interests include critical advertising studies, popular culture, and the political economy of the media



Biography:

Matthew P. McAllister is Professor of Communications in the Department of Film Production & Media Studies. He is the author of *The Commercialization of American Culture* (1996, Sage), and the co-editor of *Comics and Ideology* (2001, Peter Lang), *Film and Comic Books* (2007, University Press of Mississippi), *The Advertising and Consumer Culture Reader* (2009, Routledge), and *The Routledge Companion to Advertising and Promotional Culture* (2013). In 2010 he was selected as a Penn State Alumni Teaching Fellow and in 2014, he was the recipient of the Graduate Faculty Teaching Award. He earned a BA and MA in the Department of Communication at Purdue University, and a Ph.D. in the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Selected Publications:

Asquith, K., Chávez, C., Jenkins, J. L., Lekakis, E., & McAllister, M. P. (2025). Roundtable on teaching an advertising & society course: A 2025 update. *Advertising & Society Quarterly*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.1353/asr.2025.a958001>

McAllister, M. P., Forde S. L., & Beykont, Y. (2024). bell hooks' "eating the other" as a critical advertising framework. In A. Das, H. R. Chaudhuri, & O. S. Turkdogan (Eds.), *Postcolonial marketing communication: Images from the margin* (pp. 17-35). Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-0285-5_3

McAllister, M. P., Cikovic, M., & Salomone, C. (2023). "I keep hearing the promo, 'You're fired!': Promotional culture, populist authoritarianism, and *The Apprentice*. In E. West & M. P. McAllister (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to advertising and promotional culture* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 304-316). New York: Routledge.

McAllister, M. P., & Galarza, L. (2023). The relationship between US advertising and popular culture: Four historical threads. In E. West & M. P. McAllister (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to advertising and promotional culture* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 35-47). New York: Routledge.

McAllister, M. P., Beykont, Y., & Forde, S. L. (2023). The racialized celebrity other in perfume advertisements. *Communication, Culture, & Critique*, 16(3), 141-157. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcad002>

Andrea Miller



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Research Interests:

Transnational and postcolonial feminist theory, feminist philosophy, science and technology studies, cultural studies

Biography:

Andrea Miller is Assistant Professor of Telecommunications and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies as well as Director of the Feminist Technocultures Lab, dedicated to interdisciplinary scholarly, creative, and applied collaborations between faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students, and beyond. Their courses range from Emergent Telecommunication Technologies and Feminist Thought and Politics as well as graduate seminars in Feminist Technology Studies and Feminist Theory. They received their PhD at the University of California, Davis in Cultural Studies with a Designated Emphasis in Science and Technology Studies and their MA from Georgia State University in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Drawing from transnational and postcolonial feminist theory and feminist philosophy, science and technology studies (STS), and cultural studies, Miller examines the emergence of technoscientific practices and infrastructures through histories of militarism, policing, and empire. In particular, they are interested in how technology and security shape sensibilities of race, gender, desire, and melancholia.

Their current book, *Sensing the Cyber Ecosystem: Politics of Remediation in the Liberal Security State*, is currently under contract with Duke University Press, offering an emplaced and alternative history of cybernetics through the racialized genesis and entanglements of ecosystem ecology and nuclear science in the US South. Their previous scholarship has focused on racialized and gendered logics of drone warfare, cybersecurity, and preemption; the criminalization of online speech acts and material support for terrorism prosecutions in the US war on terror; predictive policing and biometric surveillance technologies; and the politics of algorithms, databases, and remote sensing.

Selected Publications:

Sensing the Cyber Ecosystem: Politics of Remediation in the Liberal Security State. Book manuscript. Under contract with Duke University Press.

"Encountering Ethnographic Gestures: Reflections on the Banality of Cybersecurity and STS Ethnographies of Practice." In *States of Surveillance: Ethnographies of New Technologies in Policing and Justice*, eds. Maya Avis, Daniel Marciniak, and Maria Sapignoli. London: Routledge, 2024.

"The Fungible Terrorist: Abject Whiteness, Domestic Terrorism, and the Multicultural Security State." Co-authored with Lisa Bhungalia. In "Global Counterinsurgency and the Police-Military Continuum," ed. Stuart Schrader. Special issue, *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 33, no. 4-5 (2022): 902-925.

"Cyber-Insecurities and Racialized Threat in the Embattled Urban Ecosystem." In *Insecurity*, edited by Richard Grusin, 139-164. University of Minnesota Press, 2022.

Mary Beth Oliver

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Research Interests:

Media effects; positive media psychology; media and stereotyping; media and emotion



Biography:

Mary Beth Oliver is the Bellisario Professor of Media Studies in the Department of Film/Video & Media Studies and co-director of the Media Effects Research Lab. Her research focuses on entertainment psychology and on the intersection of media with emotion and social cognition. She served as president of the International Communication Association (ICA), where she was also elected as Research Fellow and was the recipient of the Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award. In 2025 she was the recipient of the Deutschmann Award for Excellence in Research by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (AEJMC). Her recent publications have appeared in such journals as the *Journal of Communication*, *Human Communication Research*, and *Communication Research*. She is co-editor of several books, including *Media and Social Life*, *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, and *The Sage Handbook of Media Processes and Effects*; and is co-author of *Introduction to Positive Media Psychology*. She is former editor of *Media Psychology* and associate editor of the *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Theory*, and *Journal of Media Psychology*.

Selected Publications:

- Oliver, M. B., Liu, Y., de Leeuw, R. N. H., Raney, A. A., Das, E., & Mares, M.-L. (2024). Implications of shifts in dominant mediums on media-induced feelings of connectedness. *Asian Communication Research*, 21(1), 37-51. <https://doi.org/10.20879/acr.2024.21.004>
- Liao, J., Raney, A. A., Dale, K. R., & Oliver, M. B. (2025). "It strikes a chord within me": a mixed-method exploration of existential resonance in eudaimonic entertainment experiences. *Human Communication Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqaf010>
- Oliver, M. B., Raney, A. A., Janicke-Bowles, S. H., Dale, K. R., Appel, M., & Bartsch, A. (in press). Model of media inspiration. *Journal of Media Psychology*.
- Raney, A. A., Janicke-Bowles, S. H., Oliver, M. B., & Dale, K. R. (2020). *Introduction to positive media psychology*. New York: Routledge.
- Oliver, M. B. (2019). Virtual Issue: Mary Beth Oliver and the study of positive communication. *Journal of Communication*. https://academic.oup.com/joc/pages/mary_beth_oliver_vi

Anthony Olorunnisola

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Research Interests:

Media Systems as influenced by politics, economics, and cultures



Biography:

Anthony Olorunnisola, BA (Hons), MA (University of Ibadan, Nigeria); PhD (Howard University), is a tenured professor and Associate Dean of Graduate Programs & Research. He routinely teaches undergraduate and graduate courses that include COMM 100 Media & Society; COMM 419(+H) World Media Systems; COMM 502 Pedagogy in Communications; COMM 505 International Communication Problems; and COMM 510 Comparative Theories of Press Systems.

A William J. Fulbright alumnus, Dr. Olorunnisola is keenly interested in the nature, development [functional and/or dysfunctional] and transformation of social systems. He studies influences of nations' politics, economics, and cultures on media systems. This dimension of his work has produced several journal articles and four [4] book volumes about the co-transformation of political, economic and media systems - with focus on media in African transitional societies [e.g., post-apartheid, post-military, and post-democratic governance].

He has in progress solo and collaborative projects that are tracking African media contributions to 'turns in decolonization.' His aspiration in the latter instance is to showcase media practitioners' efforts to decolonize and/or demarginalize print and electronic media from global- and national margins.

Lately, Dr. Olorunnisola's focus has embraced studies of segments of societies' systems that lead democratized systems toward dysfunctionality. His ongoing work includes a developmental project in West Africa that seeks to reduce mass illiteracy and innumeracy among youth populations and impacts thereof on democratic citizenship.

Olorunnisola currently serves on the editorial boards of seven U.S. and Africa-based academic journals.

Selected Publications:

A.A. Olorunnisola, W.F. Mohammed & S. Moore (under publication review). Community Radio in Contemporary South Africa – Deconstructing Complexities in Demarginalization. *Journal of Radio and Audio Media*.

A.A. Olorunnisola & Jennifer Castoe (under publication review). Fighting for the Man in the Blue Overalls – Daily Sun as a project in Demarginalization. *African Journalism Studies*.

Egbunike and A.A. Olorunnisola (2015). Social media and the #Occupy Nigeria Protests: Igniting or damping a Harmattan storm? *Journal of African Media Studies*, 7, 2: 141-164.

Olorunnisola, A.A. & Martin, B. (2013) Influences of media on social movements: Problematizing hyperbolic inferences about impacts. *Telematics & Informatics*, 30, 3: 275-288.

Holly Overton

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Research Interests:

Corporate social advocacy, corporate social responsibility, and strategic communication



Biography:

Holly Overton, Ph.D., APR, is an associate professor in the department of advertising/public relations, program coordinator of the MPS in Strategic Communications and the director of research for the Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication. She is also an affiliate with the Center for Socially Responsible Artificial Intelligence. Before joining the faculty in Bellisario College, Dr. Overton held a tenured position as an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of South Carolina and a tenure-track position in the department of communication/journalism at Shippensburg University. She brings more than five years of practical experience to her teaching, including positions in corporate marketing, higher education, and the nonprofit sector. She earned the professional distinction of Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) from the Public Relations Society of America in 2024.

Dr. Overton conducts public relations research in the areas of public relations ethics, corporate social responsibility communication, and corporate social advocacy. Her research also focuses on examining psychological factors that impact information processing and engagement among publics, nonprofit public relations, and the persuasive impact of messages and technological factors in public relations contexts. She has published 45+ peer-reviewed journal articles. Her work has appeared in over a dozen journals, including Mass Communication and Society, Journal of Public Relations Research, Public Relations Review, Journal of Applied Communication Research, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, Computers in Human Behavior, Journal of Advertising Research, International Journal of Advertising, International Journal of Communication, International Journal of Strategic Communication, Public Relations Journal, Journal of Communication Management, and Corporate Communications: An International Journal, among others. She is a co-author of the textbook Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning (12th ed.). She has presented more than 70 conference papers at national and international conferences where she has won numerous top paper awards from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (2014 and 2021), the International Communication Association (2016), the International Public Relations Research Conference (2021 and 2022), and the Broadcast Education Association (2021), among others.

Dr. Overton's research grant awards include a grant from the Glen M. Broom Center for Development in Public Relations and four Arthur W. Page Center Legacy Scholar Grants. She was named a Page Center Legacy Scholar in 2014, 2015, and 2018, and Senior Research Fellow in 2020. In 2019 she was named Educator of the Year by the South Carolina Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and has won several other teaching and mentorship awards. She is a 2023 recipient of Bellisario College's Dean's Excellence Award for Integrated Scholarship.

Dr. Overton currently serves as Vice-Chair of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) Elected Standing Committee on Professional Freedom and Responsibility. She is a Past Head of the AEJMC Public Relations Division. She is associate editor of the *International Journal of Strategic Communication*. She also serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Journal of Communication Management*, *Journal of Media Ethics*, and on the Advisory Committee of the International Public Relations Research Conference. She is a member of the Arthur W. Page Society (Page), a prestigious association of leaders and experts in corporate communications.

Selected Publications:

Overton, H.K., Vafeiadis, M., Diddi, P., Buckley, C., & Dardis, F. (2025). Examining the impact of corporate social advocacy (CSA) issue ownership and message content on authenticity perceptions and behavioral intentions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 30(7), 21-43.

doi:10.1108/CCIJ-05-2024-0080

Harrison, V.S., Overton, H.K., & Vafeiadis, M. (2024). Perceptions of athlete activism and contentious issues: Parasocial relationships, involvement, and athlete-cause fit as motivation for cause support. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 36(60)

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2024.2385318>

Overton, H.K., Kim, J.K., Zhang, N., & Huang, S. (2021). Examining consumer attitudes toward CSR and CSA messages. *Public Relations Review*, 47(4), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102095>

Wu, L., & Overton, H.K. (2021). Is native advertising effective for corporate social responsibility messaging? How advertising recognition affects consumer responses to proactive versus reactive CSR. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 61(4), 382-396. doi:10.2501/JAR-2020-019

Overton, H.K., Choi, M., Weatherred, J., & Zhang, N. (2020). Testing the viability of emotions and issue involvement as predictors of CSA response behaviors. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 48(6), 695-713. doi:10.1080/00909882.2020.1824074

Kim, J.K., Overton, H.K., Bhalla, N., & Li, J-Y. (2020). Nike, Colin Kaepernick, and the politicization of sports: Examining perceived organizational motives and consumer responses. *Public Relations Review*, 46(2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.101856>

Juliet Pinto



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Research Interests:

Environmental communication, social construction of news, comparative news production

Biography:

Juliet Pinto, Ph.D., is interim associate dean for undergraduate studies and an associate professor in the Department of Journalism in the Bellisario College of Communications. Her research focusing on environmental communication is informed by her interdisciplinary background: She earned her doctorate in communication from the University of Miami, master's degree in marine affairs and policy from the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, and bachelor's degree in environmental science from Boston University.

Her research focuses on international news production of environmental issues, and her co-edited volume, *News Media Coverage of Environmental Challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean: Mediating Demand, Degradation and Development*, won the 2019 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication- Knudson Latin America Prize. She was awarded an Institute for Diverse Leadership fellowship from AEJMC for 2024-2025 and was a Penn State 2023-2024 Administrative Fellow, working with the Office of the Vice Provost for Online Education. Pinto is an associate editor for the journals *Environmental Communication* and *Journalism Practice*.

Selected Publications:

Pinto, J., Mainzer, M., & Xie, L. (Eds.) *Communicating resiliency and efficacy in a digital age: Mediated communities*. Emerald. In press.

Pinto, J., & Gutsche, R. (Eds.). (2022). Double Special Issue: Journalism, climate change and reporting synergistic effects of the Anthropocene. *Journalism Practice*, 16(1)

Pinto, J., Gutsche, Jr., R. E., & Prado, P. (Eds.). (2019). *Climate change, media & culture: Critical issues in environmental communication*. Bingley, UK: Emerald.

Takahashi, B., Pinto, J., Chavez, M., & Vigon, M. (Eds.) (2018). *News Media Coverage of Environmental Challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean: Mediating Demand, Degradation and Development*. Palgrave.

Pinto, J., Prado, P., & Tirado, J.A. (2017). *Environmental news in South America: Conflict, crisis and contestation*. Palgrave.

Patrick Lee Plaisance

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Research Interests:

Media ethics, moral theory, media sociology, moral psychology, philosophy of technology.



Biography:

Patrick Lee Plaisance is the Don W. Davis Professor in Ethics in Bellisario College. He is also an Affiliate Faculty member with the Rock Ethics Institute. His research focuses on media ethics theory, moral psychology theory and methods, and the philosophy of technology as applied to media systems and practices.

He is author of a textbook, *Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice* (Cognella, 4th Ed., 2025), which is used nationwide, and a book featuring original research, *Virtue in Media: The Moral Psychology of Excellence in News and Public Relations* (Routledge, 2015). He is editor of the *Handbook of Communication & Media Ethics* (DeGruyter Mouton, 2018). From 2014 to 2024, he served as editor of the *Journal of Media Ethics*, which is the flagship journal for peer-reviewed research in the field from around the world. He also writes a regular blog on media ethics issues for *Psychology Today*.

He has published more than two dozen journal articles and book chapters, and his work has appeared in research journals, including *Communication Research*, *Communication Theory*, the *Journal of Communication*, and *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.

Before coming to Penn State, he taught at Colorado State University for 15 years. He also had a career of nearly 15 years as a newspaper journalist in New Jersey, south Florida, and Virginia, where he specialized in state-level political reporting. He received his Ph.D. from Syracuse University.

Selected Publications:

Plaisance, P.L., & Chen, J. (2024). Transparency, disclosure and autonomy: Moral judgment and attitudes toward branded content among media workers. *Journalism*. doi-org/10.1177/14648849241298761

Plaisance, P.L., & Neill, M., & Chen, J. (2023). Moral orientations and traits of public relations exemplars. *Journal of Public Relations Research*. doi/10.1080/1062726X.2023.2250034

Plaisance, P.L. (2020). The concept of moral ecology in media sociology research. *Communication Theory*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtz022>

Plaisance, P.L., & Tropman, E. (2016). Moral realism and ethical naturalism in media ethics theory. *Ethical Space* 13 (4), 11-17.

Plaisance, P.L. (2016). Media ethics theorizing, re-oriented: A shift in focus for individual-level analyses. *Journal of Communication* 66 (3), 454-474.

Michelle Rodino-Colocino

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Research Interests:

Media, culture, gender, labor, technology, feminism, race, and class.



Biography:

Dr. Michelle Rodino-Colocino is excited to continue growing as a scholar-activist-artist in her role as Associate Professor of Media Studies and affiliate faculty in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and the Rock Ethics Institute. She taught for three years as assistant professor at the University of Cincinnati before coming to Penn State. Her research, teaching and service work spans feminist media and critical cultural studies, with special interest in labor and new media and is now expanding into performance and performance studies. Dr. MRC has been lauded numerous times for her publications, conference papers, dissertation, as well as for her teaching and improvisational theater performance. She is so proud of her grad students!

You can read Dr. Rodino-Colocino's co-edited book on new media and labor, [*The Gig Economy: Workers and Media in the Age of Convergence*](#) (2021); co-edited with Brian Dolber, Chenjerai Kumanyika (Bellisario Ph.D. alum!), Todd Wolfson. She's drawing on research previewed in her chapters in *The Gig Economy* in her current book project, *Making Media Work: New Media and Management from Enslaved to Digital Labor*, about how management uses new media to squeeze more free labor out of workers and workers challenge and even inspire such uses.

Inspired by her students and in solidarity with survivors, Dr. MRC is working on the convergence of empathy, movement building, and performance. Since publishing her article, [*Me too, #MeToo: Countering cruelty with empathy*](#), that explores the transformative empathy of MeToo -as a movement against sexual assault and patriarchy- she's been exploring and practicing how story telling (developing, writing, rehearsing, collaborating, performing, and reflecting) can engage transformative empathy. Drawing on her life, Dr. MRC addresses patriarchal violence, and finds empowerment in her original pieces, *My Nose, This Time With Feeling*, *Two Deciduous Gals*, *Little Stars*, *Little Stars: A Love Story and Landing on Me* (that she performed in theaters and festivals in New York City and right here in State College). Michelle is over the moon to have received two grants in 2025 to support this work that is grounded in Communications and is also richly interdisciplinary. She hopes you'll join her *Solos in Solidarity* series upcoming at Penn State in April 2026; it will provide you opportunities to create your own meaningful, healing, provocative, joyful, absurd, and/or playful works.

Dr. MRC's articles have been published in top journals in Communications, Feminist, and New Media Studies, and she has served as a leader of critical media studies associations including Union for Democratic Communications (UDC) and NCA's division of Critical/Cultural Studies. She's served on the editorial boards of ICA's *Communication, Culture & Critique*, *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, *Women's Studies in Communication*, and the feminist media studies collective Fembot that publishes *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*. She looks forward to supporting you in your graduate school journey ☺.

Selected Publications: See above and Google Scholar

Amy Sanders

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Research Interests:

Media Law, Freedom of Information, Government Transparency, Regulation of Emerging Technologies, Media Ethics



Biography:

Amy Kristin Sanders is the John and Ann Curley Chair in First Amendment Studies at Penn State. A licensed attorney and award-winning former journalist, Sanders is an internationally recognized expert on the legal regulation and ethical use of emerging technologies, with an emphasis on freedom of expression and democratic values. Specifically, her work focuses on media freedom, access to information and government transparency, freedom of speech and the regulation of social media and emerging technologies.

Sanders has published more than 30 scholarly articles in law reviews and mass communication journals, including the Georgia Law Review, Tulane Law Review, the Journal of International Media & Entertainment Law, Federal Communication Law Journal, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly and the Journal of Civic Information. Her research has been funded by multiple grants, including from the National Science Foundation. Sanders co-authors the widely recognized law school casebook "First Amendment and the Fourth Estate: The Law of Mass Media," published by Foundation Press (Thomson Reuters). In 2020, she was selected to serve as the first female editor of Communication Law and Policy, a highly respected, peer-reviewed journal in her field.

Sanders regularly serves as an expert witness and consultant to Fortune 500 companies on media law and ethics issues, and she counsels international governments and law firms regarding regulatory proceedings, policy development and pending litigation. Sanders has been quoted by the Los Angeles Times, Bloomberg, Reason, Mother Jones, Wired and numerous other newspapers, magazines, and television stations. In addition, she has published opinion columns in major newspapers, including USA Today, the Houston Chronicle and the Austin American-Statesman.

Prior to her appointment at Penn State, Sanders taught at the University of Texas, the University of Minnesota and Northwestern University's international campus in Doha, Qatar. She has developed and taught courses on comparative media law, media ethics, social media law and ethics, surveillance technologies and media leadership. Her pedagogy work has been funded by grants aimed to increase the use of technology in the classroom and to develop hybrid courses long before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sanders serves on the Truman State University Foundation Board of Directors. Before that, she was the Board Secretary and Governance Chair for the Student Press Law Center, a D.C.-based nonprofit organization that promotes, supports, and defends the First Amendment rights of student journalists and their advisers.

Sanders worked as a copy editor and page designer for the Gainesville (Fla.) Sun, then a New York Times Co. newspaper. She holds a Ph.D. in mass communication from the University of Florida. She earned her M.A. in professional journalism and her Juris Doctorate at the University of Iowa. Sanders is a proud graduate of Truman State University ('01), where she earned a B.A. in communication and a B.S. in justice systems.

Selected Publications:

Book

T. BARTON CARTER, MARC A. FRANKLIN, AMY KRISTIN SANDERS & JAY A. WRIGHT, *FIRST AMENDMENT AND THE FOURTH ESTATE* (Foundation Press 14th ed. (forthcoming), 2025; 13th ed., 2021; 12th ed., 2016; 11th ed., 2012).

Journal and Law Review Articles

David Schwartz, Kat Albrecht, Adam Pah, Christopher Cotropia, **Amy Kristin Sanders**, Sarath Sanga, Charlotte Alexander, Luis Amaral, Zachary Clopton, Anne Tucker, Tom Gaylord, Scott Daniel⁺ & Nathan Dalberg, *The SCALES Project: Making Court Records Free*, 119 NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY LAW REVIEW 23-64 (2024).

Amy Kristin Sanders, Daxton “Chip” Stewart & Steven Molchanov, *Is It Just Dumb Luck? The Challenge of Getting Access to Public Records about Smart City Technology*. 6 JOURNAL OF CIVIC INFORMATION 1-17 (2024).

Amy Kristin Sanders, *Revisiting Rosenbloom: Can a Return to the “Matter of Public Concern” Standard in Defamation Cases Quiet Sullivan’s Skeptics?* 88 MISSOURI LAW REVIEW 770-810 (2023).

Amy Kristin Sanders & Daxton “Chip” Stewart, *Let’s Not Be Dumb: Government Transparency, Public Records Laws and Smart City Technology*. 33 FLORIDA JOURNAL OF LAW & PUBLIC POLICY 167 (2023).

TRADE PUBLICATIONS AND OPINION COLUMNS

Amy Kristin Sanders, *Don’t Get SLAPPED: Minimizing the Risk of Vexatious Libel Lawsuits*. Reynolds Journalism Institute (2025).

Amy Kristin Sanders, *Re-thinking the Use of Experts in Defamation Cases*. American Bar Association (2025).

Amy Kristin Sanders & Daxton “Chip” Stewart, *If It Seems Like Attacks on Expressive Freedoms in Texas Are Escalating, It’s Because They Are*. Austin American-Statesman (2025).

Amy Kristin Sanders, *Texas Lawmakers Could Strip You of Free Speech and Make You Pay Big Legal Fees*. Austin American-Statesman (2025).

Michael Schmierbach

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Research Interests:

Exploring the ways in which media use and features shape perceptions of media, especially video games and new media



Biography:

Mike Schmierbach earned his MA and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He originally hails from Oregon, where he also worked as a newspaper copy editor. After earning his doctorate in 2004, he taught for three years at the College of Charleston in Charleston, SC, and since 2007 has been a member of the media studies department at Penn State. He teaches a variety of courses on media theory, political communication, research methods and video games at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and is affiliated with the Media Effects Research Lab, through which he works with other faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students on a range of experimental research designs. He is the editor of *Mass Communication & Society*.

Selected Publications:

- Wei, L., Schmierbach, M., Liu, B., Kang, J., Chen, C., Dardis, F. E., Tan, R., & Cohen, O. (2025). Amplifying player experience to facilitate prosocial outcomes in a narrative-based serious game. *Media and Communication*, 13, 8637. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.8637>
- Schmierbach, M., Tan, R., & Sherrick, B. (2024). Difficulty and challenge in video games. In M. Schmierbach, R. Tan, & B. Sherrick, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.1471>
- Appelman, A., & Schmierbach, M. (2024). Coverage of public opinion polls: Journalists' perceptions and readers' responses. *Journalism Practice*, 18(4), 763–782. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2022.2058064>
- Oeldorf-Hirsch, A., Schmierbach, M., Appelman, A., & Boyle, M. P. (2024). The influence of fact-checking is disputed! The role of party identification in processing and sharing fact-checked social media posts. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 68(10), 1345–1365. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642231174335>
- Schmierbach, M. & Boyle, M.P. (2020) Concrete examples of abstract others: Testing exemplar availability as an additional explanation for third-person perceptions. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 32, 510-529.

Fuyuan Shen

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Research Interests:

Strategic communications, advertising, and persuasion



Biography:

Fuyuan Shen is the Bellisario Professor of Advertising in the Bellisario College of Communications. He teaches undergraduate classes in advertising as well as a graduate seminar in strategic communications.

His research and teaching areas are strategic communications, advertising, and persuasion. He is interested in studying the effects of advertising and health messages on individuals' information processing and attitudes. His previous research has examined the impact of message frames and emotions on individuals' attitudes, and other cognitive or affective responses. He has also conducted studies to understand the psychological effects of narratives and news frames in communicating information on social and health issues. His research has appeared in such journals as *International Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Communication*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, and *Mass Communication & Society*. He received his PhD degree from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and joined Penn State in 2001.

Selected Publications:

Shen, F., Yang, G., Conlin, J., & Wang, X. (2024). Effects of green messages in advertisements: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Advertising*, 43(1), 36-52.

Conlin, J., Baker, M., Zhang, B., Shoenberger, H., & Shen, F. (2023). Facing the strain: The persuasive effects of conversion messages on COVID-19 vaccination attitudes and behavioral intentions. *Health Communication*, 38(11), 2302-2312.

Wei, L., Yang, G., Shoenberger, H., & Shen, F. (2021). Interacting with social media ads: Effects of carousel advertising and message type on health outcomes. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 21(3), 269-282.

Heather Shoenberger J.D., Ph.D.

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Research Interests: Digital Advertising; Persuasion; Perceived Authenticity

Biography:

As the advertising and media landscape adapt to evolving innovation, Shoenberger seeks to understand the impact on consumers but also, potential avenues to make media content better, more relevant, and where possible, healthier for consumer consumption.

One theme she is currently focused on is the role of perceived authenticity as it offers context to explain digital advertising efficacy, consumer attitudes, health outcomes and behaviors as a result of an escalation of exposure to digital media and the digital manipulation of media content.

Understanding the consumer's perception of authenticity and its persuasive impact may be paramount to the beginning of creating defenses against misinformation, digital enhancements, and other types of misleading information in the media realm.

She has published work in journals including the Journal of Advertising, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Advertising Research, The International Journal of Advertising, Communication Research, Health Communication, and the Journal of Health Communication, among others.

Selected Publications:

Shoenberger, Heather, Eunjin (Anna) Kim, and Yuan Sun. "Advertising During COVID-19: Exploring Perceived Brand Message Authenticity and Potential Psychological Reactance." *Journal of Advertising* 50.3 (2021): 253-261. Web.

Shoenberger, H., Kim, E. A., & Johnson, E. K. (2020). # BeingReal about Instagram ad models: the effects of perceived authenticity: how image modification of female body size alters advertising attitude and buying intention. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 60(2), 197-207.

Chris Skurka



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Research Interests:

Media effects, persuasion, emotion, health communication, environmental communication, science communication, quantitative methods

Biography:

Christopher (Chris) Skurka (he/him) is an associate professor in the Department of Media Studies. Originally from the Chicago suburbs, Dr. Skurka received his BA from Aquinas College, his MA from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and his PhD from Cornell University. His research centers on the role of emotion, efficacy, and exposure in how audiences process media messages that promote health, environmental, and science issues. His work has been funded by the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Mental Health. His research has appeared in outlets such as the *Journal of Communication*, *Human Communication Research*, and *Communication Research*. He has received multiple top paper awards from communication conferences, and he is a two-time recipient of the AEJMC Science, Health, Environment, and Risk Communication Article of the Year Award.

Selected Publications:

Skurka, C. (2024). Harnessing anger to persuade: The moderating roles of retributive efficacy and prior attitudes. *Media Psychology*, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2024.2352747>

Skurka, C., & Keating, D. M. (2024). How repeated exposure to persuasive messaging shapes message responses over time: A longitudinal experiment. *Human Communication Research*, hqae008. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqae008>

Skurka, C., Liao, M., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2023). Tuning out (political and science) news? A selective exposure study of the news finds me perception. *Communication Research*, 00936502231215528. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00936502231215528>

Skurka, C., Troy, C., Cui, Z., & Zúñiga, H. G. de. (2022). Efficacy constructs in media use and effects: Organizing and appraising the literature. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 47(1), 114–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2022.2142150>

S. Shyam Sundar

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Research Interests:

Social and psychological effects of technological elements (e.g., interactivity, modality) in digital media, from websites and social media to smartphones and robots. Current research pertains to the psychology of Human-AI Interaction (HAI), particularly in the context of Generative AI, with a focus on promoting socially responsible development, deployment, and use of AI-based media. Other ongoing areas of research include social media effects, bandwagon effects of online metrics, prosocial and strategic use of chatbots and smart speakers, the conflict between user agency and machine agency in automated systems, online privacy, persuasive aspects of human-computer interaction (HCI), and the strategic use of communication technologies for motivating healthy and prosocial human behaviors.

Biography:

S. Shyam Sundar (PhD, Stanford University) is Evan Pugh University Professor and James P. Jimirro professor of Media Effects. He is the founding director of the Media Effects Research Laboratory in the College. He is also director of the university-wide Center for Socially Responsible AI. Sundar was identified as the most published author of Internet-related research in the field during the medium's first decade. His research is supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF), Korea Science and Engineering Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Facebook, Inc., and Lockheed Martin Information Systems and Global Services, among others. A frequently cited source on technology, Sundar has testified before the U.S. Congress as an expert witness and delivered talks at universities in several countries. He is editor of the first-ever *Handbook on the Psychology of Communication Technology*. He has served as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* (JCMC) and on the editorial boards of 18 other journals. He is a Fellow of the International Communication Association (ICA) and a recipient of the Frederick Williams Prize awarded by ICA for contribution to the study of communication technology. He is also a winner of the Deutschmann award for research excellence from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC).

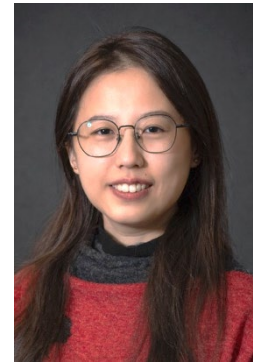
Selected Publications:

Sundar, S. S. (2020). Rise of machine agency: A framework for studying the psychology of human-AI interaction (HAI). *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 25 (1), 74-88. doi: [10.1093/jcmc/zmz026](https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmz026)

Sundar, S. S., & Liao, M. (2023). Calling BS on ChatGPT: Reflections on AI as a communication source. *Journalism & Communication Monographs*, 25 (2), 165-180. doi: [10.1177/15226379231167135](https://doi.org/10.1177/15226379231167135)

Sundar, S. S., Snyder, E. C., Liao, M., Yin, J., Wang, J., & Chi, G. (2025). Sharing without clicking on news in social media. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 9, 156-168. doi: [10.1038/s41562-024-02067-4](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-02067-4)

Dongqing Xu



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Research Interests: Strategic Communication and Ethics, Public Relations, Crisis and Risk Communication

Biography:

Dongqing Xu is an assistant professor in the College of Communications, where she conducts research and teaches courses in strategic communication.

Her research focuses on ethical approaches to strategic communication, public relations, and crisis/risk communication. She explores how organizations can navigate complex and challenging conversations, including crisis management, sociopolitical advocacy, and pro-social initiatives. She is also interested in how stakeholder groups influence one another and how organizations can incorporate these stakeholder dynamics into their ethical communication practices.

Her research has been published in journals such as *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Public Relations Review*, *International Journal of Business Communication*, and *International Journal of Strategic Communication*.

She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Miami and joined Penn State in 2026.

Selected Publications:

Xu, D., Zhang, J., & Chen, L. (2025). The Parasocial Synergy: Decoding the Hypocrisy Reduction Impact of Social Media Influencer Partnerships in Corporate Social Responsibility Communication. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 23294884251389561.

Xu, D., Li, J. Y., & Lee, Y. (2022). Predicting publics' compliance with containment measures at the early stages of COVID-19: The role of governmental transparent communication and public cynicism. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 16(3), 364–385.

Yi, Y., Xu, D., Tao, W., & Lee, Y. (2024). We are sidekicks! Concretizing the antecedents and outcomes of communal coping in the COVID-19 crisis renewal. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 32(1), e12557.

Zhang, J., Xu, D., & Chen, L. (2024). Enhancing supportive intention through perceived legitimacy: Social media influencer leadership and charismatic legitimization in CSR communication. *Public Relations Review*, 50(5), 102511.

Li, J. Y., Lee, Y., Tao, W., Xu, D., & Dong, E. (2024). Organizations with true heart: The role of organizational identity in shaping consumer attributions of corporate responsibility to race (CRR) motives. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 36(4), 320–340.

Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures

On August 29, 2000, the Council of Academic Deans adopted “A Statement on Academic Integrity at Penn State,” stating:

Academic integrity mandates the pursuit of teaching, learning, research, and creative activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. An academic community that values integrity promotes the highest levels of personal honesty, respect for the rights, property, and dignity of others, and fosters an environment in which students and scholars can enjoy the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment neither to engage in acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception, nor to tolerate such acts by other members of the community.

Academic integrity is a fundamental value at Penn State. It must be at the heart of all our endeavors and must guide our actions every day as students and as members of the faculty, administration, and staff. Because we expect new and continuing members of the University community to meet the high standards that are the foundation of a Penn State education, this message must be clear and reinforced frequently.

The Bellisario College, in agreement with these principles, seeks to foster an environment of academic trust and integrity within its student body.

Please see the links below outlining in detail Fox Graduate School academic integrity policy and procedures for graduate education.

GCAC-805: Academic Integrity: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-800/gcac-805-academic-integrity>

Academic Integrity Procedure: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-800/gcac-805-academic-integrity/p1-academic-integrity-procedure>

Academic Integrity Sanctioning Guidelines: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/faculty-staff/policies/academic-integrity-sanctioning-guidelines>

Academic Integrity Resources: <https://integrity.psu.edu/academic-integrity>