Faculty and students focus on diverse methodological and theoretical approaches to understanding human relations in interpersonal, family, and health contexts. Specific specializations include the negotiation of relational problematics and relational dialectics, discourses in and about family relationships and family forms, communication and narrative sense-making, communication surrounding relational and social identity, and communicative processes and outcomes associated with mental and physical health. We pride ourselves on our student-faculty collaborations and the independent scholarship produced by our students. You can find the work of faculty and graduate students published in highly respected journals including Communication Monographs, Communication Studies, Journal of Applied Communication Research, Journal of Family Communication, Journal of Marriage and Family, Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, Health Communication, Personal Relationships, and Western Journal of Communication. Faculty members are also authoring and editing important scholarly books (e.g., Engaging Theories in Family Communication) and have served as editors for Journal of Family Communication and Journal of Social and Personal Relationships.

Graduate students have the opportunity to work in our faculty labs and research groups. Faculty are also connected with and have leadership roles in interdisciplinary initiatives on campus including Minority Health Disparities Initiative, Qualitative and Mixed Method Research Interest Group, Translational Science Working Group, Preparing Future Faculty, and the Peer Review of Teaching Project.

The quality of the scholarship produced by our faculty and graduate students is evident in the recognition they receive from the university and top papers at national and regional conferences. Recent recognition includes several dissertation awards from the National Communication Association and the Bernard J. Brommel Award in Family Communication, Monograph of the Year Award (NCA GLBTQ Division), Distinguished Article Award (NCA Family Communication Division), Gerald R. Miller Book Award (NCA Interpersonal Communication Division).

**Dawn O. Braithwaite**
Dr. Braithwaite studies how people in personal and family relationships communicate and negotiate family change and challenges. Her research centers on how persons in discourse dependent and changing family relationships interact to co-create and enact family identity. Dr. Braithwaite focuses on communication rituals, privacy management, and dialectics of relating in stepfamilies and among voluntary (fictive) kin. She is a Willa Cather Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Communication Studies and is a Past President of the National Communication Association.

**Kathy Castle**
Dr. Castle's research is focused on improving the overall physical, mental, and relational health and well being of those experiencing and working within the context of chronic illness. She mentors graduate teaching assistants for our Business and Professional Communication course.

**Jody Koenig Kellas**
Dr. Koenig Kellas conducts research and teaches classes on interpersonal, family, and health communication. The overarching purpose of her research program is to study the ways in which narratives, storytelling, and related forms of communicated sense-making can help individuals and families understand, negotiate, and improve communication and coping within the context of difficulty and illness. Her research lab, NARRATIVE NEBRASKA, seeks to implement interdisciplinary, empirical-based interventions to improve caregiving, communication, and psychosocial well-being for families and care providers.

**Angela Palmer-Wackerly**
Dr. Palmer-Wackerly specializes in health communication and uses mixed methods and community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles to research the ways in which identities and supportive communication from family, friends, and health care providers relate to patients' health and treatment decisions. Her specific areas of interest are: (1) improving communication between families, patients, and providers to influence health and treatment decision-making in cancer, infertility, and the intersection between these two diseases; and (2) rural community engagement through cultural identity and communication to create sustainable solutions to community-defined health problems, such as cancer, diabetes, mental health, and health-care access.

**Jordan Soliz**
Dr. Soliz studies communication and intergroup processes primarily in personal and family relationships, with a current emphasis on multiethnic-racial families and interfaith families. He also investigates processes and outcomes of intergroup contact and potential communication processes that minimize outgroup attitudes (e.g., ageism) and/or buffer effects of discrimination. He is the past editor of the Journal of Family Communication and current Chair of the Intergroup Communication Interest Group of ICA.

Department of Communication Studies
comm.unl.edu
"Cultivating Scholars, Developing Teachers"

Graduate Courses in Interpersonal, Family, & Health Communication

In addition to the courses listed below, we also work with students to identify topic courses in other areas and departments as well as developing independent studies. Students take quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods courses through partnerships with other departments.

- Family Communication
- Health Communication
- Social Identity and Intergroup Communication
- Narratives, Health, and Relationships
- Dark Side of Interpersonal and Family Communication
- Interpretive Research
- Communication and Health Disparities
- Interpersonal Communication

Courses Graduate Students Can Teach

In addition to opportunities to teach our standardized courses (Communication in the 21st Century, Business and Professional Communication), our goal is to provide experience teaching courses independently in your general area of study.

- Social Scientific Research in Communication Studies
- Interpersonal Communication
- Intercultural Communication
- Small Group Communication
- Family Communication
- Communication and Aging

“UNL has a family atmosphere that encourages graduate students to produce exceptional research. I love the colloquiums, feedback from professors, and opportunities that are provided here.”

Graduate Assistantships

- Competitive stipend
- Tuition waivers
- Health insurance
- Travel funds for conferences
- Professional development programs
- Department and university leadership roles
- Faculty research collaborations

“What I appreciate the most about UNL is the collaborative academic environment. Being at UNL has allowed me to co-author work and participate in intellectual conversations with a number of people both within and outside of communication studies.”

Application Deadline for Fall is January 15th

Contact our Director of Graduate Studies at jsoliz2@unl.edu or specific faculty members for questions about our program.

Visit comm.unl.edu/graduate for more information on our program, scholarly initiatives, and the application process.

We have openings for graduate assistant coaches for our nationally recognized Speech & Debate Team!