Graduate Program in Visual Studies

2000 Humanities Gateway; 949-824-1124
http://www.humanities.uci.edu/visualstudies/
Lucas Hilderbrand, Director

The graduate program in Visual Studies, administered jointly by the faculties of the Department of Art History and the Department of Film and Media Studies, offers students the opportunity to pursue a doctorate in the cultural analysis of visual artifacts and experiences. Visual Studies synthesizes methodological insights from both component disciplines in order to examine the social practices of visual representation and visuality itself. The program leads to a Ph.D. degree in Visual Studies. While the program (in certain instances) grants an M.A. to students en route to their Ph.D., it admits only those students intending to complete their doctorate at UCI.

In addition, an emphasis in Visual Studies, described later in this section, is available to Ph.D. and M.F.A. students in all departments at UCI.

Admission

The program is open to students applying with either a bachelor’s or a master’s degree, and applicants must meet the general requirements for admission to graduate study at UCI. A recent sample of academic writing—such as a representative undergraduate paper, or the master’s thesis or a major research paper written at the master’s level—should be submitted with the application packet.

The program accepts applicants for admission for the fall quarter only. Additional information is available on the Visual Studies (http://www.humanities.uci.edu/visualstudies) website.

Language Requirements

All students are required to demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language and are strongly encouraged to develop competence in a second. Students consult with the Director and/or their principal advisor(s) to determine the appropriate language on which the student will be tested, based on their interests and program of study. Advisors, moreover, may require the demonstration of reading knowledge in additional languages according to the scholarly demands of the student’s specific field. All language requirements must be satisfied before students are awarded a master’s degree or, if they enter with an M.A., before they are advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.

Course Requirements

Beyond the core series (VIS STD 290A-VIS STD 290B-VIS STD 290C), students are required to complete an additional 11 courses for a total of 14 courses. Out of this total, at least 10 courses (including the core series and VIS STD 297) must be within the program in Visual Studies, and at least two courses are to be from outside the Visual Studies discipline. In order to establish a level of expertise in one conventionally defined discipline, students must take (among their 10 courses noted above), at least three courses that have a strong component of art history or at least three courses that have a strong component of film studies.

Students admitted with an M.A. in a related field may petition the Visual Studies Graduate Committee to have some of their course requirements waived and advance early; such petitions will be considered in close consultation with the primary advisor and on a case-by-case basis (though all students must take the core sequence). While students may accrue units for University Teaching (ART HIS 399 or FLM&MDA 399), Reading for the Preliminary Examination (VIS STD 298A), and Prospectus Research (VIS STD 298B) these do not count toward the required number of courses.

Master’s Paper and M.A. Degree

During their second year, students admitted without an M.A. in a related field will enroll in VIS STD 296 for the purpose of expanding and developing a seminar paper into a Master’s paper under the supervision of a faculty advisor. The Master’s paper is an essay of near-publication quality, approximately 30 pages in length. In addition to the advisor, two additional readers from the Visual Studies faculty will assess the Master’s paper and the student’s overall academic performance. The committee will assess whether or not the student has satisfied all requirements for the M.A. Those students who have satisfied the M.A. requirements, but whose committees assess their work as not meeting the standards for Ph.D. study, will receive a terminal M.A. degree.

Preliminary Examination

By the end of the first year, a student must reach an agreement with one of the program’s core faculty members to serve as principal advisor. The student will work with the principal advisor to plan completion of his or her program requirements and to select the faculty who will supervise examination fields. The examination committee will be constituted in accordance with UCI Senate and Visual Studies program policies.

The student and principal advisor define two fields, one major and one minor to be examined by the faculty. The fields should combine historical breadth and some variety in media. Over the course of two quarters, students prepare reading lists in close consultation with their principal advisor and field supervisor, and complete the reading of those lists. The examination normally takes place at the end of each of the two quarters of study.

The first part of the examination consists of a written component, in which the student is called upon to respond to questions posed in the two examination fields. The student’s written responses are assessed by the director of each exam reading as pass or fail; however, the responses are
circulated to all committee members. There is also an oral component to the preliminary exam process. The oral exam should be completed within the first 3 weeks of the quarter following their last written exam.

During their third year, students draft a prospectus that defines the scope, approach, and rationale for a proposed dissertation and begin research on the dissertation. At the end of the third year the student should defend the prospectus with the entire five-person committee. Based on the student’s written exam results, prospectus defense, and overall progress, the committee will determine whether the student has successfully passed the examination. Except in extraordinary circumstances, no student will be given more than two chances to pass any given section of the examination.

Advancement to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree is contingent upon successful completion of both the preliminary exams, subsequent approval of the prospectus by the dissertation committee, and satisfaction of all language requirements. The normative time for advancement to candidacy is three years.

Dissertation
The student and the principal advisor consult to determine the composition of a doctoral committee of three members including the principal advisor, which then must unanimously approve the prospectus before the student proceeds with the dissertation. The doctoral committee, on the basis of the candidate’s past academic performance and proposed dissertation topic, may require additional course work or other forms of preparation for the dissertation. The doctoral committee, under the direction of the principal advisor, supervises the student’s research program and ultimately approves the dissertation. The normative time for completion of the Ph.D. program is six years, and the maximum permitted is seven years.

Graduate Emphasis in Visual Studies
In addition to the doctoral program in Visual Studies described above, the Program in Visual Studies also offers an emphasis in Visual Studies available to Ph.D. and M.F.A. students in all departments at UCI. Satisfactory completion of the emphasis is certified by the Director of Visual Studies and is noted in the student's dossier.

Admission to the Program
Students must first be admitted to, or currently enrolled in, a Ph.D. or M.F.A. program at UCI. Applicants must submit to the Director of Visual Studies a summary of prior undergraduate and graduate course work related to Visual Studies, institutions attended, and major(s), together with a brief statement of purpose, including career objectives, areas of interest and research, record of research, teaching, professional accomplishments, and/or creative work. Lack of prior course work does not preclude admission, so long as a compelling statement of research interests, congruent with the emphasis, makes the case. Admission to the emphasis is on a rolling basis. The Director tracks students’ progress toward fulfillment of the emphasis requirements and meets with students to advise them on a program of study, as required.

Emphasis Requirements
Minimum course work for the graduate emphasis in Visual Studies consists of four courses: VIS STD 290C and three additional elective Visual Studies seminars.

For doctoral students, the qualifying examination and dissertation topic should incorporate Visual Studies as a central concern. One area of the Ph.D. qualifying examination should be on a Visual Studies topic, and one member of the candidate’s qualifying examination committee and dissertation committee is normally a member of the Visual Studies faculty. There are no requirements concerning qualifying examinations or theses for M.F.A. students.

Courses
VIS STD 290A. Art History: Theories and Methods. 4 Units.
Examines canonical texts and explores current directions in Art History.

VIS STD 290B. Film & Media Studies: Theories and Methods. 4 Units.
Examines canonical texts and explores current directions in Film and Media Studies.

VIS STD 290C. Visual Studies: Theories and Methods. 4 Units.
Examines canonical texts and explores current directions in Visual Studies.

VIS STD 294. Getty Consortium Seminar. 4 Units.
Special graduate seminar offered at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, involving faculty and graduate students from the five graduate programs in Art History or Visual Studies located in southern California (UCI, UCLA, UCR, UCSB, and USC).

Repeatability: Unlimited as topics vary.
VIS STD 295. Graduate Seminar in Visual Studies. 4 Units.
Studies in selected areas of Visual Studies. Topics addressed vary each quarter.

Repeatability: Unlimited as topics vary.

VIS STD 296. Directed Reading. 4 Units.
Directed reading on a specific topic agreed upon by student and instructor.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

VIS STD 297. Writing Practicum. 4 Units.
Offered winter quarter each year and taught in a workshop format. Assists students with the preparation and revision of the dissertation prospectus so that they may advance to candidacy.

Prerequisite: VIS STD 290A and VIS STD 290B and VIS STD 290C.

Grading Option: Satisfactory/unsatisfactory only.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

VIS STD 298A. Reading for the Preliminary Examination. 4-12 Units.

Grading Option: Satisfactory/unsatisfactory only.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

VIS STD 298B. Prospectus Research. 4-12 Units.
Research and writing of the dissertation prospectus.

Grading Option: Satisfactory/unsatisfactory only.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

VIS STD 299. Dissertation Research. 4-12 Units.
Research and writing of the dissertation.

Grading Option: Satisfactory/unsatisfactory only.

Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

Restriction: Graduate students only.