



# **Master's Degree in Journalism and Media Studies**

## **Program Handbook 2019- 2020**

The Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies offers a Master of Arts degree focusing on research and creative projects. The program is committed to the proposition that enhancing society requires an innovative, interdisciplinary, and rigorous understanding of its media.

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## Overview

The Journalism and Media Studies (JMS) program offers courses of study for students with a career orientation in diverse areas such as advertising, public relations, broadcast and print journalism, media management, media research, and teaching; and for students who aspire to continue their education in doctoral programs.

The MA program consists of 30 credits which can be taken over a period of three or four semesters and offers research or creative thesis or exam options. **The three-semester plan assumes that you have entered the MA program with a viable topic and have prepared your prospectus during your first three required courses in the Fall.**

Our MA graduates have successfully pursued professional media, administration, research, and teaching careers and been successful in doctoral programs. Our program is made more affordable by access to graduate teaching assistantships, scholarships, financial aid, and awards.

### Quick Contacts

#### **Master of Arts — Journalism & Media Studies**

Website: <http://www.unlv.edu/ma/jms>

#### **JMS Department**

Website: <https://www.unlv.edu/jms>

Location: 2147 Greenspun Hall, UNLV Campus

Telephone: 702-895-3325

#### **JMS Grad Coordinator**

Dr. Julian Kilker

Website: <https://faculty.unlv.edu/jkilker>

Email: [julian.kilker@unlv.edu](mailto:julian.kilker@unlv.edu)

#### **UNLV Graduate Student Association**

Website: <https://www.unlv.edu/gpsa>

## Location and Facilities

We are part of the culturally-diverse UNLV campus in vibrant Southern Nevada. Located in the booming American Southwest, the Southern Nevada region is a multinational hub for entertainment, scenic tourism, and new technologies. Las Vegas hosts two of the nation's largest media conventions each year, as well as new economy companies such as Zappos and Switch. The region offers compelling research opportunities in media ownership, 21st century social, environmental, and economic challenges, and in public health and emerging technologies. Students have access to multiple research libraries and archives, including the Smithsonian-affiliated Atomic Testing museum.



The School of Journalism and Media Studies is located on the first two floors of Greenspun Hall, housing staff and faculty offices as well as graduate assistant offices. Located on the corner of Maryland Parkway and University Drive, Greenspun Hall is the home of the Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies and the College of Urban Affairs. The building features state-of-the-art classrooms, research, and production facilities. The 302,000- square-foot Lied Library offers comfortable seating, group study rooms, and graduate resources. It is one of the most modern university libraries in the United States, hosting hundreds of computer workstations, automated storage and retrieval systems, and a media distribution system. Its Special Collections lab is the only one of its kind in the state.

## **Assistantships**

Our program is made more affordable by access to graduate teaching assistantships, scholarships, financial aid, and awards; applying early gives you a greater chance for these options. Please refer to the Graduate College financial resources site for options: <https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/financing>. In addition to these university programs, there are opportunities within the school and department for which you may be eligible.

The School of Journalism and Media Studies offers several graduate assistantships based on your ability to assist with courses. The stipend is \$11,250 along with a tuition waiver and health insurance (the tuition waiver covers about 80% of student fees, and the Graduate College pays \$1,000 toward the overall cost of their annual student health insurance, \$500 per semester). Students teach, prep, and grade course material for about 20 hours of work per week. Applications for assistantships are submitted through the Graduate **College and** are

due March 15 each year.

## Graduate Admissions Requirements

Graduate application requirements and procedures are available through the Graduate Catalog website <https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/futurestudents>. Start your JMS graduate application at <https://www.unlv.edu/ma/jms>. This section includes details about JMS submissions not covered in the general catalog.

Your two-page letter of intent should: (1) Describe your goals for the JMS graduate program; (2) Outline your possible research or creative thesis interests; (3) Summarize how your application packet supports these goals and thesis interests; and (4) List the faculty you would like to work with and why you would like to work with them. Research and preparing this groundwork before you apply to our graduate program is important for a successful graduate experience.

Your primary writing sample should be academic and research-based. Additional secondary work samples in any media (for example, video, audio, or software) are recommended and can be either uploaded to the application system (if possible) or linked in your letter of intent. If you do not have a recent academic writing sample, a professional writing sample that demonstrates your analytical and persuasive abilities is acceptable. The primary sample must be your own work only; for secondary samples, you must clearly and accurately describe your role in their creation, as well the roles of other people.

Letters of recommendation: Your letters of recommendation should be from people who can fairly assess your ability to be successful at the graduate level; that is, to explore new areas of knowledge, to conduct research, to explain complex topics clearly in writing and verbally, and to be a self-starter in an academic setting. Because of this, we generally require that two of the three letters be from recent academic recommenders who have experience with you in such settings. If you have been out of school for some time and have attempted to contact previous instructors but have not received a response, you should ask people familiar both with graduate-level expectations and with your recent achievements to write letters assessing your potential. Typical workplace recommendation letters are usually not sufficiently informative about applicants' ability to succeed in a graduate environment.

GRE scores: While we look at applications holistically, we do expect GRE scores of around a combined 300 and 4+ on the writing component. (Be sure to spend some time studying beforehand; you can retake it if needed.) If we do not receive GRE scores by the deadline, but you otherwise present a strong application, you may be admitted provisionally and with a requirement to submit acceptable scores.

**Note:** *We evaluate applications on the strength of whether each person is likely to succeed in our graduate program. However, an applicant may be denied admission for reasons such as a low GPA, low GRE scores, poor letters of recommendation, inadequate undergraduate preparation, and stated intentions or academic interests that do not coincide with the program.*

## Degree Options

JMS offers two Master's degree tracks:

The **thesis (research or creative) track** involves taking 24 credits of courses and an additional 6 thesis credits for preparing a research or creative thesis for a total of 30 credits. The thesis is an original piece of work that the student writes under the guidance of a thesis advisor and thesis committee.

The **examination track** involves taking 30 credits of courses and culminates in three activities: the satisfactory completion of written comprehensive exams, the submission of a Graduate Education Portfolio, and satisfactory completion of an oral examination.

### *Thesis Track:*

A GPA of 3.0 must be maintained to graduate.  
24 hours of course work  
+6 hours of thesis  
Completed thesis  
Oral defense of the thesis  
Passing grade on thesis

### *Exam Track:*

A GPA of 3.0 must be maintained to graduate.  
30 hours of course work  
Graduate Education Portfolio  
Written exam  
Oral defense of the exam  
Passing grade on exam

These two tracks are described in detail below.

## Thesis (Research or Creative) Track Details

The thesis track involves taking 24 credits of courses and an additional 6 thesis credits for preparing a research or creative thesis for a total of 30 credits. The thesis can be either research or creative:

### **a) Research (“traditional”) Thesis.**

The research thesis follows a social science model involving three components: A research topic that interests you (for example, social media use by parents), a research method (for example, a survey), and a theoretical framework (for example, uses and gratifications). You are introduced to methods and frameworks in your first-semester graduate classes; the topics come from your interests, experience and observations, and discussions with faculty. Typically, a research thesis proposes and explores one or more research questions and hypotheses, and consists of six chapters comprising 60-100 pages: (1) Introduction; (2) Review of literature; (3) Methods used; (4) Results; (5) Discussion; and (6) Conclusions (along with a bibliography and appendices).

### **b) Creative (“non-traditional”) Thesis.**

The creative thesis may be written or take the form of a documentary, drama, podcast, public relations campaign, photo essay, script, website, or any combination approved by your thesis committee. The creative thesis—no matter the medium—must include a written paper of approximately 20-25 pages containing four sections covering: (1) Intro/topic context; (2) Review of media representations of the topic; (3) Explanation of the project's design/form/structure; and (4) Lessons learned during the project.



## The Prospectus

Before the student begins his or her research or creative thesis, he or she writes a prospectus, which is a plan for the project. The prospectus includes an introduction explaining your study's purpose, how you will do it, and a timeline for completing the thesis. A prospectus meeting is scheduled, ideally in the student's second semester, in which the student's committee makes suggestions for completing the study. Committee members will receive the prospectus no later than two weeks prior to the meeting.

## Oral Defense

The oral defense must be scheduled at least three weeks before the end of the semester. No oral defenses will occur in the summer unless agreed upon by all committee members. After the thesis is completed, the student distributes it to committee members no less than two weeks before a desired defense date. At the defense, the student discusses the thesis with the committee in a spirit of cooperative good will, understanding that the faculty may question any aspect of the thesis and ask for further improvements. Make sure to follow deadlines from the Graduate College.

## Defense Results

The defense of the thesis may result in any of three decisions: Pass; pass with revisions; or, no pass. The most common of these three results is to pass with revisions, with revisions ranging from simple editing of style, grammatical errors, and so forth, to substantial rewrites of entire sections of the thesis. The committee may decide to either "sign off" on the thesis or not at the time of this decision depending on the extent of the revisions. The committee may also want to see the final revisions or not. Signing off on the thesis means that the committee agrees to sign the appropriate forms for the completion of the thesis. Again, they may decide to do this either at the time of the defense or after revisions are completed. If the thesis passes outright, then the student will have no further revisions except those that the Graduate College may request. The committee signs off on the thesis at the time of the defense. In the rare event that the student's thesis is not passed, the student will at that time be separated from the program and not granted a master's degree.

## Milestones & Required Forms

The Graduate College has required forms for the appointment of your advisory committee (and changes to your committee, if necessary), to outline your degree program requirements, to document your successful prospectus defense, and to document your final thesis defense and submission of your final document, as well as other forms to assist you as you progress through your program. All are available on the Graduate College Forms site:

<https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/forms>.

Upon admission, there are several forms that will need to be completed and submitted by the appropriate deadlines. The due dates below are approximations. For current deadlines, see the Graduate College Timeline site: <https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/study-timeline>.

It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and conform to all deadlines. The MA program consists of 30 credits which are typically taken over a period of three or four semesters.

<b>Form:</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
1. Proposed Master's Degree Program	Before completing more than 16 credits of course work (early 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester)
2. Appointment of Examination Committee	Before your prospectus meeting (early 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester)
3. Prospectus Approval	After your prospectus meeting (2 <sup>nd</sup> semester)
4. Notification of Oral or Written Examination	Two weeks before your defense date (3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> semester)
5. Final Examination for Advanced Degree	After defense of the thesis or exam (3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> semester)
6. Thesis/Scholarly Research Project Approval	After thesis defense (3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> semester)

### Thesis Distribution

The completed thesis must be distributed to the committee members no less than two weeks before a desired defense date.

### Oral defense

The oral defense must be scheduled at least three weeks before the end of the semester or by a deadline date set by the Graduate College. No oral defenses will occur in the summer.

### Thesis (Research and Creative) Track Requirements Checklist

- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with the Graduate Coordinator at the start of your Master's studies
- \_\_\_\_\_ File Degree Plan Requirements Form (before completing 16 credit hours)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create a committee (file appropriate form with Graduate College)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discuss thesis topics with your thesis advisor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Write a prospectus
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prospectus meeting (Approval Form must be signed)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Write the Thesis
- \_\_\_\_\_ File Proposed Master's Degree Program Form (before applying for graduation)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Apply online for graduation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule a defense date
- \_\_\_\_\_ Distribute Thesis to committee at least two weeks before defense date.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Oral Defense
- \_\_\_\_\_ Defense Results (pass, rewrites, fail)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Submit Thesis to the Graduate College for format check
- \_\_\_\_\_ After Thesis is approved, upload to ProQuest

## Examination Track Details

The 30-semester hour exam track culminates in three activities: the satisfactory completion of written comprehensive exams, the submission of a Graduate Education Portfolio, and satisfactory completion of an oral examination. The student works with his/her faculty advisor (whom the student selects) to compose a Faculty Committee. The development and completion of the Graduate Education Portfolio is negotiated between the student and the faculty advisor (see guidelines below).

### Typical Examination Track Schedule

Students may take three or more semesters to complete their degree program.

Semester	Course Number	Course Title	Credits
Fall (first semester)	JMS 710	Preparing and communicating research	3
	JMS 712	Quantitative Methods	3
	JMS 730	Theories of Journalism and Media Studies	3
Spring (second semester)	JMS XXX	A Qualitative methods class approved by the JMS graduate coordinator	3
	JMS XXX	A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor)	3
	JMS XXX	A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor)	3
Summer	JMS XXX	A JMS course of your choice (or graduate class of interest), approved by an advisor.	3

### TOTAL CREDITS AT THE END OF YOUR FIRST YEAR 21

Fall (third semester)	JMS XXX	A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor)	3
	JMS XXX	A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor)	3
	JMS XXX	A JMS course of your choice (and approved by an advisor)	3

### TOTAL CREDITS AT THE END OF YOUR THIRD SEMESTER 30

## Exam Committee

*Composition.* The student's examination committee consists of three members from the School of Journalism and Media Studies one of which is the exam advisor. A fourth member of the committee is from outside JMS and serves as the graduate college representative.

*Duties.* Each member of the committee (excluding the outside member) writes exam questions. The advisor then chooses from these questions to create the exam.

## The Written Exam

*Composition.* The written exam consists of several questions that cover the depth and breadth of knowledge one should obtain in a master's-level graduate program. The student will be asked to answer questions in detail in two 4-hour sessions over two consecutive days. Answers to the questions should be detailed, well-written, and show the student's range of knowledge in the areas addressed. Questions will be tied to specific course material the student covered in their program of study with emphasis on core course material (712, 730). Theory, method, and various other research techniques may be assessed. Reference to specific scholars, theories, methods, research domains, and so forth are expected. Students should write about 20 type-written pages over the 8-hours of testing.

*Format.* The student uses a department laptop, or an office computer if available. Other ways to take the exam will be considered (e.g. typewriter, handwritten, etc.).

## The Oral Defense

The oral defense of the examination must take place within one week of completing the written examination. The student is responsible for scheduling the room for the defense and finding a time that all faculty can meet. At the defense the student discusses the exam with the committee in an interactive format, understanding that the faculty may question any aspect of the exam and ask for further improvements. Improvements may involve more detailed answers to exam questions, or other refinement and editing.

## Exam Results

Three examination results are possible: Pass, Pass with Conditions (conditions must be specified), and Fail. To pass, the Examination Committee must agree on the vote. The Graduate College Representative always has the right to challenge the fairness of the examination and its grading or question if the examination meets University graduate level standards. In these rare instances, the entire examination may be deemed null and void or some other corrective action taken under Graduate College policies.

The Examination Committee Advisor will notify the student and the School of Journalism and Media Studies Graduate Coordinator in writing of the final results normally within 7 work days after the examination (with exceptions for holidays). Student performance on the examination is considered strictly confidential. Only the Examination Committee Chair (i.e., no other faculty member) should reveal the outcome.

In the case where a student receives a Pass with Conditions involving a minor rewrite, these rewrites must be completed within two weeks of notification. Examination Committee members will again

have the same time limits as specified above.

A student must retake a failed examination within one year and successfully pass it to receive his or her degree. A second failure on the examination automatically results in student termination from the program.

## The Graduate Education Portfolio

*Purpose.* The “Graduate Education Portfolio” is a tool that summarizes and synthesizes your educational experience as a JMS Master’s student.

*Design and Binding.* The portfolio should look professional, and must be bound. You may use spiral binding with a plastic cover. Pages must be numbered consecutively. Copies must be made for each committee member.

### *Portfolio Contents*

- I. Title Page with your name and contact information
- II. Table of Contents
- III. Overview of Your Program of Study (Your Focus)
- IV. Course Materials (for each of your courses)
  - A. Course Syllabi
  - B. Major Paper and/or Other Important Written Assignments
  - C. Summary of Course Notes (“lessons learned”) (approx. 2 pages per course)
  - D. Your Critical Overview of Each Course (approx. 1 page)
- V. Graduate Assistantship (if applicable)
  - A. Overview of Graduate Assistant Responsibilities
  - B. Your Critical Overview of the Graduate Assistant Experience (approx. 2 page)
- VI. Conclusions
  - A. Strengths of the Program (approx. 2 pages)
  - B. Limitations (approx. 2 pages)
  - C. Other (if necessary)
- VII. Curriculum Vita

## Deadlines

*Exam Times.* All written exams should be scheduled either in mid-October or in mid- March at a time no later than three weeks before the end of the semester, or by the deadline the Graduate College determines. No examinations are given during the summer sessions. Specific days and times to take the exam are arranged by each student in cooperation with his or her faculty committee and with adequate advanced notice. The exam takes two days to complete with the student writing a minimum of four hours each day.

*Oral Exam Times.* The oral defense of the exam occurs within a week of the written exam and by the deadline set by the Graduate College. The student is responsible for scheduling the room for the defense and finding a time all the committee members can meet. At the defense, the student discusses the exam and the Graduate Education Portfolio with the committee. The goal for a defense is discuss and question any aspect of the exam or GEP and ask for further improvements; improvements may involve more detailed answers to exam questions, refinement of the GEP, or

other refinement and editing.

*Portfolio Due Date.* The Graduate Education Portfolio is due two weeks before the student takes the written exam.

## **Graduate Grades and Courses**

A listing of courses offered in the master's program is listed in the current version of the Graduate Catalog (<http://www.unlv.edu/academics/catalogs>) under Journalism and Media Studies. Recent courses offered (beyond the required introductory courses) include: History of Journalism, Social influence and the media, First Amendment theory, Science Communication, and Special Readings and Independent Study courses on students' topics of interest.

### **Grades**

The Graduate College determines a student's grade point average (GPA), computed for all course work included on a student's Proposed Degree Program form. Graduate courses taken at institutions other than UNLV prior to admission to Graduate College are not included in the graduate GPA computation. Graduate students only get credit for classes in which they receive a "B-" grade or higher. A "C" grade in a course means that that course does not count in the program of course work. Receiving two "C" grades is grounds for termination from the program.

*Pass/Fail:* Graduate courses are not normally offered on a pass/fail basis except for thesis, professional papers, or for non-credit courses.

*"X" Grade:* An X grade is used to identify unfinished thesis credits.

*"I" Grade:* If a student receives an Incomplete grade in a graduate-level course, the instructor may determine a period, not to exceed one year, for removal of the "I" from the student's record. If after a year the student fails to complete the work, the Registrar automatically changes the grade to an "F." The "I" grade is used when a student has not completed course requirements and the instructor judges the reason to be satisfactory.

**UNLV Policies** require graduate students to have a minimum 3.0 program GPA to graduate.

### **Summer Courses**

UNLV offers graduate courses in journalism and media studies during two of its three summer sessions (Sessions II and III). Summer sessions are five weeks long. Graduate students may take classes during these sessions, but only up to 12 semester hours of credit (four classes). No more than 6 credit hours may be earned in any one summer session. Summer is also a good time to seek classes outside the major and to prepare your research or creative thesis.

### **Transfer Credits**

Students transferring from other graduate programs may transfer up to one-third of the total credits of the degree program excluding thesis credits. This translates to 10 credits that may be transferred from another program. All transfer credits must be approved by the graduate committee, graduate coordinator (or department chair), and the Graduate Dean.

Students should be prepared to submit syllabi and major papers or other assignments from the courses they wish to transfer for credit. Please review the Transfer Credit Policy under the “Credit Requirements” section of the Graduate Catalog for further policy information.

### **UNLV Courses outside of Journalism and Media Studies**

Graduate students may take up to 6 graduate-level, approved credits from a department or school outside the JMS curriculum and have them count toward your degree. The student must discuss their program and courses with an advisor and receive approval on their Degree Program or Degree Audit companion form.

### **Forms & Due Dates**

Once you have been admitted to the graduate program, you will need to fill out and have signed several forms at various times throughout your career as a master’s student. The due dates are approximations. For more information, view the Graduate Study Timeline on the Graduate College website.

<b>Form</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
1) Degree Plan Requirements Form or Degree Audit Companion Form	Before completing more than 15 credits of course work (during 2nd semester)
2) Appointment of Examination Committee	Before completing 12-16 credit hours
3) Prospectus Approval	After your prospectus meeting
4) Proposed Master’s Degree Program (Two Parts)	Before applying for graduation and no later than the first week of the semester in which you plan to graduate
5) Oral Defense Results	After thesis defense (3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> semester)
6) Application for Graduation	Check Graduate College Website
7) Program Evaluation Form	At the time you file for graduation

These are required forms. You will need several others, filed on an as-needed basis. Most forms are available as from the Graduate College form site (<http://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/forms>).

### **Advising and Your Advisor**

From the moment you are admitted to the master’s program you have an advisor — the Graduate Coordinator. You may always contact or meet with the Graduate Coordinator for advisor, ideas, or other forms of academic counseling. Eventually you will want to work with a faculty member on your thesis. That person may or may not be the Graduate Coordinator. You may select from current graduate JMS faculty, as listed on the Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies website. He or she becomes your thesis advisor. You as the graduate student always have the option to change advisors at any time with no penalty

or repercussions whatsoever.

#### Annual Review Procedures

Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are **required** to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead. Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner. Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track metrics related to the annual productivity of all students. This survey will be sent by the Graduate College to the student's Rebelmail account. The

review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress while setting goals for the year ahead.

#### Probation

If a student fails to successfully progress in their degree program, their department/school will recommend that the student be placed on probation by the Graduate College. Students on probation may be dismissed/separated from their program for failing to successfully meet the conditions of their probation by the deadline provided. Please see the [Probation and Separation](#) section of the Graduate Catalog for more information.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Here are answers to some of the questions we often hear from graduate students and those interested in our graduate program.

### Who is Hank Greenspun?

The School of Journalism and Media Studies is named after public advocate and Las Vegas Sun publisher/founder Hank Greenspun (1909-1989). Greenspun confronted major public issues, using the power of the press to fight corruption and demagoguery, and championing the welfare of the poor and disenfranchised in society. Greenspun's legacy lives on at the Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies, where we actively emphasize the powerful functions of communication in addressing challenging social issues and promoting public good. We use communication knowledge strategically to enhance the quality of life with our educational curriculum, applied research efforts, media production projects, and community outreach programs.

### Do I have to be an undergraduate journalism or broadcasting major to be admitted to your graduate program?

No. It's not required that you have an undergraduate degree in journalism, broadcasting, or media studies to apply to the graduate program. However, it is helpful if you have had at least a few courses in journalism, broadcasting, or related fields at the undergraduate level. You may be advised to take one or two undergraduate classes before full admission to the program is granted.

### What are the minimum GRE scores I need for admission?

There are no minimum requirements for the GRE scores. However, it is still important to do as well as you can on the verbal and

quantitative parts of the exam (the analytical part is not as important). As rough guide:

Using the new scale, scoring a combined 300 in the quantitative and verbal portions (150 on the latter) is a reasonable expectation.

### What can students do with a master's degree?

Master's students have gone into all sorts of careers: Teaching (elementary, secondary, and college); consulting; advertising; broadcasting; management; corporate communication; fundraising; sales; writing; public relations; event planning; human resources; lobbying; politics; advocacy; public affairs; training; and various careers in the non-profit sector. JMS grads have also continued their education to earn Ph.Ds. at respected institutions across the United States, or pursue law degrees.

### What's the emphasis of the program?

We emphasize using quality research and creative projects to contribute to journalism and media studies. Our courses focus on three areas: applied research and production techniques, concepts related to journalism and media studies, and specific topics such as technology, law, and advertising. All students take coursework in media theory and research. Students who write traditional theses proceed with in-depth study of an issue that applies or explores theory. Students doing creative theses produce a media work, such as a documentary or podcast, and situate it in terms of theory. Students taking the exam track explore and

reflect on the field through additional courses rather than a thesis. Each of these options have been useful for our graduates in

their careers.

### How long does it take to complete the degree?

Usually three to four semesters, which includes some work during the summer, for a total of 30 course credits. Some working students choose a lighter course load and take more time. You'll learn the basics during the first year, and spend most of your second year working on a major project, mentored by a group of professors. Our graduate program is very flexible and encourages personalization: During the second and third semesters you select courses from across the UNLV campus and bring your new-found expertise back into your research.

### What do students typically learn in the M.A. program? Is this program appropriate for someone who's interested in practical or creative options?

Part of going to graduate school is learning more about your own strengths and honing your analytical skills, even if you don't fit into the traditional image of a scholar. Many graduates write a research thesis, and we also offer creative project and exam alternatives. We encourage a balanced approach to practical and academic work: You will have access to professional production facilities, and we offer independent study courses in which practical, internship-like work is combined with graduate-level readings.

### How can I afford graduate school?

We have a few Graduate Teaching Assistantships available for students. In addition, we can help connect students with

job and grant possibilities, especially after we become familiar with your work and interests. Our graduate students' skills in writing, research, and presentation make them quite competitive for campus jobs.

### Can I start the program in the Spring semester instead of the normal Fall semester? Can I defer an acceptance?

Our graduate students go through the courses as a group, taking the same introductory courses in the Fall. If you would like to start at a different time, defer, or sample some of our graduate courses, we encourage you to apply as a "Non-Degree Seeking" student. Many of our graduate courses are offered in the evening to work around typical work schedules. After a few courses, you can apply and, if accepted, have the relevant courses count towards your degree program.

### Who should I seek out for advice; who is my advisor?

From the moment you are admitted to the master's program, you have an advisor. That person is the Graduate Coordinator. You can always visit, call, or e-mail that person for advice about the graduate program. After you've been in the program for a semester or two, you may select a thesis advisor who will direct your thesis, but the graduate coordinator is still always available for consultation.

### Who should be on my thesis committee? Who should direct it?

If you are doing the thesis track, you should select a committee based on what your thesis topic is. Ideally, you should choose a graduate faculty member to advise the thesis who has knowledge of the topic and the method you are going to use. Sometimes, however, you

might have one member of your committee who is knowledgeable on the topic and another who will help you on the methods. Many students find their thesis advisor and committee members by taking the courses with a professor and finding out that they have similar interests. Of course, it's also important to pick a committee who you can work with and who will challenge you to produce the best piece of research you possibly can. You can find a detailed description of the composition of a graduate committee in the Graduate Catalog.

### Who should I choose for the outside member of my committee?

An outside member, also called the Graduate College Representative (see Thesis Track section above under committee composition for a description) is often chosen based on a course you might take outside the School of Journalism and Media Studies (you can take up to 6 credits of course work outside The School). If you don't take any classes from outside the School of Journalism and Media Studies, then your advisor might suggest someone. The best way to get that person on your committee is to ask them personally, providing them with background on your project, courses you've taken, and other pertinent information. Or you can list up to three potential outside members on the Appointment of Examination Committee form and the Graduate College will ask them if they will serve on your committee.

### What have previous graduate students done for their theses?

Recent research projects have explored data journalism and criminal justice reform, health and media consumption patterns, and marketing implications of fandom using social network analysis. Examples include:

One student researched media coverage of the Iraq War in *The New York Times*

and *The Guardian*. Interested in communications, policy and research, and a member of Young Professionals in Foreign Policy, she was hired by a Government Affairs department of an energy company in Washington, DC.

Another student focused his research on risk, science and environmental communication in his thesis examining climate change messages in the desert Southwest. Now a doctoral student at Cornell University, he is studying how messages in areas vulnerable to climate change influence attitudes about climate change, intentions to alter behaviors, and support for new policies.

A former journalist enrolled in our program studied audience engagement and the development of the modern newspaper while at UNLV. His thesis explored how Nevada lawmakers and journalists worked together to write one of the nation's strongest shield statutes during the political and social tumult of the 1960s and early 1970s. He now teaches undergraduate journalism courses at Texas A&M University-Kingsville and advising the student newspaper and television operations.

A first-generation college student explored photography's influence on the framing of visual messages, and whether photographs and visual rhetoric were effective as tools for social change. She was awarded a fellowship from the University of Maryland, College Park, where she is pursuing a doctoral degree in Journalism Studies.

### What Is a Prospectus?

A prospectus is a detailed plan—a proposal—for conducting either a graduate-level research paper or (more commonly) a master's thesis. Drafting a prospectus gives both you and your instructor/advisor a blueprint for developing findings and sound conclusions. With revision, a prospectus

can also serve as the first chapter of your thesis. If you chose to do a non-traditional thesis, you will also be required to develop a prospectus (depending on your project, you might or might not use prospectus content directly in your final non-traditional thesis). It is important to consult with your individual instructor or thesis adviser on your prospectus, as each graduate faculty member approaches it in slightly different ways.

How Long is It? Prospectuses may be anywhere between 10 and 50 or more pages, depending on your topic and whether you are proposing a research or creative thesis. (A prospectus for a thesis rooted in quantitative or social sciences, for example, may require as much as three chapters of development). The length may also depend on

the amount of background the reader requires, literature on the topic, and the method you will use.

Prospectus Format: With some variation, include these sections in the following order.

*Title.* Pick a working title for your paper that uses key words and themes featured in your study. The title will, most likely, change several times before your final draft is due, so use a simple one to help frame your entire paper.

*Introduction.* The introduction should provide an overview of the study you propose. Explain what the general area of study and its purpose. Provide a justification for the study explaining why it is important, what it potentially adds to our understanding of the phenomenon you're examining. In other words, why are you doing this project? If your study replicates another one, explain why this reexamination is necessary.

*Background.* A background section may be optional, and you may have more than one of these woven throughout the prospectus. Here, includes a narrative of

the key concepts you'll feature, supplying an overview of the history of your topic or specific ideas that have evolved over time—you're supplying context for your study here without going into exact detail about other research on the subject.

*Thematic Statement.* The thematic statement introduces what you will address in your paper or thesis. Use the information you've gathered to describe the general scope of the paper, including the "who," "what," "where," "when," "why," and "how?" You should refer directly to facts, people, places, and events, but at this point, you should not have developed any conclusions.

*Significance of the Study.* Use this section to explain to the reader how your paper will be different from other papers or research on the subject. This section features a "so what?" It also explains the relevance of your paper relative to a larger body of scholarship. Answer the following questions, both implicitly and explicitly: Why should the reader care? Why is your research important? How does it contribute to a pool of knowledge on the subject? Be precise, and be sure to use appropriate scholarly style.

*Literature Review.* This section provides a description of your secondary sources. You may include references to the primary sources of your study, but the purpose here is to explain to the reader what has already been written about your subject. You should NOT include every book, journal article, or manuscript associated with your paper—only the ones that have the most relevant, direct tie to the study you are preparing. You are including this section so the reader will know both that you've done your homework and so they'll understand the significance of your study. There are no "magic numbers" (or a

minimum number of sources) for a Lit. Review; however, do feature your best sources. In the Lit. Review, you may also provide definitions of key terms, or outline hypotheses you'd like to test (if you're using statistical methods for an empirical study), or, you might outline several research questions you'd like to answer if your study is more exploratory.

*Methods.* Depending on your study, the methods section could be the most important part of the prospectus. It should be clear how you will go about conducting the research to develop your findings—the sampling procedures, methods used for analysis, and so forth. Clearly outline all the steps you will take whether your study is qualitative (interviews, focus groups, critical/cultural, ethnographic, visual, historiographic, etc.) or quantitative (content analysis, survey, quasi-experimental, etc.). Note: While qualitatively based studies may simply require an explanation of how you locate primary sources, quantitatively-based studies or those that rely on a scientific approach require a more developed and explanatory methods section.

*Preliminary Outline.* Use this section to begin organizing the direction of your research. Your outline will change over time, and it is not meant to be part of your final paper, but you should use an outline to make sure you address the items appropriate for your study. The three major subcategories include: A. Introduction; B. Body; and C. Conclusion.

*Sources to be Consulted.* Organize by categories, including “Primary Sources,” “Secondary Sources,” “Books,” “Journal Articles,” etc.

You do NOT need annotations here, but organizing by categories helps to understand the scope your sources.

The Prospectus Process for a Thesis: Generally, the prospectus is something that you want to complete in your second semester of graduate study. After working on the prospectus with your thesis advisor, and going through several drafts, you will distribute the thesis to your entire thesis committee. Do not give your prospectus to your committee without your advisor's approval. Try to give your committee members at least a week, or two to read your prospectus before the prospectus meeting.

## Discipline Resources

### Areas of Specialization

**Bates:** First Amendment law; political communication; privacy  
**Borchard:** Journalism history; reporting; research methods  
**Burroughs:** Digital, social, and streaming media; media industries; sports media  
**Kilker:** Media technologies; visual media; research methods  
**Larson:** News production; media workflow; critical cultural studies  
**Miller:** Narrative and documentary media; global media  
**Nourse:** Audio broadcasting; media workflow; production pedagogy  
**Stoker:** Advertising; public relations; media history  
**Traudt (emeritus):** Audience reception; global media; video criticism; advertising  
**Venger:** Strategic communication; regulations; human trafficking; technology

### Library Resources

Susie Skarl, Urban Affairs Librarian  
UNLV Libraries  
4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154  
Email: [susie.skarl@unlv.edu](mailto:susie.skarl@unlv.edu)  
Phone: 702-895-2141  
Web: [http://guides.library.unlv.edu/prf.php?account\\_id=44112](http://guides.library.unlv.edu/prf.php?account_id=44112)  
JMS Guides: [http://guides.library.unlv.edu/sb.php?subject\\_id=66594](http://guides.library.unlv.edu/sb.php?subject_id=66594)

### Journals

Faculty publications appear in the following journals, among others:

American Journalism  
Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies  
Communication Law and Policy  
IEEE Technology and Society  
Information Technology and Libraries  
International Journal of Communication  
Journal of Advertising  
Journal of Advertising Education  
Journal of Broadcast and Entertainment Media  
Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising  
Journal of Marketing Education  
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly  
Journal of Media and Religion  
Journalism & Communication Monographs  
Journalism History  
Management Communication Quarterly  
Popular Culture Review  
Science Communication  
The Journal of Popular Culture  
The Wilson Quarterly

Visual Communication Quarterly

**Other Publications:** American Heritage; Slate; The New York Times; The Wall Street Journal; The Washington Post; The Spectator of London; Times Literary Supplement

## Professional Organizations

American Academy of Advertising  
American Journalism Historians Association (AJHA)  
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)  
Association for Internet Research (AoIR)  
Broadcast Education Association (BEA)  
European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA)  
Marketing Public Policy Conference  
Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)

## University Resources

### Academic Success Center

The goal of the Academic Success Center is to help students do well academically and complete their studies on time. They offer or will refer you to such programs and resources as tutoring, advising, skills testing, career exploration and more. They guide students every step of the way to the many established resources created to ensure they complete their educational goals. Learn more about the programs and services the center currently offers.

### Alumni Association

With an alumni base 90,000 strong, the UNLV Alumni Association offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

### Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Registrar's Office, the commencement office is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College.

### Office of Diversity Initiatives

The vision of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's diversity mission: to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

## **Disability Resource Center (DRC)**

The DRC is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

## **Office of International Student and Scholars**

International Students and Scholars (ISS) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate transition to the campus and the U.S.

## **Jean Nidetch Women's Center**

The Jean Nidetch Women's Center is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

## **UNLV Libraries**

UNLV Libraries has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

## **Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)**

The Graduate & Professional Student Association serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

## **Office of Student Conduct**

The Office of Student Conduct is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Conduct collaborates with the

UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the UNLV Student Code of Conduct by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

## Office of Veteran Services

The UNLV Office of Veteran Services is staffed with veterans and GI Bill-experienced staff to assist more than 1,000 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

## The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

## Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the Online Writing Lab (OWL) page.

## University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the [Graduate Student Handbook](#), and following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Spósito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the online reporting form at [Title IX Reporting Form](#), by email at [titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu), by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) :

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Progression and Completion Policies \(listed alphabetically\)](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.  
Handbook Information

<b>Last revised</b>	<b>Revised by</b>	<b>Changes summary</b>
2018-02-26	J. Kilker	Updated application details, corrected typos, added
		template fingerprint.