

# MFA GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

DEPARTMENT OF  
MEDIA ARTS  
College of Liberal Arts  
& Social Sciences

**UNT**<sup>®</sup>  
**EST. 1890**

## Contents

Requirements for Master of Arts Degree in Media Arts.....	<b>3</b>
Curriculum.....	<b>4</b>
Internship.....	<b>8</b>
Typical 3 Year Course Sequence.....	<b>9</b>
Typical Course Flow Plan .....	<b>10</b>
Transfer Credits .....	<b>11</b>
Maintaining Good Academic Standing .....	<b>11</b>
Assistantships.....	<b>11</b>
Travel funding .....	<b>11</b>
MFA Thesis Requirements and Guidelines .....	<b>12</b>
MFA Thesis Procedures.....	<b>13</b>
Sample Timeline for Completing a Thesis in a 3-Year Degree Plan .....	<b>16</b>
Additional Procedures and Requirements.....	<b>17</b>
FORM: Request for Designation or Re-Designation of Thesis Committee .....	<b>20</b>
FORM: MFA Thesis Contract .....	<b>21</b>
FORM: MFA Degree Plan .....	<b>22</b>

## Requirements for Master of Fine Arts 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. In addition, the Master of Fine Arts degree is now the primary terminal degree for production faculty at college and university programs in the United States. This program emphasizes documentary production and studies and will encourage students to consider their roles in a globalized media environment.

### Degree Requirements

The MFA degree requires the completion of at least 60 hours of graduate course work including successful completion of thesis. 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
<b>Total SCH</b>	<b>60</b>

### The Thesis Production

The thesis will be a major creative production, for which six credits will be awarded. A substantial written production book will accompany the work and will include the historical/theoretical context for the production, in addition to detailed documentation of the process. The thesis will be the capstone experience for each MFA candidate. It must illustrate the student's ability to successfully execute professional level production work of high quality, in addition to demonstrating knowledge of production techniques and historical/theoretical perspective.

### Degree plan

Upon completing 9 hours in the MFA program, students must submit a Degree Plan for approval by the departmental graduate advisor and the graduate school. Once filed, any changes to the degree plan must be approved by the graduate advisor and resubmitted to the graduate school for approval.

### Curriculum

Course offerings differ each semester; check the course catalog for available courses. Course information for the following semester is posted on the bulletin board and online as soon as it is available.

*You must meet with the Graduate Director each semester to obtain course codes for enrollment.*

## MFA Curriculum

### **Required Courses (List by order of semester sequence)**

**33 hours**

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

**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.

**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 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.

**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 5245. Documentary, Visual Anthropology and Immersive Media.** 3 hours. An in-depth study of how humans have observed, analyzed and shared their understanding of humanity and the non-human world. The class encourages students to push their own boundaries in terms of their understanding of other cultures and of the role, successes, challenges and failures of media in representing culture. This course meets with MRTS 4245.

**MRTS 5791. Advanced Documentary II.** 3 hours. Designed to further develop skills in digital editing and sound mixing during the completion of the documentary started in the previous course. Prerequisite: MRTS 5790.

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

**MRTS 5804. MFA Colloquium.** 1 hour. 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. Students must enroll each semester they are in the program for a maximum of six credits.

*One course from the following:*

**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.

**MRTS 5660 Industry Studies Topics.** 3 hours. Rotating topics in industry studies including Audience Research, Digital Distribution, HBO, Law & Regulation, Media in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Media Ethics.

*and 3 credits of Critical Cultural Studies Courses*

**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 5220. Post-War European Film.** 3 hours. Examines three major film movements that developed in Europe after WWII: Italian Neorealism, the French New Wave, and British New Wave. Identifies the historical and cultural influences behind these film movements and explores the aesthetics of each movement and how these aesthetics reflect the philosophical and/or political ideals of the filmmakers.

**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 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 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. The course seeks to understand the relationships between youth cultures, mass media, adult mainstream society, and youth media production. Students will explore popular teen tropes and narratives as well as investigate how young people actually use, value, produce, and find meaning in multiple media in different contexts. 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 5425. Audience Research.** 3 hours. Provides useful knowledge of current audience research methodologies and theories, the ratings industry and analysis processes, including sampling methods, data collection methods, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, theories of audience behaviors, gross measures, cumulative measures, on-line audience research and You-tube audience research. This course meets with MRTS 4425.

**MRTS 5428. Mobile Media.** 3 hours. Provide students the relevant theories and updated information about mobile media. Students will study the knowledge of four topics under the umbrella of mobile media: mobile media diffusion, mobile media economy, mobile market research, mobile website development, and mobile app design. A research project on 5G will be required. This course meets with MRTS 4428.

**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 5750. Cinema/Video Vérité.** 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 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*

**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.

**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 5680. Media Entrepreneurship.** 3 hours. This course covers the essential information needed to start a media business. Among the topics covered are how to identify and market a new media enterprise, legal and tax issues encountered with starting a new business, and cost structures and sources of startup capital. A key outcome of this class will be the preparation of a business plan for a new media-related startup.

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

### **Internships – MFA Requirement (3 credit hours)**

1. MFA Director must approve the internship being proposed;
2. Students are required to find their own internships – the department does not place you in one. This allows you to seek out internship/career path opportunities specific to your stated career goals in media, academia, corporate/government/non-profit work, etc. Your internship should be designed to give you additional training and education in areas that you believe will directly, positively impact your future success in the field.
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 Director and the UNT Career Center (see below).
4. Once you have secured the internship and the approval of the MFA Director, the registration code will be provided;
5. 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](http://www.careercenter.unt.edu);
6. Note that the UNT policy on Internship requirements states that 150 hours of work during the semester equals 3 university credit hours.
7. Once you begin working in your internship, you should start a Google Doc (or other shared cloud storage document platform). Enter a few lines each day you work describing what you have accomplished, what hours you worked, challenges, goals, plans, etc. This document must be shared (view only) with the MFA Director once it is set up, so that the MFA Director can have regular updates on your Internship progress during the semester.
8. 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. Give specifics on your experience, not just generalities;
9. You will receive an electronic evaluation form to fill out from the UNT Career Center the week before final exams;
10. 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 Director;
11. IF the MFA Director and student have determined more should be done to fully accomplish the goals of the Internship, like a long form paper or a project, the student must submit this to the MFA Director as well;
12. The MFA Director will submit the grade after reviewing all materials above. As every Internship experience is unique, there is no general rubric for grading, but all materials required will be taken into consideration, and if appropriate, an in-person meeting with the student will be scheduled.

## Typical 3 Year Course Sequence

### Year 1 Fall

History of the Documentary  
Documentary Production  
Free Elective  
MFA Colloquium

### Year 1 Spring

Contemporary Documentary  
Documentary Preproduction  
Graduate Audio Production  
MFA Colloquium

### Year 2 Fall

Advanced Documentary Workshop 1  
Documentary, Visual Anthropology and Immersive Media  
Prescribed Elective or Critical Cultural Media Theory (5120) or Industry Studies Topic (5660)  
MFA Colloquium

### Year 2 Spring

Advanced Documentary Workshop 2  
Prescribed Elective or New Media Theory (5121) or Industry Studies Topic (5660)  
Free Elective  
MFA Colloquium

### Year 3 Fall

Thesis  
Prescribed Elective  
Free Elective  
MFA Colloquium

### Year 3 Spring

Thesis  
Internship (could be done during the previous summer)  
Free Elective  
MFA Colloquium

Note: The above should be considered only as a general guide. There are likely to be variations depending on a student's previous experience, and overall progress while in the program. We recommend that if possible students try to do their internships during the summer

## Media Arts MFA in Documentary Production and Studies – Typical Course Flow Plan

	Fall	Spring
Year 1	MRTS 5804 – MFA Colloquium (1 credit) MRTS 5770 - Grad. Doc Production (3 credits) MRTS 5340 – Documentary History (3 credits) Elective (3 credits)	MRTS 5804 – MFA Colloquium (1 credit) MRTS 5760 – Doc Preproduction (3 credits) MRTS 5650 - Grad Doc Audio (3 credits) MRTS 5780 – Contemp. Documentary (3 credits)
Year 2	MRTS 5804 – MFA Colloquium (1 credit) MRTS 5790 – Adv. Doc Production (3 credits) MRTS 5245 – Documentary, Visual Anthropology and Immersive Media (3 credits) Elective (3 credits)	MRTS 5804 – MFA Colloquium (1 credit) MRTS 5791 – Adv. Doc Postproduction (3 credits) Elective (3 credits) Elective (3 credits)
Year 3	MRTS 5804 – MFA Colloquium (1 credit) MRTS 5950 – MFA Thesis (3 credits) Elective (3 credits) Elective (3 credits)	MRTS 5804 – MFA Colloquium (1 credit) MRTS 5950 – MFA Thesis (3 credits) Elective (3 credits) MRTS 5180 – Internship (3 credits)

     = Required Courses  
      = Elective Courses  
      = MFA Thesis  
      = Internship

**Concerning your Elective Courses: You must have a total of 9 credit hours in specific areas, including the following:**

- A. One course from the following group:
  - 5120 (Critical/Cultural Media Theory) (normally taught in the fall semester)
  - 5121 (New Media Theory) (normally taught in the spring semester)
  - 5660 (Industry Studies Rotating Topics) (several options to choose from)
- B. An additional 3 credits of Industry Studies Electives  
 An additional 3 credits of Critical/Cultural/History electives
- C. The *remaining* Elective courses are to be selected in consultation with the MFA Director during your advising sessions.

### **Additional requirements and required courses (MFA Colloquium, MFA Thesis and Internship):**

MRTS 5804 (MFA Colloquium) is a one-credit course, and has required registration every semester until successful thesis defense (only 6 hours count toward degree)

MRTS 5950 (MFA Thesis) requires continuous enrollment once started, until successful thesis defense (only 6 hours count toward degree)

MRTS 5180 (Internship) may be taken the summer before the third year of MFA studies, or during the third year. The Department recommends taking this your final semester

Note: up to 6 credits of graduate free electives may be taken outside the department, and should be intended to focus on your thesis subject matter area

## **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 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 chair) 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 chair, reminding the student of the department's policy and consequences if a second "C" or below is received.

## **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. Applications are available on the department website. Offers take into consideration many variables including 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 Advisors. Students should note that Toulouse Graduate School requires students to be enrolled in 9-hours of graduate courses to be eligible for an assistantship.

## **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 must be submitted with a justification of trip and the expenses. Funding decisions are made at the discretion of the Graduate Committee and are subject to availability.

## Master of Fine Arts Thesis Requirements and Guidelines

**Master's Thesis Defined:** A Master's thesis is defined as a substantial work of original research, which synthesizes concepts, methodologies, and skills developed especially within the context of the Master's Degree program. In the department of Media Arts, the thesis must be submitted in the form of an original substantial documentary media production. The MFA thesis also requires a significant written documentation component. The written thesis must follow Toulouse Graduate School guidelines in terms of style manual use, citations, etc.

**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 Department's Graduate Coordinator, 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.**

You should note and observe carefully all deadlines pertaining to graduation printed in the current Graduate Catalog. Based on your discussion with your 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, you should apply for graduation during the agreed-upon semester. It is your responsibility to make sure you turn in all graduation application materials on time, and to submit all final paperwork and fees according to deadlines.

**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 linguistics, 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 Thesis Committee Chair. 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, any changes to the Thesis Committee must be approved by the Graduate Director, depending upon your degree.

**Enrollment.** Six credit hours of MRTS 5950 (thesis credits) are required for graduation; they cannot be taken concurrently. You must be enrolled in thesis hours to defend your prospectus and thesis. Once you have enrolled in MRTS 5950 you are required to enroll continuously until you have successfully completed the written thesis and oral defense. Only one enrollment in 5950 is required during the summer session, in either term. You will not be awarded any credit for this course until your thesis has been completed and filed with the Graduate Dean. A letter grade is assigned for the 6 thesis hours.

Please take note of the following MRTS Policy on Thesis Committees:

### **MRTS Policy on Thesis Committees**

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 the thesis will be completed and successfully defended **within one calendar year** of the establishment of the thesis committee. At the same time, students should consider that many graduate faculty are not available during the Summer semesters.

Graduate students are responsible for organizing their own thesis committees. This should be done by asking faculty members to serve who have expertise in the area to be studied. 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 his/her discretion, extend the committee for final completion and defense of the thesis. Students not making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the thesis will be required to reform a new thesis committee.

### **THESIS PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES**

As noted above, the MFA Thesis is comprised of two distinct, but related parts; an original documentary production, and an original scholarly written document that is about the production and related academic approaches. Both should be at the highest creative, technical and scholarly levels possible. In Media Arts, we have a fairly expansive definition of documentary. You may pursue more traditional approaches and styles, or depending on subject matter may incorporate other techniques such as animation, illustration, minimal re-enactments, VR, 360, etc. What is required is a solid documentary grounding, and the ability to pursue the subject matter within your own budgetary and other parameters. This is your capstone, signature work as a graduate student. You will work directly with your Thesis Chair and other committee members to refine your idea before production, and will work with them throughout the process for input and feedback. It is important that you propose a documentary film that you are committed to, and passionate about. You will be spending several months of your life working on this film, and it is likely the creative work that leads into your career after your academic studies.

**Prospectus.** You should start preparing for the prospectus early, typically after the completion of Your third semester (or 27 hours). To graduate in 3 years, students should plan to defend your prospectus in the second semester of your second year (after 36 hours); *the prospectus must be defended at least 2 semesters prior to the defense of the thesis.*

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 seem weak or need clarification. The committee will make recommendations to improve the subsequent research and writing of the thesis. In addition, the prospectus meeting results in a decision concerning approval of your proposed thesis project. 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 Thesis Chair will chair the prospectus meeting.

During the writing and production of your prospectus, you should work closely with your Thesis Chair. When they determine that your prospectus is ready to be presented to your Committee, you should, in consultation with your Thesis Chair, make arrangements for your presentation. It is your responsibility to ensure that the date and time selected for your oral presentation are convenient for all of your committee members. The Graduate Director should post notice of this meeting via email announcement 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 whenever your Thesis Chair believes it necessary to do so.

**You must distribute one copy of your prospectus to all members of your thesis committee at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.**

**Thesis.** After your prospectus has been approved, you'll write and/or produce your thesis under the supervision of your Thesis Chair. Before you begin writing, you 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 your thesis, and information about style, preparation of the abstract, and the correcting, copying and filing of your thesis, be sure to check with the procedures outlined by the Toulouse Graduate School. (<https://tgs.unt.edu/new-current-students/theses-and-dissertations>)

**The scope of the Thesis Chair.** The responsibility of the Thesis Chair is to guide the student in his/her 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 or written editorial work. Should students require extra assistance with writing or research, they should work in conjunction with the library reference staff, the staff of the writing center and/or a professional editor.

Faculty members differ in the way they wish to be involved in helping you with the writing of your thesis, but it is **YOUR** responsibility to seek whatever help is needed, to submit drafts for correction and approval, and to meet university deadlines. Your thesis may be the most important element in your academic life while you are writing and/or producing it, but it is only one of the many things a faculty member must do. Therefore, don't expect instantaneous response to your requests. The degree to which the other member(s) of the committee become involved in your writing and/or production of the thesis will vary with the individual professor. Be sure to ask the other members of the committee when they want to see your thesis (i.e., after each chapter is finished, or only when the thesis has been completely written, etc.).

**Note to English Second Language Speakers.** Theses written by international students, or students who are not native speakers of English, must be proficient to a reasonable level. Students may find it useful to consult the Campus Writing Center.

**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. Candidates who are out of town or who neglect to keep in communication with their Thesis Chair should not expect to self-schedule their defense. The decision to schedule a thesis defense is always at the discretion of the Thesis Chair. A student should not assume the availability of faculty (especially in summer), but instead may maintain regular contact to provide advance notice to faculty who will be participating in a thesis defense.

It is your responsibility also to see that the oral examination is taken before the completion deadline listed in the calendar in the current Graduate Catalog. This date usually falls about halfway through the semester.

**The defense must be scheduled at least 2 weeks prior to the Toulouse Graduate School deadline for final submission; the departmental Graduate Advisor will NOT sign thesis defense forms that were not defended at least 2 weeks prior to this deadline.**

**You must distribute one copy of your thesis to all members of your thesis committee at least three weeks in advance of the defense.**

It is also your responsibility to be sure that all members of your Thesis Committee are notified of the time and place of the examination and that they are given sufficient time to read and/or view the thesis.

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 Toulouse submission deadline, may result in a delay of graduation.

*Please note that even if your thesis approval form has been signed, if you fail to submit required final corrections/revisions to the Committee prior to the Toulouse graduate school deadline for thesis submission, you will be required to enroll in MRTS 5950 for an additional semester to allow time for these revisions. Your grade will remain a PR (in progress) until successful completion and submission.*

**Timeline.** In accordance with the Graduate Handbook, you are expected to complete your thesis within one calendar year. You should work with your Thesis Chair to determine a timeline according to your specific thesis goals and personal schedule. While the chart below is only a suggested and approximate schedule, failure to make progress or meet significant deadlines could delay your desired graduation date. You are expected to stay in communication with your Thesis Chair about your progress and intended graduation date.

We strongly advise students to be ahead of schedule with their thesis production to avoid delays, or possible issues in scheduling a defense.

**THE GRADUATE DIRECTOR WILL NOT SIGN DEFENSE FORMS IF A THESIS DEFENSE WAS NOT CONDUCTED AT LEAST TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE GRADUATE SCHOOL DEADLINE.**

**Failure to defend your thesis before this deadline will result in delayed graduation.**

## Timeline for Completing a Thesis in a 3-Year Degree Plan

TASK	DEADLINE	SAMPLE TIMELINE
Identify a Thesis Chair	Typically in the fourth semester of the program	In your 4 <sup>th</sup> semester
Enroll in thesis hours	Typically in the fifth semester of the program	In your 5 <sup>th</sup> semester
<b>Submit thesis prospectus</b> to your Thesis Chair; email entire committee <b>to schedule a date</b> for the oral defense of your prospectus	1-2 months prior to the defense date	Early in your 4 <sup>th</sup> semester;
<b>*Submit a copy</b> of your thesis prospectus to your entire thesis committee	No later than 2 weeks prior to the scheduled defense	Early to midway through 4 <sup>th</sup> semester
<b>*Successfully defend</b> thesis prospectus	At least one year prior to the desired graduation date	Midway through 4 <sup>th</sup> semester
Submit a chapter draft to Thesis Chair (and committee if specified)	Approximately 4 months prior to thesis defense	5 <sup>th</sup> semester
Submit a chapter draft to Thesis Chair (and committee if specified)	Approximately 3 months prior to thesis defense	Early 6 <sup>th</sup> semester; students often work on thesis on their own over the winter break
Submit a chapter draft to Thesis Chair (and committee if specified)	Approximately 2 months prior to thesis defense	Early in your 6 <sup>th</sup> semester
<b>*Submit final revisions</b> of thesis draft to Chair & email your entire Committee <b>to schedule a date</b> for your Thesis Defense	No later than 1 month prior to the defense	Early in your 6 <sup>th</sup> semester
<b>*Submit a copy</b> of your final thesis draft to your entire committee	No later than 3 weeks prior to the scheduled defense date	Midway through 6 <sup>th</sup> semester
<b>*Oral Defense</b> of Final Thesis	No later than 2 weeks prior to the Graduate School submission deadline	Midway through 6 <sup>th</sup> semester
<b>*Submit Final Thesis</b> (including all corrections) to the Graduate School	Check Toulouse for specific dates; typically several weeks before the end of the semester	6 <sup>th</sup> semester

## ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR A PRODUCTION THESIS (MFA)

**The Production Thesis.** A production thesis normally consists of a substantial documentary media production, with accompanying written documentation.

**The Proposal.** At the latest, early in the semester before you plan to complete all of the requirements for the MFA degree (or sooner), you should begin work on your Production Thesis. (See your Thesis Chair for examples of acceptable proposals.)

**Form.** Your proposal must contain a full description of your proposed project. It should include, as applicable, a purpose, hypothesis, initial review of literature, methodology, organization, production schedule and selected bibliography. Your Thesis Chair will help you adapt your proposal to fit the particular requirements of your project. It is important you contact your Thesis Chair during the first month of the semester before the one in which you will begin actual production work on your creative thesis. Throughout this term, you should work closely with your Thesis Chair in the preparation of your proposal. This written proposal will become a part of the required written portion of your creative thesis.

**Approval.** When you have prepared your proposal to the satisfaction of your Thesis Chair, you should schedule a Proposal Meeting with your Thesis Chair and the other members of your Thesis Committee. You should provide the committee members with a copy of your proposal at least a week before the meeting. At the end of the meeting, if all the Committee members have approved your prospectus, either as presented or with revisions, you will be able to begin work on the production thesis and additional accompanying written portion.

**The Production Project.** You are required to enroll in MRTS 5950 (Master's Thesis). Six hours of credit are required. You will not be awarded any credit for this course until your thesis (the film/video/audio/multimedia project, plus supporting written documentation) has been completed and filed with the Graduate Dean. You are required to enroll continuously in MRTS 5950 once you have begun work on your thesis. (Only one enrollment is required during the summer sessions.)

**Formal Written Report (Production Thesis).** As part of your requirements for your Production Thesis, you must present a formal written report based on the work completed. The formal written report should adhere to the following structure, based upon your agreements with your Thesis Chair and the other members of your Thesis Committee.

I. Approved Prospectus (include a heading indicating that this first chapter was written prior to production and therefore written in the future tense.)

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. Approaches

- c. Ethical Challenges and Decisions
- c. Review of Additional Texts Reviewed for Research
- d. Documentary Films
- e. Other (web sites, blogs, listserves, interviews, etc.)

#### V. Production

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

#### VI. Post Production

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

#### VII. Reconceptualization of film during postproduction

#### VIII. Evaluation of Completed Work

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

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

This written report must be approved by your Graduate Committee and filed in the Graduate Dean's Office. You must prepare your report according to instructions given in this document for preparing a Thesis. You must also pass an oral examination over the Production Project and accompanying written material. Your Graduate Committee will conduct this examination. If you are planning on graduating in a specific semester, you must ensure adequate time for all stages of the Creative Thesis process, bearing in mind Graduate School and University deadlines.

#### **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 normally at the end of the student's second year, or at the beginning of the students' third academic year at the latest. The MFA Prospectus should be approximately 10 pages long, and should include the following items, which eventually become Chapter 1 of the written Thesis Document.

#### I. Preproduction Research

People, location and subject matter research.

In this section, outline the basics of the documentary film subject matter, and discuss the specifics of locations and people within the film. You should 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

Artistic, persuasive, ethical, educational aims, etc. of your proposed documentary.

In this section, you should clarify your rationale for making this film and your goals for this production. Be specific in terms of audience (age, nationality, interests, etc.) possible distribution outlets, and why you think your film will communicate effectively to this audience. You should also outline your artistic intentions for the film, indicating any location or postproduction technical aesthetics you plan on incorporating (specific lighting techniques, unique interview locations, slow motion, integration of image manipulation during postproduction, etc). If music, archival or other clearances will be required, indicate your plans for research and approval.

## III. Integration of Theory and Production

Documentary theories, rationales and approaches for your documentary. While you are still in preproduction, you should already have a good idea about various historical documentary theories and trends and how you plan on utilizing these in your film. While you outlined textual references regarding subject, people and location in the first section, this section should include references to films, academic texts, web literature, etc. that examine artistic, structural, communication, ethical, legal, educational and persuasive trends in the larger documentary community. Your own film will require specific approaches (ex: cinema verite, interviews, strict observation, hybrid modes, incorporation of music and/or other media, etc.) these should only be utilized if they benefit the larger goals of your film. This section allows you to begin discussion of these approaches.

## IV. Schedule and Equipment

Plans for preproduction, production, postproduction and distribution of your documentary. This final part of the MFA Thesis Prospectus should give a proposed schedule for continued preproduction location and subject research, for primary production, re-shoots and pickup shooting, for postproduction (including editing, sound mixing, archival and music acquisition if needed), duplication and package design, internet distribution, festival/broadcast/webcast and other plans for distribution, and projected Thesis Defense. (Please make note that for a May graduation, the Thesis must be successfully defended in mid-March.) You should also include an equipment plan request, indicating what department production and postproduction you would like to use for this documentary film.

**Request for Designation or Re-Designation of Thesis Committee  
MFA in Documentary Production and Studies  
Department of Media Arts  
University of North Texas**

**Instructions:**

By completion of 18 hours of graduate course work, the student should consult with their Thesis Chair concerning the development of a Thesis/Exam Committee. After consultation, the student should fill out the form below and take it to each of the requested committee members for signature. When the signatures have been obtained, the form should be returned to the MRTS Graduate Advisor.

Name:  EIS ID:

Anticipated Semester of Exam or Thesis Defense: \_\_\_\_\_

**Requested Committee:**

Thesis Chair: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print/Type Signature

Second Member: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print/Type Signature

Third Member: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print/Type Signature

Approved with the following provisions (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Approved, MRTS Graduate Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

**Thesis Contract**  
**MFA in Documentary Production and Studies**  
**Department of Media Arts**  
**University of North Texas**

Name:

EIS ID:

Thesis Committee 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 available during the summer semesters.

Graduate students are responsible for organizing their own thesis committees. 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 his/her discretion, extend the 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 thesis committee.

The thesis must be successfully completed in order for the student to graduate from the Media Arts, MFA program in Documentary Production and Studies.

---

Student Signature

Date

---

Thesis Chair Signature

Date

---

Graduate Advisor Signature

Date

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS GRADUATE SCHOOL  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS DEGREE PLAN – MEDIA ARTS DEPT.**

This form must be submitted to the Office of the Graduate Dean for approval.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ EIS ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Master’s degree to be earned (circle one):  MA\*  MS  MFA

Major: Documentary Production and Studies

NA \*Date foreign language requirement met: \_\_\_\_\_ List deficiencies or prerequisites: \_\_\_\_\_

Principle Area Advisor: Tania Khalaf Thesis Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Courses to be completed for the master’s degree

Course	Semester Completed	Hours	Grade	Course	Semester Completed	Hours	Grade
MRTS 5340 History of Documentary	Fall 2018	3		MRTS 5750 Cinema/Video Verite	Spring 2020	3	
MRTS 5770 Grad Doc. Production	Fall 2018	3		MRTS 5791 Advanced Doc Workshop II	Spring 2020	3	
MRTS 5740 Visual Editing	Fall 2018	3		MRTS 5500 Advanced Screenwriting	Spring 2020	3	
MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium	Fall 2018	1		MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium	Spring 2020	1	
MRTS 5780 Contemporary Documentary	Spring 2019	3		MRTS 5120 Crit/Cult Media Theory	Fall 2020	3	
MRTS 5760 Doc Pre-production	Spring 2019	3		MRTS 5660 Media Law	Fall 2020	3	
MRTS 5650 Grad Audio Production	Spring 2019	3		MRTS 5950 Thesis	Fall 2020	3	
MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium	Spring 2019	1		MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium	Fall 2020	1	
MRTS 5790 Advanced Doc Workshop I	Fall 2019	3		MRTS 5950 Thesis	Spring 2021	3	
MRTS 5515 Anthropological Film	Fall 2019	3		MRTS 5180 Internship	Spring 2021	3	
MRTS 5660 Media Ethics	Fall 2019	3		MRTS 5701 After Effects	Spring 2021	3	
MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium	Fall 2019	1		MRTS 5804 MFA Colloquium	Spring 2021	1	

Admission to candidacy is recommended:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Area Advisor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Completion Date for Plan

To Be Completed by Graduate Dean

Degree plan Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of the Graduate School