

DEPARTMENT OF
MEDIA ARTS
College of Liberal Arts
& Social Sciences

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Media Arts MFA Handbook

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Requirements for the Master of Fine Arts Degree

Degree in Media Arts Educational Objectives

The primary educational objective of the terminal Master of Fine Arts degree in Documentary Production and Studies is the academic, aesthetic, and technical training of production professionals. The Master of Fine Arts degree is the primary terminal degree for production faculty at college and university programs in the United States. The Media Arts MFA Program emphasizes a documentary production and studies curriculum.

Degree Requirements

The MFA degree requires the completion of sixty (60) hours of graduate course work in three years. During your time as an MFA candidate, you will complete a minimum of three short documentary films. Each of these films counts towards the partial completion of your degree. This includes the successful completion of a Thesis paper and a short documentary Thesis film that ranges in running time from 20 to 30 minutes.

The following table summarizes the semester credit hour requirements for the MFA program.

Minimum Semester Credit Hours Required

Type of Requirement	Semester Credit Hours
Required courses	33
Prescribed elective courses	9
"Free" elective courses	12
Thesis	6
Total SCH	60

The Thesis Production

The Thesis will be a creative non-fiction film production and production book for which six credits hours will be awarded.

Please note that no more than six Thesis credit hours are counted towards the degree.

For example, if you need a further semester of study to complete your Thesis, you must enroll in a minimum of three credit hours continuously until you complete and pass your defense. There is an exemption available once you complete your six credits hours **if you are close to completing your project**. After you complete your six credit thesis hours, you may apply for a special exemption with the Graduate School, along with your Major Professor, and enroll in one credit of Special Problems. This will allow you time to complete the final work on your Thesis project without having to enroll again in Thesis hours.

However, if you do not complete your Thesis during the exemption window, you will need to again enroll in three credit hours continuously until you pass your defense.

A written production book will accompany the work and will include the historical/theoretical context for the production. The Thesis is the capstone experience for each MFA candidate. It must illustrate the student's ability to successfully execute a professional non-fiction work of high quality and demonstrate knowledge of production techniques and theoretical perspectives.

The MFA Degree plan

Upon completing 30 hours in the MFA program or after the completion of the candidates third full semester, students consult with the MFA Director on their Degree Plan. This plan will then be submitted by the MFA Director to the Graduate School Dean. Once filed, any changes to the degree plan must be approved by the MFA Director and resubmitted to the Graduate school for approval.

MFA Curriculum

Required Courses and Degree Plan to achieve 60 Credit Hours. (r)=required course

1st Fall Semester

(r)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.

(r)MRTS 5650. Graduate Audio Production. 3 hours. Basic concepts, theories and methodologies of audio production, particularly in regard to documentary production applications. Topics covered included studio recording, audio field recording and post-production. Prerequisite: MRTS 5770 or permission of the instructor.

(r)MRTS 5100 Introduction to Graduate Studies in Media Arts. 3 hours. Key theories and foundational methodological approaches from the arts, humanities, and social sciences that have contributed to the disciplinary tradition of Media Arts.

(r)MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium 1 hour. (Students must enroll for a total of six semesters for 6 credits total). The MFA Colloquium will consist of regular meetings of all students in the program for the purpose of viewing their work in progress and for guest lectures by professionals in the field. The forum will also be used for discussion of program requirements and procedures.

1st Spring Semester

(r)MRTS 5770. Documentary Production. 3 hours. The production of a documentary project from idea through final cut, culminating in a public screening.

(r)MRTS 5760. Documentary Preproduction. 3 hours. The design of documentary productions of all types, in both film and video. Topics include the selection of subjects, research techniques, proposal writing, location scouting, funding and budgeting. Case histories are examined and excerpts from a variety of documentary productions are screened.

(r)MRTS 5830 Documentary Cinematography. 3 hours. Concentrated study of the theory and craft of photographing the moving image as it applies to documentary filmmaking. Through a combination of hands-on exercises, screenings, discussion, critique, and lecture, students are introduced to the current technologies and aesthetics of documentary cinematography. Areas covered include: lighting for film and high definition cameras, camera and lighting peripherals, camera movements, ethics and legalities of documentary cinematography and film language.

(r)MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium 1 hour.

2nd Fall Semester

(r)MRTS 5750. Cinema/Video Verite. 3 hours. Examines the development of this major style in documentary film and video from its introduction in the 1960's 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.

(r)MRTS 5790. Advanced Documentary I. 3 hours. Designed to further develop skills in videography, lighting, and location sound recording in combination with the production of a documentary project. Prerequisite: MRTS 5760, MRTS 5770.

MRTS Elective

(r)MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium 1 hour.

2nd Spring Semester

(r)MRTS 5791. Advanced Documentary II. 3 hours. Advanced training in documentary production with emphasis on postproduction techniques, including editing, post-production sound, and distribution through lectures, discussions, lab workshops, and screenings. Prerequisite: MRTS 5790.

(r)MRTS 5804. MFA Colloquium. 1 hour.

MRTS Elective. 3 hours

MRTS Elective. 3 hours

3rd Fall Semester

(r)MRTS 5950 Thesis. 3 hours. To be scheduled only with consent of the MFA Director. No credit assigned until Thesis has been completed and filed with the Graduate School Dean. Continuous enrollment required once work on thesis has begun. Prerequisite(s) : MRTS MFA status and consent of MFA Director. **Only 6 hours credit may count toward degree.**

(r)MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium 1 hour.

(r)MRTS 5180. Internship in MRTS. 3 hours. Supervised off-campus work experience in a placement that relates to student's career objective. Students may enroll in fewer hours in consultation with the MFA Director if the number of hours will be fewer than 150 total during the semester.

MRTS Elective. 3 hours

3rd Spring Semester

(r)MRTS Thesis. 3 hours. To be scheduled only with consent of the MFA Director. No credit assigned until thesis has been completed and filed with the Graduate School Dean. Continuous enrollment is required once work on Thesis has begun until successful completion of the Thesis Oral Exam. Prerequisite(s) : MRTS MFA status and consent of MFA Director.

(r)MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium 1 hour.

MRTS Elective Courses. 3 hours

One course from the following is required:

MRTS 5120. Critical-Cultural Media Theory. 3 hours.

Introduces students to various theoretical frameworks used to study radio, television and film. Provides students with a historical development of media theory, as well as the vocabulary and concepts germane to different methodologies.

MRTS 5121. New Media Theory. 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.

and 3 credits of Critical Cultural Studies Courses are required:

MRTS 5215. British Cinema and Television. 3 hours. Advanced study of theoretical approaches to British national identity and how these are reflected in its cinema and television of the 1990s and beyond. Topics include class, political and cultural discourses, as well as race (incl. regional specificities) and gender. This course meets with MRTS 4225.

MRTS 5780. Contemporary Documentary. 3 hours. Students in this course will engage 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.

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 5240. Hitchcock Films. 3 hours. Focuses on films directed by Alfred Hitchcock tracking the development of Hitchcock's career from the early days in Britain through his studio successes in America. Detailed analyses of specific Hitchcock films and engagement with the various debates about authorship, genre, psychoanalysis and film which have been staged in relation to Hitchcock's work.

MRTS 5250. Cinema Beyond The West. 3 hours. The historical development of cinema is examined in specific countries while considering its political and social influences up through present day. The emphasis during class sessions will be on screenings and analytical discussions. This course meets with MRTS 4250.

MRTS 5415. Teen Media. 3 hours. A critical examination of various youth media and cultures in post-war America. Students will explore pop culture, subcultures, identities, discourses, practices, representations, and commodification. At the graduate level, students will examine the nuances of teen film as a genre and delve deeper into the social, cultural, economic, historical, and political implications of teen representations and their mediated experiences. This course meets with MRTS 4515.

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 Federico Fellini, The Western, The Films of David Cronenberg and International Documentary.

MRTS 5400. Media Studies Seminar. 3 hours. In-depth studies of media – rotating topics including Gender and Digital Cultures and Community Media Education.

and 3 credits of Industry Studies Courses are required:

MRTS 5320. Media Law and Regulations. 3 hours. Students learn the central issues and concepts of the law and regulations governing film, television and digital media. Through in-class discussions and individual research projects, students will analyze and debate the significant issues in media law and regulation and the ways in which they affect, and are affected by, society, culture and the media industry and its texts.

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. International Communication. 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.

Course Electives outside Media Arts

Up to 6 credits of graduate level electives may be taken outside the department. For example, students have taken courses in The College of Science, The College of Visual Arts, and other departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences such as Anthropology, English, and Journalism.

Internships – MFA Requirement (3 credit hours)

1. MFA Instructor must approve the internship being proposed.
2. Your internship should be designed to give you additional give you additional training and education in areas that you believe will directly, positively impact your future success in the field. MFA faculty will work to find a suitable placement for the student.
3. It is the student's responsibility to request from the Internship organization letter (can be provided as an email attachment), on company/organization letterhead, describing the responsibilities and activities the student Intern will experience. This letter should also include the key contact person the student will be working with, their email and other contact information. This will give both the student and the MFA Director a baseline of expectation for the overall Internship experience, including its rigor, deadlines, and appropriateness to career goals. This letter is provided to the MFA Instructor and the UNT Career Center (see below).
4. The MFA student then registers with the UNT Career Center. This is critical because the UNT Career Center is the university unit that generates the electronic evaluations at the end of the term. www.careercenter.unt.edu.
5. Note that the UNT policy on Internship requirements states that 150 hours of work during the semester equals 3 university credit hours. Students have the option to do the internship for variable credit after consultation with the MFA Instructor.
6. Create a shared document with the MFA Instructor so that they can have regular updates on your Internship progress during the semester with hours worked on a weekly basis.
7. At the end of the term, the student must write a 3-page paper, with an overview of the experience, how it will help you in your professional career, and detailing if you would you recommend this particular internship to another student.
8. You will receive an electronic evaluation form to fill out from the UNT Career Center the week before final exams.
9. The Internship organization receives an evaluation to discuss your work in the Internship. The employer fills it in, submits it to the UNT Career Center, and a copy is provided to the MFA Instructor.
10. The Instructor will submit the grade after reviewing all materials.

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 School 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 MFA program at UNT, may apply up to 12 semester hours of graduate credit toward the degree.

Maintaining Good Academic Standing

Graduate students in the Department of Media Arts at UNT are expected to meet high standards of academic performance. The MFA is a terminal degree (the highest degree in the field) in Documentary Production and Studies, with both creative and scholarly requirements. The department of Media Arts Graduate Curriculum Committee (an elected committee made up of graduate faculty in the department) may recommend dismissal of an MFA student from the program if the student receives two course grades of "C" or below. If the departmental Graduate Curriculum Committee recommends such dismissal of a student under this policy, the student may provide a written appeal to the departmental graduate committee (addressed to the current committee co-chairs) for consideration. This appeal should plainly address the situation at hand, and clearly and specifically outline the student's plan for academic improvement and success if allowed to remain in the program. After review of the appeal letter, the decision to reinstate an MFA student is solely at the discretion of the departmental graduate curriculum 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. After the student receives the first grade of "C" or below, a notice letter/email will be sent to the student from the MFA Director, reminding the student of the department's policy and consequences if a second "C" or below is received.

First Year Review

All Master of Fine Arts candidates' academic progress will be reviewed by the graduate committee.

Second Year Review

All Master of Fine Arts candidates' academic progress will be reviewed by the graduate committee.

Assistantships

All MFA 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 every year. Offers take into consideration many variables which may include funding availability, departmental needs, student status, and prior performance.

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 apply to the MFA Director and provide proof of acceptance and expenses. Research-related travel requests must be submitted with a justification of trip and the expenses. Funding decisions are made at the discretion of the Media Arts Department and are subject to availability.

Scholarships

The Department of Media Arts offers several scholarships for continuing graduate students. The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences also has funding opportunities for continuing graduate students in the form of travel grants and financial support. The announcements for applications are made annually at the start of the Fall and Spring semesters.

Master of Fine Arts Thesis Requirements and Guidelines

Master's Thesis Defined: A Master's Thesis is defined as a work of original research, which synthesizes concepts, methodologies, and skills developed within the context of the MFA Degree program. In the department of Media Arts, the Thesis must be submitted in the form of an original non-fiction media production. The written section of the thesis must follow Toulouse Graduate School guidelines in terms of style manual use, citations, etc. (<https://tgs.unt.edu/new-current-students/theses-and-dissertations>)

Thesis Chair. Your Thesis Chair or Major Professor must be a member of the MRTS Graduate Faculty and will assist you in direct preparation of your Thesis. They will chair your Graduate Thesis Committee. "Thesis Chair" and "Major Professor" are interchangeable academic titles, and refer to the same person.

It is your responsibility, after you have consulted with the MFA Director, to get the consent of an eligible faculty member to serve as your Thesis Chair and to determine in advance that the faculty member will be on campus during critical phases of your program (e.g., completion and defense of your thesis.)

You CANNOT enroll in thesis hours without approval from your Thesis Chair.

Graduate Thesis Committee. This Committee will be made up of a Thesis Chair and at least two other graduate faculty members, one of whom should be from another department or university. The latter should provide expertise in an area relevant to your Thesis topic. In the past we have had outside committee members from Anthropology, Music, History, English, Information Science, Education, Art, and other areas.

Modifications to Graduate Thesis Committee. Students should be aware that the replacement of Committee members should take place only in exceptional circumstances and always in consultation with the Major Professor. In the event of a change of Thesis topic that necessitates a change of Thesis Chair, the student should consult with the MFA Director. In the event of a faculty member leaving campus, the student should consult with the MFA Director about an appropriate replacement. Once a Thesis Chair has been approved, and a Degree Plan has been filed with the Graduate School Dean, any changes to the Thesis Committee must be approved by the MFA Director, depending upon your degree.

Please note that faculty have the right to resign from the Thesis committee if the student has not completed their work within one calendar year from the date of approval.

Enrollment. Six credit hours of MRTS 5950 (thesis credits) are required for graduation; they cannot be taken concurrently. Once you have enrolled in MRTS 5950 you are required to be enrolled continuously until you have successfully completed the Thesis film, submitted the final draft of the written Thesis, and successfully defended your oral defense. You will not be awarded any credit **(for a maximum of 6 credit hours)** for this course until your thesis has been completed and filed with the Graduate School Dean.

Thesis Procedures And Guidelines

As noted above, the MFA Thesis is comprised of two distinct, but related parts; an original documentary production and a scholarly written document about the production and related academic approaches. In Media Arts, we have a fairly expansive definition of documentary. You may pursue more traditional approaches and styles. Depending on subject matter you may incorporate other techniques such as animation, illustration, re-enactments, VR, and other approaches. You will work directly with your Thesis Chair and other committee members to refine your ideas before production commences.

Prospectus. Students start preparing for the prospectus after the completion of their third semester. It is strongly recommended to defend the prospectus in the second semester of the second year or after 30 hours of completion towards the degree.

The prospectus meeting is held for two reasons. First, it is a help session. It allows your Graduate Thesis Committee to meet with you as a group to discuss specific aspects of your prospectus that may need further clarification. At the meeting, the Committee will decide whether to allow you to continue with the selected Thesis topic, and, if so, what recommendations to give you concerning handling of the topic. Your Major Professor will chair the prospectus meeting.

Thesis. After your prospectus has been approved, you'll write and/or produce your Thesis under the supervision of your Thesis Chair/Major Professor.

Final Thesis Defense. Your Thesis Committee will convene a formal, oral examination as the culminating event in your Thesis process. It is your responsibility, in consultation with your Thesis Chair, to arrange a time and date which will be convenient for all of the members of your committee for the examination.

During the defense, in addition to answering questions about your Thesis, you should make notes of changes suggested by your Committee members. After the defense is completed, you will be excused from the room while the Committee decides whether or not to accept your Thesis. You will then be recalled and informed of the Committee's decision and any conditions attached to it. If your Committee has voted to accept your Thesis, they will then sign the appropriate pages or forms.

The Committee may require revisions prior to approving the Thesis and it is your responsibility to make the required changes in a timely manner. In some cases, the revisions will only be submitted to your Thesis Chair and in some cases the entire Committee may require approval of the changes. The Committee will decide if it is necessary to hold a second examination meeting or not. Therefore, scheduling a Thesis defense close to the Graduate School submission deadline may result in a delay of graduation.

Timeline. In accordance with the Graduate School Guidelines, you are expected to complete your Thesis within one calendar year.

Guidelines for the MFA Thesis Prospectus

This prospectus is made available to all committee members and the Graduate Director of the Department in advance of the Prospectus Defense meeting, which takes place at the end of the student's second year. The MFA Thesis Prospectus should be approximately 20 to 40 pages long. Here is a list of the four areas to be included in the MFA Prospectus:

I. Preproduction Research

In this section, outline the basics of the documentary film subject matter, and discuss the specifics of locations and people within the film. Describe these in both academic and visual terms, making specific note of additional sources (academic and popular texts, news articles, other films, web sites, web logs, radio programs, professional associations, etc.) you are using to become thoroughly familiar with the ideas, events, people and places of your film. Include an outline of the key characters in your film and why they are important, the primary locations you intend to shoot in, and how these will be utilized in the film to communicate specifics about your subject matter.

II. Goals of the Production

Outline and explain the artistic, ethical, educational aims of your proposed documentary.

III. Integration of Theory and Production

Cite references to films and texts studied during your coursework to date that have influenced your intentions as a documentary filmmaker before production commences. Use examples to illustrate your approach and explain why they are relevant to your proposed Thesis film.

IV. Schedule and Equipment

Plans for preproduction, production, postproduction and distribution of your documentary.

Guidelines for the Final Thesis paper

This is the template to use for the Final Thesis paper:

I. Approved Prospectus (include a heading indicating that this first chapter was written prior to production.)

II. Preproduction Research

- a. Subject Matter Research
- b. People, Location Research
- c. Funding - Expected plans, sources, amount needed
- d. Distribution Possibilities' Audience
- e. Goals of the production

III. Reconceptualization Before Production

IV. The Integration of Theory and Ethics in Production

- a. Theories and Rationales for Use
- b. Description of Stylistic Approaches
- c. Ethical Challenges and Decisions
- d. Review of Additional Texts Reviewed for Research
- e. Filmography of Documentary Films
- f. Other (web sites, blogs, Listservs, interviews, etc.)

V. Production

- a. Overview
- b. Final filming Schedule
- c. Crew
- d. Equipment
- e. Releases, copyright and license agreements – explanation (actual form in appendix)
- f. Updated Budget – explanation (actual budget template in appendix)

VI. Post Production

- a. Overview
- b. Schedule
- c. Equipment
- d. Crew

VII. Reconceptualization of film during post-production

VIII. Evaluation of Completed Work

- a. Production
- b. Postproduction
- c. Success in integrating proposed theories

VIII. Appendices (release forms, visual images/photographs, etc.)