

## Communication Studies Honors Thesis Program

### Overview

The Communication Studies Honors Program offers advanced students the opportunity to pursue an intellectual passion, build research and writing skills, and complete an independent project under the guidance of a faculty advisor. Students may produce a scholarly paper, laboratory research report, or another dedicated research project. It is generally expected that the project scope will be such that it can reasonably be completed in 2 quarters of focused effort (some projects may extend into a third quarter, depending on scope).

### Why pursue an honors thesis?

- It is an opportunity to integrate your coursework and academic experiences into a culminating research project.
- It can strengthen your application for graduate study and other post-graduate opportunities.
- Your final project will be archived in the Northwestern University Library's digital collection.
- You can share your work at the annual Undergraduate Research & Arts Expo (NU Office of Undergraduate Research).
- Upon successful completion, you will graduate with departmental honors.

### Eligibility and application materials

To be eligible, you must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.6 at the time of application.

[The online application](#) includes:

- A 2–3 page description of your proposed project and a brief plan for completing it.
- The name and email address of a Communication Studies faculty advisor who agrees to serve as your thesis advisor.
- A brief email of support from your faculty advisor.

### Application timeline

Application due dates depend on the intended start quarter:

- Start in Spring quarter of junior year: Application due March 1.
- Start in Fall quarter of senior year: Application due June 1.
- Students who intend to graduate early should submit their applications 3-4 quarters in advance of their intended graduation date and should meet with their academic advisor to determine the appropriate quarters for completion.

You are strongly encouraged to begin exploring potential faculty advisors no later than fall quarter of junior year (and ideally earlier). Helpful ways to identify and build fit include reading relevant faculty work, taking courses with potential advisors, scheduling informational meetings, and applying for research assistant roles in faculty labs when available.

## How the program works

In most cases, the process includes:

1. Identifying a faculty advisor and discussing potential project ideas.
2. Submitting the online application by the deadlines indicated above.
3. Attending a brief orientation meeting with the Communication Studies Undergraduate Administrator, if not already completed during the application process.
4. Writing a comprehensive project proposal (the prospectus) and submitting it during the first quarter of work.
5. Carrying out the research/creative work.
6. Submitting short quarterly progress reports until the project is complete.
7. Writing and revising the thesis (or equivalent final project) with faculty guidance and submitting during the second quarter of work.

The project must be completed before or during your final quarter of enrollment. You should plan to meet regularly with your faculty advisor and stay up to date regarding the program requirements and deadlines.

## Course credit

Students earn course credit through two units of COMM ST 397: Senior Honors Thesis:

- One unit is awarded when the prospectus is completed.
- One unit is awarded when the final thesis/project is finished and approved by the faculty advisor.

## Application Reviews

Applications are reviewed by the undergraduate curriculum committee. Students will be notified of acceptance or provided with recommendations for revisions prior to the beginning of their intended start quarter.

## Questions

If you have questions, please reach out to Jennifer Satut ([jennifer.satut@northwestern.edu](mailto:jennifer.satut@northwestern.edu)), contact your academic advisor, and/or discuss your plan with your faculty advisor.