

Visual Studies, Ph.D.

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.

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.

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 their 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.