

Graduate Student Mentoring and Research Development Efforts

Communication Studies has a very active mentoring and research development effort aimed at helping graduate students develop into productive scholars and effective teachers. The department also works very hard to help students find good academic jobs. These efforts take several forms.

Nurturing Teaching

Teaching Workshop--New GTAs participate in an intensive teaching workshop in August before they begin teaching and taking classes at KU. The workshop helps prepare them to teach the required public speaking class, but also more broadly gives them pedagogical skills that they can apply in a variety of contexts. The training workshop is so strong that when the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at the University of Kansas initiated efforts to improve GTA training across the university, the COMS program was used as a model for other departments.

Instruction in Pedagogy—New GTAs take a 2-credit class in the Fall semester of their first year at KU focused on pedagogy in Communication Studies. The class is focused on the basic public speaking class, but the topics covered apply across the curriculum. As with the teaching workshop, the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at KU has cited this class as a model for other departments.

Professional Development

On an annual basis, COMS offers six 90-minute professional development workshops during the year. At the workshops, faculty and senior graduate students help graduate students develop key professional skills. The workshop topics and schedule were developed by the Graduate Affairs Committee in coordination with the Graduate Student Organization. The professional development workshop schedule for 2009-2010 is as follows:

9/10/09—Basics of convention submission—this workshop covers the basics of submitting papers and panels to conventions in Communication Studies and related disciplines.

9/24/09—CV development—this workshop covers the basics of constructing an academic CV. Faculty and senior graduate students will provide models and tips for CV construction.

10/08/09—Job search process—this workshop outlines the job search process. The focus is on informing second- and third-year doctoral students on the process so that they can be prepared to search for an academic position in their final year in the doctoral program.

10/29/09—Convention presentations—this workshop provides practical tips for making an effective convention presentation. An effective presenter does more than read his/her paper; this workshop provides models for how to make a presentation stand out.

11/5/09—Job talks—this workshop provides guidance on how to make an effective job talk either in a phone or an on-campus interview. Job candidates are encouraged to practice their job talks with their advisor prior to the interview.

Spring 2010—Nuts and bolts of submitting journal articles—this workshop covers the basic principles of how to submit an article and how to pick a journal for submission.

Research Development

Communication Studies works very hard to nurture the research programs of graduate students. Many faculty members focus assignments in graduate classes on helping students develop a research record. In addition, the department has three other research development initiatives.

Colloquium Series

Each year, the department hosts an active colloquium series in which faculty, major scholars from other departments at KU and other universities, and senior graduate students present research to the department. The series schedule for Fall 2009 is:

August 26, Dr. Alesia Hanzal, Communication Studies, KU, Interpersonal Communication

September 2, Dr. Joshua Gunn, The University of Texas, Rhetorical Studies

September 23, Dr. Rebecca J. Meisenbach, University of Missouri, Organizational Communication

October 7, Pete Knutson, Graduate Student at KU, Organizational Communication

October 21, Dr. Kristine Bruss, Communication Studies, KU, Rhetorical Studies

November 4, Dr. Steve Wilson, Purdue University, Interpersonal Communication

November 17, Dr. David Zarefsky, Northwestern University, Rhetorical Studies

November 18, Dr. Jeremy Engels, Penn State University, Rhetorical Studies

Research Mentoring, Workshops, and Classes

COMS faculty have active programs to mentor graduate students to help them develop papers for presentation at the colloquium, as well as submission to conventions and journals.

For example, the department offers a writing workshop series in which students present revised versions of a class paper in order to get feedback to assist in revising for submission to a journal or convention. Normally, three or four papers are presented at the workshop per semester.

In addition, faculty members provide feedback to students developing papers from faculty experts in an area of study, as well as the student's faculty advisor. This takes several different forms. First, it takes the form of intensive mentoring. Second, it takes the form of participation in research teams. Third, it takes the form of coursework. The courses include Directed Study projects as well as a tutorial in which the students work intensively with the faculty member through multiple drafts in order to revise two essays for submission to journals in the field.