

# **M.A. GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK 2024–2025**

**DEPARTMENT OF  
MEDIA ARTS**  
College of Liberal Arts  
& Social Sciences

**UNT<sup>®</sup>**  
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Approved by the Media Arts Graduate  
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# The Master of Arts Degree in Media Arts

The Master of Arts degree in Media Arts requires the completion of at least 33–36 hours of graduate course work. In addition, students must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.25 while in the program. Any student whose GPA drops below this level will be placed on probation for one semester. If at the end of the probationary semester the student's GPA has not been raised to a 3.25 or better, the student will be subject to program dismissal.

## Degree Plan

Upon completing 9 hours in the M.A. program, students must submit a Degree Plan for approval by the M.A. Graduate Director and Toulouse Graduate School. Once filed, any changes to the degree plan must be approved by the M.A. Graduate Director and resubmitted to the graduate school for approval.

## Course Requirements

The M.A. degree has two pathways: Critical/Cultural Studies and Media Industry Studies. Both pathways require a capstone: either a written Thesis or a written Comprehensive Exam.

### *Critical/Cultural Studies Pathway*

Graduate students who select this pathway must take:

1. MRTS 5100 – Introduction to Graduate Studies in Media Arts
2. MRTS 5120 – Critical/Cultural Media Theory
3. MRTS 5121 – Digital Media Studies
4. At least 9 additional hours of Critical/Cultural Studies courses
5. An additional 9-12 hours of elective courses that can include up to:
  - i. 6 hours from graduate courses in other departments at UNT as approved by the M.A. Director
  - ii. 3 hours practicum OR 3 hours internship
  - iii. 3 hours special problems
6. Capstone: completion of an M.A. Thesis (6 hours) or Comprehensive Exam (3 hours)

### *Media Industry Studies Pathway*

Graduate students who select this pathway must take:

1. MRTS 5100 – Introduction to Graduate Studies in Media Arts
2. MRTS 5120 – Critical/Cultural Media Theory OR MRTS 5121 – Digital Media Studies
3. MRTS 5125 – Media Industry Studies
4. At least 9 additional hours of Industry Studies courses
5. An additional 9-12 hours of elective courses that can include up to:
  - i. 6 credit hours from graduate courses in other departments at UNT as approved by the M.A. Director
  - ii. 3 hours practicum OR 3 hours internship
  - iii. 3 hours special problems
6. Capstone: completion of a thesis (6 hours) or exam (3 hours)

## Curriculum

Course offerings differ each semester. Check the current graduate course catalog for available courses. Course information for every semester is posted on the bulletin board outside of the MRTS department office and online as soon as it is available. *You must meet with the Graduate Director each semester to obtain course codes for enrollment.*

### **Courses Applicable to Both Pathways:**

**MRTS 5100. Introduction to Graduate Studies in Media Arts.** 3 hours. Introduction to research and writing at the graduate level for Media Arts. Presents key approaches from several disciplines that have contributed to the disciplinary tradition of Media Arts. Required for all graduate students.

**MRTS 5121. Digital Media Studies.** 3 hours. Examination of emerging theoretical approaches to mass media. Application to digital media and traditional film and television of qualitative methodologies based on concepts including participatory culture, community, mobility, network theory, labor economies, and globalization.

**MRTS 5180. Internship in Media Arts.** 1-3 hours. Supervised off-campus work experience in a placement that relates to student's career objective.

**MRTS 5480. Practicum in the Teaching of Media Arts.** 3 hours. Training in the teaching of some aspect of radio, television, or film. Under the supervision of a faculty member, the student prepares and presents instructional units, conducts class discussions, and handles administrative matters peculiar to the type of course involved.

**MRTS 5900. Special Problems.** 1–3 hours. Individual study topics to be proposed by the student and approved by MRTS faculty and department chair prior to commencing work.

### **Sample Courses within the Critical/Cultural Studies Pathway:**

**MRTS 5120. Critical-Cultural Media Theory.** 3 hours. Introduces students to various theoretical frameworks used to study multiple media formats. Provides students with a historical development of media theory, as well as the vocabulary and concepts germane to different methodologies.

**MRTS 5225. Women In Film.** 3 hours. Advanced study of the development of feminist film theories and their continued impact on contemporary global cinema. The course will address a wide range of topics as they relate to women in film, including agency, violence, sexuality, spirituality and social politics. This course meets with MRTS 4225.

**MRTS 5340. History of the Documentary.** 3 hours. An overview of the history of the documentary from 1895 to the present in the context of historical and political events of the time. Examines the evolution of style and form and the impact of production technology on the process.

**MRTS 5400. Media Studies Seminar.** 3 hours. In-depth studies of media—rotating topics including Video Game Perspectives and Community Media Education.

**MRTS 5420. African-American Film.** 3 hours. Advanced study of the representation of African American characters and concerns throughout the history of American film, drawing on current concepts from historiography, spectatorship, and critical race theory. Explores the cultural context of historical and contemporary images, as well as African- American participation within the American film industry.

**MRTS 5430. Gender and Sexuality in the Horror Film.** 3 hours. Advanced study of gender and sexuality as it has been figured throughout the history of the American horror film, drawing on genre theory, psychoanalysis, feminism, and queer theory. Explores the cultural context of historical and contemporary images, charting their change vis-à-vis major historical events such as World War II, the Sexual Revolution and the AIDS crisis.

**MRTS 5435. Lesbian, Gay and Queer Film and Video.** 3 hours. Advanced study of the representation of lesbian, gay and queer characters and concerns throughout the history of American film, drawing upon recent advances in historiography, spectatorship and queer theory. Explores the cultural context of historical and contemporary images, charting their change across relevant historical events such as World War II, the Sexual Revolution, the AIDS crisis and the mainstreaming of queer concerns in the 1990s.

**MRTS 5515. Media/Genre Authors.** 3 hours. An in-depth study of a specific genre in film or television from its origins through its development as a distinct narrative and aesthetic form. Topics have included the films of Luis Buñuel, Federico Fellini, British Cinema, The Western, International Documentary, Anthropological Film.

**MRTS 5750. Cinema/Video Verité.** 3 hours. Examines the development of this major style in documentary film and video from its introduction in 1960 to its present use in nonfiction film and television. Outlines its history in detail and explores its employment in reality television, fiction film and television drama.

**MRTS 5780. Contemporary Documentary.** 3 hours. Engages with a variety of theoretical debates related to contemporary documentary. The first half of the course will involve guided reading, written responses and class discussion. The second half will be divided amongst class participants to view and discuss contemporary works in light of these and other appropriate theoretical debates.

### ***Sample Courses within the Industry Studies Pathway:***

**MRTS 5125. Media Industry Studies.** 3 hours. Introduction to how media industries work, why they work as they do, and the broader theoretical and practical implications of media industry structure and function. Provides students with research methods and critical frameworks for graduate study of the media industry.

**MRTS 5460. Global Media.** 3 hours. Study of mass communication media throughout the world, with special attention to news and broadcast systems, the sources and flow of international news, and problems of world communications.

**MRTS5620. Media Economics.** 3 hours. Analysis of the economic parameters of the current and past media industries, particularly film, television, and the cable industries. Includes study of the history and development of the film and subsequent media industries.

**MRTS 5630. Broadcast Programming.** 3 hours. Theories and strategies of program selection, scheduling and evaluation for broadcast stations and cable television systems.

**MRTS 5640. Media Management.** 3 hours. The fundamental management theories and practices in the areas of personnel, financial, marketing, legal, and technical aspects of broadcast station, cable television, and digital media systems.

**MRTS 5350. Television News Producing.** 3 hours. Theory and practice of producing television newscasts in a station environment. Students produce newscasts for North Texas Television (NTTV), UNT's cable access station. They work with reporter/photographer teams as field producers and special project producers, with assignment editors, and in content development.

**MRTS 5660. Industry Studies Topics.** 3 hours. Rotating topics in industry studies.

**MRTS 5675. Media and Power in Latin America.** 3 hours. Advanced study of twenty-first century corporate leaders in Spanish-language (and bilingual) media as well as grassroots responses to such entities and content, on air, on film, and online. Requires independent research or a media project.

## **Transfer Credits**

The Department of Media Arts follows the policies and guidelines of the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies. Subject to the approval of the graduate dean and the Media Arts department, a student who holds a bachelor's degree and has been admitted to the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies and the Media Arts M.A. program at UNT, may apply up to 9 semester hours of graduate credit toward the degree.

## **Capstone Options**

After completion of 9 credit hours in the program, occurring normally after a student's first semester, the capstone options are discussed with the M.A. Graduate Director.

### ***Thesis Option: 36 Credit Hours***

The thesis option is especially appropriate for students wishing to pursue a Ph.D. after completing the M.A. or for students wishing to work in research positions in the field, but it is open to all students. If the student chooses the thesis option, they must establish a thesis committee and successfully write and defend a thesis. Students are eligible to enroll in thesis hours after completing a minimum of 18 credit hours.

Once the student selects the thesis option, establishes their committee, and enrolls in thesis hours, a student is no longer eligible for the exam option in the program.

Details of thesis requirements, committee formation, and expected schedule of work is explained later in this handbook.

### **Exam Option: 33 Credit Hours**

If a student chooses the exam option, they must establish an exam committee and pass a comprehensive written exam. Students must complete a minimum of 21 hours of graduate credit before they are eligible to enroll in exam credits. Exams must be taken in the student's final semester.

Once the student selects the exam option, establishes their committee, and enrolls in exam hours, a student is no longer eligible for the thesis option in the program.

Details of exam requirements, committee formation, and expected schedule of work is explained later in this handbook.

### **Time Limits and Progress toward the Degree**

The following policies ensure students maintain the expected progress toward the degree.

1. Students must enroll in Media Arts classes within one year of being admitted into the M.A. program.
2. Students are expected to enroll in three courses each semester. They must also enroll in at least one course each year that will count toward their M.A. degree.
3. Students have one year after completing their coursework on their M.A. degree to take comprehensive exams or defend their thesis proposal. Students who fail one or more sections of the comprehensive exams must retake the exams the following semester. Students have one year after defending their thesis proposal to defend the final version of their completed thesis.

Students who fail to meet the above requirements will be dismissed from the M.A. program. Students who are dismissed under this policy may provide a written appeal to the departmental Graduate Committee for consideration. The decision to reinstate a student after dismissal is solely at the discretion of the departmental Graduate Committee. Students who violate the above policies twice will be dismissed from the M.A. program without further recourse within the department.

All requirements for the M.A. degree must be completed within 5 years. While it is possible to request a one-year time extension through the Toulouse Graduate School, the Department of Media Arts typically does not grant extension requests. Students who fail to complete all requirements for the M.A. degree within 5 years will be dismissed from the program without recourse within the department.

### **Maintaining Good Academic Standing**

Graduate students are expected to meet high standards of academic performance. *The graduate committee in the Department of Media Arts will recommend dismissal of a student from the program if the student receives two course grades of "C" or below.*

If the departmental graduate committee recommends the dismissal of a student under this policy, the student may provide a written appeal to the departmental graduate committee for consideration. The decision to reinstate a student is solely at the discretion of the departmental graduate committee. If a student who is reinstated receives a third grade of “C” or below, the student will be dismissed from the program without further recourse within the department.

### **Assistantships**

All MA students in good academic standing are eligible to apply for assistantships offered through the Department of Media Arts. Positions are determined on a semester-to-semester basis and are not guaranteed; students seeking an assistantship must apply each semester. Applications are available on the department website as well as through the Graduate Director.

Offers take into consideration many variables including, though not limited to, funding availability, departmental needs, student status, and prior performance. Assistantships are paid positions with high expectations of work ethic and performance. Students who do not meet the expectations of faculty or fail to work the required hours a week may not be eligible for reinstatement of appointments. Assistantship decisions are made by the Department Chair in consultation with the Graduate Directors.

Students should note that Toulouse Graduate School requires students to be enrolled in 9 hours of graduate courses to be eligible for an assistantship. The M.A. degree only requires 33–36 hours, which means that a student does not have to enroll full-time for four semesters to complete the degree in two years. However, if they wish to pursue an assistantship, they can enroll in additional elective courses or pursue a minor to meet the minimum 9-hour requirement for assistantships.

### **Travel Funding**

The Department of Media Arts has limited funding available to support graduate students who are invited to present at a conference or who wish to request research-related travel expenses. Students who are presenting at a conference must submit an application to the Graduate Director and provide proof of acceptance and expenses.

Research-related travel requests (e.g. travel to an archive or interview) must be submitted with a justification of trip and the expenses. Funding decisions are made at the discretion of the Graduate Curriculum Committee and are subject to availability.



## **M.A. Comprehensive Exam Procedures and Timeline**

### **Master of Arts Comprehensive Exam Defined**

The Comprehensive Exam (hereafter Exam) is a test of the student's understanding of the central tenets of the fields of critical-cultural media studies and media industry studies. The Exam is designed to determine the extent to which the student has mastered the theories and skills necessary for the degree and is a test of the student's ability to describe, explain, analyze, and evaluate concepts in media studies. Students are expected to demonstrate a broad knowledge of the discipline, but the exact content of the Exam and its subsequent assessment will depend on the student's pathway and specializations.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is of central importance in education, and academic misconduct will not be tolerated in the Exam. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. In addition, students may not be in contact with each other regarding the Exam during the administration of the Exam. All Exam responses will be run through Turnitin, and any finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. All UNT students must know and adhere to the University's policy on academic integrity, which can be found at: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>.

### **Exam Committee**

The Exam Committee will be comprised of three members: the Major Professor and two other graduate faculty members from Media Arts. Students must take at least one class with each of their Exam Committee members. This will enable them to answer an Exam question derived at least in part from the courses students they have taken with each member of their Exam Committee. The Exam Committee members have the discretion to write questions based on a course the student has taken with them and/or synthesizing questions that tie together their coursework.

### **Scope of the Major Professor**

The Major Professor must be a member of the Media Arts graduate faculty and will assist the student in direct preparation of their Exam. The student must take at least one course from their Major Professor, however it is strongly advised that they take at least two courses with their Major Professor, when possible. No faculty member is required to serve on a particular committee and may decline membership due to other work commitments, lack of expertise in the proposed area of interest, or other reasons.

It is the student's responsibility, after they have consulted with the Graduate Director, to obtain the consent of an eligible faculty member to serve as their Major Professor and to determine in advance that the faculty member will be available during the semester of the Exam.

***A student CANNOT enroll in exam hours without approval from their Major Professor. In the semester before they anticipate taking their Exam, the student must obtain the Exam Committee Request form from the Graduate Advisor and have the form signed by all members of their Exam Committee.***

The responsibility of the Major Professor is to guide the student in his/her work. However, it is the responsibility of the student to adequately prepare, organize, and obtain the appropriate resources necessary for the Exam. Should a student require extra assistance preparing for the Exam, they should consult their Major Professor to clarify concepts or theories; it is not the responsibility of the Major Professor to re-teach material already covered in courses or to provide reading lists or materials. Students must maintain copies of course readings, notes, syllabi, and other relevant materials for reference during study for and completion of the Exam, as professors will not reconstruct those materials for students. Students are encouraged to work in conjunction with the library reference staff and UNT's Writing Center as appropriate.

## **Modifications to the Exam Committee**

Students should be aware that the replacement of Exam Committee members should take place only in exceptional circumstances and always in consultation with their Major Professor and Graduate Director. Once an Exam Committee Request Form has been completed, an Exam Committee has been approved, and a Degree Plan has been filed with the Graduate School, any changes to the Exam Committee must be approved by the Graduate Director.

## **Enrollment**

Students are eligible to enroll in exam credits after they have completed a minimum of 21 hours of coursework, and the Exam should be completed in the student's final semester. Three credit hours of MRTS 5900 (special problems) are required for the Exam.

Students should note that the Degree Plan limits MRTS 5900 (special problems) to 3 hours. If for some reason, enrollment in the exam hours would exceed the 3-hour limit (e.g. the student had already taken another special problems course), students **must take an additional 3 hours** of credit to meet the degree requirements (e.g. students would graduate with a total of 36 credit hours instead of the minimum 33 hours).

## **Registration**

The Exam is scheduled once every Fall (typically November) and Spring (typically April) semester. Exact dates for the Exam will be made available at the beginning of each semester. The student will need to register for the Exam at least one month before the date of the Exam.

The student can register by submitting the Comprehensive Exam Registration Request form to the departmental Graduate Director (the form is available on the department website, and it is

also available at the end of this handbook). Once their registration has been received, the student will receive a confirmation email to their UNT email address. If a student does not register with the Graduate Director at least one month prior to the Exam, the student may not be allowed to take the Exam.

If a student decides not to take the Exam after registering, the student must inform the Graduate Director and Major Professor of their decision prior to the Exam date. Once the Exam has been administered, it will count as an attempt at the Exam. If the student fails to submit a completed Exam by the due date and time, it will be considered a failed attempt.

## Preparation

Students will work with their Exam Committee to create a reading list for each question that is tailored to their academic interests and that draws from material covered in their graduate coursework in Media Arts. Students should review the readings and media texts assigned for each class as they prepare for the Exam. However, total reliance on course notes is not sufficient; essay answers must be strengthened by direct references to and engagement with books, articles, media, and other materials covered in classes.

To repeat for emphasis, students are responsible for **retaining all course readings** and materials in preparation for the Exam. Notes taken in classes and on all course readings and media texts will be necessary in preparing for the Exam.

## Structure

The Exam will consist of three parts, each consisting of an essay question written by the Major Professor and the Exam Committee.

Students are expected to thoroughly answer each question, demonstrating your comprehension and mastery of the related concepts, theories, and/or research. Relevant examples and integration of concepts from various courses and readings is expected. There are no specific requirements for length. Instead, graders will look for full answers that respond to all aspects of the questions. As a rule of thumb, students should expect their responses to be at least 2,500-3,500 words each (excluding citations). However, it does not matter how long an answer is, if it does not directly answer the question and demonstrate mastery of the relevant concepts, readings, and materials, it will not earn a passing score.

Responses to the essay questions must be typed, demonstrate graduate-level academic writing skills, and have been edited to eliminate spelling, grammar, and formatting errors. Answers may use any appropriate reference format (e.g., MLA, APA) with approval of the Major Professor.

**Note that citations of lectures, course discussions, class notes, and/or professors are not, on their own, considered appropriate support.**

Answers must include relevant citations from sources such as peer-reviewed manuscripts (e.g., scholarly journal articles and books), media texts such as films, television series, or games, and/or industry publications. All evidence used in support of an answer must be specific and properly cited.

## Administration of the Exam

After enrolling in MRTS 5900 for the Exam, the student will be added to a “Special Topics” course on Canvas, as will the Exam Committee. At 9 a.m. on the first day of the Exam, the Major Professor will make the Exam questions available as a Canvas assignment. Answers are typically completed at home, but the Major Professor will make the final decision with respect to where the Exam is to be completed. The student will have 7 days to complete the exam and to submit the three essays to the Canvas assignment by 6 p.m. on the due date. All answers will be checked against plagiarism software. Once the exam has been administered, it will count as an attempt at the Exam. The Exam assignment on Canvas will close for submissions by 6:15 p.m. on the due date, and, except in the case of a documented emergency, if the student fails to submit a completed exam by the due date and time, it will be considered a failed attempt. There are no exceptions. Alterations to the exam timing are at the discretion of the Major Professor in consultation with the Exam Committee.

## Exam Results

Two members of the committee will grade each answer. Students will be informed of the results of the Exam via Canvas or email. Students can choose to meet with their Major Professor to discuss the results of the exam, as needed.

*Each answer will be evaluated and assigned a grade based on the following categories:*

- **High Pass.** A High Pass requires a higher order of synthesis, understanding, historical or contextual range, original insight, theoretical sophistication, and detailed evidence. Provides a clear path through their argument and evidence while avoiding mere summaries of texts. Demonstrates critical engagement with theories, approaches, and concepts by putting them into conversation. In assigning a High Pass, graders look for extremely clear writing, evidence of serious and sustained independent thinking, and original analysis that fully responds to all aspects of the prompt.
- **Pass.** A Pass requires that the student responds to all aspects of the prompt and demonstrates a sound conceptual grasp of critical/cultural studies or media industry studies, as well as evidence of a solid familiarity with the individual theories, concepts, texts, or research discussed. Successful students are able to respond productively to questions and argue points with clarity and specificity, while demonstrating competent knowledge of the field.
- **Revise and Resubmit.** Should a student be asked to Revise and Resubmit one or more answers of the exam, they will have one week from the date the grade was received, regardless of whether one or more answers have to be revised. They should include a cover letter that summarizes each of the concerns noted by graders and their response to each concern, including the changes that were made in the revision. In addition, students should use track changes/suggesting mode during the revision process, and/or highlight any changes or new text in the answers themselves.
- **Fail.** If a student fails one or more answers, they may retake that section of the Exam once the following semester.

**If a student fails any section twice, the student is dismissed from the program.** In cases of extreme hardship, a student may appeal the decision to be dismissed from the program and attempt an exam question for a third time. The burden of proof for extreme hardship is on the student. Appeals for a third take must be made in writing to the Graduate Director. The final decision to allow a student to take the Exam for a third try will be decided by the departmental Graduate Curriculum Committee. At the discretion of the members of the Exam Committee, the questions may be revised for the second and third attempts. If a student takes the Exam for a third time and fails, the student is dismissed from the program without further recourse within the department.

To pass a section, a student must receive a High Pass or Pass from each of the two graders as outlined below:

2 High Passes = High Pass

1 High Pass + 1 Pass = Pass

2 Passes = Pass

If a student receives a Revise and Resubmit from each grader, the student must submit a revision to the section(s) **within one week**. The answer(s) will be re-evaluated, and each grader will assign either a Pass or Fail.

If a student receives a Fail from each grader on the first attempt at the Exam, the student will fail the section(s) and must retake the failed section(s) **the following semester**.

### **Split Decisions**

If the decisions are split in any way other than what is outlined above, then a third grader will make a determination as outlined below:

1 High Pass/Pass + 1 Fail = 3rd Grader

3rd Grader evaluates as High Pass/Pass = Pass and if the 3rd Grader evaluates as Fail = Fail

1 High Pass/Pass/Fail + 1 Revise & Resubmit = 3rd Grader

Third grader will only grade as either Revise & Resubmit or as the decision of the other grader; this eliminates the possibility of three different grade responses. If the third grader grades the response as Revise and Resubmit, then the student will need to submit a revision to their answer in one week. Otherwise, the third grader's response is the final determination for the section(s).

If a student feels that the grading was unfair for some reason, the student should file a written appeal with the Graduate Director. All grade appeals on the Exam will be referred to the department's Graduate Curriculum Committee. The decision concerning the appeal and the disposition thereof will be at the discretion of the department's Graduate Curriculum Committee.

**Students must pass all three sections of the Exam to meet the degree requirements.**

## **M.A. Thesis Procedures and Timeline**

### **M.A. Thesis Defined**

An M.A. Thesis (hereafter, Thesis) is defined as a substantial work of original research, which synthesizes concepts, methodologies, and skills developed especially within the context of the M.A. degree program. In the Media Arts department, the Thesis must be submitted in the form of a written document focusing on an aspect of media history, theory, criticism, production, distribution, law and regulation, global media, or other appropriate aspects of media texts and industries. The Thesis may adopt a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approach to develop its analysis.

### **M.A. Thesis Committee**

The Graduate Thesis Committee will be made up of a Thesis Chair from Media Arts and at least two other graduate faculty members, one of whom can be from another department, when appropriate.

### **Scope of the Thesis Chair**

The Thesis Chair must be a member of the Media Arts Graduate Faculty and will assist the student in direct preparation of their Thesis, while serving at the helm of the Thesis Committee. It is the student's responsibility, after they have consulted with the Graduate Director, to obtain the consent of an eligible faculty member to serve as their Thesis Chair. They must also confirm that the faculty member will be available during the critical phases leading to the completion and defense of the Thesis.

The responsibility of the Thesis Chair is to guide the student in their work. This mandate does not include the re-writing of the Thesis in whole or in part, nor does it include assistance with basic research tasks. Should students require extra assistance with writing or research, they should work in conjunction with the library reference staff and the staff of the writing center.

Faculty members differ in the way they wish to be involved in helping students with the writing of a thesis, but it is **the student's** responsibility to seek whatever help is needed, to submit drafts for correction and approval, and to meet Toulouse Graduate School deadlines. Students must inquire with all members of the Thesis Committee to determine when each individual prefers to see the student's Thesis (i.e., after each chapter is finished, or only when the thesis has been completely written, etc.). A student's Thesis might be the most important element in a student's life while they are writing or producing it, but it is only one of the many things that a faculty member must do. Therefore, a student must not expect instantaneous response to Thesis-related requests.

### **Modifications to Graduate Thesis Committee**

Students should be aware that the replacement of Thesis Committee members should take

place only in exceptional circumstances and always in consultation with the Thesis Chair.

In the event of a change of Thesis topic that necessitates a change of Thesis Chair, the student should consult with the Graduate Director. In the event of a faculty member leaving campus or taking a leave of absence, the student should consult with the Graduate Director about an appropriate replacement.

Once a Thesis Chair has been approved, and a Degree Plan has been filed with the Graduate School, any changes to the Thesis Committee must be approved by the Graduate Director.

## **Enrollment in Thesis Credits**

**A student CANNOT enroll in thesis hours without approval from their Thesis Chair.** Six credit hours of MRTS 5950 (Thesis credits) are required for graduation; they cannot be taken concurrently. A student must be enrolled in thesis hours to defend their prospectus and thesis.

Once a student has enrolled in MRTS 5950, they are required to enroll continuously until they have successfully completed the written Thesis and oral defense. The student will not be awarded any credit for this course until their Thesis has been approved by the Thesis Committee and filed with the Graduate Dean. A letter grade is assigned for the 6 thesis hours.

## **Deadlines**

Students should note and observe carefully all deadlines pertaining to graduation printed in the current Graduate Catalog. Based on their discussion with their Thesis Chair, and taking into account the application and filing deadlines that are printed in the Graduate Catalog, as well as Departmental Thesis Defense deadlines (which precede University deadlines), a student should apply for graduation during the agreed-upon semester.

See also Application for Graduate Degree in the Graduate Catalog.

## **Prospectus**

Students should start preparing for the prospectus early, typically after the completion of their first semester (or 9 hours). To graduate in 2 years, students should plan to defend their prospectus in the first semester of their second year (after 18 hours); *the prospectus must be defended at least 1 semester prior to the defense of the Thesis.*

The student should work closely with their Thesis Chair while writing their Prospectus. When the Thesis Chair determines that the prospectus is ready to be presented to the Thesis Committee, the student will, in consultation with their Thesis Chair, make arrangements for its presentation. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the date and time selected for their oral presentation is convenient for all Thesis Committee members.

**The student must distribute one copy of their prospectus to all members of their thesis committee at least 2 weeks in advance of the meeting.** Notice of the prospectus defense should be announced to the department at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting.

Normally, this meeting is open to anyone wishing to attend. Under certain circumstances, the meeting will be closed to all but full-time faculty members at the discretion of the Thesis Chair.

The prospectus meeting is held for two reasons. First, it is a help session. It allows the Graduate Thesis Committee to meet with the student to discuss specific aspects of their prospectus that seem weak or need clarification. The Thesis Committee will make recommendations to improve the subsequent research and writing of the thesis. Second, the prospectus meeting results in a decision concerning viability of the proposed thesis project. The Thesis Committee will decide whether to allow the student to continue with the selected thesis topic, and, if so, issue recommendations concerning the handling of the topic.

## **Thesis**

After the prospectus has been approved, the student will research and write their thesis under the supervision of their Thesis Chair. Before they begin writing, the student should consult the UNT Thesis Manual with guidelines and specifics on electronic submission. This manual is located on the UNT website. For details about the technical aspects of preparing theses, and information about style, preparation of the abstract, and the correcting, copying, and filing of the Thesis, students must check the procedures outlined by the Toulouse Graduate School.

## **Human Subjects Review**

All research conducted at the University of North Texas must comply with federal and university Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies. Any student preparing a thesis should consult the policies, procedures, and deadlines on the compliance website. Appropriate human subject training certification and IRB approval must be obtained prior to the student collecting any data or conducting any research with human subjects. The IRB approval forms should be included in the final thesis whenever human subjects are involved. Since the IRB approval process could take 4–8 weeks, the student must plan accordingly.

## **Thesis Defense**

The Thesis Committee will examine the written thesis in a meeting with the student and the entire Thesis Committee. It is the student's responsibility, in consultation with their Thesis Chair, to arrange a time and date that will be convenient for all the members of the committee for the Thesis Defense. Candidates who are out of town or who neglect to keep in communication with their Thesis Chair should not expect to self-schedule their Thesis Defense. The decision to schedule a Thesis Defense is always at the discretion of the Thesis Chair. Faculty are not contractually obligated to be available in summer. Therefore, a student should not assume the availability of faculty. They should instead provide advance notice to faculty who will be participating in a Thesis Defense during the academic year.

**The defense must be scheduled at least 2 weeks prior to the Toulouse Graduate School deadline for final submission; the Graduate Director will NOT sign Thesis Defense forms for theses that were not defended at least 2 weeks prior to this deadline.** This date usually falls about halfway through the semester.



Notice of the scheduled Thesis Defense should be announced to the department at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting. Normally, this meeting is open to anyone wishing to attend. Under certain circumstances, the meeting will be closed to all but full-time faculty members at the Thesis Chair's discretion.

**The student must distribute one copy of their Thesis to all members of their Thesis Committee at least 3 weeks in advance of the Thesis Defense.**

During the Defense, in addition to answering questions about the thesis, the student should make notes of changes suggested by their Thesis Committee members. After the defense is completed, the student will be excused from the room while the Thesis Committee decides whether to accept your thesis. They will then be recalled and informed of the Thesis Committee's decision and any conditions attached to it. If the Thesis Committee has voted to accept the thesis, the committee members to sign the appropriate pages or forms.

The Committee may require revisions prior to approving the Thesis and it is the student's responsibility to make the required changes in a timely manner. In some cases, the revisions will only be submitted to the Thesis Chair, and in some cases, the entire Thesis Committee may require approval of the changes. The Thesis Committee will decide if it is necessary to hold a second examination meeting. Therefore, scheduling a Thesis Defense close to the Toulouse submission deadline, may result in a delay of graduation. *If a student fails to submit revisions or if the Thesis Committee does not accept the thesis prior to the Toulouse deadline, the student will be required to enroll in MRTS 5950 for an additional semester to allow time for revisions.*

## **Timeline**

In accordance with the Graduate Handbook, a student is expected to complete their thesis within one calendar year. The student should work with their Thesis Chair to determine a timeline according to their specific thesis goals and personal schedule. While the table on the following page is only a suggested and approximate schedule, failure to make progress or meet significant deadlines could delay the student's desired graduation date. The student is expected to communicate with their Thesis Chair about their progress and their intended graduation date.

We strongly advise students to be ahead of schedule with their M.A. Thesis progress to avoid delays, or possible issues in scheduling a defense.

## Sample Timeline for Completing an M.A. Thesis in 2 Years

*Note that for students starting the program in fall 2023, the beginning of the second semester would be spring 2024, the third semester would be fall 2024, and fourth semester would be spring 2025.*

<b>TASK</b>	<b>DEADLINE</b>	<b>SAMPLE TIMELINE</b>
<b>Identify a Thesis Chair.</b>	Typically, in the second semester of the program or after completion of 9 hours.	<b>At the beginning of your 2<sup>nd</sup> semester</b>
<b>Enroll in Thesis hours.</b>	Typically, in the third semester of the program or after completion of 18 hours.	<b>In your 3<sup>rd</sup> semester</b>
<b>Submit your Thesis prospectus to your Thesis Chair. Get approval.</b>  <b>Subsequently, consult your Thesis Chair and email your entire Thesis Committee to schedule a date for the oral defense of your prospectus.</b>	1 month prior to the defense date	<b>Early in your 3<sup>rd</sup> semester. Students often work on their prospectus on their own over the summer.</b>
<b>Submit a copy of your Thesis prospectus to your entire Thesis Committee.</b>	No later than 2 weeks prior to the scheduled defense	<b>Early-to-midway through your 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester</b>
<b>Successfully defend your Thesis prospectus.</b>	At least one semester prior to the desired graduation date	<b>Midway through your 3<sup>rd</sup> semester</b>
<b>Submit a chapter draft to your Thesis Chair (and committee, if specified).</b>	Approximately 6 months prior to thesis defense	<b>In your 3<sup>rd</sup> semester</b>
<b>Submit a chapter draft to your Thesis Chair (and committee, if specified).</b>	Approximately 5 months prior to thesis defense	<b>In your 3<sup>rd</sup> semester</b>
<b>Submit a chapter draft to your Thesis Chair (and committee, if specified)</b>	Approximately 4 months prior to thesis defense	<b>In your 3<sup>rd</sup> semester</b>

<p><b>Submit a chapter draft to your Thesis Chair (and committee, if specified).</b></p>	<p>Approximately 3 months prior to thesis defense.</p>	<p><b>Early in your 4<sup>th</sup> semester.</b></p> <p><b>NOTE: Students often work on thesis on their own over the winter break.</b></p>
<p><b>Submit a chapter draft to your Thesis Chair (and committee, if specified).</b></p>	<p>Approximately 2 months prior to thesis defense.</p>	<p><b>Early in your 4<sup>th</sup> semester</b></p>
<p><b>Submit your final Thesis draft to your Thesis Chair.</b></p> <p><b>Consult with your Thesis Chair and, if your Thesis Chair determines that you are ready, email your entire Thesis Committee to schedule a date for the Thesis Defense.</b></p>	<p>No later than 1 month prior to the defense.</p>	<p><b>Midway through your 4<sup>th</sup> semester</b></p>
<p><b>Submit your Thesis to the entire Thesis Committee.</b></p>	<p>No later than 3 weeks prior to the scheduled defense date.</p>	<p><b>Midway through your 4<sup>th</sup> semester</b></p>
<p><b>Oral Defense of your final Thesis.</b></p> <p><b>Expect recommendations and suggestions from your Thesis Committee.</b></p>	<p>No later than 2 weeks prior to the Graduate School submission deadline.</p>	<p><b>Midway through your 4<sup>th</sup> semester</b></p>
<p><b>Submit final Thesis (including all corrections) to the Graduate School.</b></p>	<p>Check Toulouse for specific dates.</p> <p>This is typically several weeks before the end of the semester.</p>	<p><b>4<sup>th</sup> semester</b></p>

## How to Write a Thesis Prospectus

Generally speaking, radio, television, film, and digital media studies grew out of academic traditions in both the humanities and the social sciences. The two tracks for M.A. students, Critical Cultural Studies and Media Industry Studies, incorporate theories and methodologies from both scholarly traditions. As such, thesis projects may incorporate a more qualitative approach using theories drawn from literature, cultural studies, etc. and/or a more quantitative approach to the study of media, using theories and methods drawn from economics, management, and sociology, etc.

All graduate students writing an M.A. Thesis will develop a Thesis within the theoretical frameworks introduced in their Media Arts coursework and, in particular, core graduate courses MRTS 5100 and, as applicable, MRTS 5120, MRTS 5121, and MRTS 5125. Different theoretical and methodological frameworks might require different formats for theses and prospectuses, and those should be determined and approved in collaboration with the student's Thesis Chair.

### A Thesis Prospectus must include the following five elements:

#### 1. Introduction

Begin with an introduction that describes your project and identifies your preliminary thesis (argument). At the prospectus stage, the thesis (argument) can be offered as a question that your project will seek to investigate and/or resolve. Define important terms and project boundaries.

#### 2. Literature Review

Include a comprehensive section that reviews the pertinent literature related to your topic. It should be written in such a way as to clearly lay the theoretical, historical, and methodological groundwork for your project; that is, it should be directly related to your thesis statement. This section should identify the theories and conceptual frameworks you will be using to answer your research questions. It should clearly articulate and identify what has been said and done in the field prior to your thesis that is relevant to your methods and arguments. You should describe how your thesis draws upon and expands what has already been written about your given topic.

#### 3. Methodology / Objects or Texts of Analysis / Sample

For studies that involve collecting data—for example with datasets, surveys, or interviews—you must describe the proposed methodological approach. In addition to theoretical justifications for the methodology, you should describe your sample as well as your procedures for analysis of data. When applicable, include an appendix with any instruments that will be used, such as surveys or interview questions. All research involving human subjects must obtain approval from UNT's Institutional Review Board before you can begin collecting data.

In media studies, theory and method are often connected and inseparable, however, even for textual analysis you should include an explanation and justification for your chosen texts, objects of analysis, platforms, etc. In other words, do not assume that it is obvious why you are analyzing the films you are including, but rather provide a contextual justification that explains the rationale for your selection.

#### **4. Chapter Breakdown**

Include a proposed chapter breakdown of your completed thesis. A typical thesis structure would set up an issue or problem in the first chapter (or introduction) and then examine that problem across 2-4 chapters. This should provide details and justification for the proposed organization and structure of the thesis.

#### **5. Works Cited / Bibliography**

All prospectuses must include an accurate works cited or bibliography that includes the resources you have already consulted and those which you will use in your final thesis.

### **General Guidelines**

Although there is no set page length for a thesis prospectus, a successful prospectus usually runs anywhere from 15–25 double spaced pages. For more help on developing your Thesis prospectus, work with your Thesis Chair and your Thesis Committee members.

**M.A. Degree Plan**  
**Department of Media Arts**

**NAME:**

**EIS ID:**

REQUIRED GRAD ONLY COURSES (9 HOURS)	SEMESTER	INSTRUCTOR	GRADE
MRTS 5100 Intro to Grad Studies in MRTS			
MRTS 5120 Critical/Cultural Media Theory			
MRTS 5125 Media Industry Studies			
MAJOR AREA (9 HOURS)	SEMESTER	INSTRUCTOR	GRADE
1.			
2.			
3.			
ELECTIVES (MINIMUM 12 HOURS)	SEMESTER	INSTRUCTOR	GRADE
**Can include, up to, but does not require: 6 credit hours from graduate courses outside the dept. 3 hours practicum <u>OR</u> 3 hours internship 3 hours special problems			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
CAPSTONE	SEMESTER	MAJOR PROFESSOR	GRADE
THESIS (6 HOURS MRTS 5950) <i>or</i> EXAM (3 HOURS MRTS 5900)			

**ANTICIPATED GRADUATION DATE:**

Graduate Director Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date

**M.A. Degree Plan: Media Industry Studies**  
 Department of Media Arts

NAME:

EIS ID:

REQUIRED GRAD ONLY COURSES (9 HOURS)	SEMESTER	INSTRUCTOR	GRADE
MRTS 5100 Intro to Grad Studies in MRTS			
MRTS 5125 Media Industry Studies			
MRTS 5120 Critical Cultural Studies <input type="checkbox"/>			
INDUSTRY STUDIES COURSES (9 HOURS)	SEMESTER	INSTRUCTOR	GRADE
1.			
2.			
3.			
ELECTIVES (MINIMUM 12 HOURS)	SEMESTER	INSTRUCTOR	GRADE
**Can include, up to, but does not require: 6 credit hours from graduate courses outside the dept. 3 hours practicum <u>OR</u> 3 hours internship 3 hours special problems			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
CAPSTONE	SEMESTER	MAJOR PROFESSOR	GRADE
THESIS (6 HOURS MRTS 5950) <i>or</i> EXAM (3 HOURS MRTS 5900)			

**ANTICIPATED GRADUATION DATE:**

Graduate Director Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Request for Designation or Re-designation of M.A. Exam Committee**  
**Department of Media Arts University of North Texas**

Name:

EIS ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Pathway:  Critical/Cultural Studies  Industry Studies

**Major: Media Arts**

Major Professor:

Second Member:

Third Member:

Have you received approval from all members of the committee? Yes No

Have you taken at least one course with each committee member? Yes No

Have you previously failed any portion of a comprehensive exam? Yes No

If yes, when and which question? Yes No

Date you are requesting to take the exam:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Major Professor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Graduate Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# Request for Designation or Re-Designation of M.A. Thesis Committee

University of North Texas Department of Media Arts

**Instructions:** After completing 9 hours of graduate coursework, the student will select a capstone and select a Major Professor/Thesis Chair. After issuing a formal request and meeting with their prospective Thesis Chair, the student will discuss the composition of their Thesis Committee, fill out the form below and take it to each of the requested committee members for signature. One outside committee member is permitted, when warranted by the thesis subject matter.

*When the signatures have been obtained, this form should be returned to the M.A. Graduate Director.*

Name:  EIS ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Pathway:  Critical/Cultural Studies  Industry Studies

Anticipated Semester of M.A. Thesis Defense:

### Requested Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Chair Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Chair Signature & Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Second Member Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Second Member Signature & Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Third Member Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Third Member Signature & Date

Approved with the following provisions (if applicable):

\_\_\_\_\_  
M.A. Graduate Director Signature & Date

**M.A. Thesis Contract**  
**Department of Media Arts University of North Texas**

Name:

EIS ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**Major: Media Arts**

Pathway:  Crit/Cult  
                   Studies

Media  
                   Industries

Thesis Chair

**Media Arts Policy on Thesis Committees and Timeline**

The Thesis represents a project of original, independent research in an approved area related to the student's course of study. It is expected that students will complete and defend their Thesis successfully within one calendar year of establishing their Thesis Committee. At the same time, students should consider that many graduate faculty members are not fully available during the summer.

Graduate students are responsible for obtaining consent from all members on their Thesis Committee. This should be done by asking faculty members with expertise in the areas to be studied in the thesis to serve as committee members. No faculty member is required to serve on a particular committee and may properly decline membership due to other work commitments, lack of expertise in the proposed topic, or other reasons.

A Thesis Committee shall be constituted for a period of 12 months. After that time, the Thesis Chair may, at their discretion, extend the Thesis Committee for final completion and defense of the Thesis.

Students not making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the Thesis will be required to form a new M.A. Thesis Committee.

It is understood that once the Thesis option is chosen and agreed upon by the student, Thesis Chair, and Graduate Director, the Thesis must be successfully completed in order for the student to graduate from the Media Arts M.A. program. A student may NOT change to the Comprehensive Exam option after enrollment in Thesis hours.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature & Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Director Signature & Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Director Signature & Date

**Comprehensive M.A. Exam Registration Request**  
**Department of Media Arts University of North Texas**

Name:

EIS ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Pathway:  Crit/Cult Studies  Industry Studies

**Major: Media Arts**

Major Professor:

Second Member:

Third Member:

Date of exam issue:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), understand that the Comprehensive M.A. Exam will be posted on Canvas on the date designated above. I will have 7 days to complete all sections of the Exam, and I must submit my work to Canvas no later than the deadline. If I fail to submit the Exam by the deadline, the Exam will automatically be recorded as a failed attempt.

In accordance with UNT Policy, I will uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. This means I will be the sole author of all answers on the exam and will not seek assistance or aid from other students or unauthorized resources. I will not engage in any form of dishonesty, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or sabotage. I understand that if the Exam Committee finds evidence that I violated any policy pertaining to UNT's Student Academic Integrity policy, I will automatically fail the Exam and will be dismissed from the Media Arts graduate program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature & Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Director Signature & Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Director Signature & Date