Graduate Handbook
2014-2015

Doctorate in Mass Communication

School of Mass Communication and Journalism

The University of Southern Mississippi
INTRODUCTION
The School of Mass Communication and Journalism doctoral program integrates research and theory into a broad-based curriculum designed to prepare master’s graduates and experienced professionals for doctoral studies. The school’s graduate faculty combines applied knowledge with communication theory and works to engage students while challenging them to think critically as they address communication practices and issues. Courses examine how mass communication creates, sustains, and changes political, corporate, non-profit, and cultural institutions, and society.

This manual is subject to change as departmental and graduate school policies change. It is not a binding contract.

School of Mass Communication and Journalism
University of Southern Mississippi
118 College Drive #5121
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: (601) 266-4258
Email: mcj@usm.edu

Director: Dr. David R. Davies
Graduate Coordinator: Dr. Vanessa Murphree
Assistant to the Director: Mandy Tilley Nace
Administrative Assistant: Sue Martinez
ADMISSION TO DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAM

Application Deadlines
Applicants are encouraged to submit all application materials during the first weeks of the semester prior to the one in which they wish to begin the program. Final deadlines are:

- Summer semester program entry – March 1
- Fall semester program entry – July 1
- Spring semester program entry – November 1

Regular Admission Requirements
- A master’s degree from an institution approved by a recognized accrediting agency.
- Graduate and undergraduate transcripts reflecting at least a 3.5 GPA on all graduate work and a 3.0 on undergraduate work during the last 60 hours of undergraduate study.
  - Applicants without an undergraduate degree in mass communication must present evidence of general knowledge of the field and basic skills in newswriting (including AP style) and design.
    - Such evidence may include courses taken post graduation and professional portfolios.
    - If applicants do not have sufficient evidence of a background in mass communication, they may be required to complete specified undergraduate courses before entering the program. The graduate faculty will provide a list of required courses.
      - Students must agree in writing to successfully complete the courses with a grade of “B” or better prior to graduation and in some cases as pre-requisites to graduate requirements.
      - Undergraduate deficiency courses are considered “out of career courses” and are not included in the graduate degree GPA.
      - Student must complete and submit and “Out of Career Coursework” form available at:
        - http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/apply-graduate-school
Graduate Record Examination scores.
  - Scores in verbal and quantitative sections should be near or above the average of about 150 on the quantitative portion and 150 on the verbal portion.
  - Admission decisions are not solely based on test scores. Exceptional academic work and/or professional experience are also taken into consideration and may offset low scores.

At least three letters of recommendation addressing academic preparation and readiness for doctoral studies.

A statement of purpose, indicating why you wish to pursue a doctoral degree at USM.

A current resume.

A writing sample.
  - Writing samples may include academic research papers or professional communication materials such as news articles or background papers.

International students must submit scores of at least 79 on the TOEFL exam or 6.5 on the IELTS exam.

**Conditional Admission**

Applicants who do not meet the minimum GPA for regular admission may be considered for conditional admission with the above requirements and a graduate GPA of 3.25.

- Conditional students must make a GPA of 3.5 on the first 9 hours after admission. Only regular courses in communication may be taken (no independent study).
- Conditional students must meet the above requirement before a change to regular admission status and before they can register for additional classes.
- Conditional students who do not have 3.5 GPA after completing 9 hours of regular course work in communication will be subject to dismissal from the program.
- Conditional students may take courses outside the department, but they may not request a change of status until they have completed three courses in mass communication.
- After successful completion of 9 hours of graduate course work with a 3.5 average, student must complete a Change of Status Form and submit it to the graduate coordinator for approval. The director and the Graduate School must also approve the status change.

  - The Change of Status Form is part of the progress to degree worksheet, which can be found at:
    - [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information-0](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information-0)
**International Students**  
Please review the International Services web site for information regarding admissions:

- https://www.usm.edu/international-services

For questions specific to international students, please contact Ms. Elizabeth Shoemake at the International Student and Scholar Services Office:

Elizabeth.Shoemake@usm.edu  
601-266-4841

**How to apply**  
Applicants should submit the above-listed materials online directly to the Graduate School. The application link is:

https://usmgrad.admissionpros.com/default.asp

If you have problems uploading materials or questions about the process, contact the Graduate School:

USM Graduate School  
McCain Library, second floor  
118 College Drive, #5024  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406  
601-266-4369  
http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school

**Course Requirements**

- The doctoral degree requires 63 semester hours of course work beyond the master’s degree. This includes:
  - 12 hours of core course requirement.
  - 12 hours of dissertation
  - 18 hours of mass communication electives
  - 12 hours of electives
  - 9 hours of research tools.
    - Research tools classes may not be transferred or waived.
- Up to 6 hours of transfer credits for other courses may be accepted with approval from the student’s committee and the Graduate School.
- Students must have at least a 3.0 GPA and no grade below a “C” to be eligible for graduation.
  - Students may re-take one class in order to replace a grade below “C” or to improve the GPA.

The four-course research, theory, and methodology core is required of all students:

- MC 607 – Theories of Mass Communication
- MC 608—Critical and Cultural Theory
- MC 720 – Introduction to Graduate Research
- MC 722 – Communication Research Methods

**Research tools**
Students must take 9 hours of research tools courses. These courses must be approved by the committee in the student’s plan of study meeting. Mass communication courses that count as research tools may include but are not limited to:
- MC 721 – Content analysis
- MC 760 – Media history
- MC 765 – Media history
- REF 602 – Introduction to Educational Statistics
- REF 761 – ANOVA
- REF 762 – Regression

**Outside courses**
With committee approval, students may take appropriate courses outside the School. Depending upon the student’s plan of study, research tools classes may be taken in other department such as psychology, marketing, education, or history. Students, however, must secure committee approval before taking such courses to ensure that they will count either toward the degree or as a research tool.

**Minor**
Doctoral students may select an outside minor approved by the student’s major professor and academic committee. Up to 12 minor hours may count as part of the 54-hour degree plan.

**Research and Scholarly Integrity Education**
All graduate students must complete the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training modules required by the Graduate School and their departments prior to graduation. Students are required to complete RCR training in MC 720 – Introduction to Graduate Research.
  - The RCR policy and training information are found on the Graduate School web page:
    - [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/research-and-scholarly-integrity-education](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/research-and-scholarly-integrity-education).
    - Contact the Dean of the Graduate School if you have any questions regarding training information policy.
    - The RCR completion certificate is good for 5 years.

**Graduate Advisor**
Each doctoral student will select a member of the graduate faculty of the School to serve as the major professor for the purposes of advisement, committee formation, plan of study development, and administration of the comprehensive exam.
- Prior to selection of a committee chair, the graduate coordinator serves as advisor.
Time Limitation

- Students must complete the doctoral degree within 8 calendar years from the date of initial enrollment.
- Six years is the maximum age allowed for course work and the comprehensive exam.
- The dean of the Graduate School, under extenuating circumstances, and special petition, may approve revalidation of some over-age credit hours if the original credit was earned at The University of Southern Mississippi and if the school’s director approves the revalidation.
  - The revalidation is secured by successfully passing a special examination on the course. The fee charged for the special revalidation examination is to be paid before the revalidation examination is taken. Over-age extension and transfer courses cannot be revalidated. Revalidation forms are available in The Graduate School:
    - [https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information](https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information)

Students who fail to complete the master’s degree program within the 5-year time period and who pass revalidation exams and requirements are subject to any changes in degree requirements made at any date five years prior to graduation.

Transfer Credit Policy

- As many as 6 semester hours of graduate credit from other accredited institutions may be transferred to the student’s program with the approval of the student’s committee and dean of the Graduate School, provided that the course work transferred falls within the five-year period allowed for the degree.
  - The transfer credit form is part of the Progress to Degree sheet and can be found at:
    - [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information)
  - Such course work must carry a letter or numeric grade of “B” or better. It cannot be used toward another degree and cannot be a pass/fail course.
    - The transfer grade is not calculated in the USM GPA.
  - Research and theory core courses (MC 607, 608, 720, and 722) may not be transferred.
  - The Transfer Approval Form and an original transcript from the university at which the course were taken should be submitted to the Graduate School at least one semester before graduation.
  - No transfer credit can be approved without Graduate School approval.
  - Credit earned as a non-degree graduate student cannot be applied toward a doctoral degree.
  - Credit apply to another degree may not be transferred.
  - Students should bear in mind that courses submitted for approval may be rejected.
Course Loads

- The normal load for a full-time graduate student is generally 9 semester hours. With permission of the director and the dean of the Graduate School, the maximum load of a full-time graduate student for the fall and spring semesters is 15 semester hours.
  - Tuition scholarships cover up to 12 hours per semester.
  - The minimum load for graduate assistants who receive tuition scholarships is 9 hours for fall and spring.

- The minimum load for a full-time graduate student is 9 semester hours for students using the services of the clinic, using the services of veteran’s affairs, or using other similar services of the university (spring and/or fall).

- 3 semester hours is considered full-time for a graduate student in the summer.

- Students who are not in residence but who are actively working on a dissertation and consulting with the major professor or making use of the library or other University facilities must enroll for at least 1 hour each semester (see Continuous Enrollment sections).

- In no case may the total hours involved in a student’s program exceed 18 hours in one semester.

- The maximum load for any graduate student in the summer session is 12 hours.
  - Summer tuition scholarship cover up to 6 hours. Graduate assistants may take more than 6 hours, but they are required to pay tuition for hours beyond 6.

- Students enrolling only for MC 791 or 792 (or other courses titled “Research”) should enroll for 1-3 hours.

Mini Session Classes and Course Loads

- Credit for mini-session courses is applied to the semester that follows. For example, the January mini-session is connected to the spring semester, and the August mini-session is connected to the fall semester.

- Credit hours taken during a mini session count as part of regular semester enrollment requirements listed above and for federal and state financial aid programs.
  - Mini session courses are covered by graduate assistant scholarships.
• Mini session hours may be taken in addition to the usual 12-hour fall and spring load. But student still need special permission to take more than 12 hours per semester.

• Tuition for min-session classes is charged at the same rate per semester hour as regular classes. Please be aware that mini-session classes are billed in addition to regular classes.

• Out-of-state fees are waived for mini-session courses.

Continuous Enrollment
Students are expected to enroll continuously after they have taken required course work, completed their dissertation and earned their degree. They may enroll as stipulated below.

  o Students must enroll for 1 hour if they are using university services such as the clinic, library and/or technology services or consulting their dissertation advisor.

  o Students must register for 3 hours of MC 898 (dissertation) or 3 hours during the semester/term they expect to defend and complete the dissertation.
    o If students do not submit copies of the dissertation in a form acceptable to the graduate reader prior to the deadlines established in a given semester, or if the student’s degree will not be awarded until the next term, students must register for 1 hour of MC 898 – dissertation – during the semester or term in which the degree will be awarded.

  o Students must complete all courses prior to taking comprehensive exams.

  o Students must register for at least 3 hours the semester they take the comprehensive exam and/or have the prospectus/proposal approval meeting.
    o Students may enroll for no more than 6 hours of 898 before their comprehensive exam.

  o Students must register for 1 dissertation hour the graduation semester/term if they have not deposited the dissertation in The Graduate School. Students must enroll for at least 1 hour the semester they graduate.

  o Failure to enroll for the appropriate hours will result in the student’s being discontinued from the university and may require that the student reapply for admission to the program.

Leave of Absence
Under special circumstances such as illness, family hardship, or military service, a student may request a leave of absence. Leaves of absence will be granted for one semester or longer as circumstances warrant. Requests for a leave of absence should be submitted in writing to the director. If the director approves the request, he or she will then forward the recommendation to the dean of the Graduate School. The dean of the
Graduate School will notify the student and director of the decision. Normally, requests should be submitted at least one semester before the leave of absence.

Course Work and Grading
Courses open to graduate students for graduate credit are those numbered 500 or above. Many courses have prerequisites. The grading system for graduate work is as follows:

A — indicates excellent work and carries 4.0 quality points per semester hour.
A- — indicates excellent work and carries 3.7 quality points per semester hour.
B+ — indicates good work and carries 3.3 quality points per semester hour.
B — indicates good work and carries 3.0 quality points per semester hour.
B- — indicates good work and carries 2.7 quality points per semester hour.
C+ — indicates average work and carries 2.3 quality points per semester hour.
C — indicates average work and carries 2.0 quality points per semester hour.
C- — indicates average work and carries 1.7 quality points per semester hour.
D+ — indicates inferior work and carries 1.3 quality points per semester hour.
D — indicates inferior work and carries 1.0 quality point per semester hour.
E — indicates a course in progress.
  o Not included in the GPA
  o May be awarded for MC 698 – Thesis/Project or other designated courses.
  o A grade of “E” will be changed to a “P” during the semester that the thesis or project is completed.
  o If the thesis/project is not completed, the “E” remains on the record indicating a need to re-register for the course, repeating it until all requirements are met.
  o Upon completed, a grade of “P” will be assigned.
  o “E” is assigned to the following courses:
    o MC 698, MC 898
F — indicates failure and carries no quality points.
NA — indicates the instructor reported the student as not attending.
  o The grade is considered as attempted, but no quality points are earned.
  o The grade is calculated as an “F” in the student's grade point average.
I — indicates that a student was unable to complete course requirements by the end of the term because of extraordinary circumstances beyond his or her control.
  o Poor performance or unexplained absences are not justification for the assignment of an “I.”
  o If an “I” has not been removed by the end of the next semester (excluding summer term), it automatically becomes an “F.”
  o Students are prohibited from enrolling in any course for which the current grade is “I.”
  o The “I” grade is not used for thesis or dissertation hours.
AW — indicates administrative withdrawal.

- In the event of extreme, unpreventable, and documented circumstances, a student may petition the Graduate School for an administrative withdrawal after a grade has been assigned but before graduation. Such withdrawals must be approved by the director, dean of the college, dean of the Graduate School, and the provost. See the Graduate Catalog for additional requirements.
WP—indicates withdrawal from a course passing after the deadline for dropping courses. 
WF—indicates withdrawal from a course failing after the deadline for dropping courses.
  o This grade is computed in the GPA as “F.”
P—indicates a passing grade in courses taken on a pass-fail basis
  o Does not count in computing GPA.

Probation

- A student whose cumulative GPA or whose program GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on probation.
- Probationary students must attain a cumulative 3.0 GPA by the end of the following (probationary) semester including summer, if the student is enrolled summer term.
- A student who fails to achieve a 3.0 at the end of the probationary semester can be reclassified as a discontinued student.
- Graduate assistants on probation may lose their assistantships.
- Students may request an appeal of reclassification by writing to the director of the school and the dean of the Graduate School.
  o Contact Graduate School for specific procedures.

Petitions and Grievance Procedures

When a student disagrees with the final grade or feels some other grievance, he or she should follow the appeals procedure, designed to assure due process for both the instructor and student.

  o For policies and procedures governing such issues, contact the Graduate School. More information can be found at:
    o http://www.usm.edu/graduateschool/grievance.php

Doctoral Academic Committee

- The academic committee is ordinarily composed of five members of the graduate faculty of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism who hold doctoral committee graduate faculty status.
  o When an outside minor is part of the student’s plan of study, one of the five committee members will be from the minor field.

- Students should check the status of each graduate faculty member to determine eligibility for chairing or serving on dissertation committees.
  - Level 3 – eligible to chair and serve on committees.
  - Level 2 – eligible to serve on committees but cannot chair committees.
  - Level 1 – eligible to serve as member of master’s and specialists committee only and may not chair any committees or serve on dissertation committees.
Plan of Study and Abbreviated Dissertation Proposal
The plan of study is a listing of the specific courses that a student will take to complete the requirement for the doctoral degree.

- It should be developed by the student and the academic committee in the second semester of coursework.
- Once developed, the student should call a meeting of the committee for an official meeting to approve the plan. At this meeting, the student should also submit an abbreviated dissertation proposal (5-10 pages) outlining research plans.
- The plan can be modified with approval and signatures of the full academic committee.
- In the event that the student fails to have the plan of study approved early in his or her academic career, courses taken may not be approved by the academic committee, resulting in additional course work and delays in completing the degree requirements.
- At the conclusion of the meeting, the student should submit a signed plan of study form and committee form to the graduate school.

Residency
All doctoral students must spend a period of continuous full-time study on the USM campus. The purposes of residency are to provide significant time for extensive involvement with faculty, colleagues, and peers and to provide a period for concentrated study and course work. The following options may satisfy the residency requirement:

- Two consecutive terms of 9 hours each.
- Two consecutive summer terms of 9 hours each with continuous enrollment during intervening terms.

Comprehensive Examination
The doctoral comprehensive examination is offered early in the spring and fall semesters. Students should notify their committee chair and the graduate coordinator the first week of the semester prior to the exam of plans to take the exam the following semester.

- Students may enroll in no more than 6 hours of MC 898 prior to taking the exam.
- Students must register for at least 3 hours during the semester they take the exam.

Written Exam
- The written portion covers 16 hours spread across five days. Generally it includes a set of questions from each committee member.
  - Students generally have four hours to answer the committee chair questions and three hours to answer committee member questions.
Students may determine the order of questions by notifying the exam coordinator.

- The exam is not necessarily course based but is designed by the academic committee following consultation with the students and test in the areas of expertise and competence that the student and committee have agreed upon in the plan of study.
- Each committee member reads and evaluates answer to his or her part of the exam and judges the student’s answers to be defendable or unacceptable.
  - If a response is unacceptable, the student may re-take that portion of the exam.
  - One-re-write for each question is allowed.
  - Students may be dismissed from the program if they fail the second re-write.

**Oral Exam**
- The oral portion consists of a meeting of the student and all committee members once the exam is completed, reviewed, and judged to be defendable.
  - Oral exam questions usually are a direct result of the student’s written answers and seek clarification and elaboration. But committee members may also ask any question pertinent to the student graduate education.
  - At the completion of the oral examination, the academic meets to determine if the student has passed. The following decision may be rendered:
    - Unconditional pass.
    - Unconditional fail.
    - Conditional pass – some remedial action required.
      - Remedial action might include readings, course work, a written paper, an additional written examination, or other assignment.
      - Once remedial work is completed, the committee will meet again to determine if the student received an unconditional pass or an unconditional fail.

**Dissertation**
Doctoral students are required to complete 12 hours of MC 898 – Dissertation – and write and successfully defend a dissertation consisting of original research. The research must make a significant contribution to knowledge in an area of mass communication.

- Students must register for at least 3 hours of 898 during the graduation semester.
  - Students who have previously registered for the maximum of 12 hours of 898, and/or who are not in residence, but who are actively working on a dissertation, consulting with the major professor, and/or using other University resources, must register for at least 3 hours of MC 797 – Independent Study and Research.
Dissertation Committee
The dissertation committee is generally the same as the exam committee. The student, however, may elect to make changes to the dissertation committee. In the event of a committee change, the student must submit the appropriate forms to the Graduate School.

- The form is part of the progress to degree worksheet found at:
  - http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information-0

The committee is ordinarily composed of five members of School of Mass Communication and journalism graduate faculty. When an outside minor is part of the student’s plan of study, one of the five members must be from the minor field.

- See the eligible listings under exam committee.

Dissertation Proposal/Prospectus
The student must successfully defend a dissertation proposal after successful completion of comprehensive exam.

- Ideally, the proposal will be complete at the conclusion of comprehensive exams, and the student may defend both the exams and the proposal in the same meeting. In the event the proposal is not complete, a proposal defense meeting will be scheduled.
  - Committee member should receive a final copy of the proposal at least 14 days prior to the defense meeting.
  - After successful defense of the proposal, students should file an application for Admission to Candidacy and Degree with the Graduate School.
    - The form is part of the progress to degree worksheet found at:
      - http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information-0

- At a minimum, the proposal should include:
  - An introduction, description of the research, and a statement of significance.
  - Research questions
  - A comprehensive literature review and a discussion of how this new research adds to the current body of knowledge.
  - A comprehensive methodology description
  - A chapter outline

- As appropriate the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee and/or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee must approve the dissertation topic.
  - For details, visit:
    - http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board

- Students should be familiar with the Graduate School guidelines for dissertation preparation prior to submitting the proposal. Students should keep these guidelines in mind as they format the proposal.
  - For details, visit:
    - http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/graduate-reader
The Dissertation
Once the proposal is approved, the student should develop a precise plan for completing the dissertation in a timely manner and register for the appropriate number of dissertation hours as described above.

- Generally students work closely with the dissertation chair throughout the research and writing process.
  - Generally, students submit chapters to the chair and revised them to the chair’s satisfaction before being passed on to other committee members.
  - Revisions are based on the professional, scholarly judgment of committee members and are deemed to be in the best interest of the student, the program, and the discipline. Such revision are normal part of the dissertation process and must be made as specified.
- Once the dissertation chair approves the document, students should schedule an oral defense and provide each committee member with a reading copy at least 14 days prior to the scheduled defense.
- Committee member may make suggestion for additional analyses and revisions. Students should be prepared to address these comments in writing prior to the defense and to discuss these and additional comments at the defense.
- After committee approval, the student should submit the appropriate forms to the graduate school and submit the document to the graduate reader.
  - The form is part of the progress to degree worksheet found at:
    - [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information-0](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information-0)
- Graduate Reader approval does not constitute approval by the dissertation committee.
- Once dissertation work begins, students must remained enrolled until graduation. See “Continuous Enrollment” section above.

Application for Degree and Audit
In the semester prior to the anticipated graduation, students should submit their graduation application to the Graduate School by or before the application deadline. The graduate degree auditor will check the application and notify the student and his or her adviser of any problems. Students who do not graduate the semester for which they applied must contact the graduate degree auditor and submit a deferment form. The form can be found at:
  - [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information)

General Policies

Orientation
An orientation meeting will be held during the first week of classes in the fall semester to discuss expected standards and review the Graduate Handbook.

Human Subjects Review
All investigations, experiments, surveys, or demonstrations involving human subjects, regardless of funding or the source of the funds, must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board before the activity is begun. This includes activities in which a faculty member is supervising research activities, including class projects, master’s theses, specialist’s theses and projects, and doctoral projects and dissertations. The signed and approved IRB application forms and approval letter should be included in an appendix of the thesis, project, and/or dissertation.

Cheating and Plagiarism
For graduate students, honesty and professionalism are required. All work submitted by a student is expected and required to be the student’s own original work. Cheating refers to the use of improper assistance on an exam or assignment. This includes, but is not limited to cheating during an in-class exam, or the use of the work of other students on a take-home exam, or other assignment. Knowingly providing improper assistance to another student is also considered to be an act of cheating. Using coursework completed for another class with the instructor’s permission is considered a cheating.

- Cheating during the comprehensive exam will result in dismissal from the program.
- Plagiarism is a serious offense. Members of the educational community avoid plagiarism by fully acknowledging the sources of all statements, ideas, studies, and projects used in their own speaking and writing. All graduate students in the school are expected to follow this policy.

Graduate Student Senate
Graduate students benefit from having a formal organization that permits them to identify common concerns, explore academic options and to provide a social network. The Graduate Student Senate invites all graduate students to join, however, each department has one voting member. The Graduate Student Senate sponsors a variety of activities including lectures, informal gatherings and the annual Graduate Student Research Symposium. The Graduate Student Senate works with and advises the Dean of the Graduate School on issues affecting graduate students. (See www.usm.edu/graduateschool for meeting dates and members).

A graduate student in the School of Mass Communication and Journalism will be selected as Graduate Student Senate representative in the beginning of the fall semester.

Mass Communication Graduate Student Alliance
Students are encouraged to join the Mass Communication Graduate Student Alliance. The organization works to facilitate and maintain scholarly collaboration between graduate students and faculty while also encouraging a community-oriented environment for networking and student support.

Authorship Credit and Authorship Order
When working on collaborative research projects with students and faculty, please discuss publication credit as early as feasible and throughout the research and publication process as appropriate. Talk to the Graduate Coordinator and/or the Director of the
School of Mass Communication and Journalism if any issue arises. The document below should provide helpful insight on this topic.


**Graduate Assistantships**
A limited number of School of Mass Communication and Journalism graduate assistantships may be awarded to qualified doctoral students by a competitive application process. Assistants currently receive an academic-year stipend and a tuition waiver for up to 12 credit hours for each term of the appointment.

- Students are encouraged to apply early and to notify the graduate coordinator of interest in applying for an assistantship upon acceptance into the program.
- Potential graduate students will not be considered for award until they have been formally accepted into the program.

Assistantships are also available in other areas including but not limited to:

- Student Affairs
- Residence Life
- Recreational Sports
- University Clinic
- Alumni Association
- Community Service Learning
- Disability Services
- Distance Learning
- McNair Scholars Program
- Athletics
- Southern Miss Foundation

Interested students should frequently check the Student Employment site for openings and inform the appropriate department of their interest in applying. The employment site is located at:

http://www.usm.edu/student-employment/students

Students on assistantship in the School of Mass Communication are expected to start work on the Monday before classes begin and be available during the week prior to the beginning of classes for orientation to their responsibilities.

All appropriate hiring paperwork must be completed and processed before work can begin.

**Expectation and Responsibilities**
The director and graduate coordinator will assign work responsibilities and supervisors to graduate assistants, who are expected to work 20 hours per week. Failure to complete work assignments or to be available 20 hours per week can result in termination of the award.
Requirements for Academic Standing and Progress

In order to retain an assistantship, graduate assistants must be making progress toward their degrees; taking courses, comprehensive exams, or progressing on writing a thesis or dissertation. Failure to make forward progress in one’s academic program may lead to termination of an assistantship. While master’s students have five years from the time of enrollment to complete course requirements, a quicker pace is expected for those on assistantships. GAs are expected to be enrolled in the graduate program on a full-time basis and maintain a 3.0 GPA. Graduate assistants are required to take 9 hours in the fall and spring semester (summer tuition waivers are currently contingent upon budget). If not, their waivers will not process. The tuition waivers do not cover course fees (online course fees and other fees).

Annual Evaluation and Renewal

Each semester, the supervisor and the director assess the graduate assistant’s work performance and progress toward a degree. If both are found satisfactory, the assistantship will be renewed for up to one additional year for master's students.

- No assistantship will be funded beyond two years.

Failure to meet assistantship expectations or failure to progress toward a degree may result in the discontinuation of an assistantship. To meet the evaluation criteria, GAs must:

- Adhere to university and department policies as stated in the department graduate handbook.
- Work 20 hours per week and enroll for 9 hours in fall and spring by the first day of class and remain enrolled for 9 hours.
  - Graduate assistant tuition scholarships cover 1-6 hours in the summer.
- Demonstrate satisfactory progress toward degree (no more than one “I” grade) and maintain academic good standing (3.0 GPA).
- Perform all assigned duties satisfactorily.
- Complete tax withholding forms in Student Employment Office (http://www.usm.edu/student-employment/forms).
- Pay tuition and out-of-state fees if the graduate assistantship is removed or given up voluntarily before the end of a semester.
- Pay tuition and out-of-state fee if DROPS and ADDS after the drop/add deadline.
Graduate Faculty

Christopher P. Campbell (Ph.D., University of Southern Mississippi) is a professor and author the author of *Race, Myth and the News* (Sage Publications, 1995). He has published a number of articles and book chapters about media and culture. He writes frequently about TV and cultural diversity for *Television Quarterly*. He has been a newspaper reporter, copy editor and local TV news assignment editor, and he taught high school English and journalism in St. Louis from 1977 to 1985.

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Cindy Blackwell (Ph.D., University of Texas) is a visiting associate professor and associate member of the graduate faculty. She is currently the advisor for the USM chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America and advisor for The Agency. Previously, Dr. Blackwell was an associate professor at Oklahoma State University. She earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Texas at Austin and her master’s and Ph.D. from Texas A&M University. While on faculty at OSU Dr. Blackwell taught in the agricultural communications program and directed the marketing communications program for the New Product Development Center, assisting small businesses with public relations and communications issues. In addition to her teaching Dr. Blackwell served as a co-director on four major grant projects. Through one Department of State project, Dr. Blackwell assisted her project team with the education and development of media specialists from Mali, West Africa.

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David R. Davies (Ph.D., University of Alabama) is a professor and acting director of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism. Before entering academia, he was a reporter for 10 years in Arkansas, working for both the Arkansas Democrat and the Arkansas Gazette. He is a graduate of the Kiplinger Program in Public Affairs Reporting at Ohio State University, where he earned a master's degree in journalism. He also holds a master's degree in American history from The University of Southern Mississippi and a Ph.D. in mass communication specializing in media history from the University of Alabama. His research specialties are the press and the Civil Rights Movement and trends in American newspapers since World War II. He has written two books, *The Press & Race: Mississippi Journalists Confront the Movement* (University Press of Mississippi, 2001) and *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965* (Praeger, 2006). He also teaches the School's British Studies in Journalism class each summer in London as part of the USM British Studies Program. In 1998 his doctoral dissertation won the prize for best dissertation in media history awarded by the American Journalism Historians Association. He was chair of the USM Journalism Department from 1998 to 2001 and interim director of the School of Mass Communication and Journalism in 2004-2005. He was an associate dean of the College of Arts & Letters in 2006 - 2007. He has served on the board of directors of the American Journalism Historians Association and as coordinator of the AJHA's book award. In 2005 he was appointed to the board of directors of the University Press of Mississippi. Dave.Davies@usm.edu

Phillip Gentile (Ph.D, University of Rochester) is assistant professor of film studies. Dr. Gentile’s areas of teaching expertise include film history and theory, film production
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Cheryl Jenkins (Ph.D., Howard University) is associate professor and teaches courses in news writing, news editing, reporting, feature writing, media history, the Black Press, introduction to mass communication and media criticism. Before entering academia, she worked as a newspaper reporter at the Hattiesburg American and interned as a media buyer with a political consulting firm on Capitol Hill. She was a 2004 Mellon Fellow for the Salzburg (Austria) Seminar session on Ethics in News Reporting and Editing and received the NABJ Region VII Cheryl Smith (leadership) Award in 2004. She has served as advisor to an award-winning collegiate newspaper and to student chapters of the National Association of Black Journalists. Jenkins has presented research on popular culture issues, minority representation in the media and cultural diversity at national and regional conferences that focus on mass and human communication. Her specific area of research examines the impact of cultural identity on news reporting and historical and contemporary issues related to the Black Press.  Cheryl.Jenkins@usm.edu

Scott Dixon McDowell (M.F.A, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale) is professor of film studies. Mr. McDowell has been teaching film production and screenwriting for eighteen years. He has produced a number of short films and authored several screenplays, including In Morning Calm, which won the MGM/UA Screenwriting Competition and was later optioned by Falcon Productions in Hollywood. His research has been devoted to studying the work of Academy Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning screenwriter and dramatist Horton Foote. Mr. McDowell has written and presented papers about Foote’s work at conferences throughout the United States. He wrote a chapter for Horton Foote: A Case Book, which was published in 1998. He is currently in post-production on a feature length documentary about Foote, which includes original interview material with Matthew Broderick, Arthur Penn, Robert Duvall, the late Alan J. Pakula and many others. Mr. McDowell was instrumental in the formation of the Mississippi Film and Video Alliance, a non-profit organization whose mission is to foster indigenous film and video production in Mississippi. He currently serves on the board of the organization. Mr. McDowell has also served on the advisory boards for the Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration and the Mississippi Film Enterprise Zone.  scott.mcdowell@usm.edu

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