

MA in Material Culture and Public Humanities

Standards and Policies Governing the MA Program in Material Culture and Public Humanities

Approved by the Material Culture and Public Humanities Steering Committee on October 15, 2013

The policies in this manual are intended to govern the graduate educational experience of all students enrolled in the MA program in Material Culture and Public Humanities.

Questions about standards and policies should be directed to either Dr. Elizabeth C. Fine, Professor, Department of Religion and Culture (bfine@vt.edu) or Dr. Bailey Van Hook, Professor, School of Visual Arts (vanhook@vt.edu)

The graduate program in Material Culture and Public Humanities is governed by the policies stated in the *Graduate Policies and Procedures and Course Catalogue of Virginia Tech* as well as those outlined here. The information in this document is intended only to supplement, not to replace general requirements established by the Graduate School. Copies of *Graduate Policies and Procedures and Course Catalog of Virginia Tech* can be obtained at the Graduate School's website: http://graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/

It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the rules and procedures in both documents.

I. Statement of Non-Discrimination

The MA program in Material Culture and Public Humanities does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, or political affiliation.

The University is subject to titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Vietnam Era Veteran Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, Federal Executive Order 112146, Governor Allen's State Executive Order Number Two, and all other rules and regulations that are applicable. Anyone having questions concerning any of those regulations should contact the [Office for Equal Opportunity](http://www.vt.edu/equal_opportunity.php) (http://www.vt.edu/equal_opportunity.php).

II. Faculty Roles and Responsibilities

The graduate program in Material Culture and Public Humanities is administered by the Director(s) and the Steering Committee of the Graduate program in Material Culture and Public Humanities.

The Steering Committee consists of two representatives of the Department of Religion and Culture, two from the School of Visual Arts, and one from the Department of History, chosen by their respective departments/schools. It is assumed that the Director(s) of the Graduate Program will be one of the representatives.

The Director(s) and the Steering Committee of the Graduate Program report to the Stakeholders Committee, which is comprised of the Deans of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, the head of the Department of Religion and Culture, the Director of the School of Visual Arts, the Director(s) of the graduate program in Material Culture and Public Humanities, and a representative of the Department of History.

The Administrative Assistant (Coordinator) for the graduate program in Material Culture and Public Humanities also serves in the same capacity for the Department of Religion and Culture. When needed s/he is assisted by the Administrative Assistant in the School of Visual Arts. The coordinator assists the Director(s) of the graduate program and advises students about department and graduate school procedures and the requirements for graduation. She/he maintains current and past student records and organizes applications for admissions.

Members of the graduate faculty who are listed in the Graduate School Catalog for the Degree are eligible to serve as directors and members of thesis committees.

III. Admissions Procedures and Requirements

The Steering Committee advises the Director(s) of the Graduate Program on admissions by reviewing applications and making recommendations for admission and for graduate assistantship support. While an incoming student may ideally have prior preparation in some area allied with material culture and/or public humanities, we consider the qualifications and career objectives of all applicants individually regardless of academic background. We base admissions decisions on a candidate's prior academic work, statement of purpose, writing sample, recommendations from instructors and/or appropriate colleagues or supervisors, scores on GRE examinations, professional experience, and other supplementary material as appropriate. International students whose degree programs were not conducted in English must also submit TOEFL scores.

For admission to the graduate program in Material Culture and Public Humanities applicants must hold a BA or BS from an accredited college or university and be accepted by the Graduate School and the Steering Committee.

The graduate program in Material Culture and Public Humanities is designed primarily for full-time students who begin their studies in the fall semester. Part-time students may be admitted, however, and applicants interested in part-time status should contact the program's Director of Graduate Studies before applying.

Admission to the program requires applicants to have at least a 3.0 undergraduate GPA, with a 3.5 in major GPA and to have taken the GRE exams. GRE scores should be at least at the 60th percentile on the Verbal sub-test and 40th percentile on the Quantitative sub-test.

If the applicant's native language is not English, a TOEFL score of 600 (paper) or 250 (computer-based) or 80 (IBT) is required. For more information on the TOEFL exam, see www.ets.org.

The Steering Committee for the graduate program in Material Culture and Public Humanities requires that *all applicants* supply the following materials:

- Application for Graduate Study (may be completed online at <https://www.applyweb.com/apply/vtechg/index.html>).
- Official academic transcripts from all undergraduate institutions that the student has attended.
- Three letters of recommendation (use the form provided by the Graduate School).
- GRE scores (Graduate Record Examinations). The GRE should be taken prior to **December 15** to ensure that the scores reach the Graduate School by the application deadline. For more information, see: <http://www.gre.org/>.
- One writing sample in English, normally a research paper or a 7-10 page analytical essay.

A statement of interest in the program and any other items required by the Graduate School.

We recommend that students enter the program in the fall semester. The deadline for applications for fall semester is February 15 to receive consideration for financial aid. Every effort will be made to notify all applicants of their status by April 1. Final application deadline is April 15. We will consider students wishing to enroll in the spring semester on a rolling admissions basis when possible. Funding for assistantships, however, is based on the normal (fall-spring) academic year.

IV. Assistantships and Other Financial Aid

The most common form of financial aid is the Graduate Assistantship, but other forms may be available through scholarships, federal work-study programs, university loans, and budget tuition plans. For more information on financial aid for graduate study at Virginia Tech, please see:

http://graduateschool.vt.edu/financial/funding_opp/index.html

The initial decision to offer a graduate assistantship to an incoming student is based on a competitive, academic ranking of applicants. For continued funding, students are required to maintain a 3.0 GPA, make satisfactory progress toward finishing the MA, and receive satisfactory evaluations for the first-year assistantship assignments and on the MA Annual Evaluation. The evaluations are part of the annual review of student progress; they are discussed below in Section X. Annual Evaluations.

V. Assistantship Duties

Assistantships are not fellowships, but rather reimbursement for work done for the program. Duties are specific to the Department of Religion and Culture or the School of Visual Arts, depending on where the student is assigned. Other graduate assistantships may come from non-academic offices or departments across the university. In that case, the student would report to the appropriate administrator.

The Graduate Program offers students two types of assistantships:

Most students are classified as **Graduate Assistants (GAs)**; they are expected to work closely with the faculty member or administrator(s) to whom they are assigned and to be responsible in carrying out their duties. Faculty who request graduate assistants for their classes are expected to provide guidance in the performance of duties assigned to the student.

A full assistantship requires a student to work for 20 hours per week on average. Hours spent attending undergraduate classes in order to fulfill GA tasks are included in the 20 hours/week workload. Graduate Assistants should expect that some weeks will require fewer hours and other weeks more hours. The faculty member to whom the student is assigned is expected to provide a schedule of assignments and deadlines and explicit directions for grading expectations. The student is expected to keep a log of the hours worked during each week of the semester.

Graduate assistants in the MA program in Material Culture and Public Humanities are not required to work over school breaks. However, students with assistantships must be available until the day grades are due (through the end of the final exam period) each semester.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) also provide academic program support under the supervision of a faculty member by being assigned full responsibility for teaching an undergraduate course. These awards are limited to students who have completed 18 hours of graduate-level course work in their teaching disciplines. Students interested in teaching should contact the program director as soon as possible to develop coursework and a research schedule that complements the teaching assignment.

VI. Orientation

At the beginning of the fall semester the Director(s) of the graduate program in Material Culture and Public Humanities hold one or more orientation meetings for all new graduate students. At these sessions, students are provided general information about the following: requirements and procedures; plans of study; office procedures and privileges; advising; thesis preparation; timetables for meeting degree requirements; and information about opportunities for professional development available to students in the program. Attending departmental orientation programs is mandatory for all incoming students.

Students who receive GTA funding are also required to enroll in and attend the GTA Workshop coordinated by the Graduate School (GRAD 5004, 1 cr., P/F) in the first fall semester of their appointment. Other students who hope to qualify for an assistantship in the future should also take the workshop in their first semester. The workshop consists of Phase I meetings during the week before classes begin in August and two sessions from the Phase II offerings during fall semester.

All new students must meet individually with the Director(s) of the Graduate Program prior to the first semester to discuss the student's particular needs and graduate career plans.

VII. Coursework for Non-Thesis and Thesis Options

The Master of Arts in Material Culture and Public Humanities degree (non-thesis option) requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of course credits that include the following:

- 3 hours of ART/HUM 5104: Historical and Theoretical Frameworks
in Material Culture and Public Humanities
- 3 hours of ART/HUM 5204: Research Methods in Material Culture and Public
Humanities
- 3 hours of ART/HUM 5304: Material Culture and Humanities
in the Public Sphere
- 3 hours of ART 5984: Exhibition Design and Display

3 hours of either

ITDS 5124: Preservation of Historic Interiors OR one of the following:
 HIST 5424: Public History
 HIST 5434: Oral History Methods
 HIST 5444: Digital History Methods
 HIST 5454: Topics in Public History

3 hours of either

ART 5584: Topics in Material Culture
 HUM 5584: Topics in Public Humanities

3 hours of either

COMM 5524: Organizational Communication
 COMM 5534: Crisis and Issue Management
 COMM 5564: Persuasion and Social Influence

3 hours of electives from the list of electives approved by the Steering Committee of the MA in Material Culture and Public Humanities
 Students are encouraged to explore course offerings in other disciplines; courses selected from other departments should advance the student's research interests

6 credits of ART/HUM 5904: Project and Report

This will take the form of an internship or practicum and should be completed during the last semester of the student's academic program. A committee consisting of at least two faculty allied with the degree in consultations with a site supervisor from the participating institution or organization will supervise the project, mentor the student, and evaluate his/her progress (a list of allied faculty may be found in the program entry in the Graduate catalogue). It will receive a EQ (earns credit) or NG (does not earn credit). See **IX Progress toward the degree.**

The Master of Arts in Material Culture and Public Humanities degree (thesis option) requires a minimum of 36 semester hours of course credits that include all of the above 30 credits required for the non-thesis option, plus 6 hours of ART/HUM 5994 Research and Thesis. See **IX Progress toward the degree.**

NOTE: The Graduate School permits MA students to submit no more than 6 credit-hours of Independent Study or Special Study course (ART/HUM 5974 AND ART/HUM 5984) as part of a Plan of Study.

Graduate Assistants and Graduate Teaching Assistants must be enrolled in 12 credit hours each semester to maintain their assistantships.

VIII. The Graduate Certificate in Material Culture and Public Humanities

The Department of Religion and Culture is currently (2013-2014) applying for approval for a graduate certificate in Material Culture and Public Humanities.

When approved, students in other graduate programs at Virginia Tech can elect to pursue a specialized 9-credit hour Graduate Certificate in Material Culture and Public Humanities. Certificate requirements will count toward course requirements for the master's degree in Material Culture and Public Humanities, and can be completed during the 2-year full-time MA program.

The 9 credits for the Graduate Certificate are distributed as follows:

Required:

- ART/HUM 5204: Research Methods in Material Culture and Public Humanities (3H, 3C)
- HUM 5304: Material Culture and Humanities in the Public Sphere (3H, 3C)

One elective chosen from the following courses:

- ART 5584: Topics in Material Culture (3H, 3C)
- HUM 5584: Topics in Public Humanities (3H, 3C)
- ITDS 5124: Preservation of Historic Interiors (3H, 3C)
- HIST 5424: Public History (3H, 3C)

IX. Progress Toward the Degree

Students are normally expected to complete the degree requirements for the MA in four semesters. Each semester the Graduate School publishes a calendar of deadlines for filing the paperwork required for graduation (http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/dates_deadlines/commencement_deadlines.html). Students expecting to graduate in a given semester must adhere to the deadlines set by the Graduate School.

A non-thesis degree requires that students complete ART/HUM 5904: Project and Report, a practicum at a cultural institution such as a museum or historical society or a non-profit cultural institution. The report (at least 25 pages) represents an analysis of the student's practicum experience, outlining duties performed, responsibilities taken, and contributions to the further growth (i.e. educational, curatorial, reputation) of the institution. The report should include a review of relevant literature and a cogent discussion of the issues involved in the student's practicum experience as they relate to both personal goals and the goals of the practicum institution. The student will have a Project and Report committee consisting of two faculty members and the site supervisor. The Project and Report

gives the student an opportunity to synthesize and apply concepts acquired in the degree program. The student will present his or her report orally, as well as submitting it in writing, to his or her Project and Report committee, who will evaluate it. It will receive either a EQ (receives credit) or NG (does not receive credit).

Thesis Option

The Graduate Program in Material Culture and Public Humanities expects that most students pursuing the program who intend to apply for further graduate study at the doctoral level will write a thesis to complete the degree requirements. The thesis is written under the direction of a faculty advisor and a committee of least two additional faculty members. The thesis represents a piece of independent research based on primary sources guided by the existing literature in the field.

By the end of the second semester of graduate work, each student pursuing the 36-credit thesis option should identify a research topic and request a faculty member to serve as the research adviser.

At the start of the third semester, all students pursuing the thesis option should submit a draft thesis proposal to the Steering Committee. This submission, serves as a student's request to complete the thesis option. The review usually takes place in early October . (See Section X: Annual Evaluations)

At this time the Steering Committee must approve the student's request to write a thesis. If recommending the thesis option, the Steering Committee, in consultation with the student, will also nominate at least two additional members for the thesis committee. It is the student's responsibility to contact these members, request their service as committee members, and convene a committee meeting before the end of the semester.

Students writing a thesis must defend their thesis proposal. This defense usually takes place in November of the student's second year in the program.

The completed thesis is normally defended during the student's last semester but the student may take additional credits of ART/HUM Research and Thesis in order to complete it.

The thesis is archived as a pdf in the University Libraries. The student is able to choose whether the document is released immediately worldwide, released to VT pid/passwords or secured from all for the period of 1 year then released worldwide.

Plan of Study

The Graduate School requires all students to complete a Plan of Study, which lists the classes the student has taken and the classes that still need to be taken prior to graduation. If the student is planning the thesis option, the Plan of Study also lists the student's thesis committee.

With guidance from their research advisors and the Director(s) of Graduate Studies, students will complete the Plan of Study by the beginning of the second semester of the first year.

At the beginning of the second year, each student will meet with the Director(s) of the MA program to finalize his/her Plan of Study, which must then be submitted to the Graduate School.

Once the Plan of Study has been submitted to the Graduate School, any changes in classes or research hours must be reported to the Director(s) of the MA Program. A change in composition of the thesis committee or the Plan of Study also requires a formal request that must be processed through the Graduate School. Forms for these procedures may be found at: <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/forms/index.html>.

It is the student's responsibility to follow the Plan of Study as submitted, to seek approval for any changes that are necessary, and to file the necessary paperwork in a timely manner. **The Graduate School will not clear you for graduation unless your Plan of Study matches your coursework and has been approved.**

Attendance at Graduation Ceremony

The MA Program in Material Culture awards Master's degrees at its May graduation ceremony. Students completing requirements in Summer, Fall, or Spring semester of the year are expected to attend the department graduation (held in May), whenever possible.

X. Student Learning Outcomes, Program Assessment, Annual Evaluations and Exit Assessments

Learning Outcomes and Program Assessment

Students will be assessed in this program using various methods. Successful completion of course requirements such as graded exams, papers, and projects will include the completion of a methodology-related case study documenting the social, political, and historical context for a selected object or issue, completion of practicum experience as evaluated by the on-site supervisor as well as a practicum report, and the public presentation of issues engaged as part of practicum, coursework, outreach activities, or defense of master's thesis (if applicable).

Student learning outcomes within the M.A. in Material Culture and Public Humanities are organized around three broad outcomes: inquiry and analysis, written and oral communication, and integration. Upon completion of this degree, the graduate will be able to:

- analyze, authenticate, and categorize pertinent objects according to their social, political, and historical contexts
- contribute to scholarship in material culture and public humanities using a variety of methods, protocols, media, and research tools
- communicate effectively using critical vocabularies appropriate to material culture and public humanities in both written and oral modalities
- conceptualize and deliver information on material culture and public humanities by way of organizing exhibitions, managing collections, and/or grant writing and other forms of education and advocacy
- connect relevant experiences from practicum to academic knowledge
- identify possible connections in material culture and public humanities across different disciplinary lenses and contexts (e.g., social, political, and historical)
- build on prior academic and practical experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts

Graduates of the M.A. in Material Culture and Public Humanities will possess the following relevant job-related skills:

- build and maintain effective working relationships with others (including teams)
- design, organize and plan exhibitions, utilizing relevant computer software as needed
- engage in effective writing and public speaking
- understand and apply principles of ethics to their job-related settings (e.g., museums; historic preservation societies; non-profit organizations)

Students will develop an e-portfolio to document their experiences, major projects and reports, and integration of their learning (<http://eportfolio.vt.edu/>). Review of ePortfolios and evaluation of progress of individual students is monitored by the Graduate School through the approved plan of study and regular reports from program faculty.

Program Assessment

In addition, the program faculty will conduct an early review in year three after program initiation, following completion of the first cohort, to determine what changes might be beneficial. The program will participate in documenting and monitoring learning outcomes through the WEAVE Online program (supported by the Office of Academic Assessment), which includes required elements of continuous improvement as part of academic program assessment. The program

faculty will develop rubrics to evaluate the quality of the work students complete for programmatic assessment purposes.

The interim review will consider at least the following:

- How well did students achieve the proposed learning outcomes anticipated in the program design?
- Quality and appropriateness of internship placements during the program and job placements or admission to doctoral programs upon graduation.
- General program information, including number and quality of applications, and student performance in classes, and progression through the program.
- Faculty review of student e-portfolios
- Satisfaction survey of first cohort graduates.

The faculty will prepare a report concerning the interim assessment, including recommendations for changes if appropriate, and post the report as part of the program assessment documentation in Weave Online. The M.A. program will also be reviewed within the Graduate School's periodic Graduate Program Review process. Virginia Tech has implemented an ongoing academic program review process (APR) whereby all formally authorized degree programs are scheduled for a comprehensive review at least once every seven years (the next APR is 2019 for this degree program). Self-study findings from the APR process will provide evidence of the quality and viability of the M.A. in Material Culture and Public Humanities degree program and will aid decision-making processes regarding program improvement and modification. APR requires a thorough, reflective examination of the M.A. degree program and educational practices to assess its status and progress and identify future directions, needs and priorities. Program faculty will develop and submit a portfolio and action plan, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to effectively assess progress and make program improvements. An Internal Review Team consisting of two to three university faculty members may also be selected at the discretion of the dean of the graduate school for further evaluation of the M.A. program portfolio. The director for graduate program review will assess the APR portfolio and/or external report(s) submitted for completeness, quality, and effectiveness and will make recommendations for further action.

Benchmarks of Success

Degree program success by the target year will be measured by the following benchmarks:

- attainment and maintenance of enrollments as projected in this proposal;
- a 75% completion rate within three years for students enrolled in the program;
- an 80% success rate for admission to doctoral programs by those students who apply within two years following completion of the M.A.;

- degree-related employment for 75% of graduates within two years for those who seek employment;
- a 75% satisfaction rate for internship and practicum sponsors and subsequent employers of graduates

In the event that the program does not meet one or more of the above benchmarks, the core faculty and the board of directors will meet to examine admission criteria, course requirements and performance metrics, and feedback from internship supervisors to better align the program with students' abilities, program needs, and marketplace demands.

Annual Review of First-Year Student Progress

The MA Program in Material Culture and Public Humanities undertakes an annual evaluation of student progress toward the end of the student's second semester of graduate work. The program uses the "Annual Review of Student Progress" form for its evaluation, with parts completed by the student, the Steering Committee, and the student's faculty (thesis or project and report) advisor.

Students submit the form with their intention to complete a practicum (ART/HUM 5904: Project and Report) at an approved institution (both thesis and non thesis options) and a draft research proposal (thesis option) by the beginning of their third semester. The Steering Committee reviews both the proposal and the student's self evaluation. Additional comments may be solicited from faculty members with whom the student has taken courses. The Steering Committee adds comments and the evaluation is forwarded to the student's research advisor. The Director(s) will make the evaluation form available to the thesis director as soon as the Steering Committee meets to complete its portion of the evaluation. After the initial thesis committee meeting, the thesis advisor should complete his/her portion of the Annual Evaluation form and return to the Director(s) by the middle of their third semester.

A copy of the Annual Review of Student Progress will be placed in the student's file; the Director(s) of Graduate Studies will convey any concerns to the student and provide him or her with a written summary of the progress report.

This annual evaluation procedure is required by the Graduate School and the Director(s) will file a report on each student based on the annual evaluation with the Graduate School.

The MA program in Material Culture and Public Humanities also requires regular evaluations of student work as graduate assistants. A Graduate Assistant Evaluation Form is completed by each student's faculty or administrative supervisor(s) at the

end of each fall semester; a copy is shared with the graduate assistant and a copy is placed in the student's file.

Continuation of funding is contingent on receiving satisfactory evaluations.

Outcomes Assessment

The University requires departments to submit annual outcomes assessment reports. To compile the report, supervising faculty members complete evaluations of the projects and reports or ePortfolios. The Director(s) submit the final outcomes report. Students are not involved in the outcomes assessment process other than to submit work for evaluation.

Copies of all MA program in Material Culture and Public Humanities evaluation forms can be found at: [give url]

XI. Avenues of Redress

Students with questions or concerns about any of the policies covered in this statement have several avenues of redress. Many procedural issues can be clarified by the Administrative Assistant/Coordinator for the MA Program in Material Culture and Public Humanities. Concerns about the thesis process or project and report process should be taken up first with the student's advisor. Students with issues related to GA assignments should first discuss the question or problem with the faculty member with whom the student is working.

If the problem cannot be resolved or the policy clarified at this level, students should follow up their concerns with the MA Program Director(s). If s/he is unable to resolve the problem or satisfactorily clarify the policy, students may also consult the [Ombudsperson](#) at the Graduate School.