

Department of Media Study – Gold Form I - MFA Schedule and Requirements

Last revision December 8, 2010

I: Thesis procedure

1. Overview

This document (gold form I) describes the mfa schedule and requirements. Details to the thesis requirements are given in the mfa thesis guidelines (gold form II).

The mfa program requires 60 credits, a thesis, and a project. During the course of study, students are required to constitute a faculty thesis committee to supervise and approve the thesis/project. Students *may* be able to accelerate (or delay) this schedule, depending on individual circumstances.

Academic requirements can be non-intuitive to new students. *Students should arrange to meet the dms graduate advisor Lisa Hewitt during each semester of their graduate studies.*

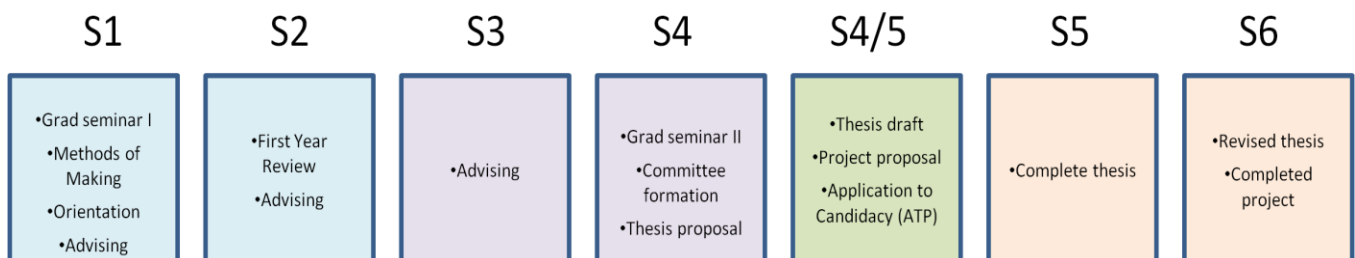
2. Documents

- Most of the documents required are available via the dms website
<http://mediastudy.buffalo.edu/e-forms.php>
- A university wide overview of courses is available at *MyUB*, accessible once a UB account is established
<http://www.myub.buffalo.edu>
- The graduate school also has relevant documents, including the graduate school policies and procedures
<http://www.grad.buffalo.edu>
- Helpful syllabus design information, including dms specific policies for teaching assistants are here
http://mediastudy.buffalo.edu/dms_ta_docs

II: Thesis schedule

The mfa at dms is a three year program. In order to graduate within the stipulated timeframe students are required to organize their time and resources carefully. This includes keeping the dms administration informed of progress or lack thereof. Students are strongly advised to consult with the academic advisor to ensure that course selections (electives) meet dms course elective requirements, especially during semesters that have no dms internal requirements (semester 3, for example). Furthermore, students are encouraged to make use of the summer break between semesters 4 and 5 to ensure timely completion of all the steps leading to graduation.

The following sections outline the flow through the 6 semester program (S1 to S6), listing mandatory courses and events.



1. S1: fall semester of first year

Just before the beginning of the semester there is a plenary orientation for dms graduate students. Students will be asked to sign up for a meeting with the dms graduate advisor at this session. First year students will also receive help in scheduling courses, completing registration and completing course transfer forms for credit from

other institutions (deadline September 15). In general it is suggested that first semester students take all their courses within dms. There is one required (Grad Seminar) and two suggested courses (Methods of Making I: Video/Audio and Methods of Making II: Computational Media) in the first semester as well as required meetings/events.

- Mandatory course: - Graduate Seminar I
- Mandatory events: - Graduate orientation + Graduate advisor meeting
- Suggested courses: - Methods of Making I and or II

2. S2: spring semester of the first year

All mfa students are required to present their ongoing research to the dms faculty in the first year review (see appendix IV.1 for details). The first year review will usually take place during the week before spring break.

- Mandatory courses: - None
- Mandatory events: - First year review + advising

3. S3: fall semester of the second year

This semester can be designed by the student.

- Mandatory courses: - None
- Mandatory events: - Advising

4. S4: spring semester of the second year

This semester commences the thesis work in dms. Full details to this process are described in the gold form II.

- Mandatory courses: - Graduate seminar II (Seminar in the Image II), including the second year show
- Mandatory events: - Thesis proposal + thesis committee formation + advising

4b. S4/5 summer between semesters 4 and 5

- Mandatory courses: - None
- Mandatory events: - Thesis draft + project proposal + application to candidacy + advising

5. S5: fall semester of the third year

This semester is centered around completing the first full draft of the written thesis and making progress on the production of the thesis art work.

- Mandatory courses: - None
- Mandatory events: - Complete thesis draft + advising

6. S6: spring semester of the third year

This semester should be dedicated completely to the completion of the written thesis and the thesis production.

- Mandatory courses: - None
- Mandatory events: - Final, revised/completed thesis + completed project

Application to candidacy must be submitted long before the intended graduation date. For example, January 9 is the deadline for June 1 graduation. *It is imperative that students confer with the graduate secretary to confirm*

the cutoff dates for the submission of the application to candidacy and the thesis progress form before making graduation plans.

III Requirements

1. Credit Distribution Requirements.

Course credits required for graduation must be distributed as described below. There is some latitude in how a particular course might fit into this scheme. A student may apply to have suitable courses not previously listed as “production” or as “media history/theory/interpretation” accepted for credit in these categories. Students must first consult with the dms academic advisor in this regard. Then they may fill out an mfa course equivalency form (available online) for each such course, and apply for approval to the director of graduate studies.

1.1 Production - 24 credits

Production courses are generally 4 credits, making the production component of the mfa contain 6 courses. Most dms courses may be counted in the production category, and do not require submission of an mfa course equivalency form. Cross-listed courses in visual studies, computer science, etc. may also be counted. For students with no production background there are summer catch-up courses. However, such courses will not be accepted for graduate credit.

1.2 Media History/Theory/Interpretation - 12 credits

This requirement may be satisfied by media-related courses in media study or other departments. If in doubt, check with the graduate advisor.

1.3 Graduate Seminar (Seminar in the Image) - 4 credits total

Students should plan to take these courses (I and II) in the in semester 1 and semester 4. Graduate seminar I is a formative course in the theory and practice of media arts, with emphasis on research practices and methods. Graduate seminar II continues the thread of the first course, includes a graduate student show and a first formulation of the thesis topic.

1.4 Directed electives - 13 credits

Students may choose any courses that generally support their thesis research. Students will be required to justify how these courses support the thesis/project, using the *mfa directed electives form*. No course equivalency form is required for the following courses, taken as directed electives: 599, 600, and 690.

1.5 Thesis Project - 7 credits

Thesis/project work is usually credited by registering for dms 598 project supervision during the penultimate semester and dms 700 thesis guidance in the final semester, in any combination of credits suited to the work. No course equivalency form is required for graduate seminar, project supervision, capstone internship, or thesis guidance.

It is also a requirement that (at least) three courses are taken in (an)other department(s). These may be dms cross-listed courses. However, the idea is to show diversity in research. Students are advised to keep documentation (syllabi, course equivalency forms, directed elective form, etc.) for these courses. All credits must be in graduate level courses (500 level and above). However, a student may petition to have up to two 400 level courses accepted for graduate credit. This requires the following steps:

- Registration using the undergraduate course number.
- Filing the graduate student petition form <http://www.grad.buffalo.edu/forms/students/petition.pdf>
- Listing of extra work that makes the course appropriate for graduate-level credit.
- Obtaining the signature of the faculty member teaching the course.
- Submitting the petition to the director of graduate studies by the end of the first week of classes.

- Submitting the petition to the dms graduate secretary.
- Submitting the petition to the graduate school.

IV. Appendix

1. First Year Review guidelines

All first year graduates are required to present their work and work in progress to the dms faculty in their second semester of the mfa program. The first year review provides the faculty with an opportunity to assess students' engagement with the department, and to appreciate their progress. It allows students the opportunity to situate their practice within the field they identify with and to indicate new directions of their research/art practice.

In selecting material to show for the first year review, students should consider that the presentation will be limited to 15 minutes including work and explanations. Students should choose work that gives some sense of the level of productivity and intellectual engagement. If the material is very specialized, a brief statement for faculty can be helpful. An artist statement should include critical self-assessment, including progress made or not made during this first year in the mfa program.

Students must send the director of graduate studies a link to a url with all required materials 4 days before the review date. Students are responsible for ensuring that their presentation materials can be viewed on the computer in cfa 232 (internet browsers and pdf viewer are available. Specialty software must be installed prior to the presentation - contact Carl Lee well in advance).

After the review each student will receive written notice as to whether they have passed or not. Students with a provisional pass will be asked to complete a summer study package. Completion of this package is mandatory. Each student passing the review will be assigned a mentor who will remain the point of contact for conceptual/academic questions until the student designates his/her thesis committee

2. Forms

2.1 Application to candidacy (atc) form

The atc form requires that students specify courses and as well as the finalized concept of the thesis/project. Later adjustments or changes require approval by the graduate school—by petition. The atc is submitted to the graduate secretary about four to six months prior to the expected graduation date, commonly during the fourth semester. The atc must include the following attachments:

- A course equivalency form for every course categorized as “production” course, which is not a dms course, or is not on the list of “production” courses.
- A course equivalency form every course categorized as a “media history/interpretation/theory” course which is not a dms course, or is not on the list of “media history/interpretation/theory” courses.
- A copy of the unofficial UB transcript.
- A course syllabus for every course whose title does not clearly indicate the course's relationship to media production or media history/interpretation/theory, or which is from another department.
- The mfa directed electives forms, signed by the thesis committee chair.
- Copies of any approved graduate petitions for undergraduate courses taken for graduate credit.
- A copy of approved thesis abstract, signed by the committee chair.
- Copies of independent and directed studies for any class without an official course description.
- Original transcripts applicable to any credits for courses taken outside of UB. These courses must be approved by the director of graduate studies.
- Courses taken outside of dms require a signature of the corresponding instructor.

2.2 M-form

The m-form, which must be signed by the thesis committee members, certifies completion of all degree requirements. It serves as the master control document ensuring a student's compliance with dms requirements. Students should meet with their thesis committee prior to the m-form submission date. Also, students should meet with the graduate secretary (LuAnn Zak) and the graduate academic advisor (Lisa Hewitt) well ahead of time to insure that courses, thesis/project, and all paperwork are in order by the deadline.