Graduate Program in Visual Studies

James Nisbet, Director
2000 Humanities Gateway
949-824-1124
http://www.humanities.uci.edu/visualstudies/

Overview

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. 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 on the Requirements tab, 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 website (http://www.humanities.uci.edu/visualstudies).

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 advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D.

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.

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; 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.

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.

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.
Prospectus and Advancement to Candidacy

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 written exams and prospectus with the entire five-person committee. Based on the student’s written exam results, prospectus, oral defense, and overall progress, the committee will determine whether the student has successfully advanced to candidacy. 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. 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.

After submitting a full dissertation to their committee members, students will be required to pass an oral dissertation defense with their three-person doctoral committee prior to filing their dissertation and graduating. The examination will be open to all members of the academic community. Faculty and graduate students of the school (or academic unit) and the Graduate Dean must be given appropriate written notice at least five days in advance of the date, time, and place of the examination.

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.

Faculty

Eyal Amiran, Ph.D. University of Virginia, Professor of Comparative Literature; Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (digital media theory, twentieth-century literature, narrative and textual theory, psychoanalysis, modern and postmodern intellectual history)

Catherine Benamou, Ph.D. New York University, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (Hispanophone and Lusophone cinema and television, U.S. Latino media, Orson Welles and maverick cinema, transnational flows, spectatorship, cinematic memory and cultures of preservation)

Roland Betancourt, Ph.D. Yale University, Assistant Professor of Art History; Visual Studies (Byzantine and Medieval Art, Critical Theory)

Bridget R. Cooks Cumbo, Ph.D. University of Rochester, Chair and Associate Professor of African American Studies; Art History; Culture and Theory; Visual Studies (African-American art, museum studies, feminist and post-colonial theory)

Sohail Daulatzai, Ph.D. University of Southern California, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; African American Studies; Visual Studies (African American studies, postcolonial theory, race, hip hop, Muslim diasporas)
Aglaya Glebova, Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, Assistant Professor of Art History; Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (history and theory of photography and film, European avant-garde, Russian and Soviet art)

Kristen L. Hatch, Ph.D. University of California, Los Angeles, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (American film history; stardom; histories of race, gender, and sexuality; childhood; melodrama)

James D. Herbert, Ph.D. Yale University, Professor of Art History; Visual Studies (modern European art)

Lucas Hilderbrand, Ph.D. New York University, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (Queer cultures and media, cultural studies, documentary, pornography, popular music, video art, histories of technology)

Victoria E. Johnson, Ph.D. University of Southern California, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; African American Studies; Culture and Theory; Visual Studies (television, critical race theory, sound, media policy, sport)

Kyung Hyun Kim, Ph.D. University of Southern California, Professor of Korean Culture; Asian American Studies; Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (East Asian cinema, modern Korea, critical theory)

Peter O. Krapp, Ph.D. University of California, Santa Barbara, Department Chair and Professor of Film and Media Studies; English; Informatics; Visual Studies (digital culture, media history, cultural memory)

Felicidad (Bliss) Lim, Ph.D. New York University, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (Philippine cinema, temporality, postcolonial and feminist film theory, transnational horror and the fantastic, film archives)

Catherine Liu, Ph.D. Yale University, Professor of Film and Media Studies; Comparative Literature; Visual Studies (Hou Hsiao-hsien, culture wars, Frankfurt School, historiography of critical theory/cultural studies, surveillance, cold war culture and neoliberalism)

Lyle Massey, Ph.D. University of California, Los Angeles, Associate Professor of Art History; Visual Studies (Italian Renaissance and early modern European art, gender theory, science studies)

Margaret Miles, Ph.D. Princeton University, Professor of Art History; Religious Studies; Visual Studies (Greek and Roman art, archaeology)

Glen M. Mimura, Ph.D. University of California, Santa Cruz, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (minoritarian and political film; media and race; popular culture and social movements)

James P. Nisbet, Ph.D. Stanford University, Director of the Graduate Program in Visual Studies and Associate Professor of Art History; Visual Studies (modern and contemporary art)

Alka Patel, Ph.D. Harvard University, Associate Professor of Art History; Religious Studies; Visual Studies (South Asian and Islamic art and architecture, historiographies, Islamic diasporas in Cuba)

Allison J. Perlman, Ph.D. University of Texas at Austin, Associate Professor of History; Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (history of broadcasting, American social movements, media law and policy, media activism, popular memory)

Amy Powell, Ph.D. Harvard University, Associate Professor of Art History; European Languages and Studies; Religious Studies; Visual Studies (Late medieval and early modern art of northern Europe, critical theory)

Fatimah Tobing Rony, Ph.D. Yale University, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; Culture and Theory; Visual Studies (ethnographic film, race and representation, film production)

Braxton Soderman, Ph.D. Brown University, Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (digital and new media studies, video games, networks, digital art and electronic literature)

Cécile Marie Whiting, Ph.D. Stanford University, Department Chair and Professor of Art History; Visual Studies (American art, 20th century visual culture)

Bert Winther-Tamaki, Ph.D. New York University, Professor of Art History; Asian American Studies; Visual Studies (modern Japanese art and visual culture, Asian American art, art and globalization)

Roberta Wue, Ph.D. New York University, Associate Professor of Art History; Visual Studies (modern Chinese art, photography, print culture)

**Affiliate Faculty**

M. Ackbar Abbas, M.Phil. University of Hong Kong, Professor of Comparative Literature; Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (Hong Kong culture and postcolonialism, visual culture, architecture and cinema, cultural theory, globalization)

Geoffrey C. Bowker, Ph.D. University of Melbourne, Professor of Informatics; Visual Studies (values in design, social studies of databases, science and technology studies)
Beryl F. Schlossman, Doctorate University of Paris 7, Ph.D. Johns Hopkins University, Professor of Comparative Literature; European Languages and Studies; Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (Modern literature, critical theory, film studies, psychoanalysis, the arts in society.)

Jared Charles Sexton, Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, Associate Professor of African American Studies; Culture and Theory; Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (race and sexuality, policing and imprisonment, contemporary U.S. cinema and political culture, multiracial coalition, critical theory)

Georges Y. Van Den Abbeele, Ph.D. Cornell University, Dean of the School of Humanities and Professor of Comparative Literature; English; European Languages and Studies; Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (French and European philosophical literature, travel narrative and tourism/migration studies, critical theory and aesthetics, francophone literature, history of cartography, media history and theory.)

Roxanne Varzi, Ph.D. Columbia University, Associate Professor of Anthropology; Culture and Theory; Film and Media Studies; Religious Studies; Visual Studies (Iran, media, war, visual anthropology, film studies, ethnographic and fiction writing)