

MFA COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ADVISING, CRITIQUES, AND THESIS STRUCTURE FOR 2023-2024

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR MFA STUDENTS:

MFA students register for 300 credits (three courses at 100 credits each) per quarter. A total of 1800 credits, or eighteen courses, is required for the degree. MFA students take three courses per quarter in the autumn, winter, and spring quarters. The Humanities Division does not cover tuition for summer courses or for more than three courses per quarter in the regular academic year.

Your course requirements are made up of three components:

1. 900 units of ARTV 40000 (Graduate Studio Project, which includes the critique class)
2. 300 units of MFA Seminar (taken in your first year)
3. 600 units of Electives

TOTAL: 1800 units

Each component is described in detail below.

1. Graduate Studio Project, ARTV 40000 (9 Courses / 900 units)

Students are required to take a total of nine sections (or 900 hours) of ARTV 40000, Graduate Studio Project during their two years in DoVA. This requirement is met through a combination of sections 01 and 02 of ARTV 40000. The different sections are described below.

ARTV 40000 section 01 (aka Studio Hours) 500 units:

ARTV 40000 section 01 is a means for students to receive academic credit for the independent work they do in their studios. There is no formal class for students enrolled in section 01 to attend. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) assigns a pass/fail grade for ARTV 40000 section 01 in consultation with the full faculty, based on participation in individual studio visits and quarter-end critiques, as well as attendance at OPC lectures and other departmental events.

ARTV 40000 section 02 (aka Crit Class) 400 units:

Every autumn and winter quarter, a faculty member teaches ARTV 40000, section 02 (aka “crit class”) as a formal course for all first- and second-year students. ARTV 40000 02 does not meet in the spring quarter. The course is organized as a weekly critique. The faculty person teaching the class invites outside guests and other faculty to attend the critiques as needed. The course also serves as a potential venue for all faculty, students, and staff to gather for discussion and/or larger group critiques, if needed. **In 23-24, Catherine Sullivan will teach the fall section, and Laura Letinsky will teach the winter section.**

The pass/fail grade that students receive for ARTV 40000 02 in the autumn and winter quarter will be determined by their attendance, participation, and performance in the class.

2. MFA seminars, ARTV 39200 and ARTV 39901 (3 Courses / 300 Credit Hours)

Students are required to take the MFA seminar in the autumn, winter, and spring of their first year. **In 2023-24, Jessica Stockholder will teach the autumn seminar, Geof Oppenheimer will teach the winter seminar, and Matthew Jesse Jackson will teach the spring seminar.**

3. ELECTIVES (6 Courses / 600 Credit Hours)

Students are required to take a total of six graduate-level electives numbered 30000 and above. At least three must originate in departments outside of DoVA. Students may take more than three of their electives outside the department if they so choose. Electives can also be fulfilled with Independent Study (ARTV 39700), which is a one-on-one class with an individual member of the faculty. Please contact Alison with any questions about Independent Study or selecting elective courses.

SAMPLE COURSE SCHEDULE:

Below are two examples of how students might plan their first and second years of the program. Note that these examples only apply to our current first- and second-year students. Next year the options might be slightly different.

Please also note that courses marked with “**R**” are required, meaning that they must be taken in the quarter indicated.

Students have some flexibility in scheduling their electives, and they also have flexibility in scheduling 40000 01. For instance, in the second year, students will often take two electives in one quarter so that they can have one quarter with all studio hours (see example 2).

EXAMPLE 1

first year of MFA program

autumn	winter	spring
Crit Class-40000 02 (R)	Crit Class-40000 02 (R)	Studio Hours-40000 01
MFA seminar-39200 (R)	MFA seminar-39200 (R)	MFA seminar-39901 (R)
elective	elective	elective

second year of MFA program

autumn	winter	spring
Crit Class-40000 02 (R)	Crit Class-40000 02 (R)	Studio Hours-40000 01
Studio Hours-40000 01	Studio Hours-40000 01	Studio Hours-40000 01
elective	elective	elective

EXAMPLE 2

first year of MFA program

autumn	winter	spring
Crit Class-40000 02 (R)	Crit Class-40000 02 (R)	Studio Hours- 40000 01
MFA seminar-39200 (R)	MFA seminar-39200 (R)	MFA seminar-39901 (R)
elective	elective	elective

second year of MFA program

autumn	winter	spring
Crit Class-40000 02 (R)	Crit Class-40000 02 (R)	Studio Hours-40000 01
Studio Hours-40000 01	elective	Studio Hours-40000 01
elective	elective	Studio Hours-40000 01

ADVISING:

Students are required to sign up for an individual studio visit with all in-residence faculty at least twice over the course of the academic year. Students should meet with all of the faculty at least once before the end of the fall quarter.

Students should limit their meetings with each faculty person to a maximum of two per quarter. Please check the MFA orientation on Canvas to see which of the faculty are in residence and for instructions on how to sign up for appointments.

It is the student's responsibility to sign up for meetings in a timely manner. Faculty members are not obligated to create additional appointments if their schedule is full.

QUARTERLY CRITIQUES:

Please see the department calendar for the dates of these critiques.

Autumn:

The department will hold an end-of-summer critique **for second year students** early in the autumn quarter; **all MFA (first and second year) students are required to attend**. All faculty will attend, as schedules allow. For this critique, all faculty and students will travel together in one large group to visit and discuss the installed work.

The department will hold a quarter-end critique **for first year students** at the end of autumn quarter; **all MFA (first and second year) students are required to attend**. All faculty will attend, as schedules allow. For this critique, small groups of faculty and students will visit each artist in their installation space.

Students will also present their work throughout the quarter in the critique class (ARTV 40000 02).

Winter:

The department will hold a quarter-end critique **for second year students** at the end of the winter quarter; **all MFA (first and second year) students are required to attend**. All of the faculty will attend, as schedules allow. For this critique, small groups of faculty and students will visit each artist in their installation space.

Students will also present their work throughout the quarter in the critique class (ARTV 40000 02). Accepted and waitlisted applicants to the MFA program will be invited to attend this critique.

Spring:

Second year students will be reviewed at their group thesis exhibitions; all faculty members will attend, as schedules allow. Only the faculty and the student being reviewed will be present at these reviews.

The department will also hold a quarter-end critique **for first year students** at the end of spring quarter; **all MFA (first and second year) students are required to attend**. All faculty will also attend, as schedules allow. For this critique, all faculty and students will travel together in one large group to visit and discuss the installed work.

THE OPEN PRACTICE COMMITTEE:

Events organized by the Open Practice Committee are part of the MFA curriculum. The OPC coordinator will make every effort to program as many events on Monday evenings as possible; MFA students should keep that evening clear so that they can attend these required events.

MFA students are required to sign up for at least two studio visits per quarter with visiting artists brought in by the OPC. Students should also schedule at least one studio visit per year with the OPC coordinator.

Students should feel free to be in touch with the OPC coordinator to discuss their ideas for visiting artists. Students are also encouraged to participate in Cluster Talks, the department's student-run visiting artist program.

DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND FACULTY CONTACTS:

Students are encouraged to bring their questions and concerns to Alison LaTendresse or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), who can refer them to the appropriate faculty member as needed. In 2023-2024, the DGS is Laura Letinsky. Students may also bring concerns to the department's Point Person for Diversity and Inclusion. In 2023-2024, Catherine Sullivan and Alison LaTendresse share this role. Students are also free to ask academic and advising questions of any of the faculty.

TEACHING FELLOWS in the VISUAL ARTS:

Students will have an opportunity to apply for a Teaching Fellowship in the spring of their second year. **To qualify, students must have been a TA for at least six courses in the Department of Visual Arts.** Academic performance, citizenship within the department, and performance as a TA will be considered along with the strength of the application when awarding the teaching fellowships.

MFA ABSTRACT AND COMMITTEES (SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS ONLY):

The DGS will create two-person faculty committees (taking student requests into account). Each of these committees will work with two or three second year MFA students.

The MFA Abstract should be a 1000-word abstract of the student's project and work. It should be clear, concise, and written for a general audience. The following should be taken into account:

1. Include references to three major influences on your work. These influences might be historical events, things in the world, or work coming from other disciplines.
2. Trace the arc of your work over time letting us know how your work has come to be what it is now.
3. Describe the physical and visual character of your work, that is, its formal structure.
4. How do you believe that your work generates meaning for those who experience it? How does the formal character of the work intersect its meaning?
5. How do you see your work placed in the flow of art history? Do you feel that you need to carve out something new in that history, expand on what's already been done, or do very well something that is already well articulated by others?

This list of five subjects need not be addressed in order, and your response to these questions may be woven together.

A meeting schedule will be established by each committee toward the end of the autumn quarter. It is recommended that committees meet once a quarter. **The students provide the entire group (students and faculty) with their writings one week in advance of meeting times.**

The final version of the paper is due to Alison on the Monday of the 4th week of spring quarter (April 8, 2024). The final version will be distributed to all faculty in advance of the final review.

In consultation with their committee, students may also pursue an optional second MFA paper/writing project, the contours of which are open. The second paper would not replace the 1000-word abstract; it would be an additional piece of writing developed and directed by the student.

The final thesis will be posted on DoVA's wiki.

Graduate Student - Teaching Assistants in the Department of Visual Arts, 2023-2024

Graduate Student – TA General Information:

Graduate Student -TAs work a nominal 10 hours per week. Attendance at all scheduled classes for the duration of the class during the 9-week quarter is required for TAs as well as some time in advance of the quarter to allow for course preparation and/or grading, critiques, etc. during/following finals week to be discussed with the faculty advisor.

TAs should only assist faculty with tasks that are directly related to teaching the specific course to which they have been assigned. Faculty may have the ability to hire their TAs to do additional work that does not pertain directly to the class from their research account. Please note that TAs are not obliged to take on any additional responsibilities outside of the course.

Graduate Student - TA Responsibilities:

- TAs are responsible for managing Canvas, the university’s online learning management system, for faculty. This includes scanning and uploading articles and images as needed. Links for training and further details below, if needed.
- TAs must be comfortable using Zoom for online instruction, should the occasion to use Zoom arise. Please see below for information on training, if needed.
- TAs are responsible for reserving rooms and spaces for class critiques. Please see the wiki and your MFA orientation on Canvas for instructions on how to reserve the spaces that DoVA controls:

017 (basement installation space)
Logan Center Great Hallway (2nd floor)
Logan Center Courtyard Hallway (2nd floor)
Logan Center South Hallway (2nd floor)
Midway Studios Great Hall

If the instructor wishes to reserve any other space at the Logan Center, the TA can check its availability at <https://rooms.uchicago.edu/>

If the room is available, the TA should contact loganops@uchicago.edu to request it.

- TAs are responsible for reserving the A/V equipment, bringing it to the room, and ensuring it is in working order before class begins. It is the TAs responsibility to budget enough time to reasonably ensure that equipment will be set up and ready to go in time for class to begin. TAs are required to attend training sessions with the Logan Media Center in advance of beginning their TA positions so they will be well versed on projection equipment. Faculty members are responsible for informing their TAs of any equipment needs in a timely manner.
- Other duties may be assigned and those can vary by instructor and class.

There is an expectation that faculty and TAs meet early in the quarter to discuss the course, any additional responsibilities required, training needs for both faculty member and TA, how much prior notice is needed for pre-class set-up and other tasks, and communication expectations outside of the course. Should any concerns arise, it is the TAs responsibility to communicate these to the faculty member and/or program leadership immediately so that a remedy can be found.

Finally, TAs should understand that accepting a TA position is a serious responsibility and commitment. It is an important opportunity for professional development, pedagogical training, and it is also an opportunity to build relationships with DoVA faculty while observing their teaching strategies. Should there need to be any changes with the student's ability to complete their commitment to this role, the student must inform program leadership immediately to discuss further. Please note that a DoVA Teaching Fellowship currently requires students to have been a TA for at least 6 DoVA classes.

TAs will be asked to sign a copy of this policy before accepting their assignments for the year to acknowledge that they have read, understood, and agree to it.

Graduate Student - TAs Training:

- 1) Teaching assistants are required to register for and attend the [Teaching@Chicago](#) conference at the [Chicago Center for Teaching](#) (CCT). The CCT is an important resource for your professional development. If you're interested in a career in teaching, and/or you'd like to apply for the DoVA Teaching Fellowship, please take advantage of their resources while you're a student here.
- 2) TAs must also attend training sessions with the Media Center and Shops during orientation week; details about these mandatory sessions will follow.
- 3) TAs must also be comfortable assisting faculty in using Canvas and Zoom. Additional information about Canvas and online teaching can be found here: <https://courses.uchicago.edu/>

FINAL DRAFT

[2-20-20]

DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ARTS

MENTORING PLAN

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

As stipulated by the Provost and the Dean of the Humanities Division, this document has been drafted by the members of the Department of Visual Arts Mentoring Committee to assist in guiding students through our graduate MFA program.

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PREAMBLE

Graduate student mentoring in the Department of Visual Arts is shared by all of the faculty, and mentoring occurs across a broad spectrum of pedagogical structures. In 2007 the Department embraced this approach, and in the intervening years, it has become one of the Department's hallmarks. In place of a traditional "advising structure," students are required to interact face-to-face with all faculty in frequent and varied ways (as described below).

This structure has proven successful as it enables and enforces a high degree of interpersonal mentorship between students and faculty. This structure emphasizes breadth, and guarantees a high degree of distributed mentoring, while allowing for, and encouraging, the depth that comes with traditional one-on-one advising. As faculty often work collectively, this structure also allows for peer review and affords frequent opportunities for the discussion of didactic practice.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Initiation of Advising

When and how does advising and mentoring begin?

Mentoring begins when a graduate student enters the MFA program. All faculty members in residence are considered mentors to enrolled graduate students. Additionally, the first-year cohort takes one seminar each of three quarters with one of DoVA's faculty members. First and second year students take a critique class in the fall and winter quarter of each year.

Advising formally begins when a student is assigned two thesis advisors at the beginning of the second year of the MFA program.

Does the department help match students with academic advisors?

Yes, the Department assigns second-year students to work with two faculty advisors on a thesis committee based on student preference and availability of faculty.

Eligibility

Who in the department is eligible to serve as a thesis advisor?

Any faculty member in residence or instructional professor in residence.

What role do faculty external to the department or the University play in academic advising?

External faculty do not typically play any formal role in thesis committees, though students are encouraged to seek out a wide range of mentoring experiences throughout the university.

Responsibilities

What are the basic responsibilities of faculty?

Faculty provide verbal feedback concerning a student's work.

Faculty are available to provide career advice (whether in a more or less formal manner, depending on the student's preference).

Faculty are available for discussion outside of courses and critiques, either through regularly scheduled studio visits or by making an appointment.

Thesis advisors should meet with their advisees regularly during the second year (e.g., twice per quarter, or each month during the fall and winter quarters).

Faculty will report unsatisfactory progress toward the MFA degree to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Capacity and Distribution

How are advising and mentoring responsibilities distributed in the department?

All resident faculty can be understood to be student mentors, while each student has only two designated thesis advisors.

Oversight

What role does the department play in overseeing and facilitating thesis advising and faculty mentoring?

The Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair—with the assistance of the Associate Director of Programs and Student Affairs—are responsible for overseeing thesis advising and mentoring within the department. The thesis committee structure involves inherent oversight because faculty work in pairs on the committees.

TEACHING

How does the department's mentoring plan relate to pedagogy?

Each graduate student usually serves as a Teaching Assistant (TA) for three undergraduate courses offered within the department each year. The specific pedagogical demands of each course should be discussed in advance with the relevant faculty instructor. The instructor and the teaching assistant are strongly encouraged to meet both before the course begins and after its conclusion to discuss goals and evaluate performance.

As students prepare their dossiers for the Visual Arts Teaching Fellow position, they consult faculty and the Associate Director as needed.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Department makes available a wide range of opportunities and experiences designed to enhance key professional skills.

Studio Visits

Faculty are encouraged to invite groups of students to visit their studios and/or to discuss the faculty member's career trajectory.

External Grants and Fellowships

The Associate Director of Programs and Student Affairs—in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair—assists students with questions about external grants and fellowships (which are rarely available for MFA students). Additionally, the department subscribes all students to an opportunities list serve and sends out funding and residency information to that list regularly.

Service

What role do students in the department play on departmental committees or extra-departmental workshops?

Graduate students are encouraged to take an active role in departmental governance either by acting as a departmental student representative, or by consulting the designated student representative. DoVA currently enlists MFA students to serve on the following committees: Faculty Meeting MFA Representative, Cluster Talk Committee, Grad Council Committee, Interdepartmental Critique Coordinators, and the Dean's Student Advisory Group. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in extra-departmental workshops, such as the *Research and Visual Evidence (RAVE) workshop* and the *20th/21st Century workshop*, among many others.

How are student committee members or workshop coordinators mentored?

The Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair, as well as the Associate Director of Programs and Student Affairs, are available for consultation concerning student committee work.

Career Advising

How does the department deploy campus resources, such as UChicagoGRAD, to assist with academic and nonacademic career advising?

The Associate Director encourages students to take advantage of UChicagoGRAD's resources. Given that our students follow very diverse paths and have divergent interests, the department encourages them to ask for assistance that is tailored to their needs.

DEGREE PROGRESS

Academic Milestones

How does the department mentor students through the progress and completion of significant academic milestones and degree requirements?

The Department guides graduate students toward completion of their MFA degree requirements (course requirements, the MFA abstract, the Thesis Exhibition, and the Exhibition Review) by assigning a two-person thesis committee. This committee monitors a student's progress toward completion of all significant academic milestones, in consultation with the Associate Director, Director of Graduate Studies, the Chair, and the faculty.

How does the department ensure fair assessments of student progress at different milestones?

The Department meets collectively at the one-year mark and again before final conferral of degree in the second year to assess a student's progress.

Protections

What protections are in place to guard students from getting off track?

The Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair consult with a student formally if they believe that the student has gotten off track. Typically, first efforts to guide the student forward will be informal in character; if the problem(s) persist, then a formal meeting will be held with relevant stakeholders, including the Director of Graduate Studies, the Chair and (potentially) the student's advisors and/or the Dean of Students.

Reviews

When and how often does the department formally review student progress?

The Department meets collectively at the one-year mark and again before final conferral of degree in the second year to assess a student's progress.

Who participates in formal reviews of student progress?

All line faculty in residence and all instructional professors in residence.

How does the department ensure objective evaluations of student progress?

The Department discusses the progress of students collectively and agrees collectively on the appropriate, objective evaluation of each student's progress.

How are reviews conducted?

Reviews are conducted verbally.

How are the results of reviews conveyed to students?

If the results of the review are broadly positive, the student receives no specific communication from the department. If the results are broadly negative, the student will be requested to meet with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair to discuss the results of the departmental review.

What process, policies, and practices does the department employ for counselling a student out of its program?

Such a process is rare in our department.

If a student's progress becomes prohibitively deficient, the Chair will call a meeting of the line faculty to discuss the appropriate measures to ensure progress. The student will then be requested to meet with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair to agree upon an appropriate path forward to ensure adequate progress toward the MFA degree. If progress continues to be deficient, the student will be placed on

academic probation with stated expectations and timeline to return to good academic standing. If that does not occur, the student will be withdrawn from the program.

Faculty Accountability

How does the department assess the quality of its mentoring?

As faculty work collectively in relationship to mentoring and gather frequently through the year, they often have opportunities to discuss and assess mentoring.

What measures does the department use to ensure faculty are accessible, available, and responsive advisors?

Such a problem is rare in our department because of our clear mentoring, advising, and curricular structure. On the rare occasion that it occurs, the Chair intervenes.

What role does student feedback play?

Students are encouraged to contact the Associate Director, who communicates with the Chair as needed.

ADDITIONAL FORMS OF MENTORING

What other forms of mentoring does the department employ?

Departmental Activities

Students are required to attend Open Practice Committee events. They are further encouraged to be actively engaged in these events and to take advantage of studio visits offered through Open Practice Committee programming. Our MFA candidates are encouraged to take the initiative in proposing original and/or experimental programming and/or activities. The department is emphatically open to suggestions concerning experiences that MFAs believe would be beneficial to their education.

Most years a faculty member will organize a travel seminar for the first-year cohort.

What extracurricular activities, both intellectual and social, exist for interaction between all students and faculty in the department?

The Department organizes various parties where students and faculty can socialize together. First year MFA students are also involved with the admissions process and participate with faculty in interviews and in deliberations.

Peer Mentoring

Does the department engage in peer mentoring, matching new students with advanced students?

MFAs and BAs can enter into voluntary mentoring relationships, facilitated by the department.

Alumni Mentoring

Does the department create opportunities for current students to interact with alumni (either within or beyond the academy)?

The department offers an annual alumni talk through the Open Practice Committee. Current students are encouraged to interact with our past students at such events, both formally and informally.

Professional Mentoring

Does the department have any programs to bring current students into contact with other professionals beyond the academy?

The department offers a robust schedule of public and departmental critiques, lectures, and related events throughout the year. These occasions offer students the opportunity to engage with professionals from the artworld and from other academic institutions.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Communication

How does the department disseminate mentoring information to new and continuing students, including at departmental new student orientations?

The Associate Director and the Faculty conduct a formal orientation event, and the Associate Director maintains a wiki with resources and consults students on how these resources can be improved to better meet their needs.

Diverse Backgrounds

What effort does the department make to help students from diverse backgrounds—including international students, underrepresented minority students, first-generation students, and students with disabilities—acclimate and succeed?

The Associate Director makes students aware of Student Disability Services, The Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, The Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture, The Center for Identity + Inclusion, Student Support Services, and various other resources that are available to them, including programs through UChicagoGRAD and the Bursar's office to mitigate food insecurity and other financial pressures. The Division of the Humanities Dean of Students Office also employs an Assistant Dean of Students for Diversity and Inclusion who can be helpful in identifying resources and measures of support.

FACULTY SUPPORT

Communication

How does the department disseminate information about mentoring to current faculty?

The yearly faculty retreat is the formal mechanism for disseminating information about current mentoring strategies among the faculty.

How will it make new faculty aware of its mentoring policies and practices?

The department will share the mentoring policy with new faculty.

Recognition

How does the department recognize good mentoring?

Our critique structure lends itself to self-awareness concerning issues of mentoring.

AMENDMENTS TO MENTORING PLAN

What procedures will the department use for an annual evaluation of the mentoring plan and for making updates to it?

The mentoring plan will be distributed annually, along with the curriculum and TA policy, for faculty to evaluate. Faculty may also suggest changes to the policy at any time, to be discussed at a quarterly faculty meeting or at the yearly retreat.