

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

**Communication Studies  
(Rhetoric and Public Culture)  
Ph.D. program**

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A handbook for students and advisors

2018-2019  
Last Revised: December 2018

This handbook is a general guide intended to help graduate students and their advisors navigate through the program. It is not a legal document. For graduate school rules and related documents, students should see The Graduate School (TGS) website. For specific offer of funding, see the student's offer letter. **It is the student's responsibility to comply with all regulations and deadlines of the Department of Communication Studies, School of Communication, The Graduate School, and Northwestern University. When in doubt about specific sources of information, ask the departmental Graduate Program Assistant or the Director of Graduate Studies.**

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## THE PROGRAM AND FACULTY

The Communication Studies Program is the primary program of study for the doctoral degree in Communication Studies. This program is defined as the study of Rhetoric and Public Culture (RPC). The RPC program prepares students to explore how texts, images, and other media function as modes of action, with particular regard to those practices that organize public thought, identities, and social relations. Faculty and student research is interdisciplinary and participates in a range of contemporary theoretical discussions, paying special attention to how power, legitimacy, and agency are negotiated rhetorically. Program conversations attend carefully to the impact of social differences as organized by particular constructions of race, class, sexuality, gender, locale, and other variables.

The primary purpose of the program is to prepare students to become lifelong scholars of communication and culture, with particular but not exclusive preparation for academic research, teaching, and service. Students should develop individual programs of study that culminate in rigorous and creative scholarship, drawing on the tradition of rhetoric and other programs of inquiry, and capable of contributing to their own discipline and other academic conversations. They also should strive to become excellent teachers, capable communicators in professional and public settings, and good colleagues.

Below is a summary of the program's Learning Objectives and Assessment.

Learning objective(s) <i>Students should be able to...</i>	Milestone/ Requirement/Capacity	Assessment Strategies and Criteria* <i>How do we know this objective has been achieved?</i> <i>What criteria do we have to measure success?</i>
Contribute original research to the scholarly community	Complete dissertation	<p>Assessment Strategy: the examining committee coordinates their expertise to assess whether the work is sound and makes a contribution to knowledge in respect to relevant interpretive communities</p> <p>Criteria: Presents an original thesis; demonstrates command of relevant literatures, the theoretical framework and arguments, the methods and critical acuity of the research, and knowledge of the subject (including the historical period and relevant events, practices, actors, texts and other media, and audiences); argues effectively using strong evidence and addressing counter-arguments</p>

<p>Develop skills and commitments necessary for effective classroom teaching.</p>	<p>Developing syllabi/Teaching/Assisting senior faculty/Searle Center programs</p>	<p>Assessment Strategy: review of syllabi, classroom performance, and CTECS</p> <p>Criteria: good to strong performance across CTEC assessment categories; development of presentation skills; ability to provide rationale for course content and course design, primary and secondary source readings, and pedagogical goals; ability to answer questions from students and evaluators; ability to learn from critical feedback and adapt to changing circumstances</p>
<p>Presentation of research for scholarly review</p>	<p>Conference presentations/Grant applications/Publications</p>	<p>Assessment strategy: Annual review by the faculty</p> <p>Criteria: Student participates regularly in scholarly workshops, symposia, or conferences; gets feedback prior to grant and article submission; applies for grants; submits and revises as needed for publication.</p>
<p>Perform academic service to support the program's larger scholarly community</p>	<p>Supporting local programs and projects/Reviewing for conferences</p>	<p>Assessment strategy: Annual review by the faculty</p> <p>Criteria: Helping with program events, graduate student academic initiatives, etc.</p> <p>NB: the expectation is that students should begin to fulfill the service obligation of academic life, but that because of their status as students it should be less important than their other responsibilities</p>
<p>Develop scholarly and professional development plan</p>	<p>Comprehensive updating of GSTS file/Periodic and annual meetings with advisor/Annual review by the faculty of progress toward degree</p>	<p>Assessment strategy: Annual review by the faculty</p> <p>Criteria: Files are up to date and meetings completed; student has meet milestones (course completion/qualifying exams/etc.) on time; student has identified and pursued development opportunities; student is positioned well for job applications</p>

**Director of Graduate Studies and of the RPC Program:** Robert Hariman,  
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### **Core Faculty**

Dilip Gaonkar- [d-gaonkar@northwestern.edu](mailto:d-gaonkar@northwestern.edu) | 847-467-6882 | Frances Searle, 1-248  
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### **Affiliate Faculty**

Claudio Benzecry- [claudio.benzecry@northwestern.edu](mailto:claudio.benzecry@northwestern.edu) | Frances Searle, 2-133  
Larissa Buchholtz- [larissa.buchholz@northwestern.edu](mailto:larissa.buchholz@northwestern.edu) | 847-467-7253 | Frances Searle,  
2-156

### **Graduate Students 2018-2019**

First Year MA/PhD and PhD Students:

Vidura Bahadur  
Bailey Flynn  
Adam Goldsmith

Continuing PhD Students:

Madeline Denison  
Sarah Chanski  
Ashley Ferrell  
Sarah Idzik  
Geraud Blanks  
Marissa Croft  
Kaitlyn Filip  
Sarah Lingo  
Jose Quintero Ramirez  
Dylan Rollo  
Lucia Delaini  
Eric James  
James Proszek  
Michelle Shaw

PhD Candidates:

Gabriela Garcia  
Harriette Kevill-Davies  
Liam Olson-Mayes  
Catalina Uribe  
LaCharles Ward  
Zhiqiu “Benson” Zhou

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDY**

*Progress toward and completion of the doctoral degree must be accomplished in accord with the requirements of the Communication Studies/RPC program and The Graduate School. It is the responsibility of the student to know and abide by the requirements that apply at the time of entry into the program. If unclear on the application of a rule, the student should confer as needed with the department Program Assistant in the Department of Communication Studies, the advising staff in The Graduate School, or their faculty advisor. Failure to adhere to program requirements can lead to suspension or termination of the program of study by either the RPC program faculty or The Graduate School.*

### **Coursework Requirements**

Each degree-track student in RPC will develop, in consultation first with a temporary advisor and later with the dissertation advisor and the consent of the program faculty, a plan of curricular study to maintain normal progress toward completion of a PhD. Students entering with a BA typically take 27 courses total. Students entering with an MA typically take 18 courses total. Course grades should be high; repeated grades of B or below can lead to termination from the program of study. Courses usually are seminars, although students also can take some independent coursework for exam preparation and research projects. It is assumed that many of the courses will be taught by core RPC faculty but that others will include offerings by the Department of Communication Studies faculty and faculty from around the university. Students should take the program's three Core Courses within their first two years of coursework.

### **Required Core Courses**

These seminars address the context, objects, themes, problems, and methods defining the program, with special attention to leading examples of historical movements and contemporary problems.

COMM\_ST 400: *The Proseminar*. This seminar introduces students to key questions, concepts, and research programs in the fields of Rhetoric and Cultural Studies.

COMM ST 402: *Modes of Cultural Analysis*. This seminar prepares students to engage in the cultural analysis of communicative forms, genres, and practices as situated in given contexts and historical moments. As such, it begins with the examination of some of the complex, even contradictory concepts of "culture" that have been used to describe and analyze the constitution and consequences of communicative behavior. Drawing on political economy, critical cultural theory, and the literatures on identity, subject, and community formation, this course introduces students to the challenges involved in connecting rhetoric and culture.

COMM ST 414: *Classical Rhetoric and its Afterlives*. This seminar attends to several of the classic texts in the history of rhetoric as it can be a tradition of erudition for the study of discourse, culture, and the conduct of inquiry, with particular regard to the problem of having to invent that tradition within the modern era. The purpose of the seminar is to help each student develop hermeneutic strategies for productive use of the historical legacy in respect to contemporary theoretical interests, institutional practices, and cultural conditions. The course includes representative texts from Greek and Roman antiquity as well as examples from later historical periods of significant recuperations and reconsiderations of the classical legacy.

### **MA Requirements**

A student who enters without a master's degree must complete an MA thesis, an MA project, or a written MA exam in route to the PhD. The selection and specific definition of the scope of the option chosen will be worked out by the student in consultation with the advisor and one other member of the Graduate Faculty, who together with the advisor constitute the MA committee. The committee determines if the student has completed the MA successfully. Students who do not complete the MA degree will not be allowed to continue in the doctoral program.

### **PhD Requirements**

To receive the doctoral degree, students must complete their required coursework and qualifying exams, have their dissertation prospectus approved by an examining committee, form a dissertation committee, be admitted to candidacy for the degree, complete the doctoral dissertation, and pass a final oral examination of that work. Students entering without a master's degree must complete the program requirements for the MA on schedule, as noted above. The student is admitted into candidacy based on the faculty's positive review of the record of study and the prospectus and approval of the doctoral committee. Students are expected to take coursework and otherwise acquire the skills, including proficiency in languages or research methods, as needed for the dissertation research.

### **Additional Requirements**

The Graduate School of Northwestern University (TGS) has university-wide policies and registration requirements that must be followed in addition to the RPC program requirements. Students should follow these policies as they are required in order to remain active in the program and to graduate. They are as follows:

- [PhD Coursework and Registration Requirement](#)
- [PhD Residency Requirement](#)
- [PhD Timeline](#)
- [Full-Time Study Requirement and Authorized Courses](#)
- [Change of Registration Policy](#)
- [Continuous Registration Policy](#)

- [Language Courses During The Academic Year Policy](#)
- [Grades and Grade Requirements](#)

Harassment, discrimination, and all other forms of abuse will not be tolerated. Such violations of university policy can be reported directly to University officials or to off-campus law enforcement. All faculty are mandatory reporters. Please refer to the [Provost's Policies page](#) for more detail.

### **Additional Programming**

Graduate study is a process of intellectual formation and professional training. As part of that process, it is important that RPC students participate regularly in academic activities provided by the program, allied departments, and University centers. Generally, such activities include:

- Conferences organized by program faculty or students
- RPC speaker series co-organized by faculty or students
- Professionalization workshops conducted by faculty, senior students, or others
- Summer seminars organized by the Center for Global Culture and Communication: typically, each seminar involves a one-week period of intensive study of a selected topic with visiting faculty
- Lectures, workshops, conferences, and other scholarly activities offered by other programs, centers, or institutes on campus as pertinent to the student's intellectual development

### **Summer Registration**

[Summer registration](#) is required for doctoral students receiving funding in the summer quarter from the University. Please review the [full-time study](#) and [residency](#) requirements and [PhD Degree Completion Timeline](#).

Summer enrollment may also be required as a result of visa or loan status. Students should review the details of their visa or loan to determine if summer registration is required. For detailed information regarding such policies, students are responsible for contacting the International Office or their loan company directly.

Summer enrollment for funded students is usually accomplished by registering full time in 3-4 units of COMM\_ST [Research 590](#) (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students) and [TGS 500](#) (3<sup>rd</sup> year and above). COMM\_ST Research 590 is a graded course. Students should register in a section with their current advisor and notify the advisor of the registration. At the end of summer quarter, students must again contact their advisor and request submission of a Pass or No Pass grade. The advisor will submit a grade dependent on the student's progress.

### **Transfer Students**

Degree requirements, timeline, and milestones for transfer students will be determined on

a case-by-case basis in conversation with The Graduate School, the student's advisor, and the Director of Graduate Studies.

## **ADVISING**

The program director assigns a faculty member to serve as the temporary advisor for each incoming student. The temporary advisor will work to familiarize the student with program requirements and protocols, will consult with him/her about course selection, and will offer counsel about identifying a permanent advisor and a master's or doctoral committee. Students should consult their temporary advisors regularly (a simple email request to meet should suffice). Please enter your temporary advisor information in the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)) as referred to on Page 20.

In order to progress through the required milestones toward a master's or doctoral degree, each student must have a permanent advisor; the temporary advisor might or might not become the student's permanent advisor. Any member of the RPC faculty who is tenured or in a tenure-track position can serve as a permanent advisor. A student identifies a potential permanent advisor and then meets with that person for a discussion; when both the student and the faculty member agree, the advising relationship is established. Typically, this decision should be made early in the second year of graduate study, or no later than the beginning of the third year for students entering with the BA. The advisor who directs the qualifying examination committee is usually the person who serves as the dissertation director, although this is not a requirement.

A student can change advisors at any time during the course of graduate studies. In a student-initiated change of advisors, the student is responsible for securing the acceptance of the new advisor and also communicating the change to the former advisor. Because no student is permitted to pursue graduate studies without guidance from an advisor, the student may not terminate an advising relationship until a new one is in place. Please update advisor information in the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)) as referred to on Page 14.

An advisor may decline to continue to serve in the role of advisor at any time during the course of the student's graduate studies. If the advisor no longer wishes to serve, he/she must notify the student and the Director of Graduate Studies in writing by electronic mail. The student must then secure a new advisor as soon as possible, but not later than 12 weeks after the initial notification. During the transition, the current advisor will continue to serve. Should a new advisor not be secured, the DGS will convene the faculty to consider dismissal/exclusion from the program.

It is the student's responsibility to consult regularly with their advisors. The primary responsibility of the academic advisor is to help the student make sound academic judgments. To that end, subjects for discussion can cover a wide range, including but not limited to course selection, research project exploration and development, selection of examination and dissertation committees, preparation of manuscripts for conference and journal submission, preparation of grant applications, pedagogical strategies, techniques,

and problems, service or other extracurricular activity, leaves of absence, and work-life balance. Students should also solicit counsel as needed from other offices on campus about topics such as university procedures, professional development, careers, and physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being.

### **Progressing Through the Program**

Students are expected to maintain normal progress toward degree. Although the contingencies of both scholarship and ordinary life can lead to varied rates of progress, personal development and professional success is most likely to follow from adhering as closely as possible to the yearly objectives set out below.

## MA/PhD Timeline (For those entering the program with a BA)

	Required Activities	Recommended Activities
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the Proseminar and at least one of the two other core courses.</li> <li>• Meet regularly with your temporary advisor.</li> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> <li>• Prepare, under the supervision of the course director, for teaching COMM ST 102, Public Speaking, and observe one session of another undergraduate core course.</li> <li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li> <li>• Begin work for submission to external conferences such as the Midwest Winter Workshop, NCA, RSA, etc.</li> <li>• If relevant, complete <a href="#">Responsible Conduct of Research</a> Training- both online CITI training and in person RCR training</li> </ul>	
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete MA project over the previous summer and file for completion in the fall.</li> <li>• Complete third core course.</li> <li>• Fulfill TA or RA assignments.</li> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> <li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li> <li>• Submit work for presentation at an external conference.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquire Searle Center teaching certificate</li> <li>• Participate in a Cluster or Certification course of study in another department or program.</li> <li>• Obtain intensive language training if needed for the dissertation.</li> </ul>
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete all coursework.</li> <li>• Select your permanent advisor.</li> <li>• Fulfill TA or RA assignments.</li> <li>• Begin qualifying exams.</li> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> <li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li> <li>• Submit work for presentation at an external conference.</li> <li>• Complete qualifying exams in the summer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquire Searle Center teaching certificate</li> <li>• Complete a Cluster or Certification course of study in another department or program.</li> <li>• Submit grant or fellowship application.</li> <li>• Obtain intensive language training if needed for the dissertation.</li> </ul>
Year 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have dissertation prospectus approved.</li> <li>• Submit grant or fellowship application.</li> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> <li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li> <li>• Submit work for presentation at an external conference.</li> </ul>	
Year 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfill TA or RA assignments.</li> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li><li>• Submit work for presentation at an external conference.</li><li>• Defend dissertation and submit the manuscript to TGS.</li></ul>	
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**PhD Timeline (For those entering program with a relevant MA)**

	<b>Required Activities</b>	<b>Recommended Activities</b>
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the Proseminar and at least one of the two other core courses.</li> <li>• Meet regularly with your temporary advisor.</li> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> <li>• Prepare, under the supervision of the course director, for teaching COMM ST 102, Public Speaking, and observe one session of another undergraduate core course.</li> <li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li> <li>• Submit work to external conferences such as the Midwest Winter Workshop, NCA, RSA, etc.</li> <li>• If relevant, complete <a href="#">Responsible Conduct of Research</a> Training- both online CITI training and in person RCR training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in a Cluster or Certification course of study in another department or program.</li> </ul>
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete all coursework.</li> <li>• Select your permanent advisor.</li> <li>• Fulfill TA or RA assignments.</li> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> <li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li> <li>• Submit work for presentation at an external conference.</li> <li>• Begin qualifying exams.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquire Searle Center teaching certificate</li> <li>• Complete a Cluster or Certification course of study in another department or program.</li> <li>• Obtain intensive language training if needed for the dissertation.</li> </ul>
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfill TA or RA assignments.</li> <li>• Complete qualifying exams in the fall.</li> <li>• Have dissertation prospectus approved.</li> <li>• Submit grant or fellowship application.</li> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> <li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li> <li>• Submit work for presentation at an external conference.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain intensive language training if needed for the dissertation.</li> </ul>
Year 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> <li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li> <li>• Submit grant or fellowship application.</li> <li>• Submit work for presentation at an external conference.</li> <li>• Defend dissertation and submit the manuscript to TGS.</li> </ul>	

Year 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend professional development meetings.</li> <li>• Attend program events including lectures by outside speakers, conferences organized by faculty or students, etc.</li> <li>• Submit grant or fellowship application.</li> <li>• Submit work for presentation at an external conference.</li> <li>• Defend dissertation and submit the manuscript to TGS.</li> </ul>	
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## **MASTER’S DEGREE (if applicable)**

A student who enters without a master’s degree must complete an MA thesis, an MA project, or a written MA exam in route to the PhD. The selection and specific definition of the scope of the option chosen will be worked out by the student in consultation with the advisor and one other member of the Graduate Faculty, who together with the advisor constitutes the MA committee. The advisor must be a member of the RPC core faculty. Once the thesis, project, or examination has been submitted, the MA committee will confer about whether the student has passed. If passed, he/she is free to continue fulfilling the requirements for the PhD. If the committee deems it necessary, the student may be asked to make revisions and resubmit. In that case, the committee will specify how much time the student has to revise and resubmit.

Approval of the Master’s thesis, project or exam should be received from the committee not later than the last day of classes in the Fall quarter of the student’s second year. Once a satisfactory final Master’s thesis is approved by the committee, that approval is officially registered by the student through 1) submittal of the “Application for a Degree” and “Master’s Degree Completion” forms available in [CAESAR](#), 2) scanning each committee members approval (confirmation email to student he/she has passed) into the “Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#))→Documents→Upload Documents→General and title the File “MA degree approvals” with name (Last name, First name) and then 3) notifying the department program assistant he/she has passed. The program assistant will validate passage by reviewing the confirmations in GSTS. TGS master’s degree requirements and deadlines are provided on the [website](#). Students who do not complete the MA degree will not be allowed to continue in the doctoral program.

## **QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS**

### **Format**

After completing coursework but before conducting dissertation research, a student must be admitted to candidacy. Admission to candidacy is secured by passing the qualifying examinations that are described below. The qualifying examinations are usually completed soon after the student’s final year of coursework (second year for students entering with a master’s degree, third year for students entering with a bachelor’s

degree). Examiners must be members of the Northwestern Graduate Faculty (typically tenured or tenure-track faculty). At least two of them must be RPC core faculty.

For each exam, the student and the examiner should agree regarding the length of the examination period and corresponding length of the student's essay. Each examination period may vary from four to 24 hours.

*Exam One* – This exam will be based on the core course Classical Rhetoric and its Afterlives and will include a number of common texts for all students as well as texts specific to a student's research program and potential teaching interests.

*Exam Two* – This exam will be based on the core course Modes of Cultural Analysis and will include certain common texts for all students as well as texts specific to a student's research program and potential teaching interests.

*Exam Three* – This exam will cover the subject of the developing dissertation broadly conceived and the research field appropriate to it. The exam should be considered preparatory to the writing of the prospectus.

### **Deadlines and Scheduling**

Be advised that TGS requires that the qualifying examinations be completed “by the end of the twelfth quarter,” which will typically be the summer following the student's third year in the program. For students entering with a BA, this deadline is both sensible and realistic. If a student fails an exam, the student must meet with the examiner and the student's advisor together to discuss any errors in performance or preparation and agree on a schedule for reexamination. More than one reexamination is possible, subject to faculty consent and TGS deadlines. Failure to pass in a timely manner can lead to probation, loss of funding, and dismissal/exclusion from the program.

When all exams have been successfully completed, the student is responsible for 1) scanning the three examiners approvals (confirmation email from each examiner to student he/she has passed each exam) into the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#))→Documents→Upload Documents→General and title the File “Qualifying exams approvals” with name (Last name, First name) and then 2) notifying the department program assistant he/she has passed and should be admitted to candidacy. The program assistant will validate passage of the written exams by reviewing the confirmations in GSTS. TGS qualifying exam requirements and deadlines are provided on the [website](#).

## **DISSERTATION**

### **Dissertation Prospectus**

After passing the qualifying examinations, the student's next responsibility is to prepare the dissertation prospectus under the supervision of the dissertation advisor. The

prospectus must be approved no later than the end of the fourth year in the program, that is, by the last day of a student's 16<sup>th</sup> quarter in the program. It is strongly advised, however, that the student submit a prospectus for approval soon after completing the written examinations and well before the 16<sup>th</sup> quarter.

While writing the prospectus the student also should form the dissertation committee in consultation with the advisor, who will chair the committee. At least two other members of the Northwestern Graduate Faculty must serve on the dissertation committee. These individuals should be selected in consultation with the advisor, and they need not include the qualifying examiners. It is recommended that at least one other committee member be a member of the RPC core faculty, but that is not required. Committees may, of course, be larger and composed of other Communication Studies faculty as well as faculty from other units of the university. Generally, members are added as needed to ensure that the dissertation can be evaluated rigorously by scholars with appropriate expertise. It is also sometimes possible to include a faculty member from outside the university on a dissertation committee, but only members of the Northwestern Graduate Faculty count for the required minimum number of committee members.

In general, the prospectus describes the subject of the dissertation and case to be made, provides a rationale for undertaking it, indicates how it will contribute to ongoing conversations in the relevant fields, and specifies the materials to be studied and the methods to be used.

Once the prospectus is drafted and cleared for defense by the advisor, it is shared with the dissertation committee and a date is set for the oral defense of the prospectus. The dissertation committee is composed of the advisor and at least two other members of the Graduate Faculty. These individuals often come from the RPC Core faculty, but that is not required. It is also possible to have a larger committee, including faculty from other institutions. Typically, the advisor serves as chair of the committee.

Although no one format is obligatory for all students, generally students are advised to begin with the following template:

The prospectus should be no more than 20-25, typed, double-spaced pages (not including the bibliography), and should consist of four sections and a bibliography:

- a Section One. State the purpose of the dissertation. Summarize the nature, scope, and significance of the research problem. Explain what distinguishes this research project from other work on the topic. Identify the preliminary thesis and set of arguments that will guide and be tested through the research. Discuss how the dissertation will contribute to the specific area of inquiry, to related research programs (as appropriate), and to the study of rhetoric and public culture.
- b Section Two. Provide a review of the literature in the relevant areas of inquiry and state the proposed method(s) to be used in the dissertation.

Identify the type of dissertation (e.g., historical, critical, ethnographic, theoretical, etc.) and how that commitment guides the research and argument to be developed. Detail the methods to be employed in gathering and analyzing the material for this research project.

- c Section Three. Identify the primary research resources (archives, communities, institutions, venues) for gathering the data in preparation for this dissertation.
- d Section Four. Provide a narrative chapter outline of the work.
- e Bibliography. Identify the major primary and secondary sources necessary for conducting research in the subject of the dissertation.

The prospectus, like the dissertation to come, should be written clearly and cogently. For understanding of general scholarly standards and protocols with regard to invention, argument, organization, and style, students are expected to read, early in their program of study, *The Craft of Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). Students should select a style manual—e.g., *Chicago Manual of Style*; *MLA Style Manual*; *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*; etc.—that is appropriate for their scholarly practice; the default style manual for the program is the *Chicago Manual*.

### **Oral Defense of the Dissertation Prospectus**

On the scheduled date, the student meets with the committee to discuss the prospectus and to get feedback on the dissertation project. At the end of the discussion, the committee will vote to pass or fail the prospectus. If the committee votes to pass the prospectus, the student is cleared to begin research and/or writing. However, the committee may also decide that the student has failed the defense and require rewriting or revisions. In this case, the committee will specify how long the student has to rewrite or revise the prospectus to the satisfaction of the committee, mindful of the approaching TGS deadline. More than one revision is possible, subject to faculty consent and TGS deadline.

Once a satisfactory final prospectus is approved by the committee, that approval is officially registered by the student 1) through submission of the PhD Prospectus form available in [CAESAR](#), 2) scanning each prospectus committee members approval (confirmation email to student he/she has passed) into the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)) → Documents → Upload Documents → General and title the File “Prospectus approvals” with name (Last name, First name) and then 3) notifying the department program assistant he/she has passed. The program assistant will validate passage by reviewing the confirmations in GSTS. TGS prospectus requirements and deadlines are provided on their [website](#).

## **Dissertation and Oral Defense**

It is expected that the student will work most closely with the dissertation advisor on the writing of the dissertation. The other committee members will involve themselves to the degree that they and the student agree. Some committee members read only the final dissertation. Others read selected chapter drafts that cover their own areas of expertise. It is the responsibility of the student to clarify what his/her committee members will do and what they require of him/her during the course of writing. Once a suitable draft of the dissertation has been completed and approved by the dissertation advisor, he/she clears it for defense, at which time the student sends it to all committee members. Students should be mindful of how much time they need to give their committee members to read the dissertation when taking into account [TGS deadlines](#) for submission and plan accordingly; it is professionally courteous to give committee members at least a month to read the completed dissertation. Equally important, it is crucial to plan for the oral defense of the dissertation well ahead of those deadlines to ensure that there is enough time to make requested revisions before submission of the completed dissertation.

If a student fails the oral defense, the student must meet with the advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss any errors in performance or preparation and present a case for scheduling another oral defense. The student has a right to a second oral defense. When the DGS and the advisor agree to a reexamination, the advisor and the student should agree on a plan for preparation; the defense then can be scheduled with the committee.

Please review the [PhD Degree Completion Checklist](#) for the complete requirements, approval processing, and final steps to earning the degree.

## **Submission of the Manuscript**

When the committee has agreed that no further revisions or editing are required, students may submit the dissertation to TGS by the published graduation deadline. The student must follow the institutional requirements for preparation of the dissertation, approval processing, and other steps to receive the degree; these requirements are listed at the [Filing Requirements and Forms](#) page and in the [Dissertation Formatting Guidelines](#) document. The degree will not be granted until the dissertation and all other documents and forms are prepared correctly and filed on time and approved by The Graduate School.

After submission of the manuscript, students submit the signed form to the department program assistant and by [TGS deadlines](#).

Please review the [PhD Degree Completion Checklist](#) for the complete requirements, approval processing, and steps to receive the degree.

## **WORK OBLIGATIONS**

Financial support from the University includes the obligation to provide teaching, teaching assistance, or research assistance as specified by the department. The expected commitment is a maximum of 15-20 hours a week. Teaching involves having responsibility for all aspects of a course; teaching assistance involves providing specified support for faculty instruction for a specific course, including activities such as copying, grading, and leading discussion sections; research assistance involves supporting faculty scholarship, including activities such as library work, copying, proofreading, and providing logistical support for scholarly events. Teaching and teaching assistance should conform to the highest professional standards to provide an excellent experience for undergraduate students. Under no circumstances should a professor or TA undermine the other's authority in front of undergraduate students. Research assistance should conform to the highest professional standards to provide timely and rigorous support for scholarly activities. In departmental nomenclature, both teaching and teaching assistance are referred to as TA or GA assignments, and research support is referred to as an RA assignment. Students are required to be in residence at Northwestern during their assistantships.

Students are given TA and RA assignments during three of their five years of funding. The assignments are for the fall, winter, and spring quarters of each academic year. Students do not have these assignments during their first year of study and their fellowship year. The fellowship year typically is taken in the fourth year. The primary TA assignment is teaching GEN COMM\_102: Public Speaking. Students also provide TA assistance for other courses in the department; these courses have enrollments of 40 or more.

Students should refer to the offer letter to determine their GA or RA and Fellowship schedule.

Specific assignments are made by the Department Chair in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Assignments are based first on curricular needs of the department and then on research needs of the faculty. TA and RA assignments also can reflect faculty preferences based on their knowledge of student experiences and capabilities. Students may submit requests for specific assignments to the DGS. Student preferences will be taken into account in recommending assignments, but there is no guarantee that requests can be accommodated.

In addition, students are invited to submit proposals to teach a section of COMM\_ST 394: Communication Studies Research Seminar, which is a writing-intensive course that is required of all undergraduate majors during their junior year. Graduate students are competitively selected to teach this course based upon the quality of their proposal.

Satisfactory performance of TA and RA responsibilities is part of a student's annual review. Consistently poor performance of either teaching or research responsibilities can lead to probation, loss of funding, and dismissal/exclusion from the program.

It is the department's general expectation that students will fulfill these TA and GA assignments. If there are extenuating or unanticipated circumstances that could prevent students from fulfilling these assignments, students should notify the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair in advance and no later than one month before the start of the quarter of changes in enrollment. At that point, the situation will be discussed and a resolution will be attempted, but students should be aware that notification of a possible conflict does not on its own negate the assignment.

Assignments are subject to change at the Department Chair's discretion in the event of unforeseen circumstances and as teaching and research needs of the department shift over the course of the year. If a student's assignment needs to be changed to better meet department needs, the student will receive an additional notification before the start of the quarter.

### **Permission for Additional Work**

Graduate students receive university funding so that they can focus their energies on their coursework, scholarship, and teaching. Thus, additional work beyond university responsibilities should be rare. Formal permission to undertake [additional work](#) in addition to department GA/TA, RA, or Fellowship obligations is required. Please complete the ["Graduate Student Permission to Work Request Form"](#) and submit it to the department program assistant after securing your advisor's signature. This form must be completed and approved in advance and **prior** to the student beginning the work. The Graduate School may not be able to continue to approve forms submitted after the work begins. Students will not be approved for additional work that is more than 15-20 hours per week. The request should provide the nature of the work, the number of hours, the amount of compensation and duration of the proposed work. The department will forward the form to the student's program director and department chair for review to ensure that the additional work will not interfere with the student's progress toward his/her degree or interfere with any assigned duties. With their support, the department will endorse the request and the department program assistant will forward it to The Graduate School Student Funding office. The department will provide notification if and when the request is approved. Again, this form must be completed and approved **prior** to the student beginning the work.

### **Leaves of Absence**

Students may apply for medical, family (including parental), or general leaves of absence. Approved leaves are for a minimum length of one quarter and a maximum of one year; the schedule for progress toward degree is interrupted for that time. Information is available at the TGS page on [Leaves of Absence](#).

### **SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS**

RPC adheres to The Graduate Schools' criteria for [satisfactory academic progress](#).

Students should pay particular attention to the TGS academic integrity [standards](#). It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with these policies and to adhere to them.

Program faculty meet once a year at the end of Spring Quarter to review the progress toward degree of all RPC students. Prior to this meeting, all students are required to submit a report about their activities during the year generated from the Graduate Student Tracking System ([GSTS](#)). Please also review the GSTS [tipsheet](#). Students are required to complete their GSTS profile starting their first quarter and keep their profile including advisor information updated quarterly. This report should list all courses taken or taught; professional activities including conference presentations and attendance; publication submissions, noting their status; grants applied for; institutional and disciplinary service; awards; and any additionally relevant material. Please follow the prompts and complete/answer all sections accurately. Missing information will be considered as incomplete and may be noted when evaluating progress. The faculty will review this report, discuss the student's progress, and decide whether progress has been Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory, consistent with TGS policies and program-specific requirements. The program director will then provide a summary of comments to the student and the advisor. A copy of this summary is placed in the student's file. Following each annual review, the student should contact their advisor and schedule a meeting to discuss goals, expectations, milestones, and other issues relevant to assessing progress toward degree.

A determination of unsatisfactory progress can include, but is not limited to: violation of academic integrity; poor GPA; an excessive number of incompletes; unsatisfactory completion of milestones (e.g., MA exam, qualifying exams, prospectus, completion of the dissertation); poor academic conduct (e.g., chronic absenteeism, weak participation in class, etc.); improper or abusive conduct in interactions with others in the program or elsewhere.

Students who receive a report of Unsatisfactory standing are placed on program probation and have 2 quarters to remediate, unless that period exceeds TGS deadlines. Details of the necessary steps for remediation will be reported to the student in the progress report letter. Upon authorization of the program faculty, students who fail to remediate their probationary standing will be dismissed from the program. Students wishing to appeal the program's dismissal decision may appeal the decision to The Graduate School through the Director of Student Services. This appeal must occur within 10 days of the student's notification of dismissal from the program.

## **FUNDING**

Students are funded according to the terms of their offer letter received at the time of admission. The School and the University provide additional sources of ad hoc funding for specific projects, and students are encouraged to avail themselves of these opportunities. The Graduate School is an excellent resource for locating these opportunities as well as for fellowships and grants. Students are encouraged to apply for full-year funding from other funding agencies, both inside and outside Northwestern.

Once this support is secured, students may apply to the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs in the School of Communication for a one-year extension of their regular funding. Applications for more than one year of deferred funding will not be considered. Note that RPC students are eligible for two TGS full-year fellowships: the Presidential Fellowship and the Franke [Fellowship](#). Other significant internal funding opportunities are available through the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, the Sexualities Project at Northwestern (SPAN), the Searle Center, the Center for Civic Engagement, the Critical Theory program, the Black Arts Initiative, as well as other interdisciplinary programs, institutes, and centers. Information is distributed regularly through the departmental graduate student listserves, but students are encouraged to prospect on their own for funding opportunities.

### **Financial Aid Policies**

Financial aid policies including Regulations Governing Recipients of University Assistance are provided on The Graduate School [website](#).

### **Conference Travel and Other Expenses**

Conference travel support is available from The Graduate School and the Department of Communication Studies. Students receive support for conferences where they are presenting a paper or on a panel. The Department of Communication Studies awards each student a fixed amount each year—typically \$1000—and students then apply for reimbursement as needed. TGS funding [applications](#) for funding must be made 30 days in advance of the event.

Funding is available from TGS for language study through the Summer Language Grant [program](#). Students can apply for support for research expenses (and not always requiring conference presentation) from various internal granting programs, e.g., the Digital Humanities Research Grant; information on the available funding programs is available at the TGS page on Internal [Grants](#).

Travel arrangements for conferences can be completed through [Egencia](#), the university preferred travel system. Otherwise, travel arrangements can be made independently and after the travel period, students may submit expenses for reimbursement.

Reimbursements are processed after submission of expense reports using NU Financials within the [NU Portal](#). See [Graduate Student Travel & Dissertation Support Outline](#) and the [Financial Support FAQ](#) documents.

### **Reimbursement Rules and Procedures**

The department requires that you turn in expenses for reimbursement in a timely manner. Expenses 90 days old or more will require a request for exception from the Dean's office and are not guaranteed approval.

Expense Report Cover Sheet: This form provides basic but also important information

required to process reimbursements efficiently. Please complete and include this cover sheet with all requests for reimbursement.

Please review your receipts/confirmations/itineraries carefully before turning them into the department for processing. Northwestern University mandates that all receipts must be itemized and serve as proof of payment. For example, if you purchase books for research through Amazon, please print the "invoice" from your order history. This will show payment information, your name and address, and will detail the items purchased. The same goes for a receipt from the bookstore; a credit card receipt is helpful, but the itemized receipt detailing the books or other items purchased is essential for hassle-free, efficient processing of the expense. Please keep these things in mind when making purchases with the intention to request reimbursement.

Please note that the university does not reimburse for tax on books or supplies. A tax exempt form can be provided prior to making a purchase for a reimbursable expense. Please request one from the Business Coordinator.

Most reimbursement requests are for conference travel, so be sure to include:

Confirmation/receipt from airline, showing proof of payment (i.e., Mastercard xxxxxxxxxxxx0592, and your name in billing info)

Confirmation/Receipt of conference registration

A copy of the relevant page(s) from the conference program, or the letter of invitation

Confirmation/Receipt from hotel/lodging

Itemized meal receipts, if any

Cab receipts, if any

The university requires original receipts for meals, cabs, parking, gas, and any other expense for which a register receipt has been provided. Expenses such as airfare, Uber/Lyft, hotel/AirBnB, and conference registration, for which receipts are issued via email, can be sent to the Business Coordinator electronically.

Please organize all receipts in order by date. If there are other expenses, or if you have questions, see the Business Coordinator in the department office. Your travel award serves as a budget for reimbursement, so you only need to turn in expenses up to the amount made available to you.

**Airfare:** The University prefers air travel at the most reasonable and economical rate. Travelers are strongly encouraged to book well in advance to secure the lowest fares. Evidence of travel, in the form of a confirmation from the airline and indicating proof of

payment, should always be included with receipts for reimbursement, regardless of whether the cost of airfare will be reimbursed. Boarding passes are welcome to include as additional documentation.

Meals: Travelers should use reasonably priced restaurants and dining rooms. Original itemized receipts for meals are required for reimbursement. If using a card, keep the receipt with tip and signature as well. For group meals, be sure to include the names and affiliations of those who joined you on the back of the receipt.

For more details about Northwestern University's Travel Policy and Procedures, go here: <http://www.northwestern.edu/financial-operations/policies-procedures/policies/travel.pdf>

Approval Process: Expense Reports are approved electronically. You will receive an email requesting certification when your report is submitted. Detailed information on certification can be found here: <http://ffra.northwestern.edu/training/fms807-employee-approval.html>. After certification, the expense report will require approval by the Chair; it will then require approval by SoC and finally Accounts Payable. Once fully approved, your reimbursement will be paid out in the next pay cycle to your direct deposit account.

### **Departmental Awards**

The awards listed below are offered to eligible RPC students for conference travel, statistical training, annual membership fee, and Dissertation Research support. Please refer to the [Graduate Student Travel & Dissertation Support Outline](#) and the [Financial Support FAQ](#) documents for instructions on applying and payment procedures. For requirements and details on how to apply for the one-time Statistical Training Award, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies for the Rhetoric and Public Culture Program.

Departmental Conference Travel Support (as noted above):

Students are eligible for up to \$1,000 towards conference travel from the Department of Communication Studies.

Annual Membership Fee Support:

The Department of Communication Studies will reimburse or pay the cost of **one** student membership per year to **NCA or ICA** professional organizations. In lieu of NCA or ICA, a combination of any other organizations **up to an aggregate total of \$75** can be covered for the academic year. *Please contact the Accounting Specialist so that funds are dispersed appropriately to cover the fee.*

Dissertation Research Support:

Graduate students that have passed their Ph.D. Qualifying exams may be eligible for a one-time award up to \$1,500 towards dissertation research expenses.

Students also may be selected by the faculty for the following annual departmental

awards:

- Donald H. and Carolyn E. Ecroyd Fellowship
- Irving J. and Laura Lee Fellowship
- Graduate Dissertation Award

### **Changes in Funding or Receipt of Awards**

Students should notify the department program assistant in advance and no later than a month before of any changes to their funding or receipt of any awards either external or from another university program or office. Students should provide confirmation from the Director of Graduate Studies and the department program assistant of funding changes or from the detailed award letter. Failure to notify the department can result in not receiving the funds, being paid from an incorrect funding source, or having to return the funds.

## **OFFICE PROCEDURES**

### **Office location**

The graduate student office, workspace, and mailboxes are located at 1815 Chicago Ave., 1st floor.

The student's WildCARD provides access to the building during non-business hours and/or when the building is locked.

### **Copy Machine**

The copy machine is located at 1815 Chicago Ave., 1st floor.

The copy code is the student's employee ID number as listed on the student's WildCARD. When entering the copy code please complete the following:

DEPT ID: *Enter your employee ID number*

Pin: *(Please leave blank)*

### **Fax Machine**

The fax machine is at 1815 Chicago Ave., room 107. The number is 847-467-1171.

Instructions for faxing are posted on the machine.

To fax long-distance, please use code 440041.

### **Information Technology Guide**

Please review this [guide](#) for information about wireless access, connecting from off-campus, email, directory services, NetID, electronic library resources, CAESAR, Canvas, Graduate Student Office computers, connecting to copier, software, etc.

## **Conflict Resolution**

On rare occasions, a student may have a conflict with his/her advisor or committee members. If the conflict involves significant breaches of academic integrity in research and publication, discrimination, or sexual misconduct, TGS and university policies require specific forms of reporting. Please see policies on [academic integrity](#), [discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct](#) on the TGS website.

More often, however, student-faculty conflict does not rise to this level. In other cases of conflict, the program recommends that the student wait 48 hours and express his/her concerns directly to the other party in the conflict. If the conflict is such that the student feels as if he/she cannot communicate directly with the other party, the student is invited to communicate his/her concerns to the Director of Graduate Studies, the Department Chair, or the Office of Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Affairs in The Graduate School. A dispute resolution plan will be developed and/or appropriate action taken to remedy the situation.

Northwestern's [policy on non-retaliation](#) applies to all instances of reporting.

## **ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

How to Register

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/registration-and-courses.html>

Academic Integrity and Dishonesty Procedures

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/academic-integrity.html>

TGS Calendar with Deadlines

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/news-events/calendar.html#resp-tabs3>

Taking Courses at Other Universities

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html>

Language Acquisition

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html>

Teaching Requirement

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/assistantships/graduate-and-teaching.html>

Leave of Absence Process

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/leaves-of-absence.html>

Childbirth Accommodation

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/childbirth-accomodation.html>

Readmission

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/leaves-withdrawal-readmission.html>

Withdrawal Procedure

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/withdrawal.html>

Petitioning for Extension

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/all-policies.html>

Remunerative Work

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/financial-aid-policies.html>

TGS External Award Policy

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/financial-aid-policies.html>

Grading systems

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html>

Hooding and Commencement Ceremonies

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/commencement/>

Graduation and Diploma Mailing

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/graduation-and-diploma-mailing.html>

Best Practice Guidelines for Graduate Teaching Assistants

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/academic-student-services/assistantship-best-practices/>

Guidelines for Research Assistants and Advisors

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/academic-student-services/assistantship-best-practices/>

Key requests or issues

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Building maintenance requests or issues

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Copier access request or issues

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Room reservation instructions

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Telephone conferencing at Frances Searle or Annie May Swift

Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

Update student profile on program website  
Please send email to [commstudies@northwestern.edu](mailto:commstudies@northwestern.edu)

## **IMPORTANT CAMPUS OFFICES**

Health Insurance

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/graduate-life/health-services/health-plan/index.html>

U-Pass

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/graduate-life/u-pass/index.html>

WildCARD

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/campus-life/wildcard.html>

University Shuttles

<http://www.northwestern.edu/userservices/transportation/shuttles/index.html>

Parking and Safety

<http://www.northwestern.edu/up/parking/>

AccessibleNU

<http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/>

The Women's Center

<http://www.northwestern.edu/womencenter/>

Gender & Sexuality Resource Center

<http://www.northwestern.edu/norris/services/lgbt/>

The International Office

<http://www.northwestern.edu/international/>

Legal Services

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/campus-life/legal-services.html>

Center for Civic Engagement

<http://www.engage.northwestern.edu/>

Counseling and Psychological Services

<http://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/>

Fitness and Recreation

<http://www.fitrec.northwestern.edu/>

Libraries

<http://www.northwestern.edu/libraries/>

Off-Campus Life

<http://www.northwestern.edu/offcampus/resources/how-tos/index.html>

Office of Fellowships

<http://www.northwestern.edu/fellowships/>

Office of Human Resources, Parent and Family Resources

<http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/childcare/solutions/index.html>

Office of the Registrar

<http://www.registrar.northwestern.edu/>

Searle Center for Teaching Excellence

<http://www.northwestern.edu/searle/>

Northwestern Career Advancement (NCA)

<http://www.northwestern.edu/careers/>

Student Affairs

<http://www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/>

Community Building Grants and Activities

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/campus-life/student-groups/index.html>

Graduate Student Associations and Graduate Leadership Council

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/campus-life/student-groups/student-associations.html>

Professional Development Programming for Graduate Students

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/professional-development/>