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Media Arts

Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in Media Arts

The Master of Fine Arts in Media Arts program emphasizes the artistic development of the individual student and the creation of quality of works in photography, film, video, sound, new media, and/or interdisciplinary media. Degree requirements are 60 credit hours. The program generally takes three years to complete.

This terminal degree program is unique in its balance of coursework in media arts practices with art, media history and theory, individual mentorship, and interdisciplinary work in other programs throughout the University. The faculty awarding a successful student the M.F.A. is an acknowledgement of creative and intellectual achievement and is accomplished through the development of a body of an innovative individual practice work in the media arts, accompanied by a creative research paper. The program prepares students for careers in the contemporary media arts as a media artist, artist, video or filmmaker, designer, theorist, educator, and other future professions which will require creativity and artistic acumen. While mastery of craft within media arts is a vital component of the M.F.A. in Media Arts, the program's philosophy is that graduate study should expand the student's breadth as an artist and encourage interdisciplinary study. Available course work in production, criticism, theory, history, and combined media studies emphasizes the interwoven character of traditional and contemporary approaches and technologies in the 21st century.

A distinguished faculty of artists and scholars in the School of Media Arts teach in excellent facilities, and a variety of curricular offerings allow students to individually tailor their programs of study.

Admission

All requirements for admission to the Graduate School at Southern Illinois University Carbondale must be met. Applicants must submit the Application for Admission to Graduate Study forms, certified transcripts of all post-secondary studies as well as three letters of recommendation from individuals who can evaluate their potential for graduate studies. Applicants must also submit a resume outlining educational and professional experience, as well as a personal statement describing their objectives for study in the program, career goals and interests.

Prospective students must present evidence of exceptional talent and/or potential in one or two media pursuits in the degree program. Applicants should include an example of work that demonstrates their competency. This evidence will ordinarily consist of a portfolio of photographs or digitally generated art works, one or more films, videos, sound works, multimedia productions, web art projects, or other evidence of artistic potential. Applicants must clearly indicate their role(s) in any project submitted. An interview with faculty in the program is highly recommended, particularly for applicants with minimal course work in the field.

Acceptance into the program and continuing enrollment are at the discretion of the College of Arts and Media and the Graduate School. Generally, applicants must have a grade point average of at least 3.0 (4.0 = A) on the entire last undergraduate work. International students whose native or first language is not English, or those with fewer than 100 graded hours of college credit at a U.S. college or university, must take the TOEFL and earn a minimum iBT score of 80 prior to January 21, 2026, or 4.5 on or after January 21, 2026, or an IELTS score of 6.5 or higher, to be admitted. Students whose preparation is deemed lacking in certain areas may be required to take undergraduate courses to attain competency. These will not be counted toward the M.F.A. in Mass Communication and Media Arts degree.

Retention

No course in which the grade is below B- shall count toward the degree or fulfillment of any requirement, but the grade will be included in the grade point average. The M.F.A. in Media Arts program generally takes three years to complete.

Procedures

All M.F.A. in Media Arts students will undergo a faculty review at the end of Year 1. This process allows faculty to deliver formal feedback regarding the student's progress toward their degree that includes performance in courses and creative and scholarly production outside of the classroom. The possible outcomes of this review are Pass, Provisional Pass, and Fail. Failure of this review will result in termination from the program. Students who receive a Provisional Pass in this review will receive a letter outlining the areas in which they must improve and be assigned a faculty mentor for this process. Failure to demonstrate improvement will result in termination from the program.

By the end of the third semester in residence, each M.F.A. in Media Arts student will be required to select, in consultation with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, a committee chair and a committee of two additional graduate faculty members. The faculty committee and the student develop a specific plan of study, considering the requirements of the Graduate School, the degree program, and the goals of the student.

The M.F.A. in Media Arts degree culminates in an intensive Creative Thesis that must be publicly presented. The exact nature of the student's project and presentation will be determined in consultation with the committee. The committee chair supervises the thesis. An oral examination by the faculty committee will take place in conjunction with the public presentation of the thesis and will focus on an evaluation of the project. The M.F.A. Media Arts electronic thesis document consists of a formal paper describing the Creative Thesis, its historical precedents, contemporary context, and theoretical underpinnings with embedded media files that document the public exhibition/screening. It must be filed with the SIUC Graduate School. The University reserves the right to retain a portfolio or samples of each student's work.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- A disciplined, professional arts-based practice in the media arts.
- A mastery in one or more practices in the media arts.
- To write about their own work and the works and theories of others from critical, historical, and aesthetic perspectives.
- An analytical understanding of contemporary media discourses.
- An understanding of creative practice and scholarly research methods.
- The ability to conduct independent scholarly and creative research.
- The ability to explain fundamental and advanced concepts in the field of media arts.

However, other graduate-level courses in the College of Arts and Media are allowed, as deemed appropriate by the faculty committee and Director of Graduate Studies. We also encourage students to work with their faculty advisors to seek out graduate-level coursework in other programs where different perspectives will enhance our students' learning.

Media Arts Faculty

Bates, Kyle, Assistant Professor, DMA, California Institute of the Arts; MFA, Mills College. Sound art and recording, electronic music and recording media, media arts, sound and video performance, film and video game scoring, neurodivergent experience, sonic metaphor, autofiction, installations, and experimental media.

Brooten, Lisa B., Associate Professor, Media Studies, Ph.D. Ohio University, 2003; 2002. Media and globalization, gender, alternative media, social movements, political communication, interpretive/critical research methods, ethnography.

Freivogel, William H., Professor, Media Law, J.D., Washington University Law School, 2001; 2006. Journalism, media law, public affairs and policy.

Han, Dong, Associate Professor, Ph.D., University of Illinois. Media and cultural industries, market relations in media sectors, media and communications research, television and new media, international communication.

Kapur, Jyotsna, Professor, Cinema Studies, Ph.D., Northwestern University, 1998; 1998. Feminist and Marxist analysis of media, globalization, children's film and consumer culture, documentary and ethnographic film, the German and Japanese new wave and Indian cinema.

Karan, Kavita, Professor, Advertising and Marketing, Ph.D., University of London, 1994; 2009. Political communication, advertising and market research, international communication, media and children, health communication.

Kreider, Wago, Associate Professor, Media Production, M.F.A., Rutgers University, 2002; 2006. Experimental and documentary media production, sound studies and production, cinematic histories, architectural and environmental studies.

Lescelius, Bridget, Associate Lecturer, M.B.A., Virginia Institute and State University, Pamplin College; Public Relations, M.S, Boston University. Advertising and marketing strategy, public relations, market research, communications planning, branding, client relations, tourism and economic development marketing, integrated marketing communications.

Lewison, Sarah, Associate Professor, Media Production, M.F.A., University of California, San Diego, 2001; 2007. Video art, social movements, environmental media, installation, live art and performance.

Malloy, Lisa, Assistant Professor, M.F.A., University of Illinois Chicago, 2025. Filmmaking and artistic practice, collaborative and place-based cinema, speculative narrative, archival media, sound and off-screen space, landscape and more-than-human worlds, documentary and ethnographic film, screenwriting and production.

Motyl, H. D., Associate Professor and Interim Dean, Media Production and Screenwriting, M.F.A., Northwestern University, 1990; 2007. Film/Video production and screen writing, narrative, gay representation.

Needham, Jay, Professor, Audio Production, M.F.A., California Institute of the Arts, 1989; 2003. Video, film, digital audio production, and electro-acoustic music.

O'Brien-Takahashi, Heather M., Assistant Professor, MFA, California Institute of the Arts. Expanded cinema and psychoanalysis, essay and experimental film, decoloniality, installation, video art, photography, third cinema, gender studies, and queer theory.

Padovani, Cinzia, Associate Professor, Media Studies, Ph.D. University of Colorado, 1999; 2005. Historical approaches to political economy, public service broad-casting, international communication, social movements and the media.

Sphar, Robert, Associate Professor and Interim Chair Department of Radio, Television, and Digital Media, Media Arts, M.F.A., Parsons School of Design, New York City, 1991; 2009. Explores the Internet using code-based automated art, live art performance, drawing, painting, sculpture and time-based media.

Thompson, Jan, Professor and Director of the School of Journalism and Advertising, Documentary Production, M.G.S., Roosevelt University, 1988; 2000. Video production, documentary, sports production.

Wall, James, Senior Lecturer, Media Management, M.A., B.S., Southern Illinois University, 2004, 1996. Electronic media marketing and management, broadcast sales and marketing, media management, broadcasting industry leadership, communication policy, community radio.

Zhou, Hong, Associate Professor, Cinema Production, M.F.A., York University, Toronto Canada, 2000; 2008. Film and video production, cinematography, Chinese cinema, surrealist cinema.

Last updated: 05/11/2026