

MA in Visual Studies

The MA program in Visual Studies blends disciplinary training in the history of art, material culture, and media studies with a commitment to public humanities. Graduate training in Visual Studies offers a combination of coursework; outreach, research, and teaching opportunities; and interdisciplinary collaboration with other professional programs, to prepare students for careers in educational institutions, cultural organizations, and the broader creative economy.

Degree Requirements

Coursework

The successful completion of the MA requires at least thirty hours of coursework that must include:

- Nine hours of visual studies foundation coursework (ART_VS 9010, ARH_VS 8120, and ART_VS 8010).
- Nine hours of Art History courses distributed across three different chronological or media history areas.
- ARH_VS 8070
- If students pursue the thesis option, they must enroll in ARH_VS 8080 and ARH_VS 8090 in place of ARH_VS 8070 .
- 12 credit hours at the 8000-level
- No more than 12 of the 30 hours (40%) can be Problems, Special Readings, or Research Hours (7960/8070/8080/8090)

Courses for an interdisciplinary minor field will be in addition to these minimums.

Language Requirements

All students are required to demonstrate a reading knowledge of one foreign language consistent with their program of study, either through an SVS language exam or a grade of B or better in a course approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. The school expects that the modern language requirement be met by the end of the third semester for use in advanced coursework as well as thesis research and writing.

Essay & Oral Examination

To complete the degree, students must complete a scholarly essay under the guidance of a faculty advisor. It will most likely be a revision of a research paper from a graduate course taken in the Department of Visual Studies. In consultation with the faculty advisor, students will select two additional members of the department faculty to read the essay. Students will discuss their essays in a meeting chaired by their advisor.

Thesis/Non-Thesis Requirements Option

MA Essay & Oral Defense

To complete the MA degree, students must complete a scholarly essay under the guidance of a faculty advisor—most likely a revision of a research paper from a graduate course taken at MU. In consultation with the faculty advisor, students will select one additional member of the School to read the essay and discuss it in a meeting chaired by the advisor.

MA Thesis Option & Oral Defense

Graduate students who intend to pursue doctoral work are encouraged to complete the thesis option. The MA thesis enables students to engage in independent and thorough research in a specific area of study and to

demonstrate the ability to engage bibliography in the field of study; utilize research tools and techniques; synthesize a variety of source materials; and sustain an argument.

The MA thesis committee consists of at least three people: the student's thesis advisor, a member from within the School, and a member from outside the School. The student should invite the latter two in consultation with his or her thesis advisor.

The defense of the master's thesis is an oral examination, chaired by the student's advisor, which focuses specifically on the MA thesis. The student submits a complete draft of the thesis, approved by the advisor, to the entire committee 30 days before the defense. Any changes recommended by the committee during the defense must be made before the finished thesis can be submitted to the Graduate School.

Funding

Incoming students are considered for funding when they apply to the program. Returning students submit applications for continued funding in the spring semester.

Admissions

Admission Criteria

Admission to the MA program in history, theory, and criticism in the School of Visual Studies is granted yearly to a small number of candidates who hold a recognized BA degree in art history, media studies, or a related field in the humanities and social sciences. Applicants are required to meet two sets of minimum qualifications for admission: the requirements of the MA in Visual Studies (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/degreecategory/visual-studies/>) and the minimum requirements of the graduate faculty, enforced by the Graduate School (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions/eligibility-process/>). Before official admission to the University of Missouri, application materials will be reviewed by both the Graduate School and the degree program to which the applicant has applied.

Required Application Materials

The following items are needed to complete the application for the MA degree:

- Three letters of recommendation concerning academic qualifications to undertake graduate work
- Official transcript from all colleges or universities attended.
- CV
- Statement of purpose: A substantial personal statement (or intellectual biography) addresses an applicant's academic interests, including specific papers and projects they have worked on, as well as what they hope to accomplish as a graduate student. It explains, too, why the applicant wishes to pursue a graduate degree in History, Theory, and Criticism in the School of Visual Studies.
- Writing Sample: One 15-20 page scholarly paper that demonstrates the applicant's scholarship and writing.

GRE scores are not required for admission to the program but are necessary for consideration for some SVS fellowships.

Contact

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More Information

Further guidelines are included on the School of Visual Studies website.