SIUE Mass Communications
Graduate Program Guide & Handbook

Designed To Educate & Assist Our Prospective & Current Masters Candidates

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Program Overview

Introduction

The Department of Mass Communications offers a graduate program leading to the Master of Science degree in mass communications. Our MS is designed for students who wish to concentrate in Professional Media Practice (media message design, and media policy and management) or Media Studies (media and politics, media influence, media ethics, media literacy, transnational media, and media and representation). These concentration areas reflect the expertise of the department’s graduate faculty, and thus enable students to attain high levels of competence in pragmatic considerations in media, theoretical sophistication and research design. Recent graduates from the program have applied their degree professionally in television journalism, advertising, public relations, sports marketing, and public policy, as well as gone on to pursue law and doctoral degrees.

The Mass Communications’ MS program maintains an enrollment of about 30 students. This size assures small class sizes (normally about 8-15), personalized program advising from the Graduate Program Director based on your career goals, and well as a close working relationship with your graduate thesis/final project committee. Students typically begin courses in August at the beginning of the fall semester and can finish their program as early as the following fall. However, admission to the program is open all year and applications are assessed for acceptance as they arrive.

To assure that students will be able to apply the degree to their professional and intellectual goals, the program stresses a foundation in:

- Mass Communication Theory
- Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods of Mass Communication
- Design, Production and Application of Media Messages

These core foci of our curriculum are pivotal for both what practitioners in the field might need as well as what doctoral program selection committees look for when evaluating students for their programs. In short, these three core areas of curriculum concentration combine to foster:

a. Critically thinking;
b. The ability to communicate clearly, both written and oral;
c. Understanding the relations between theory and research, and its application;
d. The development of independent and original research;
e. The analysis of issues relevant to investigation.
At the present time the Mass Communications Department is able to mentor students who wish to specialize in:

- Media theory and practice
- Media cultural studies
- Media campaigns
- Media management
- Media law
- Media research methods
- Media ethics
- History of mass media
- Documentary media

Admission

In addition to the requirements of the Graduate School that are described in the Graduate Catalog, students applying to the graduate program in Mass Communications must have the following:

1. Undergraduate G.P.A. of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale)
2. Three letters of recommendation
3. Department of Mass Communications application
4. Statement of purpose

Students with undergraduate majors in fields other than mass communications will be considered for admission, provided that their statement of purpose, as contained in the Mass Communications Department Graduate Program Application, shows the relationship between the undergraduate major and MS program in mass communications. Students lacking sufficient undergraduate preparation (as determined by the Director of Graduate Studies), will be required to take up to three prerequisite courses (nine hours) that will not count toward the graduate degree. With permission from the Director of Graduate Studies, these courses may be taken concurrently with those toward the M.S. degree.

The Application Process

1. Applicants are responsible for meeting all requirements and deadlines specified in the SIUE Graduate Catalog
2. Students apply for admission to the Graduate School, submitting the Application for Admission to Graduate Study along with all supporting materials. The application is available from the SIUE Graduate School, Box 1046 Edwardsville, IL 62026, or by calling (618) 692-3160. The Application should specify Mass Communications as the area of study.
3. The prospective student must complete and submit the Mass Communications Department Graduate Program Application which can be downloaded on our website.
4. The following supporting materials are to be submitted directly to the Director of Graduate Study, Department of Mass Communications:
A. Mass Communications Graduate Program Application.
B. Three letters of recommendation from references familiar with the applicant’s academic or professional work.
C. Statement of purpose. An essay outlining the student’s interest in pursuing the graduate degree, as well as his or her professional goals.

5. Applicants are notified by the Graduate School of their acceptance to the program.

Following admission, each student should make an appointment with the Director of Graduate Studies for an initial advisement appointment. Please consult the material in the Advisement Information section of this handbook prior to meeting with the director.

**Program Requirements**

The minimum number of semester hours credit required to complete the Master of Science degree in Mass Communications is 30. Within the total program twelve hours of coursework must be completed at the 500 level. All students complete the following program:

1. Core (Required) Graduate Seminars Courses (9 hours):
   
   MC 500 Mass Communication Theory: Media Interrelationships
   MC 501 Mass Communication Research: The Social-Scientific Approach
   MC 502 Media Campaigns

2. Electives (15 hours, typically 5 courses)
   
   These courses are selected in consultation with the student’s graduate advisor. Up to 6 hours may be taken outside the Department of Mass Communications. Please consult the Mass Communications Graduate Handbook "Electives" section or the SIUE Graduate Catalog for current elective course offerings.

3. Thesis or Professional Project (6 hours): MC 598 or MC599.

**Application for Graduation Information**

No later than the first day of the term preceding the term in which the degree is expected, an "Application for Graduation" must be filed in the Graduation Department of the Office of Admissions and Records.

**Assistantships**

There are a limited number of competitive graduate assistantships, which pay approximately $385 and $770 per month during the fall and spring semesters for 10 and 20 hours per week, respectively. Assistantships carry a tuition waiver. If you are interested in applying for one of these opportunities, please fill our enclosed form along with the other application materials in this packet. Assistantships are competitive, and selections are generally made in early April for the following academic year.
Thesis Information

Thesis or Project?
To complete the Master’s degree, each student must develop and complete a thesis or project. Which option the student chooses is contingent upon their future goals, and is elaborated in conjunction with a graduate committee of three professors (four is optional). At least two of those committee members should be from the Department of Mass Communications, and the Committee Chair must be a Mass Communications graduate faculty member.

Thesis
A thesis involves identifying a problem, issue or trend within the field and investigating it by drawing on relevant theory and applying appropriate research procedures. This option is usually selected for those students wishing to extend their graduate studies (e.g. doctoral program) or that wish to pursue a research problem in depth.

Project
A project can be developed that blends theory, research methods, and a professional skill to an applied problem. For example, this might involve developing an information campaign for a hospital, an audio or video documentary about a media related issue, or a media literacy curriculum for a secondary school.

Six hours credit may be earned for the Thesis under MC599 or Professional Project under MC 598. Before beginning work, each student should be familiar with Guidelines for the Preparation of Thesis or Project, issued by the Graduate School.

Preparation For Thesis
The preparation of a thesis proposal involves the following steps:

Step 1:
Before beginning a proposal, students should discuss their topic area with the chairperson of their graduate committee in order to determine if the topic is appropriate, and to get helpful research advice.
Step 2:
Students should prepare a complete proposal and set up a proposal meeting with their committee. Thesis proposals normally include Sections I, II, and III of “A Brief Guide for the Preparation of A Research Study” (See Table of Contents). The chairperson of the graduate committee will then schedule a committee meeting to approve or disapprove the proposal. Students must register thesis and project titles with the Graduate School as soon as the proposal is approved.

Please note that the Graduate School requires that a title be registered two semesters prior to a student’s anticipated graduation.

Step 3:
Once the proposal has been accepted by the committee, students may complete their Thesis with the help and advice of their graduate advisors.

NOTE: Each Thesis must relate to the theories of mass communication taught in MC500 and use, as appropriate, the research methods taught in MC501.

Preparation For Professional Project
Six hours of credit may be earned for the project under MC598. The preparation of a project involves the following steps:

Step 1:
Before beginning a thesis proposal, students should discuss their topic area with the chairperson of their graduate committee in order to determine if the topic is appropriate, and to get helpful research advice.

Step 2:
A student should prepare a project proposal that includes: (1) An overview of the project; (2) A summary of relevant theory and research; (3) Overview of methodology to be used, and (4) A statement of the significance of the project.

Step 3:
Once the proposal is accepted, a student may complete his/her project with the help and advice of the graduate committee.

Summary
The finish project includes three sections:

Step 1.
Overview of the project including review of relevant research and statement of the significance of the project (essentially a more elaborate and revised version of the proposal, Step 2).
Step 2.
A lengthy statement describing how the communication theories studied in MC500 will guide the completion of the project, and how methodologies learned in MC 501 were applied.

Step 3.
The project itself.

It is the student's responsibility to provide a complete copy of the project for the department's permanent records.

NOTE: Each Professional Project must relate to the theories of mass communication taught in MC500 and use, as appropriate, the research methods taught in MC501.

A Brief Framework For Research Study

I. Introduction
In paragraph style, state the conditions, situations, facts, concepts, and experiences in which the research problem had its origin – the sequence of thought that led up to the problem.

The Problem

A. Statement of problem
B. Explanation – identify elements broadly
C. Basic assumptions
D. Hypothesis or guiding questions
E. Definitions of terms
F. Delimitations
G. Limitations
H. Purpose(s) or objective(s)

I. Justification or merits of the study

II. Theoretical Framework/Review of Related Literature

III. Procedures and Research Methodology
A. Nature and sources of bodies of evidence (data) needed to solve problem. This may include steps to identify and select sources, and to determine sample size and characteristics.

B. Research methodology for collecting and recording data – including specific steps to develop and pretest instruments and to record information.

C. Research procedures for processing data – analyzing, comparing, statistically treating, tabulating, charting, graphing, or whatever must be done to the data to produce the findings. Determining scope and adequacy. Applying inductive and deductive reasoning.

IV. Results of Study

A. Results of processing data

B. Drawing inferences, generalizations

C. Answers to guiding question; support, rejection of hypotheses

D. Additional observations

E. Conclusion

F. Limitations of Study

G. Recommendations of future study

V. Bibliography

Should include all works consulted in preparing the thesis, whatever or not they have been cited directly in the text. The referencing system and bibliography should correctly and consistently follow established practices of the discipline as are found in published style manuals. Only one system of referencing is to be used throughout, and should be accompanied by single bibliography or reference list. The Department of Mass Communications requires its graduate students to use the American Psychological Associations style (APA) for theses and projects.

VI. Appendices

Items to be included in appendix might consist of instruments, tests, statistical formulas, raw scores, or whatever else seems essential for the reader.
Putting a Masters Committee Together

To complete the Master’s degree, each student must develop and complete a thesis or project. Which option
the student chooses is contingent upon their future goals, and is elaborated in conjunction with a graduate
committee of three professors (four is optional).

Your graduate committee should consist of professors that you feel comfortable working with and whose
options and expertise you respect. Moreover, their areas of expertise should complement the topic area of
your thesis or project.

At least two of those committee members should be from the Department of Mass Communications, and
the Committee Chair must be a Mass Communications’ graduate faculty member.

Committee Chair

Selecting a proper Chair for your Thesis/Project Committee is very important. The “Chair” is the person with
whom you will work most closely, and will have the biggest impact on the final product (besides yourself).
Make sure to select someone who, A.) you have worked well with in the past; b.) has expertise in the area of
research that you plan to develop for your thesis; and c.) has formally agreed to chair your thesis.

Committee Members

In consultation with you Committee Chair, you will need to select at least two more committee members.
Again, at least one of these must be from within the Dept. of Mass Communications and both must have
Graduate Faculty status. These members should be selected to play a very specific role in the development
of your thesis or project, e.g., to sharpen your methodology, help you with a literature review, or help provide
connections for interviews/field work.

Outside Member

Students may pick one committee member from outside the discipline. These “outside” members are usually
selected because a student has had a course with that professor and found that their experience help them
to better identify and sharpen their research focus. Past outside members on Mass Communications’ MS
thesis have included professors from History, Political Science, Education, Sociology, Speech
Communication, English and Marketing.

Final Examination For Masters Thesis or Project

Once the advisor and the graduate committee is satisfied with quality of the student’s thesis or project, the
advisor schedules a final oral examination over the thesis or project and the coursework. A defense should
be scheduled at least two weeks prior to the defense date requested, and at least three weeks prior to finals week of a given semester.

**Completing the M.S. Degree in a Timely Manner**

Many students discover that if they have not identified a thesis/project topic prior to completing coursework, a lot of time passes before they make substantial progress on the thesis or project. Further, many students find that the process of preparing a proposal to be far more time consuming than they had imagined. (Indeed, a good proposal represents a substantial portion of the total thesis/project). With these considerations in mind, the faculty recommend the following:

1. Students should identify a thesis or project topic as early as possible, and certainly prior to completing coursework. Discussions in the graduate seminars frequently lead to viable topics.

Before coursework, or as soon as possible thereafter, each student should develop a complete thesis or project proposal, as discussed above, for presentation to the student’s graduate committee. If this is done in a timely manner, the time spent registered for thesis or project credit can actually be spent working on the thesis or project rather than searching for a topic.

2. The minimum time required for faculty members to read and critique a proposal or chapters of a thesis is about two weeks. Please keep this in mind when trying to meet Graduate School deadlines.

**Time Limit**

All requirements for the M.S. degree must be completed within six years.

**Continuing Registration**

Students who have completed six hours in MC599 or 598, and who are continuing to use the SIUE library, to meet with an advisor, or to continue work on thesis or projects, must register for UNIV 500 for every term which they are active.
Certificate Program in Media Literacy

Information
The Media Literacy Post-Baccalaureate Certificate is designed for teachers of secondary education who wish to address questions of media impact in their curriculum. The certificate provides these teachers with a foundation of theoretical, analytical and applied approaches to current trends in mass media. Issues such as the emergence of new technologies; growth of multinational media conglomerations and their impact on politics; questions of race, class, gender and representation; and the effects of media violence are focused on. In addition, certificate program students can also learn and/or sharpen media production skills through elective courses. This certificate should be particularly useful for teachers of high school courses such as, social studies, contemporary concerns, political science, English, media studies, etc.

Required Courses (9 hrs):

- MC 500 Media Interrelationships
- MC 503 Media Critical Theory
- MC 504 Social Responsibility in the Media

How To Apply
Thank you for your interest in our Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Media Literacy at Southern Illinois University. We are very excited about offering the first and only one in the area!

The mission of our program is to prepare educators with ways to integrate media-related issues into the classroom. Our curriculum is designed to foster analytical thinking and a sensitive understanding of the interrelationships between technological, economic, cultural, ethical and political issues of media and society.

The program allows certificate students to take a wide variety of media theory and skill-based courses. The program's structure is designed with one basic premise: by teaching people how to critically analyze and learn to create their own messages (in print, audio, video and multimedia), educators can foster sophisticated and active citizens rather than merely more consumers for our media saturated society.

To make this experience accessible for educators and other working professionals, we offer many night courses. We also offer many courses during the summer.
To apply to our program, please provide:

1. Statement of Interest (a page or so about yourself and why you’re interested in our Media Literacy pro-
gram)

2. Three letters of recommendation

3. Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program Application

4. Official Transcripts

5. SIUE’s Graduate Admission Application

Send items 1-3 to the Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Mass Communications. Send items 4 & 5 to the University’s Graduate School.
Additional Program Information

Initial Advisement
Initial advisement is handled by the Director of Graduate Studies. After the Graduate Committee is appointed (see below), the chairperson of that committee becomes the advisor.

Undergraduate Program
The Director of Graduate Studies will examine each student’s transcripts to determine if that student has satisfactorily completed the minimum coursework in mass communications required by the department. Students might be asked to provide detailed information about courses taken in order for the transcript to be adequately evaluated. Students with insufficient preparation may be required to take up to three undergraduate level courses (nine hours) as prerequisites, which will not count toward the graduate degree.

Seminars
MC500, which covers theories of mass communications, MC501, which covers research methods, and MC502, which is a media campaigns course, are the core of the M.S. program. These courses must be taken at the beginning of each student’s program, typically in the first and second semester of the coursework. The seminars may be taken in any order, but taking MC 500 before MC 501 is recommended. Virtually all of the program will relate to these three primary courses. Students who must drop a course should not select MC500, MC501 or MC 502 to drop.

Electives
Electives should be related in a meaningful way to the student’s interests and professional future. Each student should develop a plan for these electives prior to the initial advisement appointment.

500-Level Courses
Within the student’s total program of study for the M.S. degree, 12 hours of course work must be at the 500 level.
Advanced Independent Study Courses

Independent study courses (MC590 and 595) are to be used only for advanced independent research projects and after students have completed their core requirements. Students wishing to take MC590 or 595 must have an Independent Study/Readings/Thesis Form accepted by a faculty member prior to registering for the course. In no case are independent study courses to be substituted for regular required coursework. In some unusual cases, MC590 and 595 will be used for students doing advanced graduate work while also attending an undergraduate course. Such arrangements must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

Funding and Financial Aid

SIUE provides a number of funding programs for graduate coursework and completion of the Master's thesis or project. Please consult the SIUE main webpage at [www.siue.edu](http://www.siue.edu) or just click our links to Financial Aid on the Mass Comm website. Information regarding Graduate Assistantships in the Department of Mass Communications is available from the director of graduate studies.