

MRTS 5100: Introduction to Graduate Studies in Media Arts

Fall 2023

Tuesdays 2-4:50 p.m.

RTFP 282

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Office Hours: Wednesdays and Fridays, 10-11 a.m.

Office Location: RTFP 276

Course Description

Welcome to graduate studies in the Department of Media Arts at UNT! This course is required for all our graduate students, regardless of enrollment in our M.A. or our M.F.A. program. The course introduces students to the rigors of research and scholarly writing that will serve as a foundation for the professional projects they will need to complete to meet the requirements of their target Media Arts graduate degree. The course advances students' understanding of Media Arts as a research field and as a practice for both M.A. and M.F.A. students. Along the way, it presents the key theories, voices, and methodological approaches that have contributed to the scholarly and artistic pursuits that the students have chosen to undertake. Research, critical reading, and writing will be underscored as key pursuits for all the students in the course.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the field of Media Arts, differentiating between its artistic foundations as well as its institutional structures.
- Understand the forces driving mainstream media histories as well as historically marginalized media.
- Access and curate materials needed for successful graduate projects in the field.
- Integrate research ethics in the research and pre-production process.
- Advance writing skills in Media Arts by identifying meaningful research topics, selecting appropriate methodological approaches, evaluating existing research, and drafting proposals.
- Strengthen collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking about their professional objectives in the field.

Required Readings

1. *Media Research Methods: Audiences, Institutions, Texts* [Nearly the entire book]
2. *A Field Guide to Grad School* [Nearly the entire book]
3. Selections from *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* by Raymond Williams
4. Journal articles and book chapters available on Canvas

MRTS 5100 Assignments

Participation	15%
Conference Abstract	5%
Scholarly Book Review	10%
Filmmaker/Scholar Grant App.	10%
Essays	20%
Prospectus Elements	15%
Conference Presentation	15%
Total	100%

MRTS 5100 Grading Scale

A	90-100%	Outstanding, impressive work. Performance exceeds expectations.
B	80-89%	Excellent, solid work. Performance shows promise, with room to grow.
C	70-79%	Good, graduate-level work. Performance ok.
D	60-69%	Below average work. Performance does not meet expectations.
F	- 60%	Sub-par work. The student failed to complete the assignment, submitted incomplete work, or otherwise neglected their responsibility to work.

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

Participation: As graduate students you are expected to come to class prepared to positively contribute and value to scholarly conversations. You expected to fully complete in-class work as well as any work outside of the class related to our course.

Conference Abstract: Both emerging filmmakers and scholars build a reputation by presenting their work at conferences. Students in this class will identify a target conference at which to share their work and will submit a conference abstract that will then be vetted by the organization. Possible conferences are PCA, Southwest PCA, BIPOC Pop, and NWSA (all have post September 1 deadlines), though you can also consult with me if you would like to aim for a different conference. The student's grade will depend on the quality of the abstract submitted, not on the outcome of the vetting process.

Scholarly Book/Documentary Review: Scholarly writing is not private; it is a public practice. Publishing in peer-reviewed journal articles allows for quality scholarly writing to circulate and move the field forward. Working within the time limitations of a semester-long course, students will complete a scholarly book or documentary review. Submission is optional, but not required for a grade.

Scholarly Essay: There is one brief scholarly essay required in this course. The idea is put us at the point of convergence of our distinct tracks by having us write in a scholarly way about a documentary film. More information will be provided as we move closer to the due date.

Grant Application/Crowdsourcing Proposal: If you are a filmmaker working on your M.F.A, you are already aware that identifying funding for a future project is critical to your success, in fact it is a key piece of the M.F.A prospectus you will write. Similarly, if you are an emerging scholar working on your M.A. degree, you know that your media research might require interviews, attendance at festivals, and at the very least will require that you wet your feet in a scholarly setting by attending an academic conference. To prepare you for those financial details, you will write a grant application to improve your chances of financing your target project.

Grad Proposal Elements: This assignment is designed to prepare you for your M.A. or M.F.A prospectus. Hence, the topic and structure will reflect your personal interests and the goals of your respective degree program. Working in a range of modalities (independently, with your instructor, with your peers, etc.) you will take your idea from conceptualization to rough draft. The project is not intended to be the final product that you will present to your Thesis Committee; it is simply an exercise in crafting the required elements of the prospectus that we have found to be the most difficult for students to produce as they prepare for this major milestone.

Conference Presentation: Writing for a scholarly audience is different than writing for a trade audience, and writing for a reader is different than writing for a listener. To that end, this assignment involves extending the ideas plotted in your abstract and preparing a paper for presentation at the target conference. More details, especially with respect to voice, in due time.

Course Policies

Communication

- I ask to be addressed as Dr. Gómez Menjívar by my students.
- I favor a quick turnaround on emails, though you can expect up to 48hours for me to get back to you. If you email me on a Friday, don't count the weekend and instead, expect a response from me by Tuesday.
- Do not expect me to return your message about an exam or assignment that is due, when you email me on the same day that it is due.
- I do not respond to email questions that you can find the answer to via other resources I have provided for you.
- Don't take to social media (or similar) when your concern can simply be shared with me.
- If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student. Turn to two people right now and jot down their information:

Classmate Name: _____

Classmate Contact: _____

Classmate Name: _____
Classmate Contact: _____

- Beyond simple clarification questions, I cannot discuss anyone's grades via email; if you are concerned about your grade, talk to me during my office hours.

Attendance & Participation

- I designate one participation point per class meeting, provided that the student is present for the entire session and actively participates in class discussions, exercises, and activities. No partial points are awarded and, unless the student has a documented emergency, there is no way to make up for the missed point.
- Since an important element of this class is acclimating you to graduate student life and your new role in the institution, you can expect small-scale projects/activities completed outside of class to count as course participation.
- Students who come to class unprepared or distracted, or arrive late or leave early, sleep in class, or use their phones or other electronic devices (including ear pods) during class time, will lose the point for the day.
- Life happens. If you need a mental or physical health day, take it. It's better to be healthy and take a zero than come to class, distracted, and disengaged, and lose it anyway.

Late Assignments

- All assignments are due as specified in the syllabus and on Canvas.
- If you are unable to complete your work on time, you must talk to me BEFORE you miss the deadline. I can usually accommodate extensions, but only if you communicate your needs ahead of time. No extensions will be granted after you miss a deadline.
- A late assignment that has not been granted an extension will lose one full letter grade for each day it is late. Assignments without prior approval, will not be accepted after 3 days; you will receive an automatic zero for that assignment.
- Technical difficulties submitting work ARE NOT an excuse for late work. If you have problems, consult the Guide to Canvas, ask a classmate for help, Google the issue for some troubleshooting tips, and, if all else fails, contact the UNT Canvas support desk.
- If you experience technical difficulties submitting an assignment shortly before the deadline, you must email me the completed assignment **prior** to the deadline AND provide documentation of the issue (e.g. take a screenshot of the error message etc.). In any event, it will not be graded until it is submitted via Canvas.

Academic Integrity

- Everything that you submit on Canvas is in turn submitted by our system to Turnitin, a plagiarism and AI detecting software that allows us to know with percentage of certainty the likelihood of your reliance on AI.
- ChatGPT or any other AI “help” is NOT allowed, under any circumstances or to any extent, in this course. Its use constitutes plagiarizing *and* cheating. Period.
- If you plagiarize or cheat on any part of any assignment, I will email you and cc my chair with a screenshot of the Turnitin result, and I will follow the Office of Academic Integrity’s instructions. The assignment will receive a “0” with no opportunity for a redo.
- If UNT determines that this is not your first infraction—including your undergraduate years at UNT—you will automatically fail the course and you could face expulsion from the graduate program.

UNT Policies and Resources

Respect

You are expected to show up prepared to participate in weekly discussions. At all times, you are expected to treat each other and the instructor with respect. You are encouraged to challenge ideas, but I will not tolerate speech or behaviors that attack an individual or their community (including those based on group identities such as gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and so forth). Show respect by giving your peers your full attention.

All students are expected and required to abide by the [UNT Student Code of Conduct](#). Be aware that this policy is taken very seriously on our campus.

Chosen Names & Pronouns

If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and/or have a preferred pronoun and would like that to be used in class, please let me know.

ODA Notifications

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the [Office of Disability Access](#) (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding specific course needs.

Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester, and they must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. See the ODA website.

Seeking Help

If you are facing challenges securing food or housing and believe this may affect your performance in this course, I urge you to contact the Dean of Students for support at deanofstudents@unt.edu or 940- 565-2648. The [UNT Food Pantry](#) is free for all students.

If you are struggling with mental health, an abusive relationship, trauma or PTSD, or other personal challenges that are negatively affecting your studies, contact the [UNT Counseling Center](#) at 940-565-2741 or the CARE team at 940-565-4373. [Denton County Friends of the Family](#) has a 24-hour crisis hotline for anyone experiencing relationship violence or abuse (940-383-7273). Cumberland Counseling & Family Services offers affordable/sliding scale counseling services to individuals, couples, and families (940-382-5112).

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. [Survivor Advocacy](#) can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-5652648.

Graduate Student Life

Use the resources available to you! These include our Research 1-level libraries as well as our extensive resources available to graduate students. Check out the Toulouse Graduate School webpage for more information: <https://tgs.unt.edu/toulouse-graduate-school>

Student Affairs have many programs to enhance and support the experiences of students including the [Multicultural Center](#), the [Pride Alliance](#), [Student Veterans' Affairs](#), and numerous [Student Faith groups](#).

Tentative Schedule		
Week	Read Before Coming to Class	Assignments Due
Week 1: Aug. 22 Introduction	N/A	
Week 2: Aug. 29 Intro to the Field of Media Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 1 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Of Elephants, Definitions and Models: The Context of Media Research” Chapter 2 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Getting Started” Chapter 2 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Building Your Team” 	
Week 3: Sept. 5 Research On Audiences I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Researching Audiences” Chapter 4 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Gathering Data on Audiences” Chapter 3 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Deciphering Academic Jargon” 	Conference Abstract Due
Week 4: Sept. 12 Research On Audiences II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas trade article: “Learning from Documentary Audiences” Canvas research article: “Veridicality and the Truth Claims of the Documentary in the Post-Truth Era” Chapter 4 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Reading and Writing About Other People’s Research” 	
Week 5: Sept. 19 Research on Institutions I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 6 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Researching Media Institutions” Chapter 7 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Gathering Data on Institutions” Chapter 5 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Staying on Track in Your Program” 	Book/ Documentary Review Due
Week 6: Sept. 26 Research on Institutions II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas research article: “Rethinking the Canon: The Role of Film Festivals in Shaping Film History” OR “The Netflix Original Documentary” Canvas research article: “Crowdsourcing and outsourcing” Chapter 6 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Doing Research and Finding Funding” 	

Week 7: Oct. 3 Research on Texts I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 9 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Researching Texts” Chapter 10 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Gathering and Analysis of Textual Data” Chapter 7 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Writing About Your Research” 	Grant Application/ Crowdsourcing Proposal Due
Week 8: Oct. 10 Research on Texts II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas research article: “Sense-value and the essay film: the speculative dimension of Dónal Foreman’s <i>The Image You Missed</i> (2018)” “In the wings of the dove: bird's-eye view and more-than-human gaze in the wildlife documentary series <i>Earthflight</i>” Chapter 8 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Publishing and Promoting Your Work” 	
Week 9: Oct. 17 Researching Texts I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 9 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Researching Texts” Screening of <i>Summer of Soul</i> and Discussion 	
Week 10: Oct. 24 Researching Texts II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 10 in <i>Media Research Methods</i>, “Gathering and Analysis of Textual Data” Screening of <i>Parasite</i> and Discussion 	Essay Due
Week 11 Oct. 31 Your Research Topic, Problems, and Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canvas Book Chapter, “Methods of Exploration: Asking Questions” Canvas Book Chapter, “Methods of Exploration: Finding Answers” Chapter 7 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Writing About Your Research” 	<i>M.A. Students: Draft Prospectus Introduction (Handbook p. 20); M.F.A. Students Draft Preproduction Research (Handbook, p. 18)</i>
Week 12: Nov. 7	Drop-In Meetings in My Office	<i>Revise your work and plan for your literature review/integration of theory and production)</i>

Week 13: Nov. 14 Planning & Writing Your Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Visit: Steven Guerrero, UNT Media Arts Librarian • Canvas Book Chapter, “Literatures and Data Bases” • Chapter 8 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Publishing and Promoting Your Work” 	<i>M.A. Students: Draft Thesis Literature Review (Handbook, p. 20); M.F.A. Students: Draft Integration of Theory and Production (Handbook, p. 19)</i>
Week 14: Nov. 21 Fall Break. Enjoy!	--	--
Week 15: Nov. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Zoom Visit: Jermani Ojeda Ludena, ABD & Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Innovation Fellow • Chapter 9 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Talking About Your Research” • Chapter 10 in <i>A Field Guide to Grad School</i>, “Going to Conferences” 	Prospectus Elements Due
Week 16: Dec. 5	No Class. Reading Day & Pre-Final Week Policy. Individual Consultations, as Needed.	Work on your final projects. Swing by my office if you have questions.

Finals Week, Tuesday, Dec. 12 (1:30pm–3:30pm): Deliver Your Conference Presentation