



# 2021



**Walter Cronkite  
School of  
Journalism  
and Mass  
Communication**

**Arizona State  
University**

# Doctoral Student Handbook

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# Purpose

The doctoral program at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication is a highly individualized program designed for the thought leaders and educators of tomorrow. The program leads to a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in journalism and mass communication, appropriate for those who are interested in tackling the critical questions emerging in the fields of journalism, digital and social media, strategic communication and audience studies, and global mass communication. It is based on the priorities of original research, faculty-student mentoring, and interdisciplinary studies.

## Interdisciplinarity

The program allows students to develop individual programs of study, taking coursework and drawing on knowledge and methodologies from diverse fields that have a bearing on questions within mass communication. Examples range from political science to film to computer and data sciences, sociology, anthropology, and more.

## Mentoring

The Cronkite doctoral program is small, admitting only a handful of applicants each year. This is by design to ensure that students will have the opportunity to work

closely with faculty and other students on collaborative projects as well as developing their own research program, and benefit from the advice and example of senior scholars for personalized guidance.

## Original research

The ultimate goal of the program is to train scholars capable of identifying key questions, designing appropriate studies to investigate those questions, and conducting independent and impactful research. Students will be exposed to a wide range of theories and methods so they can forge their own scholarly identity based on interests and aptitude.



# Message from the Director

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A PhD is a personal journey that can have large-scale impact

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*Cronkite doctoral students are encouraged to explore broadly, to examine issues from different angles through an interdisciplinary, highly flexible program.*

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That you are reading this handbook means that you are at a pivotal point in your life. Whether you are a prospective student just starting to consider the possibility of earning a doctorate, or a current Cronkite PhD student double-checking policies, you are contemplating a future of uncertainties.

Uncertainty here is a good thing. Personal and professional growth only happen when we push ourselves outside our complacent everyday lives and begin asking questions about what might be, what may exist just outside the boundaries of what we can see from our current vantage point.

This is the mindset of a researcher, someone who looks around and asks why, and how, and what if.

At the Cronkite School, we encourage our doctoral students to explore broadly, to examine issues from different angles. Our program is interdisciplinary and highly flexible to meet the interests of our students.

Most of our students come to us after some years of a media career. Journalists, communication strategists, public information officers, documentarians, and media managers can all leverage their professional backgrounds into a PhD in journalism and mass communication.

Others come to us from fields such as law, data science, education, and more, bringing their unique perspectives to bear on issues of mass communication research.

Whatever their backgrounds, Cronkite doctoral students engage important questions involving media of all kinds in their social, cultural, political, historical, and technological context. Their studies prepare them to grapple with these questions to impact both scholarship and public discourse, as well as to influence the future of the media industries.

Now more than ever before, we are all aware of the central importance of mediated communication in shaping our individual and collective experience of the world. If embarking upon a PhD is a bit of a personal risk, it is one that can help us address vital global issues ranging from disinformation to climate change to social inequities.

I hope this handbook will help you make the decisions facing you at this pivotal moment, in your own career and in the world at large."



**Dawn Gilpin, Assistant Dean for Research**

# Facts & Figures

The Cronkite Doctoral Program at a glance

## General information

The first Cronkite PhD students began their degree programs in Fall 2011. “

*Cronkite PhD graduates have gone on to make a significant impact on the discipline of journalism and mass media, and on higher education in general, in the U.S. and around the world*

Graduates work in a range of roles, primarily in higher education research, teaching, and administration. They have published in a variety of academic journals and edited volumes, written award-winning books, served as editors of scholarly journals, won teaching awards, and achieved other important career milestones.”

The director of the doctoral program is Assistant Dean for Research Dr. **Dawn Gilpin** ([dgilpin@asu.edu](mailto:dgilpin@asu.edu)), and the graduate coordinator is **Kathren Sammis** ([kathren.sammis@asu.edu](mailto:kathren.sammis@asu.edu)).

## Sample of recent dissertation titles

The Framing of Terrorism: How American and International Television News Script a Global Drama	Toward a Theory of True Crime: Forms and Functions of Nonfiction Murder Narratives	On the Sidelines: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism, and the American Female Sportscaster	Ball is (Virtual) Life: An Ethnographic Examination of Identity, Culture and Community in NBA 2K
- Dr. Ashley Gimbal '18	- Dr. Ian Punnett '17	- Dr. Guy Harrison '18	- Dr. Allison Forbes '21

## Key Numbers

Total PhD students currently enrolled	30
Total PhD graduates	18
Median time to degree	4.5 years
Median cohort size	4
International students	22%



# Application & Admission

The holistic selection process used at the Cronkite School, and how to maximize your chances of being admitted

There are a number of factors to consider when contemplating a major life change such as pursuing a PhD. Personal and professional goals, family and other obligations, and financial matters are just some examples. Even once you have made your decision, choosing a program can be a complicated process. We hope the information in this handbook and that on the program page will

help you decide whether a Cronkite School PhD is a good match for your own future plans.

Admission to the Cronkite School's Ph.D. program is **competitive**. Applicants should dedicate significant care and attention to each element of the packet, making sure the application is complete and that it clearly reflects the student's interests. Where possible, students are also encouraged to visit the campus. Such visits can include meeting faculty,

touring Cronkite facilities, and exploring the four ASU campuses. COVID-19 safety measures may affect the availability of campus facilities, so please check the ASU website when planning your visit.

The doctoral program operates on a cohort model, meaning that students are admitted for the fall semester only. Applicants must apply to the Graduate College and meet its requirements before the Cronkite School can review any application.

The Cronkite School's doctoral committee reviews completed applications on a rolling basis as they are received, but students hoping to be considered for assistantships should apply no later than **December 1** if possible. Faculty members identified by the student may also be asked to review individual applications. Incomplete applications may not be reviewed. Students can track the application process online but will usually be notified of the admission decision within four weeks of receipt of the complete application packet.



## ◆ Submitting your application”

Graduate College applications are [filed online](#), and the university requirements can be found on the [Graduate College website](#). International students must also submit [evidence of English proficiency](#) according to Graduate College requirements.

The Cronkite School requires applicants to submit the following additional information as part of their holistic admissions process:

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*The doctoral committee looks for evidence that an applicant has made a considered decision to pursue a research degree, understands what that entails, and is familiar with the faculty's work and how it intersects with their own research interests*

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- ◆ A two-page **personal statement** explaining your personal and professional goals, and how a Cronkite School PhD will help them achieve them. In writing your personal statement, you should also reflect upon how your past experience has prepared you for this next phase, and what you expect to be your primary challenges in undertaking doctoral studies. Please indicate in your statement whether you wish to be considered for an assistantship (see below).
- ◆ A **research statement**, which should describe in some detail your areas of research interest, with citations of recent peer-reviewed scholarship in those areas. You should also indicate one or two members of the Cronkite faculty with whom you envision yourself working, after carefully reviewing the faculty bios and vitae posted on the [program website](#). You are urged to read some of the published work of those who stand out as most intriguing to you and cite it in your research statement. The doctoral committee is always looking for an understanding both of what motivates the applicant to pursue a PhD at this time, and what specifically appeals to them about the Cronkite School's program. Faculty research interests are clearly a central part of that decision, and familiarity with their work shows that you are making a considered decision to apply.
- ◆ A detailed **resumé** or curriculum vitae focusing on your academic and professional experience.
- ◆ A **writing sample** is optional but strongly recommended. If none is included, the personal statement may serve as a writing sample. However, you are encouraged to submit samples of any published research, such as a conference paper or refereed research article if you have any. Writing samples produced for the general public, such as news or feature articles, or fictional narratives, are less helpful but may be included if you feel they showcase your writing to a degree your other application materials do not.
- ◆ **Three letters of recommendation**, at least two of which speak to the applicant's perceived ability to successfully complete a research-oriented Ph.D. program.

Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores are currently being waived due to the pandemic. International students must provide evidence that they meet the university's **English proficiency standards** by submitting their scores from one of the [tests accepted by the Graduate College](#).

To be considered for admission to ASU and the Cronkite School, applicants must have **at least a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) or equivalent grade-point average** both in their graduate and last 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of undergraduate course work.

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*The committee looks for demonstrated interest in the subject matter and in research, academic achievement, writing proficiency, and a good fit between the program and the applicant's aspirations*

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Once the completed application packet is received, it is reviewed by the **doctoral committee**. The committee takes a holistic approach to applications, examining all submitted materials to determine who would be the best fit for the program. They look for evidence of a demonstrated interest in journalism and mass communication research, academic achievement, writing proficiency, and a good fit between the program and the applicant's stated career aspirations. Individuals under consideration may also be invited to **interview** with one or more members of the committee, in person or remotely. The committee are responsible for making the final decision on who will be accepted into the next cohort; recommendations for assistantships must be approved by the dean.

Students accepted into the program are encouraged to notify the Cronkite School of their intention to enroll as soon as possible after receiving notice of their acceptance.

## ◆ Financial aid

Financial considerations are an important part of deciding to pursue a doctoral degree. The [Graduate College website](#) includes information about tuition and fees, as well as various types of funding and support that are available. To be eligible for any financial assistance, a student must be enrolled in at least 6 for-credit (non-audit) hours of course work each semester. International students must be enrolled in a minimum of 9 credit hours, and for teaching positions must also demonstrate language proficiency to meet the [university's standards](#). "

## Assistantships

An assistantship is a form of financial support that includes a **stipend as well as tuition remission and individual health insurance**. The Cronkite School offers limited **teaching and research assistantships**. Teaching assistantships typically involve teaching two undergraduate courses each semester for the duration of their funding. Students may also be assigned to work with faculty on research projects as part of their duties. Students with assistantships are still responsible for university and program fees.

Since teaching assignments for Fall semester are typically determined in January or February, applicants who wish to be considered for an assistantship should submit their applications by **no later than December 1** if possible, and indicate this interest in their personal statement.



## Fellowships and Awards

Fellowships are **limited monetary awards made by the university** to help defray the cost of graduate studies. You can find a list of available fellowships [online](#). Some fellowships are offered just once, while others may be renewed for multiple semesters. The school must apply on your behalf, but if you believe you may be eligible for one or more fellowships, once you have been admitted it is worth raising the topic with the program director.

Awards are similar to fellowships, but most are **offered by third party** philanthropic or other organizations. They tend to have various restrictions: some are created to support specific subject areas or types of research, or particular phases of the PhD process such as dissertation research. Consult the [Graduate College listings](#) regularly to identify awards that may pertain to your situation.



## Employment

Many Cronkite doctoral students support themselves during their graduate program through paid employment. This may include remaining in their previous position, if it offers sufficient flexibility, freelance work, or other opportunities. The Cronkite School may occasionally have openings for teaching or other positions within the school for which individual students are qualified, in which case you are encouraged to apply.

ASU also maintains [listings](#) of hourly, stipend, and work-study positions available across the university.

## Loans

A great number of doctoral students rely on loans to fund at least part of their graduate studies. As for many fellowships and awards, to be eligible for loans you must file a Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) form. The Graduate College website has a page dedicated to the [financial aid](#) process with instructions, forms, and links.

## Travel and Research Funding

Academic conferences are vital to becoming an active and productive member of the scholarly community. They offer opportunities to present research, keep abreast of the latest research in the field, and network with peers and senior scholars. Cronkite School doctoral students present at some of the major disciplinary conferences every year (see below), as an important part of their scholarly development.

ASU's office of Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) offers [travel funding](#) for academic conferences and professional development.

Cronkite students with a paper or extended abstract accepted at a national or international academic conference are eligible to receive **up to \$1,000** for travel reimbursement. Students must notify the director of the doctoral program prior to travel, provide documentation of the paper acceptance and submit travel receipts once they return.

Although the Cronkite School supports and encourages conference panel participation, funding is not available for this type of activity.

Summary of Cronkite Research Funding	Amount	Notes
Paper accepted	\$1,000	For papers accepted at a recognized journalism or mass communication national or international academic conference, the Cronkite School will provide up to \$500 for travel and conference expenses. Pre-approved conferences include AEJMC, AOIR, AJHA, BEA, ICA, IAMCR and NCA. Other conferences require approval from the student's chair and Dr. Gilpin.
Abstract accepted	\$1,000	For paper abstracts—sometimes known as “Research in Progress” submissions—the Cronkite School may provide up to \$1,000 toward travel and conference expenses pending approval by Dr. Gilpin.
Dissertation support	\$500	Once a dissertation prospectus has been approved, the Cronkite School may also provide up to \$500 for travel and research expenses. These must be approved in advance by the student's chair and Dr. Gilpin.

## ◆ Advising



You are encouraged to reach out to the school early in the application process, while you are exploring your options. Through in-person meetings, phone calls or Zoom meetings, we can answer your questions and direct you to resources. We can also connect you to faculty and current doctoral students who can answer your questions and help you in your decision making process.

There are two primary contacts for the program. **Kathren Sammis** is the Cronkite School's doctoral academic success coordinator. She assists students with questions concerning the application process, enrollment, and deadlines. She provides advice on registration and related issues.

Ms. Sammis tracks each student's degree progress and frequently communicates with students regarding important dates, events, opportunities and deadlines. You can reach Ms. Sammis at [kathren.Sammis@asu.edu](mailto:kathren.Sammis@asu.edu), or by phone at 602-496-5055 during normal business hours.

**Dr. Dawn Gilpin** is the Cronkite School's Assistant Dean for Research and Director of the Ph.D. program. She leads the doctoral committee, assigns faculty and peer mentors, works with research faculty and students, and confers with Ms. Sammis in advising and tracking student progress. You may reach Dr. Gilpin at [dgilpin@asu.edu](mailto:dgilpin@asu.edu) or by calling the Cronkite School during business hours at 602-496-5555.

Summary of Application Process	Key Dates	Notes
Submit application	December 1	Priority, for assistantships
	February 1	Preferred
	Rolling	
Interview	By invitation	
Notice of acceptance	March 1 or rolling	
Acceptance of placement	April 15	Preferred

## ◆ Peer and Faculty Mentors

Cronkite doctoral students find themselves immersed in a vibrant and multifaceted community of scholars, characterized by rigor as well as mutual support. Prior to arriving at ASU, incoming students will be assigned two mentors who will assist them with making the transition into their graduate school community.

The **faculty mentor** is someone who is not a core course instructor, but who can help students navigate the program, answer questions, and help decide on courses and research apprenticeships to pursue after the first semester. A committee chair (see below) will eventually take over these duties, but the mentor ensures that students have a designated point of reference from the beginning of their studies.

The **peer mentor** is a student in the program who can answer informal questions: about the program, the school, university, faculty, or life in the Phoenix metro area.

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*The Cronkite School strives daily to be a welcoming community for all members, where the contribution of each individual is valued and respected.*

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## ◆ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Cronkite PhD Program

The Cronkite School is committed to creating an environment in which everyone feels they are **represented**, their experience is **equitable**, they are fully **accepted** for who they are and that they are **valued**. We strive daily to be a welcoming place for all members of our community, where the importance and contribution of each individual is valued and respected.

The school's diversity principles may be summarized as follows:

- ◆ Actively **seek out and encourage diverse populations** to become productive members of the faculty, staff and the student body.
- ◆ Create and maintain a work, learning and social environment that is cognizant and supportive of a diversity of **human differences and beliefs**.
- ◆ Incorporate within the formal content of the curriculum and in each course an affirmation of the core values of accuracy, fairness, ethical behavior and sensitivity when engaging with an **increasingly multicultural world**.
- ◆ Foster and support a climate in which events and activities of the school reflect diversity of awareness, sensitivity to and support for people of **different origins, orientations and abilities**.

# Program Overview

The doctoral degree is rooted in substantial and sustained scholarly research that constitutes a significant contribution to new knowledge within the discipline. The Cronkite School's program has three parts: required courses, electives, and research/dissertation. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the program is its **interdisciplinary focus**: students complete at least 15 credit hours of coursework outside the Cronkite School in departments across ASU's four campuses.

Most students complete the program in approximately four years. In the first semesters, core courses set out the theoretical and methodological foundations. By the time they enter their second year, students are completing interdisciplinary course work and working with Cronkite faculty on research apprenticeships that ideally culminate in publication. Students typically take their comprehensive examinations and defend their prospectus in the third year, after which their time is dedicated to researching and writing the dissertation.

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*The Plan of Study (iPOS) is a roadmap to your degree*

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This section of the handbook outlines the general contours of the program and the degree requirements, and offers an at-a-glance overview for quick consultation. For more details, see the sections below dedicated to coursework and major degree milestones including committee selection, the comprehensive examinations, dissertation prospectus, and dissertation.

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## Plan of study

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The student, in consultation with their mentor or chair, will develop a **Plan of Study (iPOS)** that lists all of the courses the student will take as part of her/his degree program. The iPOS is approved by the student's committee chair and the Ph.D. director and forwarded to the Graduate College for final approval and filing. The Plan of Study includes all required and elective courses as well as 12 hours of research and 12 hours of dissertation credits.

Students should work with their mentors during the first year to develop an unofficial iPOS which must be submitted to the Cronkite School no later than the end of the second semester. A reminder email will be sent to students who do not file their preliminary POS by the end of their second semester, and an administrative hold will be placed on the student's record. The administrative hold will be removed once the student has filed an approved iPOS and the student will be able to register for classes.



Changes in the Plan of Study may be made at any time using the iPOS link under My Programs on the student's MyASU. An approved Plan of Study is required for graduation.

## Transfer Credits

Transfer credits are those accepted from another accredited institution for inclusion on an ASU Plan of Study. Official transcripts of any potential transfer credits are sent directly to the Graduate Admissions Office from the Office of the Registrar at the institution where the credit was earned. Requests for transfer credit will be evaluated by ASU and the Cronkite School's admissions committee at the time of the application. Consult the [Graduate College policies](#).

**Transfer credits may not exceed 12 credit hours** (with the exception of credits from an incoming master's degree; see below). Only graduate level courses with grades of "B" (3.00) or better may be transferred. Transfer credits may not be applied toward the minimum degree requirements for an ASU degree if they have been counted toward the minimum requirements for a previously awarded degree.



Graduate transfer credits are not awarded for: course work completed at institutions not accredited by a regional accrediting association; life/professional experience; courses taken at government agencies, corporations or industrial firms; workshops and seminars offered by postsecondary institutions; extension courses; or work completed prior to the posting of a bachelor's degree. All graduate courses taken prior to admission that are included on the POS must have been completed **within three years** of the semester and year of admission to the Cronkite program.

## Degree Requirements

The doctoral degree requires **84 credits beyond the bachelor's**. For students with an applicable master's degree in journalism, mass communication, or a related area, ASU will accept up to 24 transfer credits.

Students entering the program without a master's degree in journalism or mass communication or a related field are required to complete an **additional 15 hours** of Cronkite School graduate course work:

- ◆ MCO 503 Media Law
- ◆ MCO 510, Media Research Methods
- ◆ MCO 525 21st Century Media Organization & Entrepreneurship
- ◆ MCO 530 History/Philosophy & Ethics
- ◆ An appropriate elective to be decided with their mentor.

plus **9 hours of additional 500-level interdisciplinary courses** taken outside of the school.

These 24 credits are in addition to the coursework requirements for the doctoral degree as laid out in the next section.

*Students register for core courses in mass communication, then expand their range of knowledge and skills through interdisciplinary coursework and research practice*



# Coursework

Courses represent the foundations upon which an emerging scholar may build their research agenda

## ◆ Registration and Credit Hours

The first semester, all students will register for the same classes, totaling seven credit hours. (International students will need to consult their faculty mentor or the program director for advice on bringing their total credit hours to the required minimum of nine.) Students will normally register for **six to twelve credit hours** each semester. The maximum number of hours in which a doctoral student may enroll is 12.



The Graduate College requires students in good standing to register for a **minimum of one hour** of graduate level credit, which appears on their Plan of Study, or in an appropriate graduate level course in the academic unit in which they are pursuing their degree. This requirement includes any semester or summer session in which written or oral examinations are scheduled. The Graduate College allows doctoral students maximum of **10 years** from the date of the first course taken to complete the degree.



## ◆ Core Courses

The program includes **18 credits of core coursework** within the Cronkite School, which cohort members typically take together. The order and timing of these courses is set forth in the table following the course descriptions.

### **MCO 710 Research Methodology in Mass Communication**

Introduces students to scholarly research and fundamental concepts and skills used in empirical mass communication studies.

### **MCO 711 Critical, Historical & Legal Methods in Mass Communication**

This course guides students through the various skills and concepts needed to conduct qualitative research in mass communication.

### **MCO 712 Freedom of Expression Theory**

Examines the philosophical and legal aspects of press freedom, with an emphasis on First Amendment theory and its evolution from 1791 to the present day.



### **MCO 720 Mass Communication Theory**

Introduces students to both foundational and current theories used in various areas of mass communication scholarship.

### **MCO 722 Philosophy of Mass Communication**

This course approaches mass media as social institutions, particularly in the sense of how they interact with government and the public. There is an emphasis on criticism and examining normative statements.

### **MCO 755 Research Apprenticeship Seminar**

Additionally, in their first semester students take a seminar-style research apprenticeship designed to help orient them within academia and the discipline, and allow them to learn and practice core skills before they assist faculty with original research.

## Research Apprenticeships

The research apprenticeship is a one-credit course that provides Cronkite School doctoral students the opportunity to **work closely with one or more faculty members on original research projects**. Students are required to complete three apprenticeships, the first of which is a seminar taken in the first semester.

Each of the two remaining apprenticeships may be taken in the spring or fall and must be completed before the student is eligible to take the comprehensive exams. Summer apprenticeships may be available at the discretion of the supervising faculty member and the director of the doctoral program.

## Interdisciplinary Electives

To complement their core coursework and expand their scope of understanding, students take at least **15 credit hours** of interdisciplinary electives outside of the Cronkite School.

Course electives typically focus on the individual's research interests, including subject matter knowledge, methodological approaches, and key perspectives. Courses may be selected from **500, 600, and 700 level** classes.

Examples of interdisciplinary courses completed by successful Cronkite doctoral students in the past include, but are far from limited to, those listed below. Note that not all courses are available every semester, and some Special Topics classes may be offered only once. Contact the instructor listed in the catalogue for details about any particular course.

- Social Network Research and Theory
- Microeconomic Theory and Basics of Managerial Economics
- Communication Campaigns
- Surveillance and Popular Culture
- Quantitative Research Methods in Communication
- Impacting Inequality: Inequities and Wellbeing
- Communication Networks in Social Media & Everyday Life
- Survey of Intercultural Communication
- Introduction to Material Culture

**At least one of the chosen electives must be an advanced quantitative or qualitative methods course.** Students are strongly advised to consult with their mentor or advisor when selecting all of their courses, including their choice of advanced methods.



## ◆ Overview of Coursework Calendar

Students beginning the program in Fall 2021 will follow a course plan similar to the example shown below. Students from other cohorts may find some minor variations in the scheduling of core courses. International students may also have additional credit hour requirements that will necessitate them adding courses to what is shown here. Research apprenticeships may be taken at any time after the first semester.

Always work with your mentor or chair when planning your course selections.

### First Year

*The PhD represents 84 credits beyond the bachelor's degree. Most Cronkite doctoral students transfer 24 credits from an incoming relevant master's degree*

#### Fall 2021

MCO 710 Research Methodology  
MCO 720 Mass Communication Theory  
MCO 755 Doctoral Seminar

#### Spring 2022

MCO 711 Qualitative Methods  
MCO 722 Philosophy of Mass Communication  
Interdisciplinary elective

### Second Year

#### Fall 2022

Two interdisciplinary electives  
Advanced methods course  
Research apprenticeship

#### Spring 2023

MCO 712 Freedom of Expression Theory  
Interdisciplinary elective  
Research apprenticeship

### Overview of Course Credits

	Credit Hours
Core courses	18
Research apprenticeships	3
Interdisciplinary electives	15
<b>Coursework total</b>	<b>36</b>
Research hours (exams and prospectus)	12
Dissertation hours	12
Credits from transferable master's degree	24
<b>Total credits</b>	<b>84</b>

# Research Opportunities

Research is the engine of any academic enterprise, and the central focus of any doctoral degree

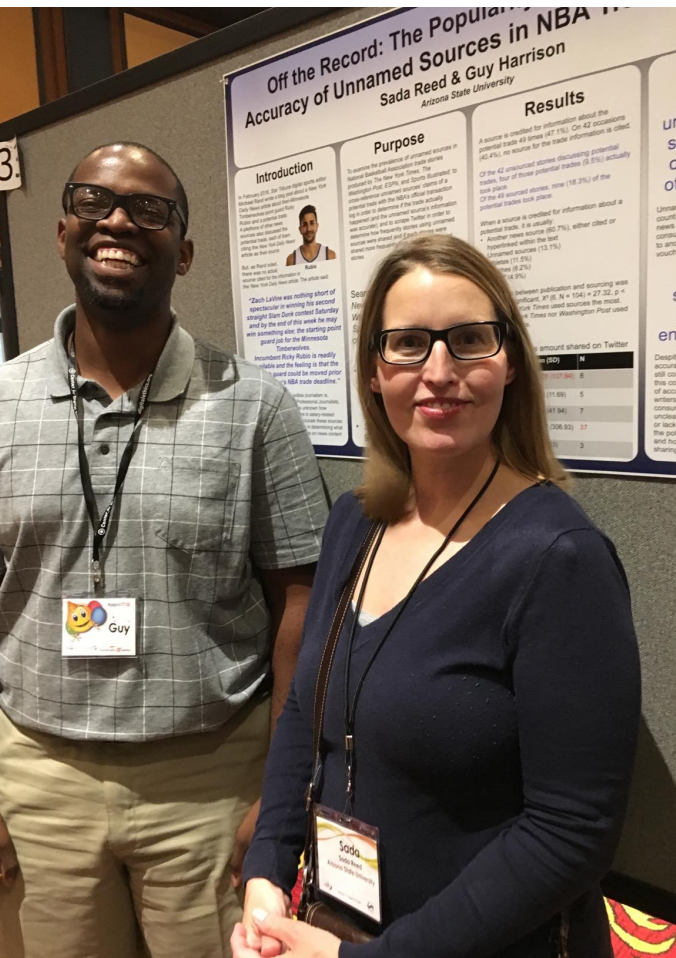
A doctoral degree is a research degree. Accordingly, Cronkite doctoral students have numerous avenues for engaging in research and enrichment to build their knowledge, skills, and experience.

## ◆ Independent Research

In addition to other research options described here, and papers resulting from coursework, students are encouraged to undertake independent research. It is advisable to have a continuous series of projects under way to ensure submission to **at least two conferences and/or scholarly journals each year**. This is the general level of productivity expected at most research universities, so it is best to get into this rhythm early in your studies.

## ◆ Research Apprenticeships

As noted above, students are required to take at least three research apprenticeships (RAs), the first of which is an introductory seminar. The remaining research apprenticeships offer the student an opportunity to work alongside a faculty member on a mutually agreed research project, usually one that is part of the faculty member's research agenda. While RAs have a duration of just one semester, most research projects in our discipline take longer to complete. The student is not required to continue working on the project after the RA semester ends, although they may wish to do so of their own volition in order to have build their scholarly record (CV).



## ✦ Collaborations with Faculty

Students also frequently work with students on various collaborative projects outside of formal courses or research. These projects may be initiated at any time, and may include paid opportunities from grant-funded research projects, or research and proposal writing aimed at securing grant funding.

## ✦ Internal or Cross-Disciplinary Working Groups

There are a number of working groups in operation at ASU, and more forming all the time. Cronkite faculty members have from time to time established working groups to focus on areas such as community journalism or social media and society. Two interdisciplinary groups of particular interest to Cronkite students include the [Disinformation Working Group](#) housed in ASU's Global Security Initiative, and the [Migration Working Group](#). Students are advised to seek out any groups that may be focused on their own area of specialization and take advantage of the research, publication, and networking opportunities they offer.

## ✦ Cronkite Research Symposium

The Cronkite Research Symposium is an annual event that takes place early in Spring semester each year, to showcase research by students of all levels. Doctoral students are encouraged to submit their work, as well as to serve as reviewers. The symposium offers an opportunity for students to receive feedback on their work from peers, faculty and alumni before submitting to larger academic conferences and scholarly journals.

The top paper selected by reviewers also receives a **cash prize of \$500**.





# Selecting a Committee

The committee mentors and evaluates the student into candidacy, and through the dissertation process.

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*Selecting a doctoral committee is one of the most important tasks the student will undertake during their graduate career*

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As mentioned earlier, relationships with faculty are central to the PhD experience, and nowhere is that more evident than in the committee.

Prior to arriving at ASU, incoming students will be assigned a mentor who will assist them with making the transition into graduate school until they have a mutual agreement with a faculty member who will serve as their chair, at which point they will also form a committee. Selecting a doctoral committee is one of the most important tasks the student will undertake during their graduate career.



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*The relationship between committee chair and student is one of the most important defining aspects of the doctoral experience*

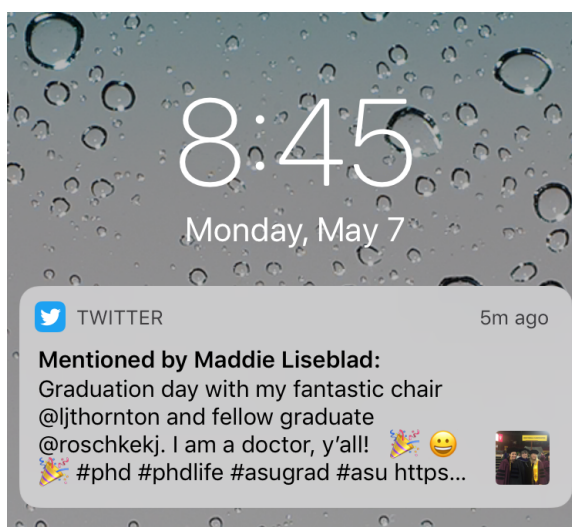
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The student's committee will consist of:

- ✦ A **chair**, who mentors and supervises the student's program of study. The relationship between student and chair will shape the entire PhD experience, so it is a mutual decision to be made with care and deliberation. The ability to collaborate well is ultimately more important than subject matter expertise, which can be supported by the other committee members.

The chair may be selected from among Cronkite faculty eligible to head doctoral committees, who are primarily tenured research faculty. As this selection requires approval of the program director, students should consult with both their mentor and Dr. Gilpin while considering whom to invite to serve in this role.

Supervising a doctoral student involves a considerable investment of time, effort, and care. Faculty members have sole discretion in deciding which students they are willing and able to work with. It is a good strategy to have two or three possibilities in mind in case your first choice is not available.



- ✦ At least **two members from the Cronkite faculty**. These should be chosen from the [list of approved committee members](#) maintained by the Graduate College. The list is updated infrequently, so please consult your chair and Dr. Gilpin if you are uncertain of a potential member's eligibility. Your member choices should be based on methodological and/or subject matter expertise, with the aim of forming a cohesive committee that can work together productively to ensure the student's success;
- ✦ At least one member from one of the student's interdisciplinary areas of emphasis. Often referred to as the **"outside" or "external" committee member**, this person is usually from another department at ASU in which the student has taken a course, although in some cases it may be appropriate to invite someone from outside the university to join the committee. The Graduate College must approve all external committee members.



# Comprehensive Examinations

Comprehensive examinations serve as a way for the student to demonstrate mastery of a particular knowledge domain and set of methodological skills



The comprehensive examinations represent an important milestone in the doctoral degree program, where the student has an opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of specialized knowledge and research skills that will qualify them to advance toward candidacy and take them one step closer to the terminal degree.

Upon completion of 36 hours of course work (the core, advanced methods, and electives) and prior to the submission of a dissertation prospectus, the student will be examined on material from course work included on his/her Plan of Study. The examination consists of **both written and oral components** and will be conducted by the student's supervisory committee.

Students are required to register for at least one semester hour of research credits that appears on the Plan of Study, or one hour of other appropriate graduate-level credit during the semester or in which they take their written and oral comprehensive examinations.

**A student must have on file a completed and signed Plan of Study and comprehensive exam application no later than the last day of classes of the semester prior to the one in which the student intends to take the exam.** This requires the student to have formed a committee and the chair to have convened at least one committee meeting, to sign the exam application form.

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*“Comps” are closed-book, closed-note proctored exams that take place over a two-week period*

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The comprehensive exams consist of **five written essays** in response to questions posed by committee members. At least one question must address **methodological issues**, while another must address some areas of **mass communication theory**. Other questions may focus on particular **subject matter areas** relevant to the student’s research interests and planned dissertation topic. One committee member, usually but not necessarily the chair, prepares two questions, one of which may be described as “overarching” to cover multiple subject areas.

The exams are closed-book and closed-notes, taken in a proctored setting when possible but always governed by the same integrity pledge

to which all Cronkite students must abide. **Each exam session lasts four hours**, and while the student and chair may decide on the specific dates, **all five sessions must be completed during a period of two weeks**.

Students orally defend their comprehensive exams to their supervisory committee. The **oral defense** should be scheduled approximately two weeks after the date of the last written exam.

Committee members consider both the written and oral responses, and score **each question on a scale of 0 to 4**, where 0 is “insufficient” and 4 is “outstanding.” The sum of scores determines the outcome.

Score	Assessment
19 to 20	Pass with distinction
16 to 18	Pass
14 to 15	Pass with contingency
13 and below	Fail

**Pass with distinction** represents the highest level of achievement, and denotes outstanding mastery across the examination areas. **Pass** indicates that the student has addressed the examination questions to the committee’s overall satisfaction, and will be permitted to continue to the next step in the degree process.

A **pass with contingency** assessment indicates that the written answer and oral defense for at least one question was found to be unsatisfactory by the committee. The student and committee members will work together to determine the appropriate means of fulfilling the requirement; often this consists of a paper written on the topic(s) in

question. The committee will also indicate the time frame in which the contingency assignment must be completed. Upon review, if the work is deemed satisfactory the exam result will be changed to “pass.” In the event the paper or other work fails to meet the committee’s standard, the assessment will be changed to “Fail.”

Failure on comprehensive examinations will be considered final unless the supervisory committee, and the director of the doctoral program approve reexamination. The decision of this committee is reported to the Graduate College.

# Dissertation Prospectus

The last step toward candidacy is to write and defend a formal research proposal known as the prospectus

*The prospectus is essentially a pitch designed to persuade committee members that the proposed dissertation project is viable, and the student can complete it within a reasonable time frame*

The prospectus is a working document describing and justifying the intended dissertation topic and methodology. It should be approached as a persuasive text containing a robust argument supported by appropriate citations.

Typically the prospectus includes:

- ◆ an **introduction**;
- ◆ a detailed **literature review**;
- ◆ clearly stated **research questions and/or hypotheses** for the proposed study;
- ◆ a detailed description of the planned **methodology**;
- ◆ a **timeline** for completion; and
- ◆ any **additional information** requested by the chair or other committee members.

The suggested length for the dissertation prospectus is **generally 20-40 pages**, but this may vary and is at the full discretion of the chair. It also likely varies based on the type of research proposed. Quantitative studies may call for a shorter “contract” than qualitative, legal, or historical proposals. Students should confer with their chair in advance to define expectations.

The chair determines when the prospectus is ready for the oral defense. The prospectus should be distributed to all committee members **at least three weeks before the scheduled oral defense** date, to allow time for careful review.

Once the prospectus has been approved by the committee, the student may apply to the Graduate College for admission to candidacy.

## Admission to candidacy”

“Admission to Candidacy” is one of the most important milestones along the path to a doctoral degree. It occurs after the student has passed both the written and oral portions of the comprehensive examinations, and the student’s supervisory committee has formally approved the student’s dissertation prospectus following an oral defense. At this point, the student is referred to as a “**doctoral candidate**.”

Prior to admission to candidacy, students must enroll for a minimum of **12 hours of MCO 792 Research credits** while preparing for their comprehensive exams and writing their prospectus.

# Dissertation

The dissertation is the final product of a doctoral degree, but only the first step in a larger research agenda

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*A dissertation presents original empirical research that contributes to and advances knowledge within the discipline and exemplifies a high standard of rigor and excellence*

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The dissertation is a book-length research project, typically between 150 and 300 pages, that contributes original knowledge to the discipline. It is the culmination of months of hard work by the student under supervision of the chair and other committee members, but the dissertation itself is an individually authored document.

A dissertation presents original research that contributes to and advances knowledge within the discipline. It may employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, but it must exemplify a high standard of rigor and excellence.

Following the semester in which the student is admitted to candidacy, the student must complete 12 credit hours of MCO 799 Dissertation research. Continuing registration credits (MCO 795) may be used to maintain enrolled status once the research hours have been completed.

The university has [specific requirements](#) regarding the formatting and structure of the dissertation, including a wizard tool. Students are encouraged to make use of the Graduate College resources early and often to avoid unnecessary delays surrounding the defense.

Once the dissertation is complete and approved by the chair, it is reviewed by committee members, who may require revisions and additional drafts. The final draft of the dissertation should be submitted to the committee **at least four or five weeks prior to the scheduled oral defense**. The oral defense is a public event intended to showcase the research; it is the student's opportunity to present the material and answer questions by committee members and any other guests.

Oral defenses may only be scheduled during the standard academic year.

At the defense, the chair and committee collectively decide whether the dissertation has earned a grade of **Pass**, **Pass with Distinction**, or **Fail**. Even the most successful dissertations generally require some edits and minor changes before filing with the Graduate College. Consult the [Graduate College website](#) for details about formatting the dissertation, scheduling the defense, filing the completed document, and other requirements for graduation.



# Standards

Monitoring progress is fundamental to students' success in the program and to maintaining the school's reputation for rigor

Each year the doctoral committee meets formally to discuss each student's progress. The committee will make recommendations regarding continuation, probation, or termination of the student from the program. Those evaluations are based on grades, progress on the plan of study, and a written evaluation from the student's adviser/mentor.

time they are enrolled in a graduate program. This includes maintaining a **minimum 3.0 cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)** overall and in courses included on the Plan of Study. If a student's GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be notified and placed on probation. If the student's GPA is not raised to at least a 3.0 by the end of the next semester (excluding summer), a recommendation will be



If a student fails to meet the requirements set forth below they may be placed on probation or removed from the program by the Graduate College.

## ◆ Grade Point Requirements

The Graduate College and the Cronkite School require students to make satisfactory progress during the

made to the Graduate College to remove the student from the program.

## ◆ Deficiencies

Deficiencies are generally related to timelines. Under most circumstances, students should:

- ◆ Request the **appointment of a chair** and form a supervisory committee by the end of the first



year and/or before they have earned 18 hours of core credit. If progress is otherwise satisfactory this timeline may be extended.

- ◆ Finish their doctoral **course work within two years**.
- ◆ Take their **comprehensive examinations** immediately following the completion of their course work.
- ◆ Complete the **dissertation prospectus** defense in a timely manner following completion of the comprehensive examination.

- ◆ Report **significant progress on the dissertation** and defend the dissertation within one year of defending the proposal prospectus; some research will require more time, especially for projects requiring fieldwork or qualitative analyses of large amounts of data.

Students requiring more flexibility in this schedule must remain consistently in touch with their mentor or chair and the doctoral program director.

## ◆ Timelines, Limitations and Graduation

The [Graduate College calendar](#) is found on the Graduate College website and includes all important dates for students approaching graduation. It lists deadlines for applying for graduation, submission of the dissertation to the Graduate College, and the last date to hold an oral dissertation defense.

## ◆ Academic Integrity

The Cronkite School has a **zero tolerance policy toward academic dishonesty** that is enforced within every course and educational activity offered or sanctioned by the school. Any allegation of academic dishonesty will be referred to the school's Standards Committee for review and recommendation to the dean of the school. If a student is found to have engaged in academic dishonesty in any form – including but not limited to cheating, plagiarizing and fabricating – that student shall receive a grade of XE for the class and will be dismissed from the school. There will be no exceptions.



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*Cronkite  
doctoral  
students are  
held to the  
highest  
standards of  
scholarly and  
professional  
ethics*

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International students who violate academic integrity policies may be dismissed immediately. Being withdrawn from a degree program can have immediate consequences regarding visa status, and dismissed students are required to leave the country immediately per immigration and visa rules.

At the beginning of every Cronkite class, each student will be given a copy of the full academic integrity policy, along with accompanying information on plagiarism. Students must sign a pledge that indicates they have read and understood the material and agree to abide by the policy.

The policy, along with guidance on how to avoid plagiarism and fabrication, can be found on the school's [website](#).

## ◆ Professional Ethics

In addition to academic integrity commitments, students in Cronkite School programs must abide by the highest levels of journalism ethics. This includes following the core principles of the Society of Professional Journalist's Code of Ethics, including seeking and reporting truth, minimizing harm, acting independently, accountability and transparency. The Cronkite School [Social Media Guidelines](#) are also based on these principles. Students are responsible for reading these policies and abiding by them.

## ◆ Professional Conduct

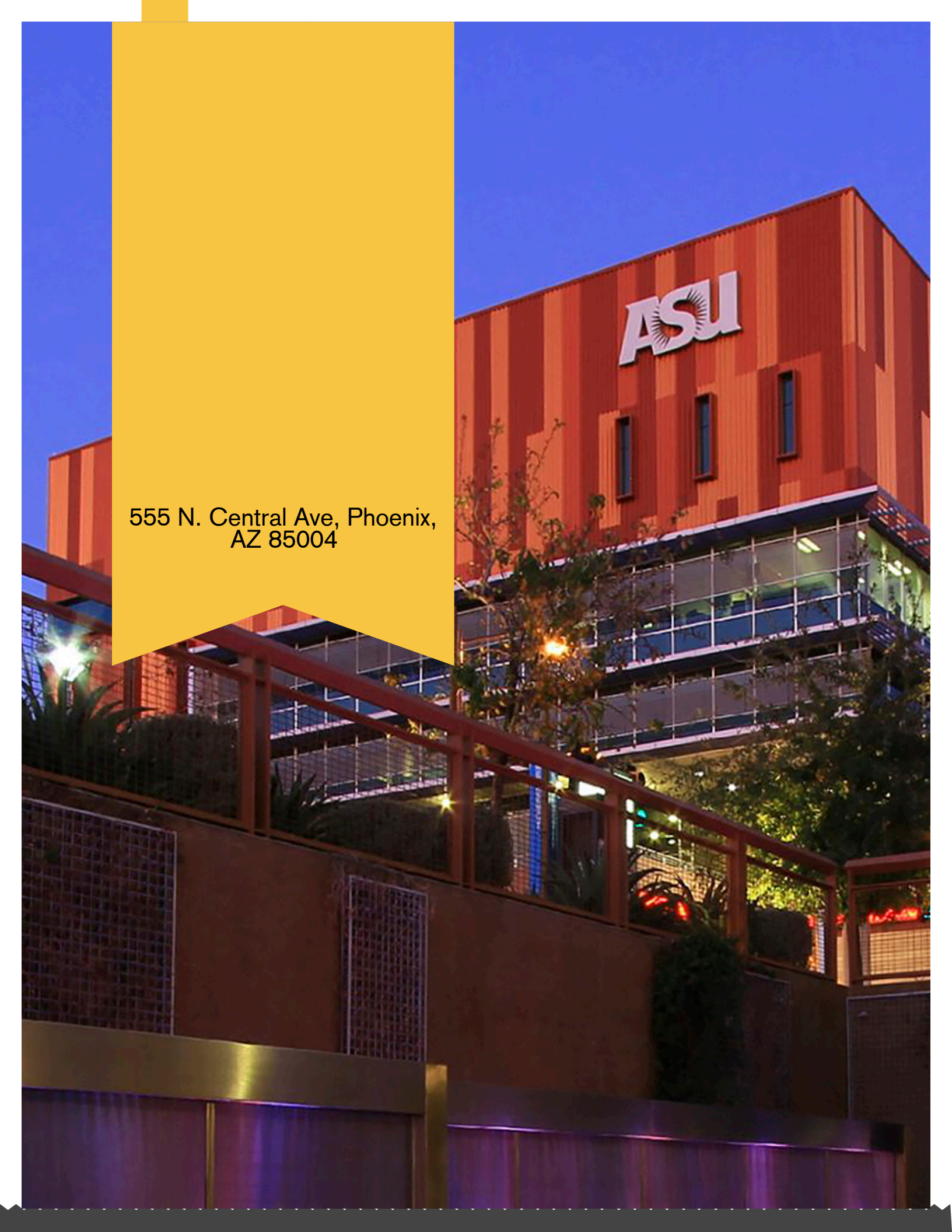
ASU prohibits all forms of discrimination, harassment and retaliation. You may view ASU's policy on the [university website](#).

Title IX protects individuals from discrimination based on sex in any educational program or activity operated by recipients of federal financial assistance. As required by Title IX, ASU does not discriminate on the basis of sex in the education programs or activities that we operate, including in admission and employment. Inquiries concerning the application of Title IX may be referred to the Title IX Coordinator or to the U.S. Department of Education, Assistant Secretary, or both. Contact [titleixcoordinator@asu.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@asu.edu) or 480-965-0696 for more information. Office located at 1120 S. Cady Mall, INTDSB 284. Visit the [website](#) for information on making a report please.

## ◆ Appeals

Students who wish to appeal a decision must do so in writing to the dean of the Cronkite School within 10 business days of being notified by the school that a recommendation has been made to the Graduate College to remove them from the program. The dean's decision regarding appeals is final.



A photograph of the ASU building at night, featuring a prominent red facade with the ASU logo. The building has multiple levels with glass railings and is surrounded by greenery. A large yellow banner is overlaid on the left side of the image.

555 N. Central Ave, Phoenix,  
AZ 85004