



The University of Georgia

University Council
Athens, Georgia 30602

October 2, 2009

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Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal to offer a non-thesis option under the major in Speech Communication (M.A.) will be an agenda item for the October 9, 2009, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

David E. Shipley, Chair
University Curriculum Committee

cc: Dr. Arnett C. Mace, Jr.
Professor Jere W. Morehead

Proposal to Add a Non-Thesis Option to the M.A. in Speech Communication

Department of Speech Communication

Submitted to: Dr. Maureen Grasso, Dean
The Graduate School
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Revised by: Professor Barbara Biesecker, Department Head
Dr. Jennifer Samp, Graduate Coordinator

Basic Information

1. Submitted April 2009; Resubmitted July 2009
2. Request to add a non-thesis option to the M. A. in Speech Communication offered by the Department of Speech Communication
3. Start Date: Immediately (Applies to students entering the M.A. program Fall 2009 and thereafter)

Program Description

The Department of Speech Communication offers master's and doctoral programs in Rhetorical Studies (rhetorical theory and criticism, feminist rhetorical theory and criticism, public argument, the rhetoric of science, the rhetoric of war, and visual rhetoric) and Communication Studies (interpersonal, health, persuasion, and intercultural communication). M.A. students are admitted into the program under one of the two general areas; in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, faculty, and their major professor students identify particular expertise within their designated area. The Department requests a non-thesis option be approved for the M.A. degree. The current thesis option will remain in place.

The non-thesis option is designed to serve the needs of two types of students. First, students who intend to pursue a career outside of academia: such students typically pursue employment immediately after graduation with a profit or non-profit research, political, or health-related institution. A non-thesis option that requires additional coursework will give these students a stronger foundation in the communication discipline that can be applied to his or her post-M.A. career. Second, students admitted to the master's program who earned their undergraduate degrees in other disciplines and, therefore, need additional coursework in and exposure to the discipline. Some of our M.A. students come to our program seeking to articulate their expertise and training in another discipline (e.g., international studies, political science, history, film studies, psychology, or sociology) to advanced study in communication. Such students will benefit from the additional coursework required by a non-thesis option.

Approval of the non-thesis option is consistent with the Department’s goal to provide rigorous and high-quality training in the communication discipline. The proposed program’s requirements are consistent with other highly competitive and highly ranked M.A. programs in the Speech Communication discipline that offer non-thesis options, including Indiana University, Michigan State University, Purdue University, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Illinois, University of Maryland, University of Minnesota, University of Iowa, and the University of Wisconsin.

As displayed in Table 1, the program of study for students selecting the non-thesis option includes the same core courses required of M.A. students who choose the thesis option. All core courses are content-based classes taught by graduate faculty in the department. The core courses focus on pedagogy (8010, 8011); Introduction to Graduate Studies (8020); theory, criticism, and analysis of communication practices (8200, 8500, 8300 or 8700), and research practicums (8050).* Students are required to take an additional 9 hours of electives related to a student’s program of study within or outside of the department. The non-thesis option requires all of the above courses (core and elective), plus 2 additional content-based in-department seminars (8000-level and above). Further, non-thesis students will enroll in 7200 (Examination Preparation) in lieu of 7300 (Master’s Thesis). 7200 is a directed readings course supervised by the student’s major professor, and it involves intense preparation for the comprehensive examinations. All courses have been approved by the University Curriculum Committee.

*8010 and 8011 are three-credit graduate courses on teaching speech communication in postsecondary institutions, including theories of pedagogy and practical instructional strategies (including evaluation, technology use, and curriculum organization.) 8010 is for graduate students specializing in rhetorical studies; 8011 is for graduate students specializing in communication studies. 8020 is a one-credit course introducing students to graduate studies in the field of speech communication. 8050 is a one-credit research apprenticeship conducted under direct faculty supervision.

Table 1. *Current M.A. in Speech Communication with Thesis and Proposed M.A. with Non-Thesis*

Current M.A. in Speech Communication with Thesis	Proposed M.A. in Speech Communication with Non-Thesis Option
<i>Core Classes</i>	<i>Core Classes</i>
SPCM 8010: Seminar in Public Communication Education (3 credits) or SPCM 8011: Seminar in Interpersonal Communication Education (3 credits)	SPCM 8010: Seminar in Public Communication Education (3 credits) or SPCM 8011: Seminar in Interpersonal Communication Education (3 credits)
SPCM 8020: Introduction to Graduate Study in Speech Communication (1 credit)	SPCM 8020: Introduction to Graduate Study in Speech Communication (1 credit)
SPCM 8050: Research Practicum in Communication (1 credit x 2)	SPCM 8050: Research Practicum in Communication (1 credit x 2)
SPCM 8200: Seminar in Rhetorical Theory (3 credits)	SPCM 8200: Seminar in Rhetorical Theory (3 credits)
SPCM 8500: Seminar in Interpersonal	SPCM 8500: Seminar in Interpersonal

Communication Theory (3 credits)	Communication Theory (3 credits)
SPCM 8300: Seminar in Rhetorical Criticism (3 credits) or SPCM 8700: Social Scientific Research Methods In Speech Communication (3 credits)	SPCM 8300: Seminar in Rhetorical Criticism (3 credits) or SPCM 8700: Social Scientific Research Methods In Speech Communication (3 credits)
<i>Elective Coursework</i> 3 courses in or outside of Department (9 credits)	<i>Elective Coursework</i> 3 courses in or outside of Department (9 credits)
<i>Master's Research</i> SPCM 7000: Master's Research (6 credits)	<i>Elective Coursework</i> 2 In- Department Seminars (6 credits)
<i>Master's Thesis</i> SPCM 7300: Master's Thesis (3 credits)	<i>Master's Examination Preparation</i> SPCM 7200: Master's Comprehensive Preparation (3 credits)
Minimum Total Credit Hours = 33	Minimum Total Credit Hours = 33

Comprehensive Examinations

The proposed non-thesis option replaces the thesis requirement with a rigorous and comprehensive written and oral examination. The Written Comprehensive Exam will consist of two parts. Part I will be a 6-hour closed book exam in which the candidate will answer questions in two areas (3 hours in each area). For Rhetorical Studies students these two areas are: (1) rhetorical theory and (2) rhetorical criticism. For Communication Studies students these two areas are: (1) communication theory and (2) empirical research methods. Within one or two of these areas (at the discretion of the major professor), students will also be asked questions applicable to a particular content area of focus. The exact nature of the content area of focus will be negotiated between the student and the committee members. Students should anticipate between 2-3 questions within each area.

The major professor will negotiate which committee members provide questions and in which particular areas. It is up to the student to meet with individual committee members and to consult with the major professor to discuss the parameters of particular questions. Committee members may require additional readings in the two main areas as well as the content area in preparation for the examination.

Students will complete the written portion of the exam in the Department, using Department-furnished computers. The two areas of the written exam can be completed on the same day (3 hours for area 1, followed by a 1-2 hour break, and 3 hours for area 2), or on consecutive days (3 hours for area 1, followed by 3 hours for area 2 on the next day). Students pursuing the two-day option cannot complete the exam over a Friday-Monday period.

Committee members shall have two weeks to grade the exam. Committee members will inform the major professor if the student's answers are a "pass" or "fail" in each area. A two-thirds majority will determine if a student passes or fails each area of the written examination. If a

student fails an area of the exam, the student will have one opportunity to retake the exam within a time frame and following conditions agreed upon by a majority of the committee. After a certified “pass” has been achieved in both areas covered by the written examination, a two-hour oral examination will be held. The oral examination is intended to be an inclusive examination within the student's field of study. Therefore, a portion of the oral examination may not solely focus on a student's exam questions. The oral preliminary exam is graded on a pass/fail basis, with 2/3 of committee members required for an overall pass. A student who fails an oral preliminary exam will have one opportunity to retake the exam within a time frame and following conditions agreed upon by a majority of the committee.

Timeline

In consultation with the major professor, students will declare whether they will pursue the thesis or non-thesis option. The graduate coordinator must be informed of this decision no later than the last day of classes of the spring semester of the first year of M.A. study. Should a student decide to shift options, he or she should inform the graduate coordinator immediately. Students will not be able to switch from the thesis track to the non-thesis track or vice versa after the first day of classes of the fall semester of their second year of M.A. study.

Faculty Vote

The Graduate Faculty of the Department of Speech Communication voted unanimously in favor of the proposed non-thesis M.A. option on February 3, 2009.

Justification for the Proposed Non-Thesis M.S. Option

A non-thesis option for the M.A. degree in Speech Communication is needed for several reasons:

1. Several of our M.A. students seek careers outside of academia that do not require them to conduct primary research. Of our M.A. class that will graduate by the close of summer 2009, 60% of these students will not be continuing on to doctoral programs and will instead be employed as instructors or in industry positions. The non-thesis option would allow students who have decided not to pursue a career in academia the opportunity to acquire a broad mastery of the communication discipline.
2. Some of our M.A. students come to our program seeking to articulate their expertise and training in another discipline (e.g., international studies, political science, history, film studies, psychology, or sociology) to the discipline of communication. The non-thesis option would allow students to acquire a broad mastery of the communication discipline.
3. Offering a non-thesis M.A. option creates new opportunities for the program to grow without compromising faculty resources. The Department of Speech Communication views the non-thesis option as an effective means by which to utilize faculty resources to teach a greater number of students while continuing to maintain an emphasis on high-quality scholarship.

Impact on Current Students

There would be no adverse impact on current M.A. degree students in the Department. Immediately upon approval, students enrolled in the M.A. degree Fall 2009 and thereafter would have the option of pursuing the non-thesis option or the thesis option.

Financial Impact

No new course, faculty, facilities, or services will be required to implement a non-thesis option for the M.A. degree. Thus, no new funds are required.

Admission Procedure for Domestic Applicants

The admissions standards are the same for both the thesis or non-thesis options. Admissions are open to all qualified graduates of accredited institutions. Admission materials are available through the Graduate Admissions Office and through the Department of Speech Communication's website.

Admission Procedure for International Applicants

The admissions standards are the same for both the thesis or non-thesis options. Admissions are open to all qualified graduates of accredited institutions. Admission materials are available through the Graduate Admissions Office and through the Department of Speech Communication's website.