Women and Gender Studies Program
George Mason University

Graduate Student Handbook
MAIS Program with Concentration in
Women and Gender Studies
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**MAIS in Women and Gender Studies Requirements**

**Requirements at-a-Glance**

- Two core courses (6 credits): WMST 630, Feminist Theory across the Disciplines, and WMST 640, Women and Global Issues
- 12 credits in disciplinary focus, including at least 3 credits in a course related to the study of women and gender (The discipline is chosen in consultation with an advisor.)
- 9 to 12 credits of elective courses, including at least 6 credits in including at least 6 credits in courses that address the study of women and gender and that are not part of the disciplinary focus.
- One course (3 credits) of research methods, selected in consultation with an advisor.
- 1 credit of proseminar: MAIS 796
- 1 credit of proposal: MAIS 797

**Understanding the Requirements**

To complete the MAIS degree, you must take a total of 36 graduate credits. The majority of Mason courses carry 3 credits. That means you will take 10 to 11 courses for a total of 30 to 33 credits and complete the thesis or project (including the MAIS proseminar and proposal writing courses) for a total of 3 to 6 credits. You are strongly encouraged to take the proseminar within the first year of your enrollment. Two of your courses are required and the rest are yours to choose, within the stated parameters.

**Required Courses**

- WMST 630, Feminist Theory across the Disciplines (offered each Fall)
- WMST 640, Women and Global Issues (offered each Spring)

**Focusing on Courses in the Discipline (Foundations, Breadth)**

Graduate work in Women and Gender Studies differs from undergraduate work in that it allows you to specialize in a specific disciplinary approach to questions of women, gender, and sexuality. The MAIS degree requires that you gain a strong foundation in a discipline of your choice. You may choose any discipline offered at Mason (e.g., history, literature, sociology, anthropology, public policy, arts, etc.) as your anchor for studying the issues of women, gender and sexuality. You are required to take four courses in the chosen discipline. In the first three courses, there need not be a gender component. For instance, you may consider a

- Theory course in the discipline (e.g., “Theories of Conflict Analysis and Resolution”)
- Regional or historical perspective (e.g., “Global Migration”)
- Topic focus (e.g., “Human Rights Theory and Practice”)


A gender component is required for the fourth course. For example, “Gender and Conflict.” Exceptions must be approved in advance by the Graduate Director.

**Note:** The examples are given for the discipline “Conflict Analysis and Resolution to illustrate how you might structure the coursework in the discipline. You are free to choose any discipline.

**Electives (Breadth, Focus, Thesis Work)**
The electives you choose will allow you to gain a breadth of knowledge in Women and Gender Studies and/or to strengthen your area of specialization. We definitely recommend this to students who have no prior degree in Women and Gender Studies. For example, you may use the electives to start the literature review for your Master’s thesis or project.

- Elective 1: A gender-related elective that is *not* in your chosen discipline.*
- Elective 2: Another gender-related elective that is *not* in your chosen discipline.*
- Elective 3: Free choice

*These electives can be either WMST courses or any other graduate courses on women, gender or sexuality. If you choose a course other than a WMST code, keep in mind that it must have a significant gender-related content and that it has to be approved in advance by the Graduate Director.

**Other Important Notes**
**Selecting Your Courses**
You generally do not need your advisor’s or graduate director’s approval before registering for courses, but you are encouraged to seek advice. The approval is necessary when taking gender-related courses offered by other departments.

**Advising**
The graduate director serves as your interim advisor until you establish an advising relationship with your prospective thesis chair. By at least the beginning of the second year you should choose an advisor who will serve as your thesis chair. The graduate director and your advisor can offer advice about the process of choosing a discipline of focus, developing your research project, establishing your thesis committee, and any graduate policies. Keep in mind that your needs will be served best if you take an active role in soliciting advice.

**Independent Studies**
As you advance in your graduate education and start preparing for your thesis work, you may find that no courses are offered in the particular area of specialty you are interested in. At this point, you should consider the option of taking an independent study course with a professor who specializes in your area of interest. Note that any arrangement of independent studies is at the professor’s discretion.
Summer Courses
We do not offer graduate courses during the summer. If you want to take a summer course, you have two options:
• Take a course at a different institution through the University Consortium
• Take an undergraduate course as an independent study (see below).

Undergraduate/Graduate Credit
Only graduate credits count as fulfilling the MAIS requirements. If you would like to take an undergraduate course that fits your area of interest, ask the professor teaching the course to allow you to take the course as a graduate independent study. Keep in mind that only some instructors are able to offer independent studies; they usually have the word “Professor” somewhere in their titles.

Envisioning Your Thesis/Project
Start envisioning your thesis or project work right away and use your hunch about it to anchor your selection of courses. Your thinking about the thesis or project will become more serious and focused as you progress in your coursework. Begin developing your thesis project at the end of your first year. Try to work on some parts of the thesis in the scope of your second year coursework.

University Requirements for Master's Degrees – from the University Catalog
Candidates must satisfy all applicable university degree requirements and all requirements established by the master’s program faculty. Individual departmental degree requirements are listed under the respective master’s programs in this catalog. Programs may impose more stringent requirements.

• Admission. Candidates must have been officially admitted into degree status.
• Credit Hours. Candidates must earn a minimum of 30 graduate credits.
• Credit Level. Only graduate courses may apply toward the degree.
• Institutional Credit. The majority of the credits applied to the degree must be earned at Mason or, in the case of programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortial arrangements, at the participating institutions.
• Residency. A minimum of 18 credits must be taken in degree status, after admission to the degree program.
• Thesis/Project Limits. A maximum of 6 credits of master’s thesis research (799) or master’s project may be applied to the degree.
• Quality. Candidates must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 in course work presented on the degree application, which may include no more than 6 credits of C. (Grades of C+, C-, or D do not
apply to graduate courses. The GPA calculation excludes all transfer courses and Mason nondegree studies credits not formally approved for the degree.)

Thesis Options
Requirements regarding a thesis vary with the degree program. A number of master’s programs offer both thesis and nonthesis options. The same quality of work is expected of students regardless of their chosen option. For more information, consult the section on degree requirements under each degree program.

Time Limit
Master’s degree students have six years from the time of first enrollment as a degree-seeking student to complete their degrees. Individual master’s programs may have stricter time limits, which are published in this catalog. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status also have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information. Students who are given permission to re-enroll following an absence from Mason may not count the six-year time limit as beginning on the date of re-enrollment. Students who will not meet published time limits because of circumstances beyond their control may petition for an extension. Failure to meet the time limits or to secure approval of an extension request may result in termination from the program.

Master's Thesis
When a thesis proposal has been approved by the appropriate department, the department chair sends the collegiate dean or director a copy of the thesis proposal, including the approval signatures of the master’s thesis committee members. Students may enroll in thesis research (799) at the beginning of the next semester. Students must register for a minimum of three credit hours in their first semester of 799. After that semester, students may enroll for one credit of 799 per semester and be considered full time, if the following requirement is met: the student, advisor and department chair must certify each semester that the student is working full time on the thesis. Please note: Master’s students must maintain continuous enrollment in 799 while writing and submitting a thesis. Graduation candidates who miss the library deadline for thesis submission, but do submit officially before the next semester begins, do not have to register for 799 in that next semester, but must stay active to graduate.

The master’s thesis committee is composed of at least three members of the graduate faculty, at least two of whom must be from the student’s department or program. Committee members are appointed by the chair or director of the academic unit or program, or designee, after consultation with the student’s adviser and the student.

The thesis committee chair is primarily responsible for directing the candidate’s research and writing activities. The student is responsible for keeping all committee members informed of the scope, plan, and progress of the research as well as the writing of the thesis.

Students selecting the thesis option should obtain a copy of Mason’s Thesis, Dissertation, or Project Guide, which is available at thesis.gmu.edu. Students may register in 799 only after their thesis proposal has been submitted and approved as prescribed in the guide. Any student not in attendance at Mason who is preparing a thesis under the active supervision of a member of the faculty or wishes to take an exam must maintain continuous registration in 799 for at least 1 credit per semester.
Thesis Submission

The university has a policy on the dissemination of scholarly works created by graduate students. The Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETDs) program encourages masters-level graduate students to submit an electronic copy of their thesis for broad scholarly dissemination through the Mason Archival Repository Service (MARS). Student participation in the ETDs program is strongly encouraged, but not mandatory. All students choosing to participate in this program will be required to sign the MARS Author/Contributor Permission Agreement.

On or before the thesis deadline for any semester, the student will submit a complete (signed Signature Sheet through Curriculum Vitae) 100% cotton copy of his or her thesis to the University Libraries along with a transmittal sheet. The student may also opt to submit an electronic copy of his/her thesis. These submissions can be in Word, WordPerfect, or in portable document format (PDF). Media formats (tiff, jpeg, png, wav, avi, mpeg, mov, rm, wmv, wma, etc.) for supporting materials will also be accepted. Datasets may be accepted at the discretion of the libraries. The files may be submitted on CD, DVD, or USB memory device. Please note that those students opting out of the ETDs program are required to submit two 100% cotton copies of their thesis.

For degree conferral in a particular semester, the above materials must be submitted to the library by 5 p.m. on the last Friday of classes in that semester. For specific deadlines and other information, go to registrar.gmu.edu.

Mason Graduate Policies -- From the University Catalogue

Graduate Council

The Graduate Council is the governing body for all graduate academic policies and procedures. The council approves all new graduate programs; authorizes all graduate course work, policies, and degrees conferred by the university; and sets minimum standards for admission to and graduation from any graduate program. These are minimum standards that all programs must meet; individual programs may set and enforce higher standards. The Office of the Provost administers university graduate policies for the Graduate Council.

Graduate Faculty

The graduate faculty consists of all George Mason University tenured and tenure-track faculty. Other Mason faculty members, as well as individuals from outside the university, may be appointed to the graduate faculty by the Provost for a specified duration of time.

Student Classification

Students may access graduate classes and programs according to their status as non-degree or enrolled degree students. For more information, see the Admission chapter of this catalog.

Full-Time Classification

Graduate students are considered full time if they are enrolled in at least 9 graduate credits per semester or hold a full-time assistantship (20 hours a week) and are enrolled in at least 6 graduate credits per semester.
Master’s students may enroll in 1 credit of 799 and be considered full time only if they have completed 3 credits of 799 and the student along with their advisor and department chair certify each semester that the student is working full time on the thesis. See the Master’s Thesis section for more information regarding 799.

Doctoral students who are enrolled in dissertation credits (either 998 or 999) are considered full time if they are enrolled in at least 6 credits per semester, regardless of whether they hold an assistantship. Doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy and have completed the minimum number of credits required by the university and their degree program, including the minimum number of credits of 998 and 999, are considered full time if they are registered for at least 1 credit of 999 and the student along with their advisor and department chair certify each semester that they are working full time on the dissertation. See the Dissertation Registration section for more information regarding 998 and 999.

To be considered as full time under the aforementioned clauses, a student must complete and submit the appropriate forms to the Office of the Registrar prior to the first day of classes for the semester.

Note that different criteria for full-time status may apply for tuition, verification, loan deferral, and financial aid. Contact Student Accounts, the Registrar’s Office, and Student Financial Aid, respectively, for more information.

**Academic Advising**

When a student is admitted to graduate study, the student is assigned a faculty advisor by the academic program responsible for the student’s program of study. Registration for newly admitted graduate students, as well as continuing students, begins with a visit to the student’s academic advisor. There, the student can obtain information about specific courses and degree requirements and develop an individual program of study. Progress in an approved program of study is the shared responsibility of the student and the advisor. The graduate student is responsible for compliance with the policies and procedures of the college, school, or institute, and all applicable departmental requirements that govern the individual program of study. Students should consult with their advisors before registration each semester.

**Student Status**

**Change from Non-degree Status**

A student admitted for graduate study in non-degree status may apply to obtain degree status within the same program. All admission requirements (as usually defined by the student’s program for degree status) must be met, including official transcripts and letters of recommendation. If the student intends to use credits earned in non-degree status toward a degree, the credits must be approved on the Graduate Transfer of Credit Request form. The credit must have been earned within six years prior to first enrollment as an admitted student in the specific certificate or degree program, and a minimum grade of B (3.00) must have been earned. There is a limit on the number of credits that can be transferred when changing from non-degree to degree status; please see the applicable degree program for specific information.

**Removing Provisional Qualifier**
For policies concerning students admitted provisionally, see the Graduate Admission Policies section in the Admission chapter of this catalog.

**Permission to Re-Enroll**

Permission to re-enroll in a program must be obtained by all master’s and doctoral degree students who have failed to enroll in at least 1 credit of course work for two or more consecutive semesters at Mason. A program may allow a student to petition to graduate under any catalog in effect while the student was enrolled. All program components, including concentrations, must appear in the catalog for the year selected. The final decision as to catalog year rests with the unit dean or director. Forms are available from the Office of the Registrar at registrar.gmu.edu/forms.

**Voluntary Resignation from Graduate Academic Program**

Degree-seeking students may officially resign from their academic program with the approval of their department or program chair and their dean. The Voluntary Resignation form must be approved by the student’s program and Student Accounts, then submitted to the Registrar’s Office for notation on the transcript. Resignations after the drop period will result in grades of W on the student’s transcript for that semester, and removal from any future registered courses. Program resignation is final. Students who have been granted a resignation will not be able to register for any courses unless admitted to another degree program or non-degree status in a different program.

**Credit by Exam or From Other Institutions**

**Credit by External Exam**

Degree credit for satisfactory completion of an external exam is limited to those exams and achievement levels specifically approved by the Graduate Council.

**Transfer of Credit**

Graduate credit earned prior to admission to a certificate, master’s, or doctoral program may be eligible to be transferred into the program and applied to the certificate or degree. Transfer of credit requires the approval of the program director and dean or director of the school, college, or institute. They will determine whether the credit is eligible for transfer and applicable to the specific certificate or degree program. Note that credits accepted for transfer do not compute into any Mason GPA. Limits on the number of credits that can be transferred derive from the degree requirements given below.

Credit is usually considered for transfer at the student’s request at the time of initial registration as a degree-seeking student. Students must supply official transcripts. For transcripts from outside the United States, students must supply an official transcript evaluation and an official translation for transcripts not in English if these documents were not supplied in the admission process. Credit transfer requests from students who are admitted provisionally are not considered until they have fulfilled the conditions of their admission and the provisional qualifier has been removed from their records.

To be eligible for transfer credit, the credit must be graduate credit earned at another accredited university, earned at another institution and recommended for graduate credit in the American Council on Education guidebook, or earned at Mason while in a non-degree status or enrolled through extended studies. The credit must have been earned within six years prior to first enrollment as an admitted student in the specific certificate or degree program, and a minimum grade of B (3.00) must have been
earned. The course must be applicable toward a degree at the institution offering the course. Extension and in-service courses that are not intended by the institution offering the courses to be applied to a degree program are not eligible for transfer credit to Mason. The credits cannot have been previously applied toward a degree at another institution or Mason; however, up to 3 credits previously applied to a degree program at another institution may be transferred into a certificate program at Mason.

**Reduction of Credit**

The number of credits required by a doctoral, master of fine arts, or master’s program of more than 39 credits may be reduced on the basis of a previously earned master’s degree. Reduction of credit requires the approval of the program director and the dean or director of the school, college, or institute. They determine whether the credits are eligible for reduction of credit and applicable to the degree program and the number of credits to be reduced. Reduction of credit is limited to a maximum of 30 credits in a doctoral program, 20 in an MFA program, and 18 in the MA in psychology concentration in school psychology, and derive from the degree requirements given below.

Students requesting a reduction of credit must supply official transcripts. For transcripts from outside the United States, students must supply an official transcript evaluation and an official translation for transcripts not in English if these documents were not supplied in the admission process. Reduction-of-credit requests from students who are admitted provisionally are not considered until the students have fulfilled the conditions of their admission and had the provisional qualifier removed from their records.

Credits used in reduction of credit are not subject to time limits, and the credits must have been applied to a previous degree. All the other conditions given above for eligibility of transfer of credit apply also to reduction of credits.

**Permission to Study Elsewhere**

Students enrolled in a degree program may take graduate courses at another accredited institution and apply these credits to a master’s or doctoral degree with prior approval. Approval must be secured in writing from the director of the graduate program and the dean or director of the school, college, or institute, and submitted to Mason’s Office of the Registrar before registering at the other institution. Upon completion of the course, students must arrange for an official transcript to be submitted to Mason so that the credits may be transferred into their Mason degree program. These credits are subject to all the other conditions given above for transfer credit, including limits on numbers of credits that can be taken elsewhere. Note that credits accepted for transfer do not compute into any Mason GPA.

Permission to take a course elsewhere does not exempt a graduate student from satisfying the degree requirements given below.

Enrolled, degree-seeking graduate students may be eligible to take a limited number of courses through the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. See the University Consortium section in the Registration, Attendance, and Grading chapter of this catalog. Credits earned through the consortium are considered resident, not transfer, credits, and are therefore not subject to transfer of credit conditions or limitations.

**Graduate Grading**

University course work is measured in terms of quantity and quality. A credit normally represents one hour per week of lecture or recitation, or not fewer than two hours per week of laboratory work,
throughout a semester. The number of credits is a measure of quantity. The grade is a measure of quality. The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
<th>Graduate Courses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>Satisfactory*/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory/Failing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Although a B- is a satisfactory grade for a course, students must maintain a 3.00 average in their degree program and present a 3.00 GPA on the courses listed on the graduation application.

**Consortium Services**

Check out the website for full consortium details: [http://registrar.gmu.edu/consortium/index.html](http://registrar.gmu.edu/consortium/index.html)

**Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area (CUWMA)**

George Mason University is a cooperating member of the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. Full participating members included in the Consortium are:

- American University
- The Catholic University of America
- Corcoran College of Art + Design
- Gallaudet University
- Georgetown University
- George Mason University
- The George Washington University
- Howard University
- Marymount University
- National Defense Intelligence College
- National Defense University
- Trinity College
- University of the District of Columbia
- University of Maryland College Park

Joint Military Defense College and the National Defense University are not yet participating in cross-registration.
Eligible students are provided the opportunity to benefit from the offerings of member institutions and to enroll for courses at any of the participating institutions. Students register and pay tuition at their home institution for all consortium courses.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1. What is the Consortium for cross-registration?
- 2. Where do I go for more information about the program?
- 3. How can I find out what courses are offered at other institutions?
- 4. Can I take as many courses as I would like through the Consortium?
- 5. Is there a deadline for turning in the paperwork?
- 6. What tuition do I pay?
- 7. What about my grade?
- 8. Can I audit a course through the Consortium?
- 9. If I am an Air Force ROTC student, how do I register for courses within the AFROTC program?
Areas of Research Specialization
Women and Gender Studies Faculty

The Women and Gender Studies program encourages applications from students who want to pursue interdisciplinary research on women and gender in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and policy studies. Our program has more than 50 faculty members who examine gender issues working on a wide range of topics and with various disciplinary and theoretical approaches. We have particularly strong concentrations of faculty in History and Art History, Sociology and Anthropology, and English. Yet, what make our program unique are the following interdisciplinary fields of research on women and gender. All faculty listed here may serve as thesis chairs and thesis committee members for our MA program in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Women and Gender Studies.

Faculty Areas of Specialization

Our program has more than 50 faculty members who examine gender issues working on a wide range of topics and with various disciplinary and theoretical approaches. We have particularly strong concentrations of affiliated faculty in History and Art History, Sociology and Anthropology, and English. Yet, what makes our program unique are the following interdisciplinary fields of research on women and gender. All faculty listed here may serve as thesis chairs and thesis committee members for our MA program in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Women and Gender Studies. A list is provided here, but information is also available on our website (http://wmst.gmu.edu/faculty/fields-of-research)

Arts, Visual Culture, and Media
Carbonneau, Suzanne
Christensen, Julie A.
Constantine, Lynne
Deshmukh, Marion
Fuchs, Cynthia
Gilbert, Paula
Hanrahan, Nancy
Karametou, Maria
Lont, Cynthia
McNeely, Connie
Miller, Jennifer
Muir, Janette
Ricouart, Janine
Sandell, Renee
Scott, Suzanne
Todd, Ellen
Yocom, Margaret
Communication, Language and Gender
Taylor, Anita

Education
Baily, Supriya
Gorski, Paul
Sandell, Renee

Adult and Continuing Education
Non-formal education
Baily, Supriya
Reybold, Earle

Higher Education
Bernard, Elizabeth
McNeely, Connie
Reybold, Earle

Ethnicity, Race, and/or Religion
Censer, Jane
Cherubin, Rose
Dakake, Maria Massi
Fuchs, Cynthia
Gorski, Paul
Harvey, Tamara
Hattery, Angie
Hughes Rinker, Cortney
Karametou, Maria
Kirsch, Vicki (spirituality)
Lindley, Lisa
McNeely, Connie
Portillo, Shannon
Rabin, Lisa
Reybold, Earle
Richards-Jordan, Yevette
Snyder-Hall, R. Claire
Vivancos-Perez, Ricardo

Feminist Theory
Cherubin, Rose
Constantine, Lynne
Hanrahan, Nancy
Harvey, Tamara
Kaplan, Deborah
Kirsch, Vicki
Miller, Jennifer
Scott, Suzanne
Snyder-Hall, R. Claire
Vivancos-Perez, Ricardo
Yocom, Margaret

Feminist Communication Theory
Taylor, Anita (Emeritus)

Feminist Standpoint Epistemology
Peters-Burton, Erin
Hattery, Angie

Globalization and/or Human Rights
Baily, Supriya
Burt, Jo-Marie
Chen, Cher Weixia
Gilbert, Paula
Hamdani, Sumaiya
Harvey, Tamara
Hattery, Angie
Hirsch, Susan
McNeely, Connie
Richards-Jordan, Yevette
Robles, Andrea
Sandole-Staroste, Ingrid
Seligmann, Linda
Vivancos-Perez, Ricardo

See also the related Gender Justice Research Community, which meets regularly every semester and supports collaborations between graduate students and faculty members. The current group coordinator is Marisa Allison (malliso6@gmu.edu).

Health/Health Promotion
Hughes Rinker, Cortney
Lindley, Lisa

Historical Perspectives
Cherubin, Rose
Harvey, Tamara
Rabin, Lisa
Usher, Bethany  
Gender in 19th Century US  
Censer, Jane  
Koch, Lisa  
Lockwood, Samaine  
Synder-Hall, R. Claire

International Research and Transnational Perspectives
Next to a very strong contingent of faculty who focus on gender in American culture and on multiculturalism and social justice in the United States, our faculty members have conducted research on women and gender in a variety of global settings and have the following regional expertise:

**Europe**
Christensen, Julie  
Gilbert, Paula  
Karametou, Maria  
Ricouart, Janine  
Sandole-Staroste, Ingrid  
Vivancos-Perez, Ricardo

**Canada, Francophone World**
Gilbert, Paula  
Ricouart, Janine

**Latin America**
Burt, Jo-Marie  
Rabin, Lisa  
Seligmann, Linda  
Vivancos-Perez, Ricardo

**Middle East/Arab World**
Amireh, Amal  
Dakake, Maria Massi  
Hamdani, Sumaiya  
Hughes Rinker, Cortney

**Africa**
Cheldelin, Sandra I.  
Hirsch, Susan  
Richards-Jordan, Yevette
Central Asia
Christensen, Julie
Sandole-Staroste, Ingrid

East Asia
Chen, Cher Weixia

South and Southeast Asia
Baily, Supriya

Internet and Web Based Research
Joshua G. Rosenberger

Methods
Qualitative and quantitative study design, data analysis and interpretation
Joshua G. Rosenberger
Robles, Andrea

Public Policy, Law, and Politics
Baker, Ann
Burt, Jo-Marie
Cattaneo, Lauren
Cheldelin, Sandra
Chen, Cher Weixia
Cohen, Janice
Hirsch, Susan
McNeely, Connie
Muir, Janette
Portillo, Shannon
Regan, Priscilla
Travis, Toni-Michelle

Sexuality
Amireh, Amal
Kirsch, Vicki
Lindley, Lisa
Ricouart, Janine
Scott, Suzanne
Vivancos-Perez, Ricardo

Adolescent Sexuality
Joshua G. Rosenberger
Men’s Sexuality
Joshua G. Rosenberger

LGBT Sexual Development
Joshua G. Rosenberger

Sexual risk taking behaviors (HIV/STI)
Joshua G. Rosenberger

Violence
Burt, Jo-Marie
Cattaneo, Lauren
Cheldelin, Sandra
Eby, Kim
Gilbert, Paula
Hattery, Angie
Hodges, Devon
Kirsch, Vicki
Scott, Suzanne
Vivancos-Perez, Ricardo

Women and War/Violence
Cheldelin, Sandra I.
Fuchs, Cynthia

Women’s Writing and Literature
Amireh, Amal
Burr, Zofia
Christensen, Julie
Gilbert, Paula
Harvey, Tamara
Kaplan, Deborah
Kirsch, Vicki
Koch, Lisa
Lockwood, Samaine
Michals, Teresa
Rabin, Lisa
Ricouart, Janine
Samuelian, Kristin
Scott, Suzanne
Tichy, Susan (particularly interested in working with students interested in poetry)
Vivancos-Perez, Ricardo
THESIS AND PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Overview

The 36-credit MAIS Program in Women and Gender Studies (link: http://wmst.gmu.edu/programs/la-mais-isin-wmst/requirements/) is concluded with a final 1- to 4- credit project (MAIS 798) or 4 credit thesis (MAIS 799). Since the project or thesis is the culminating work in the interdisciplinary degree, it should draw upon the course work and the two disciplines studied by the individual student: Women and Gender Studies and the student's discipline of focus.

George Mason University's Thesis, Project and Dissertation Guide (http://thesis.gmu.edu) states: "The thesis, dissertation, or project should demonstrate a student's ability to carry out independent research. This research should be closely related to the student's general academic objectives and contribute creatively to knowledge."

Besides reflecting the student’s mastery of subject matter from course work taken throughout this interdisciplinary program, the project or thesis in Women and Gender Studies must also demonstrate the student’s ability to analyze data, independence of thought, and intellectual maturity. In addition, the project or thesis should demonstrate originality and creativity, and should be written in correct and fluent prose. All projects and theses require a formal proposal. Through this process students will have the ability to collaborate with faculty, scholars and other professionals engaged in the work of Women and Gender Studies.

The MAIS thesis or project in Women and Gender Studies should demonstrate student achievement of four objectives:

1. Synthesis of Women and Gender Studies approaches with other disciplines and fields represented in the student’s area of specialization.
2. Illustration of scholarly, creative and professional methods and standards appropriate for graduate-level work.
3. Understanding of theoretical foundations of Women and Gender Studies by drawing on terms and concepts examined in coursework.
4. Planning, research and completion of an original project or paper relevant to Women and Gender Studies.
The project and a thesis will not involve the same type of work. A major difference between a project and thesis is the applied nature of a project and the more theoretical nature of the thesis. The project is often an implementation of an idea or theory, whereas the thesis is original research designed to test a theory. Please refer to the sections below on Projects and Theses for more specific distinctions, information, and guidelines.

Preparing for the Thesis or Project
Registration for MAIS 798 (project) or MAIS 799 (thesis) is by Individualized Section form (http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/index.html). Registration is approved only after the following requirements have been met:

- The student has successfully completed 27 credits towards the MAIS degree.
- The student has received an S grade for MAIS 796 and MAIS 797.
- The Project or Thesis Proposal link: (http://mais.gmu.edu/graduate/proposals) is reviewed and approved by the student’s Project or Thesis Committee.
- Approved proposal has been submitted to the MAIS office during the semester preceding registration for MAIS 798 or 799 (contact the MAIS coordinator for the deadline).

All M.A. theses and projects must meet George Mason University requirements for the student's enrollment and committee formation, and formatting. In addition to the information here, students should refer to Mason's Thesis, Dissertation or Project Guide, http://thesis.gmu.edu.

All MAIS Theses and Projects must fall within MAIS degree requirements (http://mais.gmu.edu/programs/LA-MAIS-ISIN/requirements) as well as the requirements of the Concentration.

Any research involving human subjects must first be reviewed by the Human Subjects Review Board: http://research.gmu.edu/ORIA/InstitutionalReview.html

The Project/Thesis Committee
The student is responsible for the development of the project or thesis committee which consists of at least three members of Mason’s graduate faculty.

The committee chair is selected in consultation with the graduate advisor and director of the Women and Gender Studies Program. The committee chair must be a Women and Gender Studies faculty member (core or affiliate). The thesis or project committee chair is primarily responsible for directing the candidate’s research and writing activities. In addition to the chair at least one other committee member must be a Women and Gender Studies faculty member, and at least one member of the committee should be from the student’s disciplinary concentration. Note that Women and Gender Studies core faculty and affiliates whose primary departments are the student’s discipline of concentration are particularly well suited to serve on the committee. For example, a student whose discipline is Sociology would seek out a Women and Gender Studies faculty member (core or affiliate) who is a faculty member of the Sociology Department.
One committee member may be someone from outside the university with expertise in the topic of the thesis or project; in this case the non-Mason member must have a terminal degree in their field and be a researcher and/or a faculty member at another accredited institution. If the student chooses to do a project tied to another institution (e.g. a non-profit organization), the third member may be the project supervisor, provided that they have a terminal degree in their field.

The student is responsible for keeping all committee members informed of the scope, plan, and progress of the research as well as the writing of the thesis. The committee will jointly decide whether or not to meet in person, or to communicate only by phone, e-mail, etc., and whether to require a meeting with the student. Students should provide committee members with contact information (phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc.) and any modifications of the original time line, as necessary. Regular communication with each member of the committee throughout the project or thesis is advised.

**Thesis Guidelines and Requirements** (5 credits of MAIS 799).
The MAIS in Women and Gender Studies thesis is a formal paper of approximately 50 or 60 pages (depending on the number of credits) involving research and analysis. Students will choose a topic in collaboration with their advisor and committee. The thesis should include discussion of the student's theoretical basis, methods, findings and conclusions.

A thesis is original, independent research presented in the form of a scholarly document that has the potential to be published in a professional journal. A thesis is an unbiased examination of a research question, objective, or hypothesis followed by data collection and analysis, presentation of results, and specific recommendations for future study. Completion of a thesis involves planning and execution of an appropriate research design for the purpose of advancing the knowledge of a specific topic. The thesis will include a complete bibliography and documentation of source material within the text. A thesis is focused on issues of significance to the field(s) of interest chosen by the student, at the intersections of Women and Gender Studies and the student’s discipline of focus.

Faculty advisors will draw upon their own experiences in advising discipline-based masters students to provide direction and guidance to interdisciplinary masters students. Therefore the process and nature of the research will vary for each student in Women and Gender Studies. Students are urged to examine completed graduate theses on file at the Fenwick Library prior to beginning their own thesis research.

All theses must conform to formatting requirements of Mason University Libraries. See University Dissertation and Thesis Services: http://thesis.gmu.edu/

**Thesis Proposal**
Writing a detailed thesis proposal is the key to successful and timely completion of work. A discussion of ideas with each committee member prior to writing the proposal will help clarify the approach to be taken. The course in research methodology will help determine the method(s) for accomplishing the work that integrates the student’s interdisciplinary graduate curriculum.

During the semester preceding registration for MAIS 799, a student prepares a written proposal (approximately 15 pages). The proposal is revised until approved by the student’s three-person thesis
committee; this may require several revisions. The approved proposal, with all committee members’ signatures, is then submitted to the MAIS Program office. Theses proposals must be approved before a student can register for MAIS 799. Students should be aware of Women and Gender Studies and MAIS deadlines for approval and submission.

The thesis proposal should include the following:

1. A detailed description of the research problem or hypothesis to be addressed in the thesis, including an explanation of the appropriate methodology to be used.
2. A substantial, preliminary literature review of the current and past research related to the chosen topic, and the additional literature to be examined and presented in the final thesis.
3. A detailed explanation of the reasons for choosing the topic and how it relates to the student’s interdisciplinary education.
4. A time line for completion of the thesis that has been coordinated with the committee members prior to the proposal submission.

Approaches to the Thesis
Below are expectations for theses in different disciplines and areas of study. Note that these are guidelines and general expectations, and each student's committee and topic may determine additional or alternative approaches.

The Thesis
By Professor Mark Jacobs, Sociology and Cultural Studies, George Mason University

A thesis represents an original analysis of primary evidence that explores a research problem and its associated subproblems, as informed by traditions of scholarly inquiry. A research problem is something that scholars genuinely do not know; although it is often motivated by practical concerns, it is only indirectly translatable into purely practical terms. It may take the form of a puzzle, paradox, tension, contradiction, discrepancy, or anomaly, as well as a problem. Primary evidence is evidence that other scholars have not already interpreted for the student. Scholarly traditions—which exist in competition with each other—prescribe fundamental presuppositions about sets of core concepts, as well as proper methods and objects of inquiry.

Presentation of the thesis must be cogently argued and completely framed. Arguments are chains of claims and subclaims that address the research problem and its subproblems. Claims must be supported by warranted evidence and qualified so as not to overreach that evidence. Presentations are framed by their introductions, conclusions, and the point-sentences of the various sections. If the central claims, concepts, and themes that appear in each of the point sentences do not align with those that appear in the introduction and conclusion, the presentation is not properly framed. Introductions and/or conclusions must articulate the significance of research problems by demonstrating how they disrupt readers’ presuppositions; the deeper the disruption, the more significant the research. Introductions must at least foreshadow the major claims and subclaims; conclusions must summarize those claims and indicate their broader significance to research tradition(s).
Students should realize that inquiry and presentation are distinct processes. Inquiry is a circuitous, recursive, and serendipitous process of discovery that leads to reformulation of research problems. Formulations of research problems are always provisional, then, until the process of inquiry is complete. The student cannot write a proper introduction before discovering the final formulation of the central research problem at the very completion of the inquiry. (For similar reasons, the process of literature review is never complete until the inquiry is concluded, and satisfactory literature reviews can never result from simple mechanical searches.)

First drafts of theses are intended primarily to facilitate the process of inquiry. The task of presentation is to engage the reader’s attention and to communicate the author’s claims in the most effective and efficient manner. It requires the author to “think like a reader” rather than merely to rehearse the course of the inquiry. Although theses must identify methods of gathering and analyzing evidence, methodological discussions should not overwhelm the engaging and efficient communication of conclusions; “blow-by-blow” accounts of methods are to be avoided altogether, and minute methodological detail should be presented in footnotes and/or appendices.

Thorough revisions of theses are always required to accomplish those goals of presentation. Theses are evaluated according to the significance of their research problems, the cogency of their arguments, and their completeness of presentation.

Planning for Thesis Research

By Professor Stephen Fuller, School of Public Policy, George Mason University

Many research projects fail to achieve their objectives because they were not based on a carefully constructed research plan. Preparing this research plan, which takes the form of a thesis proposal, is a critical step in the process of doing any academic thesis. One of the benefits of the research plan is that it defines the magnitude of the effort required to complete the project. Also, the feasibility of the project will be tested in the process of developing this plan. Additionally, this process forces the researcher to answer two fundamental questions: is the topic researchable (and manageable) within the available time frame and does the researcher have the required methodological and analytical skills and knowledge to undertake the project?

The research plan should include the basic information to enable the thesis to succeed. All master’s level theses are designed to answer one or more research questions or test one or more hypotheses, no matter what discipline are the basis of the work. It is important to define the research question or hypotheses, no matter what disciplines are the bases of the work. It is important to define the research question or hypothesis narrowly enough so that it is clear what is included in the research and what is not, and when the research will be complete. Avoid compound questions.

One approach to defining the question that has proven successful is to frame an overall or primary question to be addressed or answered by the proposed research, and then to identify subsidiary questions that define the boundaries of the topic and whose separate answers combine to provide the basis for answering the overall research question. The research plan then can be structured around these
subsidiary research questions. For each question, the research plan should identify the data or information required to a responsive answer. Then, the sources of these data and information requirements need to be identified; where will this information be found? And, how will this information be collected? Is it in the library and requires only the careful preparation of note cards or is primary data collection through personal interviews or a survey?

Once the data are collected, how will they be analyzed or evaluated to develop a defensible response to the research question? Will quantitative or qualitative methods be used? This is a critical element of the research plan as the researcher is forced to think through the process of moving from a hypothesis or research question to a conclusion supported by facts and deductive reasoning. In answering the question--what analytical method will be used?--the researcher also must confront his or her analytical abilities and the need for additional preparation. This is the time to determine whether the deficiencies can be remedied. Finally, it is important to anticipate the results of the proposed research. What are the expected outcomes or research findings? These will provide a point of reference for assessing the contribution of the research.

A well thought out research plan does not guarantee a successful result, but it can greatly reduce the possibility of failure. The preparation of a research plan should resolve the hard methodological questions that could interfere with the project’s satisfactory conclusion. In the process of preparing the plan, the project scope is defined, data sources are identified, the analytical procedures are formulated, and the bibliography is prepared. With this as preparation, there should be no major surprises in undertaking this research.

Textual Research
By Professor Lynne M. Constantine, School of Art, College of Visual and Performing Arts, George Mason University

At some point in her or his graduate career, every graduate student will engage in textual or text-based research. Textual research includes such activities as studies of archival materials (including verbal, visual, auditory or multimedia texts; and encompassing both physical texts and virtual texts such as those found on the internet); reviews of the literature in a field; critical/analytical studies; scholarly reviews; theory development; the preparation of annotated bibliographies, scholarly translations, or critical editions of texts; and other specialized text-based activities in specific fields. For some students in the arts and humanities, text-based research will be the primary activity of their professional lives.

Some students who complete a master’s thesis in the MAIS with concentration in women and gender studies will choose a topic that requires use of textual research almost exclusively, particularly if the student’s background is in the arts or humanities. A project whose research questions can be explored primarily through textual research will have all the same concerns as one that asks questions requiring ethnographic study or survey research. It will still be necessary to define and refine a research question of some significance and specificity, as discussed in this handbook by Professor Mark Jacobs. It will also be necessary to define and carry out a specific and detailed research plan, as discussed in this handbook by Professor Stephen Fuller. However, in textual research there are so many types of and uses
for source materials that the handling of these materials requires it own plan, or at least an extended consideration within the overall research plan.

In preparing to do textual research, you must consider the following issues carefully:

**Sources:** If you are doing textual research, choosing textual materials that will help you answer your research question is the foundation of a good thesis. Sometimes, the research materials themselves come first: a group of poems that you want to study, or an archive of historical illustrations, or a particular film, has set you on a path of questioning that you want to deepen and broaden through systematic research. Other times, the question comes first, and then you must determine the source materials that will allow you to seek answers. Think carefully about the source materials you will be using for your study. How will you establish their value or importance to the question you are researching? If they are archival materials, do you have a clear sense of where they came from? If they are published texts, are you working with the definitive form of them, or were they published in several forms or editions? If you are using them to establish or support historical claims, how do you know they are good, valid, authentic sources of authority?

**Theory:** Theory provides a framework in which information gathered from research becomes meaningful in the production of knowledge. Therefore, you must consider carefully the role that theory will play in the research problem you are investigating. For most MAIS students concentrating in women and gender studies, feminist theory will play a crucial role both in selecting the research problem and in selecting the methodology of study; feminist theory may also help you evaluate the quality and implications of the answers you find.

**Methodology:** During your graduate studies, you have seen examples of and learned to use accepted methodologies of textual research. These methodologies might include semiotic analysis, deconstruction, psychoanalytic studies, biographical studies, discourse analysis, form and genre studies, contextual analysis (Marxist, feminist, postcolonial, queer), and various forms of historical analysis, studies of sources and influences, and discipline-specific technical methodologies. You will need to choose a methodology that can help you answer your research problem and that is applicable to the type of source material you are investigating. It should be a methodology with which you are familiar and whose rules of what counts as useful and valid evidence you understand.

As the arts and humanities have become increasingly interdisciplinary in their approaches to research problems, many students will explore the possibilities of combining textual methodologies with quantitative and qualitative methodologies usually associated with the social sciences, such as ethnographic fieldwork or survey research. It is important to respect the integrity of such methodologies, and gain a firm grounding in them before you attempt to incorporate them into your research projects.

**Genre:** How will findings of your research be presented? As a critical or analytical study? In the form of a critical translation? As an intervention into the theory surrounding your field of study? This decision will depend on the source materials you are using, the research question you are considering, and the conventions of the field in which you are working. Discuss your ideas about this decision carefully with the person directing your thesis. Find models of the type of writing you are planning to do.
All of these issues are important to consider as you work out your research problem and research plan with your thesis advisor. Be sure you have a firm grasp on them by the time you prepare your thesis proposal.

Above all, keep two important considerations in mind as you plan and carry out your thesis research:

**Use your sources to create knowledge, not merely to review information:** Remember that research is not simply the collection of information. A search engine can compile facts (or ostensible facts). Textual research is about using information to answer questions that are significant to you, to your field of study, and potentially to others. A journalist organizes knowledge and cites experts; a scholarly researcher compiles and validates information, subjects it to the rigors of an established methodology of study, and reports it in ways that make its meaning and significance evident to all. Above all, a scholarly researcher is part of a larger community of inquiring minds, who are accountable to each other and who understand that their research potentially has consequences and repercussions.

**Keep in mind the legacies of three decades of feminist inquiry:** Among the most important contribution that feminist scholars have made to the research endeavor is to question the very foundations of the knowledge-making process itself: the kinds of research questions we ask, the types of materials we consider valuable or valid, and how we define our relationships with our subjects. Use your feminist research training to help you ask questions using a feminist lens, such as: Whose perspectives are included in/left out of my research? How was this research material gathered, and does that make a difference? How will the products of my research be used, and how does that affect those who have made my research possible? Does my analytical framework perpetuate invisibility or bias? How am I defining terms like truth, objectivity, validity, significance, and how does my use of these terms reflect an understanding of feminist epistemology? Does my manner of writing up and sharing my research reflect a feminist understanding of the nexus between knowledge and power?

**PROJECT GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS** (1 to 4 credits of MAIS 798)
The project is an applied effort that may be tailored to the student’s career or future career aspirations. There is great flexibility in designing the project. As examples, the project may be a research paper, an original artwork, a video program, fieldwork, an internship, a participatory project, a survey, the design of a course, a draft of legislation, preparation of a business plan, etc. All projects must reflect work that warrants 1 to 4 semester credit hours. The number of credits is based on the scope of the project and is determined by the student's thesis advisor in collaboration with the student.

The project should be self-contained and carried out by the student alone, although it may be part of some larger initiative. All projects must be undertaken specifically to meet this degree requirement.

There are 2 main categories for projects:

1. Practical/Experiential, in which the student actively engages in some form of original research through practice and experience. Some examples include internships, service and experiential learning, advocacy work and drafting public policy.
2. Artistic, in which the student conceives and creates an object, performance or other form of visual art or fine art.

As projects may take a wide variety of forms and cover a diversity of subjects, there is no standard method of formatting a project proposal, for conducting the work, presenting the outcome, or carrying out assessment.

Note: Projects are not required to adhere to the Mason thesis formatting guidelines unless the student elects to deposit their final Project in the library. The guidelines explained on http://thesis.gmu.edu/ apply to those students who opt to submit the project to the library.

Project Proposal
During the semester preceding registration for MAIS 798, a student prepares a written proposal (approximately 10 pages). Prior to writing the proposal the student should discuss ideas with each committee member; this will help clarify the approach. The required course in research methodology, or the equivalent, will help determine the method(s) for accomplishing the work that integrates the student's entire interdisciplinary graduate educational curriculum.

A student revises the proposal until it is approved by the three-person Project/Thesis Committee. This process may entail several revisions.

The approved proposal, with all committee members’ signatures, is then submitted to the MAIS Program. Project Proposals must be approved by the committee before a student can register for MAIS 798.

When the project does not include a research component, the proposal should fulfill the following objectives:

- Describe what the project will entail with some indication of the phasing of the work.
- Demonstrate the value of the project.
- Offer a context of existing work in the area, or in the case of such activities as an internship, the links with other courses being pursued.
- Explain the role of the faculty advisor and committee members in monitoring and assessing the work.
- Outline the nature and presentation of the final output.
- Indicate the criteria upon which the work should be assessed and evaluated.
- Provide justification for the number of seminar credit hours (1 to 4) sought.

Project Credit Hours and Project Scope

The number of project credits is based on the scope of the project and is determined by the student's thesis advisor. Mason university policy stipulates that each credit hour correspond to 45 hours of student learning/work. Thus, expectations are that each 2-credit project involve 90 or more hours of applied
project work (including experiential learning, planning, creation and/or execution of the project) and a portfolio in which the written reflection and analysis is at least 20 pages or 5,000 words (not including images, notes, bibliographies, charts, appendices, and other supplementary material). The expectation for a 4-credit Project is 180 or more hours of applied project work and a portfolio in which the written reflection and analysis is 50 pages or 12,500 words. Projects of 3-4 credits require work hours between these parameters at the discretion of the Project Chair.

**Project Portfolio**

All projects require a final portfolio with a substantive written component integrating scholarship with practical and/or creative application of relevant theories and methods, including a reflection on the process and final outcome of the project. In addition, the portfolio should document the outcomes of the project, in a form agreed upon by the Project Committee. The portfolio may also document the project process from conception through completion; examples of this are a work log or journal; summaries of meeting notes or field notes; and budgeting and planning documents.

**CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING YOUR THESIS OR PROJECT** (See also “MAIS Proposal Quick Notes” available online)

ALL PROPOSALS, whether for a thesis or project, must be submitted to the MAIS Executive Committee during the semester preceding desired registration for MAIS 798/799. Please contact the MAIS office for the deadline.

- When you are developing your graduate studies contract with a faculty advisor, discuss your ideas for a project or thesis as well; this will help you choose the most appropriate courses in research methodology.
- About the time you have completed 21-24 credits, discuss your refined ideas for a project or thesis with your advisor.
- Consult with your advisor about whom you should ask to serve on your project or thesis committee. Begin talking about your ideas with potential committee members.
- Start working on your written Proposal, (guidelines are above). Please note: A collection of project/thesis proposals submitted by MAIS students is available in the MAIS Program office for review by students and faculty members.
- Discuss with your advisor whether your idea represents work that warrants a project or a thesis.
- If applicable, be sure to review and follow the university’s Human Subjects Review Board guidelines (insert link: http://research.gmu.edu/ORSP/HumanSubjects.html). Allow enough time
for determination by the HSRB representative to advise you of exemption or required review by the full board; confirm HSRB deadlines well in advance of beginning your research or project.

- Confirm, with each member of your thesis or project committee, the feasibility of your tentative timeline for completion of the project or thesis. Make adjustments for the times they are unavailable. Include consideration of deadlines for graduation applications, changes of grade, etc.
- Give your committee members plenty of time to review drafts of your proposal and your project or thesis. Most faculty members need about two weeks for review and feedback.

Bring the approved proposal to the MAIS Program office by the deadline specified: usually a month before the start of fall semester classes (for fall projects or theses), two weeks before the end of fall semester classes (for spring projects or theses).
The following course work will comprise the MAIS Degree for the above referenced student; substitutions must be documented with an AMENDMENT TO CURRICULUM CONTRACT form. Candidates for the MAIS/Women and Gender Studies Degree must successfully complete 36 credits of graduate course work, including the following:

- 1 credit of MAIS 796 (proseminar)
- 6 credits of core courses: WMST 630 and WMST 640
- 12 credits in a disciplinary focus, including at least 3 credits in a course related to the study of women and gender
- 3 credits of appropriate research methodology
- 9-12 credits of electives, including at least 6 credits in courses that address the study of women and gender and that are not part of the disciplinary focus
- 1 credit of MAIS 797 (proposal writing)
- 1-4 credits of MAIS 798 (project) or 4 credits of MAIS 799 (thesis)

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MAIS Director Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________
http://mais.gmu.edu/forgraduatesstudents