

CARLETON UNIVERSITY  
Master of Arts in Film Studies  
PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Version: 2025-2026

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## 1. Welcome

This handbook is intended to give general guidelines. Rules and regulations may change, so please refer to the [graduate calendar](#) for all official university policy. Film Studies itself is one discipline housed in the *School for Studies in Art and Culture (SSAC)*, which also includes Art History and Music. Above this, all graduate programs at Carleton are overseen by the *Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGPA)*. The School itself is an academic unit within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS). Carleton University is located on the unceded territories of the Algonquin nation.

## 2. Getting Started: Checklist of First Things to Do on Campus.

### 2025-2026 GRADUATE ORIENTATION

Please register for the orientation session (and TA Orientation sessions if you will be working as a TA during the fall term) using the form below.

You will receive further information about how to access the Orientation materials before Academic Orientation Day (September 3).

\*\*\*[REGISTER HERE](#)\*\*\*

If you are a graduate student or teaching assistant new to your role in Fall 2025 it is strongly recommended that you attend orientation. The sessions will provide you with important information about starting your graduate studies and/or your role as a teaching assistant. You will have the opportunity to hear from members of the Graduate Students' Association, CUPE 4600, and a variety of campus service representative.

The TA Orientation session counts toward paid training hours for new teaching assistants who complete it.

If you have questions about Fall Orientation, please contact David Lafferty at [david.lafferty@carleton.ca](mailto:david.lafferty@carleton.ca)

### [Check out the new Carleton Graduate Student Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs website!](#)

- **TA Offices:** Please speak with your graduate administrator, Kristopher Waddell, about receiving a numeric code for TA office access located in the St Patrick's building.
- **Your Campus Card** – The Campus Card office is using [a line management system](#) – walk ups will not be accepted. Community members with an essential need for a new Campus Card should email [campuscard@carleton.ca](mailto:campuscard@carleton.ca) to request support.
- **Pick up your UPass** – The Universal Transit Pass is a discounted fare offered through Carleton University partnership with OC Transpo. Click [here](#) for more information.
- If you are a [new graduate student or your personal information has changed](#), visit Human Resources to fill out necessary forms to be paid at 507 Robertson Hall.

### **3. Administration and Information**

Film Studies is part of the School for Studies in Art and Culture (SSAC), alongside Art & Architectural History and Music & Culture. SSAC is within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS). All graduate programs are overseen by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGPA), including this one. This all becomes easier to navigate once you discover a few key people and offices. Some of these are explained in more depth throughout the handbook, but a short list of crucial contacts includes:

#### The Graduate Supervisor for Film Studies

Professor Malini Guh

[MaliniGuh@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:MaliniGuh@cunet.carleton.ca)

407 St Patrick's Building

613-520-2600 x2349

The job of the Graduate Supervisor is to be aware of all program features and regulations. Whenever you are in doubt, please reach out to your graduate supervisor for issues with TA assignments, funding, program regulations, and any academic matter pertaining to your studies. The Graduate Supervisor holds a confidential administrative position.

#### The Graduate Administrator for SSAC

Kristopher Waddell

[kristopher.waddell@carleton.ca](mailto:kristopher.waddell@carleton.ca)

423 St Patrick's Building

613-520-2600 x2342

If you have questions related to registration, your academic record, or thesis submission, seek out the Graduate Administrator. The Graduate Supervisor works with the Graduate Administrator to answer student questions and ensure that students are on track to fulfill degree requirements.

#### Head of Film Studies

Gunnar Iversen

[gunnar.iversen@carleton.ca](mailto:gunnar.iversen@carleton.ca)

430 St Patrick's Building

613-520-2600 x2343

The Head of Film Studies is responsible for the academic operation of the Film Studies program, and especially the undergraduate program. The Film Studies Graduate Supervisor consults with the Assist on a variety of matters.

#### Audiovisual Resource Center (AVRC)

Supervisor: Nancy Duff ([nancy.duff@carleton.ca](mailto:nancy.duff@carleton.ca))

460 St. Patrick's Building

The [AVRC](#) has an enormous collection of DVDs, 16mm prints, slides, books and journals that are available for graduate student use.

The Reference Librarian for Film Studies.

Alana Skwarok

[alana.skwarok@carleton.ca](mailto:alana.skwarok@carleton.ca)

238 MacOdrum Library

613-520-2600 x1634

For help with research and making the best use of the [library's resources](#), contact the Film Studies Reference Librarian.

The Multimedia Technician for SSAC

Paul Jasen

[ssactech@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:ssactech@cunet.carleton.ca)

429 St. Patrick's Building

613-520-2600 x8327

For help learning how to use classroom technology for teaching and for troubleshooting, contact the Multimedia Technician, if he is around. For all other tech support needs and if the Multimedia Technician is not available, contact the Instructional Media Services (IMS) (613-520-3815; [ims@carleton.ca](mailto:ims@carleton.ca); Room D283 of the Loeb building)

The Undergraduate Administrator for SSAC

Elise Durand

[elise.durand@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:elise.durand@cunet.carleton.ca)

423 St. Patrick's Building

613-520-2600 x5606

Faculty in Film Studies

All full-time Film Studies [faculty members](#) have offices on the fourth floor of the St. Patrick's building.

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs (FGPA)

The [FGPA](#) is the main office for a wide variety of practical professional, funding, and academic matters connected to being enrolled as a graduate student at Carleton University.

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities

The [Paul Menton Centre](#) coordinates academic accommodations and support services for students with disabilities. If you think you might benefit from their services, book an appointment with them right away.

The Graduate Students Association

The [GSA](#) is a student-run organization offers services, advocacy, and community for over 3,900 graduate students at Carleton University. They offer many services, like printing, scanning, and binding, a grad student lounge. The GSA provides grad student representation on various Faculty- and University-level administrative bodies.

### International Student Services Office

The [ISSO](#) is dedicated to helping international and exchange students adjust to life in Canada and help them get the most out of their student experience. The ISSO may be reached at [isso@carleton.ca](mailto:isso@carleton.ca). International students are encouraged to attend the I-Start Orientation events at the beginning of the semester in order to make the most of the assistance and opportunities available to them.

### Health and Counseling Services

In order to promote the health and safety of our Carleton community, the [Carleton Health and Counselling Services remains open virtually](#).

Service available virtually for most appointments and in person if deemed essential.

Medical Appointments: Health and Counselling Services uses the Collaborative Health Record (CHR) system. The CHR system allows you to receive reminders, request appointment changes, complete forms, update contact information, securely communicate with our clinic, and book appointments online. To learn how to book an appointment, check out our [Book an Appointment](#) page.

Counselling Appointments: Your counsellor will telephone/video counsel you at your designated appointment time.

Urgent Care (Walk In): Call 613-520-6674. You will be triaged by telephone to determine the safest way to provide care.

Crisis Counselling: Call 613-520-6674.

#### 4. The Program's Three Streams

All students working towards an M.A. in Film Studies do so through one of the following three “streams”:

- 1) the coursework only stream
- 2) the research essay stream
- 3) the thesis stream.

All streams have equal value and are designed to be completed within two years, though the time of completion may vary depending on the stream and the student's rate of progress through the program.

All students are admitted into the coursework only stream. Students then have the option of applying for the research essay or thesis streams.

The total required credits for every stream is 4.0.

**The coursework stream** is a good choice for students who want to make the most of the courses offered at Carleton. Students in this stream are also encouraged to undertake a Graduate Internship in order to apply their studies to the day-to-day challenges experienced by a local film institution or company.

FILM 5010 Directions in Film Theory and Film History I (0.5 credits)

FILM 5020 Directions in Film Theory and Film History II (0.5 credits)

6 additional (0.5) elective courses.

**The research essay stream** is a good choice for students who want to do independent research supervised by a faculty member and who have strong writing skills. It is equivalent to two graduate courses and is typically around 35 pages long. The research essay should represent a strong understanding and original interpretation of the field studied. The advantage of writing an essay of this length is that a very strong research essay could be submitted for publication in an academic journal.

FILM 5010 Directions in Film Theory and Film History I (0.5 credits)

FILM 5020 Directions in Film Theory and Film History II (0.5 credits)

4 additional (0.5) elective courses.

FILM 5908 M.A. Research Essay (1.0 credits)



**The thesis stream** is a good choice for students who want to work intensely on an original research project for more than a year and who are strong writers, self-motivated, and proactive. It is equivalent to four graduate courses and is typically around 80 pages. The thesis should represent a distinct and original contribution to the field based on primary research.

FILM 5010 Directions in Film Theory and Film History I (0.5 credits)

FILM 5020 Directions in Film Theory and Film History II (0.5 credits)

3 additional (0.5) credit elective courses

FILM 5909 M.A. Thesis (1.5 credits)

## **5. Typical Timelines for Completion of the Degree**

Here is the timeline that we recommend for all students. Check in with the timeline regularly to make sure you stay on track.

### **Term 1 (Fall Term, Year 1)**

- All students in the program are advised to register for 1.0 to 1.5 credits in the fall term: FILM 5010 plus one or two half-credit elective courses (students who take one elective course in the fall should plan on taking two in the winter).
- Students who intend to apply for the research essay or thesis streams ought to begin formulating a research project in consultation with their assigned Faculty Advisor early in the fall term.
- Students applying for either the research essay or thesis streams must submit their proposals to the Graduate Supervisor. The Graduate Supervisor will discuss the submission deadline in class.
- Students applying for the research essay or thesis stream are encouraged to apply for external grants such as the Ontario Graduate Scholarship and the SSHRC CGS Master's Award. Applicants can consult with their Faculty Advisor or the Graduate Supervisor regarding deadlines and the specifics of the application process.

### **Term 2 (Winter Term, Year 1)**

- All students in the program are advised to register for 1.0 to 1.5 credits: FILM 5020 plus one or two additional half-credit elective courses (students who took one elective course in the fall should take two in the winter).
- Thesis stream students should begin meeting with their thesis supervisor to plan research and writing.

### **Term 3 (Summer Term, Year 1)**

- Ordinarily graduate Film Studies courses are not offered in the summer, with the exception of FILM 5909 M.A. Thesis and FILM 5908 M.A. Research Essay.
- Students in the coursework stream are not required to register with the university. In exceptional cases, it may be possible to register for Film 5801 Graduate Internship, assuming that a suitable summer placement is available, or 5001 Directed Readings and Research, if a faculty person agrees to supervise the course. More information on these courses can be found in later sections.
- Students in the research essay and thesis streams must do one of the following:

(1) register for either FILM 5909 M.A. Thesis or FILM 5908 M.A. Research Essay if they wish to work with their Supervisor on their projects through the summer; or (2) apply for a leave of absence.

Thesis students should read all key secondary sources and complete any archival research during the summer. At the end of the summer, they should submit an updated table of contents for their project to their supervisor.

#### **Term 4 (Fall Term, Year 2)**

- Coursework students register for three half-credit electives (one or two of these courses can be taken in the winter term, according to course availability and student preferences)
- Research essay students register for FILM 5908 M.A. Research Essay and one further half-credit elective
- Thesis students register for FILM 5909 M.A. Thesis
- All research essay and thesis students should begin writing by September. They should complete half the required writing (two chapters for thesis students) by mid-December.
- Students writing a research paper or thesis will present a short overview of their projects at a Friday Film Seminar in October. The exact date will be provided early in the fall term.

#### **Term 5 (Winter Term, Year 2)**

- Students in the coursework stream typically aim to complete any remaining credits. Otherwise, they choose to register in the summer term.
- Students in the research essay and thesis streams typically aim to complete their projects. Otherwise they choose to register in the summer term.

As the timeline indicates, the typical pattern is that students in the program, regardless of the stream, complete 2.5 credits of coursework by the end of the winter term of the first year.

Students can register for more or fewer courses per year than the timeline indicates, depending on their particular needs and objectives.

Finally, all students in the Film Studies M.A. program must fulfill the language requirement, which is explained in the next section.

## 6. The Language Proficiency Requirement

A basic requirement for engaging with the world and the fundamental multilingualism of film and media is the ability to communicate more than one language. For this reason, the Film Studies M.A. program requires students to pass a second-language requirement. We expect students to achieve at least an intermediate level of competence, such that they will be able to have meaningful social and cultural interaction in a modern language other than English.

The language requirement must be completed before you can graduate. It may be satisfied in one of three ways:

- 1. By course work.** Students who lack second language skill upon entry, or who wish to learn a new language, can satisfy the language requirement by satisfactorily completing language instruction courses in a modern language other than English up to an intermediate level. In general, we will accept one 0.5-credit course focused on reading comprehension (for example FINS 2105), or two general-purpose 0.5-credit language introductory courses. In either case, you must achieve a mark of at least B+ in the course(s). Apart from FINS 2105, which is already approved, you should obtain approval for any language course(s) from the Graduate Supervisor before enrolling.
- 2. By taking a translation test.** Translation tests are offered by the Film Studies M.A. program once per term. Talk to the Graduate Administrator to find out more about the translation test, including the dates.
- 3. By demonstrating prior language proficiency.** For students who already have an extensive background in a relevant language, we will consider waiving the language requirement. (For example, if your undergraduate transcript documents successful study of a second language within the past two years, we will consider waiving the language requirement). If you think this describes you, speak with the Graduate Supervisor for details.

## **7. Information for Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants**

### Teaching Assistantship

A teaching assistant (TA) assists faculty members with various duties which might include conducting labs or study groups, assisting with lecture preparation, marking assignments and tests, etc. Some students will be asked to work as a Teaching Assistant (TA) for Film Studies courses as part of their admissions package. Students may also ask the Graduate Supervisor for work as a TA, although placement is not guaranteed.

All Graduate Teaching Assistants can complete or update their TA Profile immediately after accepting their TA award through the TA Management System in Carleton Central. (You do not have to be registered nor have paid your tuition fees in order to fill in your profile.) At the beginning of the academic year, students will be informed of their assignment(s) for the year. The most important of the online procedures is the submission of the electronic Assignment of Duties form, which each instructor and TA must fill out at the beginning of the fall term and which each TA must approve.

Beyond the orientation sessions held at the beginning of the fall term, the [TLS](#) offers ongoing TA training programs and consider making use of them on a regular basis.

### Research Assistantships

Research Assistant (RA) work ordinarily involves assisting the faculty member with her or his academic research. The actual tasks ought to allow you to develop your research skills in some way.

Students who are given work as an RA (Research Assistant) do not receive the same level of institutional support because RA contracts are made directly between an individual faculty member and a student. In most cases, an RA-ship is paid out of a faculty member's research funds. In some cases, however, the money might come from the student's financial package. If you receive an RA position, ask which of these two situations applies, since the answer may have a bearing on your pay or hours of employment.

Since the nature of an RA-ship is flexible and dependent on the specific needs of the faculty member and the specific skills of the student, communication is paramount in making sure that everyone feels well served by the experience. Be sure to maintain regular, ongoing contact with your faculty employer.

There must be a contract specifying the beginning and end date of the RA job, the rate of pay, and the number of hours to be worked. Under no circumstances should you feel compelled to work outside the dates specified in your contract. In terms of the hours worked, that is often dealt with more flexibly.

## **8. Financial Assistance & External Grants**

### Internal Funding

The university offers various kinds of financial assistance, apart from the funding that you may have received upon being admitted into the program; for example, there are awards for academic merit, scholarships for particular areas of research, and bursaries for financial need. Although some funding is based on recommendations from the Film Studies program, other types of funding require that you apply yourself. You can search the awards database on Carleton's Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research website in order to locate available funding options (<http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/internal-awards/>)

One internal award to keep in mind is the Graduate Student Travel/Research Bursary (GSTRB), which provides funding to attend conferences and to conduct research. The GSTRB has been very helpful for Film Studies graduate students over the years. Click on the link for more information: [Internal Awards | Current Grad Students \(carleton.ca\)](#)

### External Funding

The department is committed to working with students as they apply for scholarships and fellowships, particularly the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) and SSHRC Canadian Graduate Scholarship M.A. Award. All graduate students who plan to write a research essay or thesis should consider applying for these awards. It's important to begin these applications several months before the deadline in order to get transcripts and letters of recommendation and so that faculty members can read application drafts. Contact the Graduate Supervisor for more information. The application process is an important dimension of scholarly life. Applying for an OGS and SSHRC fellowship should be regarded as an integral academic practice by which a student's research is validated on a provincial and a national level and his or her career is advanced through the profession.

While the primary sources of funding for MA students are Teaching Assistantships, Research Assistantships, and scholarships provided by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, students are strongly encouraged to apply for financial support through external agencies, primarily the Ontario Graduate Scholarships (OGS) and the Canada Graduate Scholarships (CGS) programs.

Detailed information about these and other external sources of funding can be found at the FGPA website at <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/>

Please note that our departmental deadlines for these applications are early in the fall term, so the student must request transcripts and references as soon as possible (at the latest, mid-September). These are merit awards, and so the successful applicant must possess at least a 10.0 grade-point average for the last two years of coursework.

Any student who does not meet that requirement will not be considered by the sponsoring agency.

### Graduate Student Travel Grants

Students are also eligible to apply for financial support from the Graduate Travel/Research Bursary, which is annually given to departments by Grad Studies in order to assist students with Conference attendance.

If further assistance is required, students can also contact their Graduate Administrator to discuss applications to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Students may also pursue funding through the Graduate Student Association.

Be sure to apply to these bodies at least a month in advance of your travel date.



## **9. Guidelines for Directed Readings and Research (FILM 5001)**

The MA in Film Studies offers a wide array of courses that support the program's aims. Students are encouraged to register for Film Studies graduate courses even if the topics of these courses falls outside their area of interest (sometimes the most rewarding experiences take place in academic contexts outside one's specialization). On occasion, however, a student may have a compelling reason to explore a topic that is not covered in one of the existing courses. FILM 5001 Directed Readings and Research is an elective course designed to permit students to pursue research on a topic chosen in consultation with a member of the faculty. Course expectations are the same as those for other graduate courses: regular meetings between student and faculty member, assigned readings and similar work in a clearly laid-out plan of study, one or more substantial assignments (reading journal, a research paper, a final project, etc.) and a mechanism for assessing the work.

In general, the Graduate Supervisor will only approve applications for students who will have completed at least one term of coursework prior to the proposed FILM 5001. The Directed Readings and Research Course is not a requirement for completion of the M.A., so admission to the course is not guaranteed.

The student must submit a proposal for a FILM 5001 course to the Graduate Supervisor at least one month before the beginning of the term for which the course is to take place. The proposal needs to state the course title, provide a description, rationale and context for the research topic, outline a plan of study (including the means of evaluation and a reading schedule), and a bibliography. Proposals tend to average around five to seven pages in length, with the bulk taken up by the bibliography. The proposal should indicate the relevance of FILM 5001 for the student's course of study, whether it is intended to investigate an area of interest or expertise for the student or to explore a topic in preparation for the thesis/research essay. The Graduate Supervisor will review the application and will communicate to the student the results.

## **10. Guidelines for the Film Studies Graduate Internship (FILM 5801)**

The Graduate Internship provides students with the opportunity to gain practical experience by working on film-related projects under the supervision of staff at a museum, gallery, archive, exhibition venue or government agency. It gives students the opportunity to put the skills and knowledge they've learned at the university into practice, critically reflect on the important work performed by local film and media institutions, and gain additional skills.

Students are required to complete **96 hours** of work for the institution over the course of the semester (the equivalent of one eight-hour day per week for 12 weeks, but distributed according to the institution's needs and student's schedule). Exceptions must be approved by the Internship Supervisor. Students may only do a Practicum for one semester, earning 0.5 credits. The course is graded Satisfactory (SAT) or Unsatisfactory (UNS), and therefore does not contribute to the student's GPA.

Given the variety in the sizes and mandates of the institutions that have had internship agreements with Film Studies, there is no one typical internship experience. Each placement will be unique in the types of work experience it provides, the skills required and the type and range of tasks you will be expected to undertake. It is up to the student to come to an agreement with the on-site supervisor as to when to come in to work. The student will likely be able to negotiate hours that will fit in their class schedules but should not expect to be able to do the work on evenings or weekends. On-site supervisors are often amenable to making alternate arrangements on religious holidays or during a busy study week.

Note: This course involves participation in an unpaid work placement as part of the requirements. Please visit the [Risk and Insurance website](#) to review the information on unpaid work placements and to complete the insurance forms required.

### **Eligibility**

- Only students who are registered full-time in the Film Studies MA program can apply.
- The 0.5 credits awarded for successful completion of FILM 5801 will count towards the degree requirements.
- Internship placements are not available to Post-Baccalaureate Diploma students.

### **How to Apply for an Internship**

Consult the available positions and discuss with your Graduate Supervisor.

Following Supervisor approval, request an override for the course via Carleton Central.

Information and the application form can be found [online](#).

Once the applications have been received, the Practicum & Internship Coordinator will suggest a match and forward the student's application to the institution.

If the institution is interested, the on-site supervisor will interview the student and then contact the Practicum & Internship Coordinator with their decision.

If the student is accepted, the Practicum & Internship Coordinator will instruct the Undergraduate Administrator to approve the student's override. The student should then enroll in the course via Carleton Central.

The student meets with the on-site supervisor to determine the student's hours and core duties and to fill out the required paperwork. Students must give the paperwork to the Graduate Administrator by the second week of the Practicum.

Students may also seek out and secure internships at another organization that we don't have an existing partnership with. In this case, the student should share the requirements with the institution, secure the position, and then ask the on-site supervisor to contact the Practicum & Internship Coordinator to ensure that the tasks and number of hours are appropriate.

The Practicum & Internship Coordinator will do their best to place students but cannot guarantee that every student will receive a position. Students should therefore register in a full complement of courses for the semester in question, in case they are not able to do an Internship. If they get in, they can then drop one of the courses.

### **Expectations and Assessment**

During the Internship, students are required to perform the following:

- **The tasks set by the on-site supervisor** and described in the position description. Students are required to complete **96 hours** of work for the institution by the end of the semester. At the end of the Practicum, the on-site supervisor will complete an evaluation form assessing the student's work.
- **Attend two required group meetings** with other internship students arranged by the Practicum & Internship Coordinator. At these meetings, students will share information about their experiences, ask questions, and discuss the required assignments.
- **Keep a journal** that documents and reflects on the work done for the institution. Students should document the dates they work, the hours worked each day, and the tasks completed. They should also reflect on this work -- what have they observed about the institution? What is the institution trying to achieve? Why is the workflow organized the way it is? How does the institution assess its success? What challenges does the institution face? What progress has been made towards the research project? Make sure to update the journal immediately upon completing the day's work - don't try to fill it in at the end.

- The first set of journal entries are due on the First Writing Deadline and the second set are due on the Final Writing Deadline.
- **Write a 12-15 page research essay.** The essay should bring together the kind of thinking, knowledge, and skills you've been learning at university with the observations you've made during your internship. Use your experiences and observations at the institution to generate possible research questions. Within the first couple weeks of the internship, you should meet with your on-site supervisor to discuss and agree upon a research question and the on-site sources you will use. Find a minimum of six academic sources to help you explore this question.

**Submit a research essay proposal.** It should be 2 pages plus a bibliography and should include the following: a description of the core research question, including its relevance to the work you are doing in the internship and a research plan that includes what sources you will be using on-site at your internship. This is the First Writing Deadline.

**The final essay is due by the Final Writing Deadline.**

This course will receive a final grade of satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

## **11. Summer Registration**

Students are required either to register or to apply for a Leave of Absence (LOA). For research essay and thesis students, summer registration is recommended, but is not required.

Regardless of whether the student registers, the summer term will still count towards the total number of terms within which the student is expected to complete the program (i.e., six terms). As a result, students who do not register are recommended to apply for a leave of absence, which stops the academic clock for that term and is normally granted without question. The Graduate Administrator can advise you on the steps to apply for an LOA, which involves filling out a [Change of Registration form](#).

You cannot hold a TA position in a term for which you are not registered. Thus, students who wish to work as a TA in the summer will need to register. Students who plan to do research that requires ethics clearance must be registered in the term during which the research is to be done (i.e., ethics clearance is not given for terms in which you are not registered). Students cannot take courses while unregistered. So, for example, a student who wishes to complete a FILM 5001 directed readings course over the summer will need to register.

Unregistered students do not have access to library or AVRC holdings or to faculty supervision.

Finally, summer registration may carry implications for a student's funding. For example, any money in a student's financial package connected to the summer term will be forfeited if the student does not register for the summer term. However, once the student resumes registration in the fall, the remainder of the funding package will be available.

(Please note: the information above depends on rules set by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs. Before making final decisions about summer registration, it would be wise to consult with the Graduate Supervisor and/or someone in FGPA.)

## **12. Choosing a Stream**

All students admitted into the Film Studies M.A. are placed in the coursework stream. Students who wish to write a Thesis or a Research Essay must apply to do so. Students who successfully apply to enter the research essay or thesis stream will generate a thesis or a research essay as the culminating product of their degree, whereas those in the coursework stream are required only to fulfill the writing assignments for their courses.

Students who wish to apply for the thesis or research essay option must submit in the fall term a thesis or research essay proposal, along with a writing sample, to the Film Studies Graduate Committee. (More information about the proposals is given in the next section.) Students are advised to consult with their assigned Faculty Advisor regarding the suitability of the thesis or research essay options. All students are assigned a Faculty Advisor in the summer prior to their first year in the program.

Each student must decide whether writing a research essay or thesis is an appropriate ambition. A familiar consideration in this regard is the possibility of further academic work at the Ph.D. level. If you intend to pursue a PhD, a master's thesis allows you to demonstrate an ability to tackle a large project and develop an original line of thought, which may be helpful when applying for admission into a PhD program. On the other hand, writing a research essay or completing a program of coursework can prove just as effective in facilitating admission into a Ph.D. program as writing a thesis. In fact, the coursework stream might be seen as the best form of preparation for a Ph.D. program on the grounds that it demonstrates the student's mastery of a wide range of topics within the field of study. In any case, anecdotal evidence suggests that many if not most students admitted into Ph.D. programs have not completed master's degrees let alone master's theses. Moreover, graduates from Carleton's Masters of Arts in Film Studies all receive the same degree; the document includes no designation concerning the student's stream.

The research essay option and the thesis option require that you do less coursework. So one question to ask when making your decision is whether you prefer taking courses over engaging in large independent projects. A thesis must involve original primary research and/or original analysis. In other words, a thesis must to some degree represent an original contribution to knowledge. A research essay, by contrast, does not entail the same emphasis on originality. So a question to ask yourself is: do I have new ideas that I am eager to develop, or would I be happier spending more time absorbing and organizing already-existing work?

A thesis is considerably longer and is broader in scope than a research essay, running around 80 pages for the thesis versus about 35 for the research essay. The research ought to involve multiple primary and secondary sources. If your project concerns minimal primary material, and/or engagement with a small secondary literature, and/or is modest in its research questions and results, then that project is perhaps better served by the research-paper format. Longer is not better: a well-crafted research essay is a fully legitimate option for students whose topics do not warrant extended treatment.

The Graduate Committee reserves the right to determine whether a proposal is best suited for a thesis or a research essay. In other words, upon review of a thesis proposal, the committee can recommend to the student that he or she undertake a research paper instead. A further possibility is that the Committee will recommend that the student remain in the coursework stream.

Also, students who have been admitted into the thesis stream are free to change their minds, and opt for the research essay stream instead, or they can return to the coursework only stream. Likewise, students who have been admitted into the research essay stream can select the coursework stream instead, if they wish. Keep in mind that the number of courses required for the streams varies slightly, with students in the thesis stream taking **one fewer course** than do students in the research essay stream, who take **two fewer courses** than do students in the coursework stream. So students who change streams will need to ensure that they meet the course credit requirements for the new stream.

### **13. Supervisors**

Each student in the Film Studies M. A. program will be assigned a Faculty Advisor in August at the beginning of the first year. Students interested in the research essay or thesis option are invited to discuss with their Advisor the viability of these options. Students who submit a successful thesis or research essay proposal will be assigned a Thesis or MRP Supervisor, who will oversee the production of the document itself through its research and writing (and defense, in the case of the thesis).

The Supervisor may be someone other than the student's initially assigned Faculty Advisor. Students are encouraged to discuss their research interests with faculty members so that they can acquire a sense of who they want to work with. Students are welcome to inform the Film Studies Graduate Supervisor if they have a preference regarding which faculty person might supervise the research essay or thesis. Keep in mind that only regular, full-time faculty members can serve as Supervisors.

Students who have written successful proposals for the thesis or the research essay should meet with their Supervisors as soon as possible, to sketch out a schedule for timely completion of the project. All students are entitled to supervision, including when the Supervisor is on leave. The exception concerns cases in which the student takes a leave of absence, which entails a denial of access to certain university resources.



## **14. How to Apply for the Research Essay or Thesis Stream**

The preferred length for the writing sample is 8-10 pages. The topic of the writing sample does not have to be identical to the topic taken up in the proposal. Students should include in the proposal title of their project and their preferred faculty supervisor. The student should also note at the top of the proposal whether it is a proposal for a thesis or a research paper. \*Your proposal will be developed as part of your assignments in FILM 5010.

The proposal ought to run 5-10 pages in length, depending on whether the student is applying for the research paper or the thesis stream.

The thesis proposal should be divided into the following sections:

1. Abstract (150 words)
2. Statement of the Research Problem/Question
3. Relationship of Existing Scholarship
4. Objectives and Method
5. Chapter Breakdown
6. Bibliography

Here are suggestions on how to approach each section of the proposal:

### **Abstract**

In one paragraph, summarize the project in as jargon-free and concise a manner as possible. This sounds simple but it can be quite difficult, as anyone who has written one of these can attest. Abstracts are important, however, because they are the first indication to the reader concerning what the thesis is about. It's worth spending time on abstracts because people reviewing proposals will use the abstract to decide whether they want to read further. Abstracts are sometimes written at the very end of the process, after everything else. It's acceptable to finish the abstract in the late stages of work on the proposal. But our recommendation is to start them sooner, along with the other sections, since they do require revision and refinement. Scholars sometimes create the abstract by pasting in the opening paragraphs from the "Statement of the Research Problem/Question," described below. But a better strategy for the abstract is to avoid recycling your text verbatim and instead to write new sentences.

### **Statement of the Research Problem/Question**

Begin by explaining your project in a few short paragraphs that fill a single page (double-spaced, with 12-point font). Explain the gist of what you want to do in as straightforward manner as possible. Identify the films and/or issues you plan to write about, along with the main question(s) that you will pose.

### **Relationship to Existing Scholarship**

This section--and the next one, as well--require that you elaborate on certain of the points made in the section "Statement of the Research Problem/Question." Here you need to explain how your project compares and/or contrasts to the work of other scholars. What distinguishes your project from the work of others who have taken on the same or a similar topic? This question raises concerns that overlap with those of the preceding section. Here, however, you must go into greater detail. Identify important antecedents

for your project in the field of study, as well as tendencies in the field that you intend to avoid. Put another way, which books, articles, and ideas have inspired your project, as well as tendencies in the field that you intend to avoid. Put another way, which books, articles, and ideas have inspired your project? How will your project differ from what others concerned with the same or similar issues have produced? Most significantly, how will your inquiry contribute to the field of film and moving image study?

## **Objectives and Method**

Explain precisely how you will go about conducting your research. Do you need to examine materials pertaining to film production, film reception, or both? Which materials, exactly -- the popular press; the trade press; DVD or Blu-ray versions of the films; interviews with directors, cinematographers, set designers, etc.; shooting scripts; other sorts of production documents? If you need to read periodicals, list the titles.

Where will you find this stuff? Do you need to visit archives--including archives outside Canada, or can you get the material on campus, via interlibrary loan, or through an online source?

Beyond identifying the materials you will examine, explain *how* you will examine them. If your project involves film analysis, try to be specific about what kind of film analysis. Will your analysis focus on a particular style parameter such as sound or editing? Will it involve analyzing narrative? If your concern is with narrative, then identify which theories of narrative are likely to come into play in your analysis. If you are studying film music, will you need to examine musical scores or song melodies? To what extent does your analysis involve looking into a film's cultural, economic, aesthetic, and technological contexts, and how will you document your claims concerning the context(s) in question?

## **Chapter Breakdown (Thesis)**

One possibility is to assume that the body of your thesis will encompass roughly seventy-five pages, divided into the following five sections.

- Introduction [ten pages]
- Chapter 1 [twenty pages]
- Chapter 2 [twenty pages]
- Chapter 3 [twenty pages]
- Conclusion [five pages]

You can, of course, include more or fewer chapters, plan for a mix of short and long chapters, or otherwise deviate from the model proposed here. But for the purposes of getting started on the proposal, it may be useful to think in terms of three core chapters. Write paragraph-length descriptions for each chapter. You can also write paragraphs for the Intro and Conclusion but these don't need to be as long. In fact, for the Conclusion, one or two sentences may be enough.

A further recommendation is to think of the three chapters as case studies devoted to specific films or other moving image works, with each chapter covering a single film or moving image work in detail. The one-film/or moving image work -per-chapter

concept has seemed to work well for many students over the years; but there are other ways to write a thesis. Ultimately, the chapters must be appropriate to the project as outlined in the “Statement of Research Problem/Question.”

## **Bibliography**

Here you list the major authors and texts behind your conceptualization of project. Any authors or works cited in the body of the thesis proposal ought to be included in the bibliography. Try to strike a balance between works exemplifying the established literature in the field and works marking the latest developments. Aim for at least one-and-a-half or two pages.

Keep in mind that those who evaluate research proposals sometimes read bibliographies very carefully, aiming to determine the depth and breadth of the applicant’s knowledge of the relevant literature. So it’s worth spending time on the bibliography, editing and re-editing it prior to submitting the final draft. Avoid spelling mistakes and typographical errors. Get names and titles right.

Writing a thesis proposal is a lot like writing a proposal for research funding, and the same advice for one will often apply to the other. What follows below is a list of criteria for evaluating research proposals taken from the SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) website. These general standards can be applied to the thesis and research-essay proposals as well:

According to SSHRC, external assessors and adjudication committees for research proposals evaluate the proposed program of research using the following criteria:

1. Degree of originality and expected contribution to the advancement of knowledge;
2. Scholarly, intellectual, social and cultural significance of the research;
3. Appropriateness of the theoretical approach or framework;
4. Appropriateness and expected effectiveness of the research strategies or methodologies;
5. Feasibility of successfully completing the program of research, and appropriateness of the schedule of research, given the applicant's and/or research team's resources and commitments.

## **15. Ethics Clearance for Research Involving Human Participants**

At Carleton University, any research involving living human participants must receive ethics clearance before work can begin. Examples of the kind of research requiring ethics clearance include (but are not limited to): interviews, reporting on events involving named (or easily identifiable) individuals; and surveys. In sum, if your research involves other living humans, you will need ethics clearance.

It is crucial to obtain ethics clearance before the start of the research because any material collected without clearance will not be accepted for use in your research essay or thesis. For most students, this means thinking about applying for ethics clearance simultaneously with the formulation of the thesis or research essay proposal.

Ethics clearance is administered by the [Office of Research Ethics and Compliance](#).

## **16. Guidelines for the Preparation and Submission of Theses and Research Essays**

The guidelines for theses are stricter than those for research essays. Research essays can follow any of a variety of formats appropriate for an academic paper and can be prepared according to either MLA or Chicago conventions. Students are asked to confer with their supervisor regarding the specifics of how their essay ought to be formatted, since they may vary slightly from one supervisor to another.

Theses must be formatted in a manner consistent with rules set by Carleton University's Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs. For questions regarding the thesis format, see: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/thesis-forms-templates/>.

This document also contains information on the submission of thesis, and procedures for the thesis defense. For more on thesis submission and defense, see:

<http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/thesis-checklist/>; and  
<http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/defence-the-process/>

Students who have further questions about the thesis, including defense policies and procedures, are invited to ask the Film Studies Graduate Supervisor or their Thesis Supervisor.

## **17. MA Supervision: “Rules of the Road”**

### **The first meeting**

Upon acceptance of the thesis or MRP proposal, the student should contact their supervisor to arrange for a meeting. In the first meeting the supervisor should lay the groundwork for the supervision and inform the student about the responsibilities of the supervisor and the student. The supervisor should discuss the expectations the supervisor has and the different phases of writing an MRP or thesis. The student should also discuss their expectations of the supervision.

### **Supervision and responsibilities**

Supervision should be regular. This is the responsibility of both student and supervisor. In the first year, the contact between the student and the supervisor is usually more irregular, and it is up to the student to contact the supervisor when the student needs help, feedback or information. In the second year, when the student is writing an MRP or a thesis, it is the responsibility of both the supervisor and the student to ensure regular meetings. In the second year the student should not leave the supervisor's office without having a date and a time for the next meeting. This could be next week or next month, but it should be clear what the student's main job should be until the next meeting. It is important that the supervisor and the student agree on the expectations between meetings, so that both are prepared for the meetings.

### **The writing process**

The first job of the supervisor is to try to identify the needs of the individual student and help with structure, research, literature search, and the writing process, etc.

By the second year, meetings should be focused on detailed discussion of writing submitted by the student. It is the supervisor's responsibility to explain to the student what their expectations are for drafts, how far in advance they need to receive them before meeting, and the schedule by which the drafts will be produced and feedback given. If a student repeatedly fails to produce drafts according to the agreed upon schedule, this may result in a longer completion time (beyond the second year) for the MA and/or removal from the thesis or MRP stream.

### **Feedback**

The supervisor's primary job is to closely engage with the student's ideas and, through encouragement, motivation, and critical evaluation, help them hone their skills as researchers and writers. Feedback should be constructive and as clear as possible. In the first year the feedback is usually verbal, although sometimes a small log of the issues covered at meeting can be helpful both for supervisors and students. In the second year the feedback is usually written, mostly as feedback on drafts of chapters. It is important that this feedback - for example in the form of track changes in a document - should be returned within no longer than a week of the submission by the student. If the supervisor is not able to give feedback within a week the student should be informed immediately and a new deal should be made.

It is the student's responsibility to carefully and thoroughly consider the supervisor's feedback and to revise their drafts to reflect this. It is also the student's responsibility to

follow up with the supervisor if they have questions or concerns about the feedback (e.g. do not understand the supervisor's comments, do not know how to make the requested changes, disagree with feedback, etc.).

**If problems occur**

If problems occur, they should be discussed as soon as possible. These could be discussed in a meeting between the supervisor and the student and/or discussed with the grad supervisor or assistant director.

**Sabbaticals and leaves of absence**

Supervisors are required to continue their supervisions while on sabbatical, either in person or online. If a supervisor takes a (non-sabbatical) leave of absence, it is the supervisor's responsibility to discuss this with the student and the grad supervisor. Either the student should be given a new supervisor, or the supervisor agrees to continue the work of supervision as normal.

**Defense committee**

It is the supervisor's responsibility, with approval of the SSAC director, to decide on the composition of the examiner board for the thesis defence. For MRPs, it is the supervisor's responsibility to choose a second reader. In each case, this should be done to ensure that the student gets the examiners/readers that are best suited for their topic. These choices should be discussed at the regular faculty meetings to ensure appropriate assignments and evenly distributed workload.

