



FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES STUDENT GUIDE 2024-25

**Department of Film & Media Studies
University of California, Irvine**

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<https://www.humanities.uci.edu/filmandmediastudies/undergraduate-students>

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What is Film and Media Studies?

Film and media studies focuses on the histories, theories, aesthetics, and cultural meanings of film, television, video games, digital platforms, and other media. We offer students strong liberal arts training to analyze and make sense of the complex and ever-evolving media landscape. Our award-winning faculty are engaged in innovative research on topics including video games, television, critical race studies, gender and sexuality studies, post-colonial studies, and other areas; our courses give our students access to this cutting-edge research.

Film and media studies is not a production program. Our major emphasizes the histories, theories, and analyses of film, television, video games, digital platforms, and other media. We offer a limited number of production and screenwriting courses to enhance the study of film and media.

For more information, visit humanities.uci.edu/filmandmediastudies/undergraduate-students

Getting started

Canvas is the campus learning platform with syllabi, reading PDFs, assignments, etc.:

<https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/>

UCI VPN (to access library and course materials off campus):

<https://www.oit.uci.edu/help/vpn/>

Who to ask when you have questions about...

Department office: 2000 Humanities Gateway, (949) 824-3532, filmandmedia@uci.edu

Department website: <https://www.humanities.uci.edu/filmandmediastudies/>

Registration, major requirements, internship opportunities, department events, and administrative issues or paperwork:

Sylvia Meza-Tallada, staff for our undergraduate major (smezatal@uci.edu)

Production equipment:

Nikki Normandia, tech staff for our major (nikkinor@uci.edu) or Trevor Jue, tech staff (tjjue@uci.edu)

Curricular issues, course substitution petitions, or FMS advising questions:

Allison Perlman, faculty director of undergrad major (aperlman@uci.edu)

Specific classes, independent studies, and career mentoring: your faculty

Questions about:

- School and University requirements beyond FMS
- Dropping or adding a class after Week 2
- Changing your grading option for a course
- Updates to your student record or DegreeWorks account
- Withdrawal from a class or from the whole term after Week 10

School of Humanities Office of Undergraduate Study, 143 Humanities Instructional Building (HIB), humanities.uci.edu/undergrad

FMS classes, requirements, and advising

Searchable guide to all classes offered on campus each quarter (with filters by department, by timeslot, by requirements filled, etc.): <https://www.reg.uci.edu/perl/WebSoc>

Quarterly list of FMS course descriptions:

<https://www.humanities.uci.edu/filmandmediastudies/undergraduate/courses.php>

FMS academic year planned course schedules:

<https://www.humanities.uci.edu/undergrad/academics/planned.php>

Guide to FMS requirements:

https://catalogue.uci.edu/schoolofhumanities/departmentoffilmandmediastudies/filmandmediastudies_ba/#requirementstext

FMS core course schedule

Note that some required courses are only offered once per year during the academic year, and that others are offered repeatedly. Some of these are also offered during Summer Session, but these offerings are not guaranteed

85: offered in fall and usually at least once more per year

86: offered in winter only

87: offered in spring and usually at least once more per year

101A: offered at minimum every other year

101B: offered at minimum every other year

101C: offered at minimum every other year

101D: offered at minimum every other year

101E: offered at minimum every other year

110: offered every quarter but limited enrollment

139W: offered every quarter but limited enrollment (no longer a major requirement but satisfies campuswide upper division writing requirement)



Beyond the Major

Be aware that there are requirements at the Major, School (Humanities), and University levels.
See requirements beyond the major here:

School requirements: <http://catalogue.uci.edu/schoolofhumanities/#schoolrequirements>

University Requirements:

<http://catalogue.uci.edu/informationforadmittedstudents/requirementsforabachelorsdegree/>

Track your progress toward degree at DegreeWorks:

<https://www.reg.uci.edu/access/student/degreeworks/>

Advising for requirements and progress toward degree:

Humanities Undergraduate Advising: <https://www.humanities.uci.edu/undergrad>

Resources tailored for **first-generation students**: <http://firstgen.due.uci.edu/>

Resources tailored for **transfer students**: <https://admissions.uci.edu/apply/transfer-students/related-majors.php>

Resources tailored for **international students**: <https://ic.uci.edu/>

Further resources tailored for **international students**: <https://ic.uci.edu/resource-pages/>

Campus resources for students

Health, wellness, and accommodations

Counseling Center: 949-824-6881 • counseling.uci.edu

Disability Services Center: disability.uci.edu

Note: Even if you are unsure if you have a disability you are encouraged to consult with a DSC counselor to see if you qualify for accommodations.

Wellness, Health, and Counseling services: whcs.uci.edu

Sexual health: studentwellness.uci.edu/topics/sexual-health

Sexual violence prevention and reporting: sexualviolence.uci.edu/resources.html

Sexual harassment and Title IX office: <https://www.oeod.uci.edu/sho/faq.php>

FRESH Basic Needs Hub and food pantry: basicneeds.uci.edu

Academic resources

Campus computer, email, and web support: <https://www.oit.uci.edu/undergrad/>

UCI Libraries: <https://www.lib.uci.edu/>

UCI Library Film & Media Studies resources: <https://guides.lib.uci.edu/film>

Humanities Studio Academic Resources and Technology: humanities.uci.edu/studio/

Multimedia Resources Center: lib.uci.edu/mrc

Learning and Academic Resources Center tutors and peer educators: larc.uci.edu

Writing Center: writingcenter.uci.edu

Pathways peer educators: soar.uci.edu/pathfinders

Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct (this office handles cases of plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty, among other conduct issues):

aisc.uci.edu

Student Success Initiatives: ssi.uci.edu

Student Outreach & Retention Center: soar.uci.edu

Study Abroad: studyabroad.uci.edu

Career Center: career.uci.edu

University of Texas Writing guides: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/handouts/>

Purdue Online Writing Lab: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

Culturally specific resources

Cross-Cultural Center: ccc.uci.edu

Veterans Services: veteran.uci.edu

DACA, Dreamers, and undocumented students: dreamers.uci.edu/about

Latinx Resource Center: <https://latinx.uci.edu/>

Center for Black Cultures, Resources, & Research: <https://blackcultures.uci.edu/>

Muslim Student Union: <https://www.msuuci.com/>

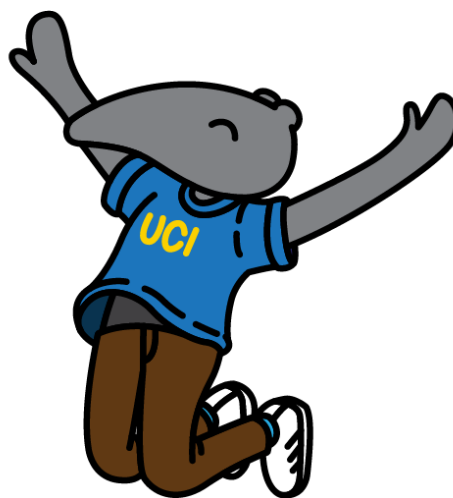
LGBT Resource Center: lgbtrc.uci.edu

Gender-Inclusive Restrooms on campus: <https://lgbtrc.uci.edu/campus-support-tab/gender-inclusive-restrooms.php>

Trans, Non-Binary, and trans resources:

<https://lgbtrc.uci.edu/resources/Resources%20to%20Support%20Transgender%20and%20Nonbinary%20Identities.php>

Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity: oeod.uci.edu



Meet your FMS faculty

Catherine Benamou, Professor (Hispanophone and Lusophone Cinema and Television; US Latinx Media; Orson Welles and Maverick Cinema; Transnational Flows; Spectatorship; Cinematic Memory and Cultures of Preservation) cbenamou@uci.edu

Sohail Daulatzai, Professor (African American Studies; Postcolonial and Decolonial Theory; Race, Hip Hop; Muslim Diasporas) sdaulatz@uci.edu

Desha Dauchan, Associate Professor (Media and Activism; African American Film; African Diaspora Cinema; Screenwriting and Film Production) ddauchan@uci.edu

Arcelia Gutiérrez, Assistant Professor (Latinx Media Studies, Media Activism, Race and Ethnicity, Media Policy, Industry Studies) arceliag@uci.edu

Bambi Haggins, Associate Professor (Black African American Comedy in Film; Television History; Digital Media and Performance; Comedy as Social and Political Discourse; African American Studies; American Studies) bhaggins@uci.edu

Kristen Hatch, Associate Professor (Classical Hollywood; American Film History; Stardom; Histories of Race, Gender, and Sexuality; Girlhood Studies) khatch@uci.edu

Lucas Hilderbrand, Professor (Queer Cultures and Media; Cultural Studies; Documentary; Pornography; Popular Music; Video Art; Histories of Technology) lucas.h@uci.edu

Victoria E. Johnson, Professor (Television, Critical Race Theory, Sound, Media Policy, Sport) v.e.johnson@uci.edu

Meryem Kamil, Assistant Professor (New Media Studies; Ethnic Studies; Postcolonial Studies; American Studies; Palestine Studies) mkamil@uci.edu

Peter Krapp, Professor (Media History; Digital Culture; Models and Simulations; Secret Communications and Cybernetics, cryptologic history; Cultural Memory and Media History, games and simulations, history of computing; Aesthetic Communication, title design, film music) krapp@uci.edu

André Keiji Kunigami, Assistant Professor (Brazilian cinema; Japanese cinema; Critical Race Theory; Film and Media Theory; Critical Theory; Silent Cinema; Decoloniality; Cinematic Embodiment; Asian-Latin American Studies) akunigam@uci.edu

Catherine Liu, Professor (Historical Materialism; New Taiwan Cinema; Hou Hsiao-hsien; Edward Yang; Sinophone Cinema; Political Economy of Film and Media Studies; Genre Film; Class and Contradiction; History and Theory of Trauma Studies; Trauma Media) catherine.liu@uci.edu

Glen Mimura, Associate Professor (Third Cinema; Asian American Film and Media; Native American and Indigenous Film and Media; the Western and Martial Arts Genres; Animals and Representation) gmimura@uci.edu

Philana Payton, Assistant Professor (Black Film and Television History; Black Popular Culture; Performance Studies; Classical Hollywood Stardom; Women and Gender Studies; Black Studies; Queer Studies) paytonp@uci.edu

Allison Perlman, Associate Professor (TV Studies; Media Policy and Law; Media Activism; Popular Memory; Public Media) aperlman@uci.edu

Bonnie (Bo) Ruberg, Professor (Digital Media; Game Studies; Technology; Queer Studies; LGBTQ Studies; Gender Studies; Video Games; Feminism; Digital Humanities) bruberg@uci.edu

Braxton Soderman, Associate Professor (Games Studies; Game History; Digital Media Studies; New Media Aesthetics) asoderma@uci.edu (on sabbatical Winter 2025)

FMS Lecturers:

Liz Cane, Lecturer (Narrative and Documentary Filmmaking; Screenwriting; Global Warming; Social Justice; Aging Process) ecane@uci.edu

Marie Cartier, Lecturer (Screenwriting; LGBTQ+ Film Studies; Gender and Women's Studies; Queer Studies/History; Religion; Ethnography) mcartier@uci.edu

Ricky Crano, Lecturer (Digital and Screen Cultures, Politics, and Aesthetics; Critical Data Studies; Science and Technology Studies; Intellectual History of Liberalism and Neoliberalism) rcrano@uci.edu

Edgar Davis, Lecturer (Editing) epdfilm@gmail.com

Lesley Elizondo, Lecturer (Production; Cinematography) elizondo@uci.edu

Aruna Ekanayake, Lecturer (Local and Global Cinemas; Decolonization; Media and Activism; Social Movements) aekeanyake@uci.edu

Andrew Kim, Lecturer (Editing; Sound) ackim3@uci.edu

Jon Oh, Lecturer (Editing) jonko@uci.edu

Mark Saraceni, Lecturer (Television Writing) msaraceni@uci.edu

Department leadership

Department Chair: Lucas Hilderbrand, lucas.h@uci.edu

Undergraduate Program Director: Allison Perlman, aperlman@uci.edu

Director of Production Curriculum: Desha Dauchan, ddauchan@uci.edu

Department Manager: Amy Fujitani, amy.fujitani@uci.edu

Office Hours

- Office hours are an opportunity to build mentoring relationships with faculty and to clarify and enrich concepts from class
 - Every faculty you take classes with has office hours. Some faculty may want you to schedule an appointment, and others may have open drop-in office hours. Typically faculty are not available to meet beyond their designated office hours unless you have made a scheduled appointment for another time.
 - Come to office hours prepared. If you have questions about an assignment, read through the prompt carefully in advance. If you have a question about a lecture, read through your notes so that you can pinpoint your areas of confusion; office hours are not intended for faculty to re-give entire lectures.
 - Office hours can be times for thinking beyond specific classes. You can come to discuss course plans, internships, research and creative projects, study abroad, grad school, and future career plans. You can also come to office hours to talk about ideas or about films and media that excite you. Faculty will likely have advice about preparing for your future or suggestions for other things to read and watch for enrichment.
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Building relationships and finding your way

- Part of the college experience is encountering new ideas and new challenges
 - Part of the college experience is learning to recognize what you don't already know and being open to learning more
 - Part of the college experience is learning how to problem-solve
 - Part of the college experience is building relationships with friends and classmates
 - Be generous in sharing your experiences, insights, study tips, and leads for campus and off-campus resources; you are building relationships that will sustain you through college and beyond
 - Part of the college experience is building relationships with faculty, in class and in office hours
 - If you are interested in making media, you can explore a range of opportunities, including
 - **FADA** (Film-Arts-Drama Alliance student organization: <https://www.fadauci.org/>)
 - **Zotfilm** and **Zotfest** (student filmmaking club and festival: <http://www.fadauci.com/zotfest.html>)
 - **Anteater TV**: <https://www.instagram.com/anteater.tv/>
 - **Cine-Collective**: <https://campusgroups.uci.edu/cinecollective/home/>
 - **KUCI Radio**: <https://kuci.org/wp/>
 - **New University newspaper**: <https://www.newuniversity.org/>
 - **Internships** (talk to Sylvia Meza-Tallada Smezatal@uci.edu for more information)
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Advice for success in classes

- Communicate with your instructor if you are struggling with an assignment or are feeling overwhelmed. One of the most common problems occurs when students stop communicating rather than reaching out to address their issues.

In classes:

- *Students are required to follow campus and instructor policies regarding wearing masks that fully cover students' mouths and noses when in class.*
 - Read the syllabus in full at the start of the term and then reread it before each day's specific class so that you can come prepared and know what each day's class will focus on. Different instructors may organize their syllabus and Canvas portal differently (some may use weekly modules while others may have a different format), so be sure you understand how to navigate the course.
 - Note that instructors may use multiple apps or kinds of assignments (such as discussion boards, quizzes, Perusall annotations, Google Drive, and others) that are hosted through the Canvas portal. You will need to familiarize yourself with all of the different types of assignments and applications.
 - Be prepared to participate in class by asking questions, answering questions, listening to and responding to classmates, and showing respect to everyone in the room
 - Do the reading all the way through before class. Just reading the first page or so won't give you full comprehension of the reading.
 - Show up and don't skip class. If you absolutely have to miss class, don't ask the professor if you "missed anything important." Every class session is substantive. Ask a classmate to share notes and go to office hours to discuss what you missed.
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- Take notes by hand on paper if possible. Studies show that students learn more this way. You will also be less distracted by social media, texting, and internet rabbit holes.
 - If you are accessing class reading PDFs during class, look at them on your laptop or tablet. Smart phones are too small for going through the readings.
 - Participation means active engagement in the class, by listening to the professor and your fellow students, answering questions, asking questions, contributing to discussions, and respecting everyone in the room.

Here are some guides for taking notes:

- <https://howtostudyincollege.com/how-to-get-good-grades/note-taking-strategies/>
- <https://collegeinfo geek.com/how-to-take-notes-in-college/>

Discussion sections and Teaching Assistants (TAs):

- Many FMS courses (85, 86, 87, 101A, 101B, 101C, 101D, 101E) will require students to enroll in discussion sections. Students are required to attend discussion sections each week; students must attend the section in which they enrolled.
 - Discussion sections can serve many crucial functions for a class: clarify difficult course material (inclusive of readings and screenings); solicit and address student questions and concerns; provide guidance and support for course assignments; review course material for exams; update students on course logistics and policies.
 - Discussion sections are led by Teaching Assistants (TAs). TAs typically are graduate students working on their PhDs.
 - TAs are key members of the teaching staff. In addition to leading discussion sections, they also grade student work.
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- If you have questions about your grade, your TA is the first person to speak to about it. Do not talk to your instructor about a grade until you already have met with your TA.

Course screenings:

- Screenings and clips are essential parts of class. These are not a “break” for you to go to the restroom or run out for food.
 - Screenings are carefully chosen to illustrate course concepts and themes. As you view, think about how what you are watching illuminates or complements course material.
 - Watching with other students is a vital part of screenings. Watching screenings with an audience changes your experience of it, as other people’s reactions may change or enhance your own interpretations. For films, class screenings approximate the ways people used to watch all films: in public with an audience on a big screen without interruptions.
 - Even if you have seen the screening before, you should view it again with your classmates. This is crucial to refresh your memory of the text and to see how other people respond to it.
 - If you get bored or do not like a screening, resist the urge to multitask or check out. Stick with the screening. You may get more interested as it progresses. And if not, reflecting on the reasons for your reaction can illuminate different expectations of media across time, culture, genre, medium, and so on.
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Course readings:

Books are generally available at the Hill (UCI's bookstore) in the student center or from online retailers; article PDFs are generally available through Canvas

When doing the reading, first, get an overview of the reading:

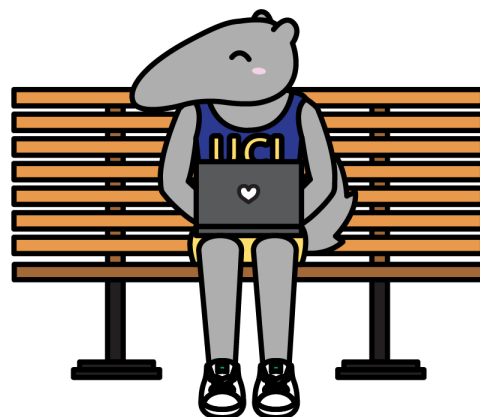
- What does the title suggest the chapter or article will be about?
- Read the introduction and conclusion carefully. What is the author's central point?
- Are there section headings? What is the central point of each section?
- What evidence is the author using (descriptions of specific media texts? Quotations from magazines and/or newspapers? Government data?, etc.)

Then read more carefully:

- If you don't understand a word, look it up in the dictionary.
- If you don't understand a passage or section, try to paraphrase it and ask the professor to help you make sense of it in class or office hours.
- Only underline main ideas; don't underline the supporting details unless you have a question about them or you find something particularly interesting that you'd like to remember.

Take notes on the readings:

- What was the main idea?
- Complete this sentence: The author examines _____ in order to understand _____.
- Who is the author in conversation with? Whom do they cite? What ideas are they challenging or building on?
- How does this reading relate to other things you have read and discussed in the class?
- Do you have any questions or ideas you would like to discuss in class?
- If you have a writing assignment coming up, what might be helpful for that assignment?



When doing the readings, reflect upon the following questions for yourself:

- What did I learn?
- What do I now think about differently?
- How does the text model form(s) of analysis and interpretation?
- What argument is the text making?
- How do I distinguish between the author's argument and the previous thinkers whom the author may be citing, building upon, and/or arguing against?
- What kind of evidence is used?
- What questions does the text raise?
- How can I apply the concepts this article offers to other examples or contexts?
- What questions do I have—conceptually and/or specifically for clarification?

Study tips

Keep in mind that the goals for classes and for assignments can be multi-faceted. There are different kinds of knowledge and skills, such as:

- recognizing and correctly using precise terminology (for instance, many of the formal terms in 85A)
- understanding concepts (not just memorizing facts or vocabulary but also being able to explain their significance and apply the concepts to other examples)
- original analysis and interpretation (using your own creative thinking to explain the potential meaning of a scene)



For remote learning (in the event that the campus suspends in-person classes for health safety reasons):

- You will need to have reliable internet access.
 - Determine whether each of your courses are being taught *synchronously* (with scheduled live and simultaneous video conferencing), *asynchronously* (with prerecorded lectures and assignments you can complete on your own schedule), or as a *mix* (some live, some on your own schedule).
 - Keep tabs of routine weekly deadlines and specific assignment deadlines for each of your courses. Keep in mind that asynchronous courses will likely still have weekly deadlines for completing coursework and assignments.
 - Check your email regularly for class updates and announcements.
 - Communicate with your instructor if you are having any troubles completing course assignments or staying on track. We work as hard as we can to find accommodations for all students, so please reach out as proactively as possible if you are struggling. We can only help you if we hear from you.
 - Find a dedicated work space/surface with as few distractions as possible—if possible.
 - Try to establish a routine schedule for your coursework to help balance school with the rest of your life. You will need time for self-care!
 - Take breaks from looking at the screen, use blue-blocking filters or glasses, and reduce white balance to minimize eye strain and headaches. And don't forget to stretch, to hydrate, and to eat!
 - View course screenings on as large of a screen as you can access; streaming course media on phones should be a last resort.
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- Use headphones to minimize distractions.
 - We understand that remote learning can feel impersonal. Take advantage of office hours to personalize your learning experience and to build relationships with your faculty.
 - Contact your professor and/or TA if you have questions about course content. If your class is being taught asynchronously, send an email, attend office hours, arrange a meeting, and/or post to the relevant course message board so that you can get clarity on anything that confuses you.
 - Engage with course discussion boards beyond minimum course requirements to build relationships with your classmates and to get the most out of classes.
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A note on “Imposter syndrome”

Imposter syndrome is when a person doubts their knowledge or abilities compared to their peers and feels like a fraud who doesn't deserve to be where they are. This is a common form of anxiety for students, especially first-generation students. Know that a lot of people are probably going through many of the same feelings you are. In fact, 70% of people feel imposter syndrome at some point in their lives.

Imposter syndrome can manifest in various ways, such as:

- Perfectionism: setting very high or even unrealistic expectations, where not meeting these goals can feel like a failure.
- Natural genius: those who have never felt academically inadequate before may struggle with the demands of new context.
- Superhuman: those who will push themselves to work harder than those around them to prove they belong.
- Soloists: needing to accomplish everything on their own and asking for help feels like failure.

Here are some strategies to combat this:

- Celebrate every success, no matter how small.
- Talk to your peers, they are probably feeling the same way.
- Embrace not knowing, you are first and foremost here to learn.
- Remember that everyone started somewhere, don't compare yourself to others.
- Read, read, read, become familiar with things you are unsure of. Write down terms you hear in classes and look them up.
- Take breaks. Sometimes taking a step back will help bring a new perspective to the problem.

Remember: if you're at UCI, you earned your admission! You deserve to be here, and we want you to do your best!

FAQs if you are considering graduate school

What is the difference between an MFA, an MA, and a PhD?

An MFA (Master of Fine Arts) is a graduate arts degree; in our field this is the degree one earns in practice-based film production and screenwriting programs.

An MA (Master of Arts) is an intermediary scholarly graduate degree; this typically reflects one or two years of study beyond the undergraduate BA. Coursework toward an MA typically involves a mix of core courses and electives, as well as a moderate-length thesis or comprehensive exam.

A Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) is an advanced scholarly graduate degree; this typically reflects five to seven years of study beyond the undergraduate BA. Some programs admit students with a BA who will earn an MA en route to the Ph.D.; some programs require an MA to apply to the Ph.D. This degree involves coursework, comprehensive and specialty exams, and a book-length original research project called a dissertation. Sometimes proficiency in one or more language beyond English is also required. This is the degree required for most college-level teaching positions.

I'm not sure what I want to do after I graduate from UCI. Is graduate school a good way to figure that out?

Graduate school is a major commitment of time, money, and labor, and it tends to amplify any anxieties students may have about their futures or their student debt. For all of these reasons, only students who are really directed and driven to go to graduate school are likely to thrive.

I want to work in the industry. Should I go to graduate school? What's the difference between graduate school for production versus for studies?

An MFA program can be a productive way to hone your craft and to make connections with future collaborators. But be advised that these programs often offer limited or no financial aid beyond loans, which makes them a costly investment.

An MA or Ph.D. typically will not open doors in the industry and may lead people in the industry perceive you as too smart or too removed from practical training.

I would like to be a teacher or professor. How do I become one?

To be a professor in film and media studies, you typically need to earn a Ph.D. from a top-tier program. (Community colleges do allow instructors to teach with an MA, but most tenure-track faculty are expected to have a Ph.D.) You will also likely need to publish original research, present your work at conferences, and make a name for yourself as early as graduate school. In terms of hiring, departments generally conduct searches for faculty with specific research areas but who can teach a broader range of courses. Campuses conduct national, even international searches for each faculty position, and each position can have dozens to hundreds of applicants. Note that universities do not typically hire their own graduate alumni. Most people hired to faculty jobs will have to relocate.

Be aware that the academic job market is extremely competitive. Any student considering graduate school for this track should go in with their eyes open.

The Chronicle of Higher Education has published numerous editorials cautioning prospective graduate students:

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Just-Dont-Go-Part-2/44786>

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Big-Lie-About-the-Life-of/63937/>

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/To-Apply-or-Not-to-Apply/139539/>

Although these articles are a bit dated, there has been more recent attention to the issue of MA programs that cost a lot of money, create significant debt for students, and that offer little promise of increased employability or pay.

My parents think I should go to graduate school, but I am not really sure what that involves or if that's a good idea. What should I know and consider?

Parents mean well, and there is often a belief that earning a degree will lead to better career opportunities and higher salaries. To a large extent, that correlation is true of undergraduate degrees.

However, the balance between time and potential student debt versus likelihood of professional security is different with graduate degrees in the Humanities. To be a K-12 teacher, you may need an MA. In certain other fields an MA may also boost your salary. An MBA or a professional degree may also be foundational for certain careers. But unless you have a clear career plan, we urge caution when considering graduate school in the Humanities. It may not be the best financial decision.



I'm a first-generation college student, so the idea of graduate school is a little mysterious to me. Who can I talk to about graduate school? Are there dedicated resources to help me succeed?

Talk to your faculty!

Some campuses do have programs specifically designed to help first-generation college students make the leap to graduate school. For instance, UCI's programs operate through DECADE (<https://grad.uci.edu/about-us/diversity/decade/index.php>).

UCI has additional first-generation student resources here: <http://firstgen.due.uci.edu/>

I am an international student interested in applying to graduate school in the US. What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Many of our international students apply to graduate school—and do so for a variety of reasons. Some students want to extend their time in the U.S. Some are pressured by their parents to earn an advanced American degree. Some are drawn to advanced and specialized study. Some expect to have more opportunities, more prestige, and higher salaries when they return for work in their home country. Graduate school offers the opportunity to experience living in a different place in the U.S. It also means more intensive classes and more demanding assignments. The advantage is that graduate school will really challenge you to do your best work—but the higher expectations of student work may be its primary disadvantage if you are not prepared for advanced study in English. Graduate school can also be a major financial challenge.

Are there reasons not to go to graduate school?

As we've indicated above, graduate school can become a major financial risk. Although some programs waive tuition and/or offer stipends, these typically do not pay a living wage. Most graduate students take out loans to subsidize their expenses during graduate school, and this will exacerbate student debt burdens--adding to any loans you have taken out for undergrad. If you are planning to pursue a career in academia or in the film and media industries, there are few guarantees of employment.

Many universities are committed to hiring under-represented faculty, including those who were first-generation college students; unfortunately, the economics and culture of higher education can still pose barriers.

Beyond financial considerations, graduate school can also be an incredibly difficult time emotionally, triggering anxiety, insecurity, and other issues.

You should not go to graduate school unless you are financially, academically, and emotionally prepared to succeed.

How much does graduate school cost? Is there financial aid? Will I be able to support myself (and my family)? Will I go into debt?

MFA programs typically charge full tuition and offer limited tuition remission or fellowships; most programs will offer student loans. Terminal MA programs (i.e., graduate programs that do not offer Ph.D.s) also generally charge full tuition.

Ph.D. programs generally offer tuition remission and funding packages that combine fellowships and TAs. Most students still end up taking out some loans. We do not recommend enrolling in a Ph.D. program (or MA-to-Ph.D. program) that requires students to pay tuition or that does not offer any funding.

Can I go to graduate school part time so that I can work? Or can I work while in graduate school?

Most graduate programs require full-time enrollment.

Some programs may offer you part-time positions as a teaching or research assistant. In addition, many students work additional part time jobs, though this can cut into your time to do school work. Only rarely are students able to balance a full-time job with the demands of graduate school.

Should I take a gap year before graduate school?

We often encourage students to take time between undergrad and graduate school to get some perspective, to mature, to save money, and to know why they are going to graduate school. But some students do succeed going directly into graduate school. Each student has their own trajectory.

What is the difference between FMS and Communications?

Film and media studies is based in the humanities and combines historical, theoretical, and textual interpretive approaches. Communications programs tend to use social science methods. However, some communications departments combine humanities and social science approaches.

What should I study if I want to go into marketing?

FMS does not primarily train students to go into marketing. Students interested in marketing are encouraged to supplement their FMS courses—which focus on interpreting media within their cultural and historical contexts—with classes in business, economics, and/or statistics.

Graduate programs in marketing will most commonly be offered through communications or business schools rather than through film and media studies.

How do I figure out where to apply?

Talk to your faculty about your research interests and career goals. This is a great reason to go to office hours. Note that most people attend graduate school at a different institution than where they went to undergrad.

For an academic degree in film and media studies, some of the leading programs include:

Brown University: <https://www.brown.edu/academics/modern-culture-and-media/graduate-program>

New York University (Cinema Studies: <https://tisch.nyu.edu/cinema-studies> or Media, Culture and Communication: <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/degree/phd-media-culture-and-communication>)

Northwestern University: <https://screencultures.northwestern.edu/>

University of Chicago: <https://cms.uchicago.edu/>

UC Berkeley: <https://filmmedia.berkeley.edu/>

UC Irvine: <https://www.humanities.uci.edu/filandmediastudies/phd>

UCLA: <http://www.tft.ucla.edu/programs/film-tv-digital-media-department/graduate-degrees/>

UC Santa Barbara: <https://www.filandmedia.ucsb.edu/academics/graduate-program/>

University of Michigan: <https://lsa.umich.edu/ftvm>

University of Southern California: <https://cinema.usc.edu/mediastudies/index.cfm>

University of Texas: <https://rtf.utexas.edu/#>

University of Wisconsin: <https://commarts.wisc.edu/graduate/film/>

Yale University: <https://filmstudies.yale.edu/graduate-program-film-and-media-studies>

For production programs, some of the leading programs include:

New York University: <https://tisch.nyu.edu/grad-film>

UCLA: <http://www.tft.ucla.edu/programs/film-tv-digital-media-department/graduate-degrees/>

University of Southern California: <https://cinema.usc.edu/>

What is involved in applying to graduate school?

Graduate school applications typically include a personal statement, a scholarly writing sample (for MA and PhD programs) or a creative portfolio (for MFA programs), a transcript, and three letters of recommendation. Many programs also require GRE scores. The deadlines are in fall for the following academic year. Admission to top programs is very competitive, with only a small minority of applicants accepted.

What does a successful personal statement look like?

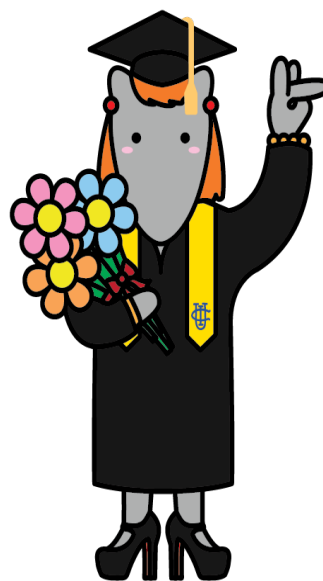
The UCs have two separate statements: one is a statement of purpose in which applicants explain their research plans and the other is a personal history statement in which students explain challenges they have overcome and/or experiences that have shaped them. Some programs combine these into one personal statement.

The most successful personal statements give a clear sense of vision in terms of conceiving of research interests or creative sensibility, as well as communicate your personality and perspective. You are constructing a narrative about yourself. If you do discuss challenges you encountered, articulating how you overcame them and explaining their relevance in how they inform your research or artistic commitments is generally effective. The more unique and specific your personal statement is, the more your application will stand out.

Whom should I ask for a letter of recommendation? When should I ask? What information should I give my recommenders?

You should approach faculty with whom you have worked closely and developed relationships. If you have only had a professor in a large lecture such as the 85s and 101s, it is difficult for faculty to write a letter that is specific enough.

Generally speaking, if you earned less than an A in a class, it would be hard for that professor to write you a strong letter unless there are extenuating circumstances. It's a good idea to visit office hours for each of your professors to build these relationships well before you graduate.



Generally speaking, letters from tenured or tenure-track faculty will be more effective for MA and PhD applications than from a TA or lecturer. If you are applying to an MFA program, you may want a mix of letters from faculty and from industry professionals, such as someone with whom you interned.

In terms of asking recommenders, you should try to give them at least a month's notice before the first deadline. You need to make sure you ask if the recommender is willing to write on your behalf before you list them as a reference. Recommenders will likely want to see your statement of purpose, a writing sample or work from the class you took with your recommender, and possibly more. Some faculty may have a questionnaire for you to fill out to give them more basis to write a more detailed and individualized letter. Faculty can also give you feedback on your statement of purpose.

The **UCI Career Pathways** office also has resources to help you prepare to apply to graduate school:

<https://career.uci.edu/undergraduate/apply-for-grad-school/>

https://career.uci.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/QT_ConsideringGradSchool.pdf
