

# JOURNALISM & MEDIA STUDIES, M.A.

The Department of Journalism and Creative Media offers the Master of Arts degree with a major in Journalism & Media Studies. Students work closely with a faculty dedicated to the principles and practices of sound journalism, mass communication and scholarly inquiry. The program offers three options for study:

- Individuals who seek in-depth knowledge and mastery of one or more of the subfields and methodologies of journalism or media studies – for example, mass communication history, mass communication law, critical and cultural communication, mass communication theory and methods. These individuals typically follow Plan I (see below) and go on to pursue doctorates. Those with significant experience in the journalism field may teach without the PhD degree.
- Individuals who seek to work professionally in writing, editing, visual journalism, electronic news and/or digital journalism, and who wish to develop conceptual knowledge of the field, as well as critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. These students typically follow Plan II (see below).
- Individuals who wish to earn graduate credit through distance education can enroll in our online journalism and media studies program. This program is ideal for people eager to expand their knowledge base, individuals looking to start a career in news, and those interested in teaching in the field of journalism and media.

The program serves both recent BA recipients, whether in journalism/mass communication or other fields, and professionals seeking to deepen their knowledge.

## Admissions

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission an application must include:

- Three letters of recommendation, resume
- Examples of journalistic work if available – e.g., stories, photos or multimedia – via hard copy, disk, or website link
- The Statement of Purpose must address how the degree will advance the applicant's professional and educational goals
- A TOEFL score of at least 90 (with a score at least 24 on each of the speaking and writing sections) for non-native English speakers who are required to submit an English Language test score (see admissions criteria link below). International applicants who prefer to submit IELTS test scores must score at least 7.0 and also score at least 7.5 on the speaking section and 6.5 on the writing section. International applicants who meet these criteria may also be invited to participate in a videoconference with the college application review committee

The department faculty may require up to nine hours of additional coursework for applicants lacking undergraduate classes related to the professional values and competencies that are central to the master's program.

## Deadlines (note that earlier applications are given priority for funding)

### Thesis & Project-Oriented Tracks on UA Campus

- Applications accepted year-round
- Fall semester admission prioritized, but spring admission may be considered.

- Priority deadline for applicants interested in funding: January 31
- Priority deadline for completed applications: March 31

### One-Year Community Journalism Concentration on UA Campus

- Applications ONLY accepted for fall semester
- Priority deadline for applications: February 1
- The one-year focus in Community Journalism admits a limited number of students each fall. Applicants not accepted for Community Journalism may be considered for other master's path in the Department of Journalism & Creative Media.

### OTIDE Online Journalism & Media Studies MA

- Applications accepted year-round for fall, spring and summer admissions

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

## Curricular Requirements

Each student entering the graduate program in Journalism & Media Studies must complete 31 semester hours of credit, under either programs of study. Requirements for each plan are as follows:

**Plan I - Thesis track** (On-campus, everyone follows). The research track allows you to study and think critically about journalism from a variety of scholarly approaches. You will explore news and its role in society and its effects on audiences, factors that shape decisions, the history of journalism and the legal and ethical implications of journalism. This two-year option is highly customizable and allows for 12 hours of elective credit that can be taken across disciplines.

Plan I, Master's Thesis		Hours
Required Courses		
JCM 500	Grad Studies Orientation <sup>1</sup>	1
MC 551 or CIS 605	Sem Communication Theory Cultural and Critical Theory	3
MC 550 or CIS 609	Research Methods Humanistic Research Methods	3
JCM 562 or JCM 522 or JCM 520 or MC 526	Cont. Issues in Journalism Science & Environment in Media Media Effects Race, Gender and Media	3
JCM 563	History of Jour. and Media	3
JCM 599	Thesis Research	6
<b>Electives</b> <sup>2, 3</sup>		<b>12</b>
JCM 512	Seminar in American Cinema	
JCM 517	Advanced Sports Writing	
JCM 520	Media Effects	
JCM 522	Science & Environment in Media	
JCM 528	Editorial Analysis and Opinion	
JCM 533	Journalism and Emergent Media	
JCM 536	Teaching Multimedia News	
JCM 542	Advanced Magazine Writing	
JCM 545	Feature Writing	

JCM 548	News Analysis	
JCM 555	Entrepreneurial Journalism	
JCM 590	Directed Research in JCM	
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>31</b>

**Footnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> All students must enroll in JCM 500 Grad Studies Orientation their first year of study
- <sup>2</sup> With their thesis advisor's approval, research-focused master's students may take elective courses in other UA departments and colleges. For example, a graduate student interested in media effects may take 500-level coursework in psychology if approved by their advisor and the course instructor. Students who are pursuing their research master's degree may also take 600-level courses in the College of Communication & Information Sciences, with permission of the instructor.
- <sup>3</sup> An independent study with a faculty member. Students must sign up for three credit hours of JCM 590 with the supervising professor. A proposal must be submitted to the graduate coordinator detailing the purpose of the independent study.

**Plan II: Project track**

**On-campus option A: Community Journalism Concentration (COM-J):** Our award-winning, one-year professional offering is designed to support community journalism by establishing trained professionals in the field. In this program, you will explore new ways to serve communities through evolving journalism practices and digital innovation. The hands-on curriculum relies heavily on experiential learning, rather than a thesis. It includes a May-through-July internship at the University's Digital Media Center, which includes Alabama Public Radio and WVUA-23, a commercial television station in Tuscaloosa. Students interested in the Community Journalism concentration should indicate interest in their Graduate School application and statement of purpose.

**On-campus option B:** Under this option, students can complete the on-campus degree and have their studies culminate in an in-depth project or comprehensive exams. This path requires completion of 31 total hours, with 28 hours of graduate courses as outlined in Plan I, and a 3-hour project or comprehensive exams in JCM 597.

**Online option:** A professional option is also available entirely online for students who wish to have flexibility to complete coursework around their everyday lives. Students can complete the program in as little as 18 months, taking both skills and conceptual courses that help students master knowledge about journalism and media.

<b>Plan II, Master's Project</b>		<b>Hours</b>
<b>Required Courses</b>		
JCM 500	Grad Studies Orientation	1
JCM 552 or MC 550	Journalism Theory and Research Research Methods	3
JCM 562	Cont. Issues in Journalism	3
JCM 597	Master's Project	3
JCM 555 or JCM 553 or MC 551	Entrepreneurial Journalism Making Media Innovation Sem Communication Theory	3
JCM 563	History of Jour. and Media	3
<b>Electives</b>		<b>12</b>
JCM 512	Seminar in American Cinema	

JCM 517	Advanced Sports Writing	
JCM 520	Media Effects	
JCM 522	Science & Environment in Media	
JCM 528	Editorial Analysis and Opinion	
JCM 533	Journalism and Emergent Media	
JCM 536	Teaching Multimedia News	
JCM 542	Advanced Magazine Writing	
JCM 545	Feature Writing	
JCM 548	News Analysis	
JCM 555	Entrepreneurial Journalism	
JCM 590	Directed Research in JCM	
General Elective		3
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>31</b>

All students must enroll in JCM 500 Grad Studies Orientation their first year of study.

**Community Journalism Concentration**

<b>Code and Title</b>	<b>Hours</b>
Students in this concentration must select JCM 552, JCM 553 or JCM 555 and JCM 562 in their program core.	

<b>Concentration Requirements</b>		
JCM 501	Media Production Tools	3
JCM 511	Depth Reporting	3
JCM 502	Prod. Com. Journalism	3
JCM 572	Sem. in Prof. Journalism	3
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>12</b>

**Sports Media Concentration**

<b>Code and Title</b>	<b>Hours</b>
Students in this concentration must select MC 550, MC 551, and MC 546 in their program core.	

<b>Concentration Requirements</b>		
JCM 517	Advanced Sports Writing	3
MC 531	Sports & Social Media	3
MC 564	Sports Media Research	3
JCM 535	Sports Documentary	3
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>12</b>

**Transfer Credit**

Students transferring from another graduate program can have up to 12 hours accepted from their prior program for the M.A. degree, pending a curriculum review by the graduate coordinator. In addition, non-degree seeking students can enroll in M.A. classes, pending review by the graduate coordinator. Non-degree students must seek degree status in order to continue after taking 12 credit hours. For more information see the Graduate School Transfer Policies.

**Accelerated Master's Program**

Through the Accelerated Program (AMP), rising UA seniors who have demonstrated high performance can take courses that count simultaneously toward their undergraduate and graduate degrees. Once admitted, an AMP student can take up to 12 hours of courses that count toward both the degrees, which reduces the time it takes to earn a degree by one year. Interested students apply for the AMP program during their junior year and work with the graduate coordinator to create a plan of study to complete their undergraduate degree during their first year as a

graduate student. Applicants must have earned 90 or more credit hours by the Fall semester they start the AMP program and have a minimum GPA of 3.3. See the Accelerated Master's Program section of this catalog for more information.

#### **Expedited Admission Track into the CIS Doctoral Program**

The Expedited Admission Track into the CIS doctoral program allows highly qualified students who completed an undergraduate degree to join the doctoral program. Such students begin graduate coursework in the JCM program and complete their graduate degree as College-wide doctoral candidates, with a streamlined application process for admission or to transfer credit hours into the doctoral program. In short, if admitted on the expedited track, candidates will be able to count 24 hours of coursework, rather than the usual maximum of 12 hours, toward their doctoral degree. Students cannot simultaneously enroll in the AMP program and Expedited Admission Track. See the C&IS Statement of Purpose Guidelines for complete requirements. Otherwise the process requires admission into the JCM program and the CIS doctoral program. Applicants must submit a statement of purpose indicating interest and commitment to graduate work through the doctoral level. Upon completing 24 hours of graduate coursework at the level (18 hours of core classes, and two journalism classes), students must pass a comprehensive qualifying exam to continue toward the doctoral degree.

## **Plan I - Thesis Process Requirements**

### **The following applies to students pursuing a master's degree under Plan I (Thesis):**

The student is required to complete a thesis, which must be orally defended. Students will work with their adviser to identify a gap in the scholarly research devoted to a topic in journalism and creative media. The student will conduct a review of related literature, and propose and execute original research that will answer the overarching research inquiry. The thesis can be completed no earlier than the second year of a program. Students will enroll for six hours in JCM 599, as part of that process.

**Committee:** Students must form a committee of two JCM faculty members and one faculty member outside of JCM. Students are encouraged to have their faculty adviser serve as thesis chair. The thesis chair must be a tenured or tenure-track professor with associate or full graduate faculty status. An Appointment or Change of Master's Thesis Committee form must be submitted to the Graduate School for the dean's approval of the committee members.

**Proposal:** Students must submit a proposal detailing (1) a specification of the topic and its significance, (2) a review of relevant literature, along with proposed research questions and/or hypotheses, (3) a proposed methodology and (4) a calendar for projected completion. The committee must approve the proposal before the student can proceed with the project.

**Final Report:** The final thesis must include (1) a specification of the topic and its significance, a review of relevant literature, along with proposed research questions and/or hypotheses, (3) a detailed methodology, (4) an analysis of the results, and (5) a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the results. The final report must be submitted to the committee at least two weeks before the oral defense.

**Oral Defense:** Students will defend their final thesis to their committee for approval. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Graduate School of their defense by submitting the final thesis and the relevant paperwork before the deadlines set by the Graduate School. Defenses are open to all faculty members in the department. Students must be enrolled in JCM 599 during the semester they defend their thesis. During the oral defense,

students are questioned on their thesis. Questions often concern the methodological design, theoretical foundation, results, and theoretical/professional implications of the thesis project. For the student to pass the oral defense, committee members must be satisfied the student has gained sufficient knowledge in core areas study and demonstrated this knowledge in the design, execution, and completion of the thesis project. A successful thesis will demonstrate research capacity, independent thought, and the ability to interpret materials.

## **Plan II - Non-Thesis Process Requirements**

Plan II students take a comprehensive exam or produce a Capstone project. Similarly, a Capstone project or a comprehensive exam is required for distance learning students.

**Capstone Project:** The project option is competitive. Students wishing to pursue a project option must formally submit a brief proposal for the project to the student's MA committee before the end of the first week of the student's final semester. Students will be notified about acceptance during the second week.

The students' master's committees, each of which consists of the JCM 597 instructor and one other faculty member (see committee details below), will collectively review proposals and approve no more than five MA projects each semester –i.e., the five projects that are judged to be the best will be selected each semester. Judgment criteria include relevance, importance, coherence, thoroughness, creativity, practicability and writing quality.

**About the project:** The MA project may focus on a media work (e.g., an in-depth journalistic report, a documentary, etc.); a media innovation (e.g., an online entrepreneurial media product or app); or a scholarly research study (in the social sciences or the humanities). The project is not a fully completed work, but instead consists of the following three components: (1) a detailed plan for carrying out a completed work; (2) a "prototype" or "pilot" of the work; and (3) a conceptual paper in which the student reflects on the project.

Here are details about each component:

1. A detailed plan (due week 6): In this component, students provide a rationale for the project that includes evidence that demonstrates a need, and a description of how the full project will be completed. For journalistic works, students provide background on the issue, statistics and other evidence that show it is a socially important issue, information about previous journalistic reporting on the issue, and details about how the piece will be reported. For research studies, students produce a literature review, theoretical explanation, and a methodology section. For media innovations or entrepreneurial works, students provide a brief explanation of the innovation, and a business plan, including mission and goals, audience/market analysis, and revenue plans. Students receive feedback that may inform their project moving forward.
2. Prototype/pilot of the finished product (due week 10). In this component, students produce an example of the completed work. For a journalistic work, this is a substantial reported and sourced overview that introduces what would be a more involved journalistic work. For a research project, this would be a pilot study.
3. Reflection paper (due week 12). Students write a six-page conceptual paper that draws implications about the project from the perspective of two of the four core knowledge areas of the program (theory, methods, history, issues/ethics). This paper includes citations and

demonstrates understanding of, and an ability to think critically about, these perspectives.

To graduate the same semester, each student must orally defend their projects to their two person committee no later than week 12 of the semester (no later than two full weeks before the last day to submit examination results to the Graduate School). The defense should be in person. A phone conference is acceptable only if there are technological barriers.

Each student pursuing a project will have a committee of two graduate faculty: (1) the JCM 597 class instructor and (2) a second faculty member. The JCM 597 instructor serves as the committee chair and must be a full or associate member of the graduate faculty. The second committee member may be a temporary, associate or full member of the graduate faculty. The second member may come from outside the University, but in this case, must be appointed as temporary graduate faculty. The area of expertise of the second committee member should complement the project's focus.

Committee responsibilities: In the case of project students, committee members provide feedback on the project proposal, feedback on student questions during the JCM 597 class, and feedback on the completed project. Committee members determine if the project proposal is accepted. Both attend the defense of the project and determine if the project and defense demonstrate competency.

## **Comprehensive Exam**

Students who choose the comprehensive exam option, or are not approved for the project option must complete the comprehensive exam. They will take comprehensive exams by enrolling in JCM 597 (three hours) during their final semester, and a three-hour approved elective, to reach the required 31 hours for a degree. Students must have completed their five core courses (JCM 500 Grad Studies Orientation, JCM 562 Cont. Issues in Journalism, JCM 563 History of Jour. and Media, MC 550 Research Methods, MC 551 Sem Communication Theory) before taking JCM 597.

Each student will complete four essay questions in an open-book format over the course of 48 hours to be identified by the department in the JCM 597 syllabus at the beginning of the semester. The questions cover the core classes - contemporary issues and ethics, history, methods, and theory. Four professors ask the questions and evaluate students' responses, determining whether the responses warranted evaluations of (a) passed, (b) revisions, or (c) fail. Students who do not pass the initial question will first be asked to revise the response. Students who decline to complete revisions will fail the course. Students who revise and resubmit their answer will have the response re-evaluated by the relevant faculty member, who will determine whether the student passed or failed.

The examination committee will determine whether the student has passed, must perform additional work to demonstrate competency in one or more areas of the examination, or has failed the examination. This determination will be made within one week (seven days) of completion of the exam. When additional work is required, the examining committee may choose to administer another oral examination within the same semester. In the case of a clear failure, re-examination must take place after six months and before twelve months have elapsed. Each of the four portions of the preliminary examination may be taken only twice. The examining committee will rule either pass or fail on the second examination.

## **Fieldwork/Practicum/Internship Requirements (COM-J)**

Our award-winning, one-year professional offering is designed to support community journalism by establishing trained professionals in the field. In this program, you will explore new ways to serve communities through evolving journalism practices and digital innovation. The hands-on curriculum relies heavily on experiential learning, rather than a thesis. It includes a May-through-July internship at the University's Digital Media Center, which includes Alabama Public Radio and WVUA-23, a commercial television station in Tuscaloosa. Community Journalism students must complete an internship and coursework during the interim and summer months culminating with a Capstone project. For the Capstone project, students will work together to produce a digital reporting project focused on a community issue or problem and report on that topic in depth. Students are required to pay tuition during this period, regardless of whether they served as research/teaching assistants during the previous fall/spring. Admission criteria and core curriculum requirements are identical to the traditional Plan II option.

## **Time Limits for Degree Completion**

See the Degree Requirements section of this catalog for more information.

## **Student Progress Requirements**

Students can be removed if their GPA scores do not meet minimum standards. Students generally must earn a 3.0 GPA in their first 12 hours in the program to maintain admission.

## **Academic Misconduct Information**

See the Academic Misconduct section of this catalog for more information.

## **Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information**

See the Academic Policies section of this catalog for more information.

## **Academic Grievances Information**

See the General Information section of this catalog for more information.

## **Scholastic Requirements**

See the Academic Policies section of this catalog for more information.

## **Graduate School Deadlines Information**

See the Student Deadlines section of this catalog for more information.

## **Application for Graduation Information**

Students must register for graduation before the deadline of the semester in which they expect to complete their degree. See the Graduation section of this catalog for more information.