



BROWN

Modern Culture and Media

Graduate Student Handbook

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I. Introduction

Welcome to the Ph.D. program in Modern Culture and Media. This handbook is intended to present a clear set of guidelines and expectations for the program, answer some of the most frequently asked questions, and help students at all stages plan their individual experience of the program effectively. No such written guide can, however, foresee every programmatic, administrative, or scholarly detail that might arise. Furthermore, plans of study in the program are individualized and distinctive scholarly combinations are possible. So, while this handbook provides a framework, you are encouraged to consult actively and consistently with your faculty advisor, department staff, and fellow graduate students throughout your time in the program. It is every student's responsibility to be aware of the contents of this handbook; please consult it when questions or problems arise, and/or when preparing for the next stage of the program. Because MCM faculty and the profession itself are continually changing, these guidelines may be revised on a regular basis. When changes have been approved, they will be introduced as quickly as possible.

II. Arrival on Campus

Initial Contacts

Your principal initial contacts at MCM are the Director of Graduate Studies, the Academic Department Manager, and the Student Affairs Manager. You can find the names and contact information for persons in these roles on the Department website, updated every semester. The Academic Department Manager and Student Affairs Manager are in the main office on the first floor of 155 George Street, Room 104. Please introduce yourself when you arrive on campus. They will help you with the administrative and bureaucratic aspects of being a graduate student.

At the start of your first semester, in advance of orientation activities, contact the DGS to let

them know that you are in town and schedule an appointment to discuss your program and any other matters of concern. You will also be assigned a faculty mentor. Meeting with the DGS and your faculty mentor at the start of your first semester is mandatory. The DGS and assigned mentor will be your first advisors until you select a committee chair, which can happen at any point after your first year and should be settled by your 4th or 5th semester. See the section on advising below.

Visit the [MCM faculty directory](#) for an updated list of roles such as the DGS.

Notes about the First Year

Academic: You should use your first year as an opportunity to get to know the varied modes of research and criticism on offer in MCM, as well as the individual faculty members practicing them. Take as many classes as you can with Department faculty as these will be the faculty to eventually populate your committee. You will want to take graduate seminars for the most part, but if there is an undergraduate seminar that interests you, speak with the faculty instructor and ask about bringing the class to a graduate level (most often this simply means writing a longer seminar paper or adding additional readings).

General Note on Courses and “Shopping”: The approximately two-week-long period between the beginning of classes and the deadline for course registration without a late fee each term (see the Academic Calendar) is known colloquially at Brown as the “shopping period.” Traditionally during this period, many Brown students sample a variety of courses before making a final decision about which ones they will commit to for the semester. This can be a useful process for you, but there are some things to keep in mind. Though faculty members sometimes adjust their syllabi to account for early-term shoppers, be somewhat cautious about shopping, as keeping current with extra upper-level classes can be overwhelming, even for the short, two-week shopping period. Also, be sure to register for your full load of classes before the shopping period. Faculty members are under no obligation to enroll shoppers, and many courses are over enrolled in pre-registration. If you decide to change a course and the professor agrees to allow you into the class, you can then change your schedule easily through the standard drop-add process. Finally, discuss any course changes initially with the DGS and your mentor, and later with your advisor, before finalizing them. Brown has an on-line course registration system called [Courses@Brown](#) where students can register for classes.

The Graduate Student Council (GSC) is the primary political and social voice of graduate students from all departments. The GSC holds various activities and social events throughout the academic year and the summer.

While Brown is a lively and active community, Providence itself also has a thriving local arts, film, and music scene. You are encouraged to explore events and facilities outside of the Brown community, for example at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), and at local concert, cinema, and gallery spaces such as AS220 (115 Empire St.), the Avon Cinema (260 Thayer St.) and the Columbus Theatre (270 Broadway), among others.

Boston, New York, and Newport, RI are easily accessible by public transportation. See the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), Bonanza Bus Lines, Greyhound,

Amtrak, and the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) for details.

Housing: The University Auxiliary Housing Office maintains a list of housing opportunities both on and off campus. Other good sources for housing include Craigslist Providence, The Providence Journal's Classifieds Section, the [Brown Graduate Student ListServ](#) and postings at local cafés. The rental market in Providence can be a challenging one, and choosing among the city's many diverse neighborhoods can be difficult. Other graduate students and some faculty can provide you with useful advice.

III. General Description of Program

The Department of Modern Culture and Media (MCM) is committed to a broad spectrum approach to the study of media and culture. We consider not only technological and device based media but technologies of colonialism and imperialism, techniques of the body and flesh, media ecologies, elemental media, and media infrastructures. We consider a medium to be any means, mode, or material of making, transporting, transmitting, transforming, producing, preserving, collecting, selecting for sound, image, gesture, affect, text, and information broadly conceived. Alongside histories and theories of photography, film, television, video, print, and digital media, our faculty bring a range of overlapping methodologies to their seminar tables, including queer studies, Black study, feminist studies, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, ecological inquiry, decoloniality, historical and new materialisms, text, performance, and disability studies. We are intent to engage decolonial methods and speculative means for the innovation of livable presents, futures, pasts, and intertimes. In our approaches to the study of media and culture, we are sensitive to entanglements among methods, genres, forms, mediums, and materialities across human and nonhuman forms.

The Department offers a graduate program in Modern Culture and Media, which is the main concern of this handbook. Our graduate program is a Ph.D. program. Doctoral candidates who do not enter the program with an M.A. earn one on their way to the Ph.D. There is no stand alone, terminal M.A. program for those applying to the program from other universities.

The Ph.D. in Modern Culture and Media is aimed at: (1) Preparing students to engage in quality scholarship and teaching in the theory, history, and critical analysis of one or more mediums, in ways that encompass diverse cultural contexts, practices, and historical periods, within a methodological framework that includes awareness of modern textual, cultural, political, social, and performance theory; (2) Preparing students to seek academic appointments in a market that increasingly offers positions to media and culture specialists both in traditional media disciplinary units (e.g., Film Studies, Television Studies, Media Studies, etc.); in units with labels such as Cultural Studies, Visual Studies, Performance Studies, Comparative Media, New Media; and also in other kinds of programs that may have expanded concerns (e.g., certain American Studies, Black Studies, Comparative Literature, English, and Foreign Language Departments).

Visit the [Modern Culture & Media department website](#) for more information.

IV. Year-by-Year Summary

The Department and the Graduate School consider six years to be the optimum period for completion of all Ph.D. requirements. As noted above, financial support in the form of fellowships, proctorships, and teaching assistantships is usually not guaranteed for a seventh year. When a seventh year is necessary to complete the dissertation, a candidate will have to apply for an extra year's support. Assuming the candidate is making good progress towards completion, the Department will try to support such applications. Candidates should also look into any possibilities for external funding.

The following represents ideal progress towards the Ph.D. for those who do not enter the program with an M.A.

1-Year

- **Fall Semester:** 3 courses
- **Spring Semester:** 3 courses
- **Summer:** Students often use the summer after their first year to begin preparing for the Foreign Language Exam, which must be passed before the Preliminary Examination can be taken.

2-Year

Fall Semester: 2 courses

- Successful execution of TA responsibilities

Spring Semester: 2 courses

- Successful execution of TA responsibilities
- Selection of primary advisor suggested, beginning discussion of Preliminary Exam fields and committee
- Successful completion of Qualifying Review

Spring-Summer:

Language study if needed.

3-Year

Fall Semester: 1 or 2 courses

- Successful execution of TA responsibilities
- Completion of field lists for Preliminary Examination
- Progress on fields essay and Preliminary Examination preparation
- Preliminary formation of MCM 0900 course if it is to be taught in 4th year

Spring Semester: Remaining 1 or 2 courses

- Successful execution of TA responsibilities

- Completion of fields essay and successful completion of Preliminary Examination (may be completed earlier)

4-Year

Fall Semester: Successful completion of MCM 0900 course (if not taught in spring) or successful execution of TA responsibilities

- Completion and approval of dissertation proposal by November 15

Spring Semester: Successful completion of MCM 0900 course (if not taught in fall) or successful execution of TA responsibilities

- Substantial progress on dissertation

5-Year

Fall Semester: dissertation fellowship

- Substantial progress on dissertation.

Spring Semester: dissertation fellowship

- Substantial progress on dissertation.

6-Year

Fall semester: TA

- Substantial progress on dissertation.

Spring Semester: TA

- Completion of dissertation.

Students Entering with an M.A.

It is not typical, but there is the possibility (determined on a case by case basis in consultation with the DGS) for the timetable for students entering the program with an M.A. to be accelerated. While the pace of coursework is the same as for those entering with a B.A., candidates entering with an M.A. may apply to have some course requirements waived. Since the Preliminary Examination is taken upon completion of coursework, if granted the Examination would be taken earlier and everything else accelerated as well, including the teaching and funding timetables.

V. Advising in MCM

The graduate advisor and advisee relationship is one of the most important ones in a student's early professional life. Students are advised to select their graduate advisor with great care, realizing that the relationship extends beyond intellectual interests into professional persona, conduct, and commitment. Every graduate student needs a graduate advisor (or co-advisors).

When a student enters the MCM program, they are assigned a mentor. A student works with the DGS and their mentor to select courses and become oriented to the program. They work with the

DGS and the mentor until they establish a relationship with a graduate advisor who agrees to serve as a research advisor and committee chair. Once a research advisor is selected by soliciting and securing their willingness to serve, be sure to discuss your selection with the DGS so that the Department is aware of your selection. Feel free to discuss your potential selection with the DGS and mentor and other faculty along the route of your studies.

Students will usually select a graduate advisor by their 5th semester if not earlier. The graduate advisor works with a student toward their preliminary exams, helping the student put a committee in place. After the preliminary exams, a committee may be changed for the dissertation, but in many cases the advising relationship and the full committee remains in place. Although rare, changing established graduate advisors is possible at any point (that is not only at the point between prelims and dissertation proposal) and can be achieved through conversation with the DGS.

The graduate advisor-student relationship is governed by mutual expectations and responsibilities. No two mentoring relationships will look the same due to personality differences in both faculty and students. Nonetheless, a baseline of professional and collegial conduct should be observed, as follows.

Student Expectations

- Respect and abide by the Brown Academic Code;
- Adhere to the Departmental Ph.D. program guidelines as outlined in this Handbook;
- Meet regularly with my advisor and provide them with updates on the progress and results of my research and professional activities;
- Embrace and facilitate an environment of inclusion, respect, and generosity in the Department and University, whether toward fellow students or toward Department faculty and staff;
- Solicit and be responsive to the advisor's input on course selection, intellectual directions, knowledge of the field, Preliminary Exam preparation, and Dissertation writing and research;
- Make sufficient annual progress in the program, whether regarding coursework, teaching, Preliminary Exam preparation, Dissertation Proposal, research and writing, and producing the Dissertation in a timely manner;
- Take the lead in establishing an understanding with their advisor about their progress in the program each year, and, after year four, the timing and nature of Dissertation chapter delivery and feedback;
- Make requests for letters of support well in advance of the deadline, and include accompanying materials as early as possible (four weeks is ideal).

Graduate Advisor Expectations

- Demonstrate care and support for their graduate advisee for the duration of the program;
- Remain in regular and continual contact throughout the student's program, including regular meetings when on campus, and regular email contact while off campus. The frequency of such meetings will fluctuate throughout the program, but monthly check-ins are ideal at least for the first year or two;
- Remain informed as to the program's structure, requirements, and deadlines, and be in conversation with the student about such dates;
- Consider the full range of professional development for their advisees and help identify opportunities that contribute to their professional development;

- Produce timely feedback on submitted writing (4-6 weeks is the standard turnaround time unless the student and advisor discuss and agree on a different time frame);
- Write letters of recommendation and support in a timely manner;
- Conduct themselves with the highest level of integrity and according to the best practices of the profession;
- Embrace and facilitate an environment of inclusion, respect, and generosity in the Department and University toward students and toward student committee members and Department faculty and staff;
- Continue their responsibilities to their advisees even while on leave and during the summers;
- Clearly inform the advisee and DGS if they are no longer able to discharge any of these duties;
- Familiarize themselves with the [Graduate School's Advising and Mentoring Resources for Faculty](#) site, along with its recommended Best Practices for Faculty Advising.

VI. Requirements for the Ph.D.

There are three major stages to your studies in the program: (1) Preparation for Candidacy, which includes Coursework, the Qualifying Review and fulfilling the Foreign Language Requirement; (2) Advancement to Candidacy, which includes the Preliminary Examination and writing an approved Dissertation Proposal; (3) Writing and presenting the dissertation for completion of the degree.

1) Preparation for Candidacy

Coursework

1. At least 13 courses taken while a graduate student are required of doctoral students. Up to three arts production courses, either in MCM or a related discipline, may count toward this total though none are required. Plans of study are individualized. You will choose courses in consultation with the DGS/mentor and then with your primary advisor, based on your scholarly and teaching interests. At Brown, 2000-level courses are designated as graduate courses, while 1000-level courses are designated as upper-level undergraduate courses that may also be taken for graduate credit. Courses numbered below 1000 may not count for graduate credit or towards the degree. It is also possible to organize individual and group independent study projects with MCM faculty, but of course this depends on the availability of individual faculty, the constraints on their time, and their interests. The rubric MCM 2980: Independent Reading and Research in Modern Culture and Media is reserved for such projects. Two independent studies are allowed, but the rest of your coursework should be class-based.

2. Among these 13 courses, students are required to take at least **five** graduate level courses (i.e., course number 2000 or higher) offered by primary MCM faculty across their time at Brown. This number may be adjusted if courses are accepted from an M.A. program (a matter to be determined by the graduate committee). The aim of taking courses with peers from courses offered by Professors within the Department is the building of a sense of a cohort and a collective base for discussion. These five courses (and many will take more than five) can be in any area, with any core faculty. Independent studies do not count toward these five courses.

3. Students normally take 6 courses in the first year, 4 courses in the second year, and 3 courses in the third year. Students entering the program with an M.A. may apply to accelerate their coursework and their progress through the program by transferring no more than four credits from prior coursework that is relevant to their planned course of study at Brown. Transfer requests must be approved by the DGS and the graduate committee. In such cases, students entering the program with an M.A. may complete their coursework as early as the end of the fourth semester.

First year students will receive a written evaluation of their work from the DGS after their first and second semesters. All other students will receive an annual evaluation of their progress toward the degree.

Qualifying Review and the M.A.

Upon successful completion of 8 courses (6 for those entering with an M.A. and transferring course credits), the Graduate Faculty Committee will conduct a qualifying review. For those who have already declared an advisor, the advisor will join the Graduate Faculty Committee for that review. The committee will review the student's progress based upon reports by instructors and the DGS as well as a sample of work submitted by the student (normally a seminar paper). The Graduate Faculty Committee will then make one of the following decisions for students who entered the program with a B.A.: (a) award of an M.A. and a determination that the student may proceed towards advanced candidacy; or (b) award of a terminal M.A.

Students who enter the program with an M.A. in hand and have been approved to transfer course credits may elect to take the qualifying review after completing 6 courses. In such cases, the Qualifying Review Committee decision will be either (a) a determination that the student proceed towards advanced candidacy; or (b) award of an additional terminal M.A. from Brown.

Student Evaluation and Notification

All MCM graduate students in coursework are required to meet with the Graduate Faculty Committee at the end of each academic year to discuss progress toward the degree. Students' academic standing across the entire university can be classified in four ways: good, satisfactory, warning, or termination. The DGS will maintain an updated and comprehensive census of the status of each student in their graduate program, and, additionally, each student will be informed of their status by email according to the following timetable:

Entire Academic Year

- First-year students will receive letters before the start of the Spring and Summer Terms.
- Students submitting a [Dissertation Completion Proposal or a Dissertation Extension Proposal](#) will receive a letter before the start of the Spring Term.
- Students who are changing status in the following term will receive a letter at the

end of the current term.

- Students who are continuing on [Warning status](#) (see pg. 13) in the following term will receive a letter at the end of the current term updating them on their current status.

Fall Academic Standing and Warning Letters are due to students before the beginning of the Fall semester for:

- All students who are changing status from Summer Term to Fall Term.
- All students who were on Warning during Summer Term and are continuing on Warning in Fall Term.

Spring Academic Standing and Warning Letters are due to students before the beginning of the Spring semester for:

- All first-year students.
- All students submitting a Dissertation Completion Proposal or Dissertation Extension Proposal.
- All students who are changing status from Fall Term to Spring Term.
- All students who were on Warning during Fall Term and are continuing on Warning in Spring Term.

Summer Academic Standing and Warning Letters are due to students before the beginning of the summer term for:

- All continuing students.

Foreign Language Requirement

Students are required to demonstrate reading and research competency in one foreign language. Additional languages may be required of individual students based on their research interests. This requirement may be met by one of the following methods:

- Being a native speaker of a language other than English.
- Having received a degree from an educational institution in which the primary language of instruction was not English.
- Passing a translation exam administered by MCM faculty or qualified faculty in other departments.
- Earning a grade of B or better in a 1000-level or higher course offered by a foreign language department, for which the professor attests that teaching and reading assignments were preponderantly in that language. (This course will count towards the 13 required courses only if its content coheres with the student's scholarly interests.)
- Passing a graduate level reading course offered by a Foreign Language Department.

Summer Foreign Language reading courses are offered by Brown for graduate students. You should satisfy the foreign language requirement as early as possible in your program. In no case will a student be allowed to take the Preliminary Exam without satisfying this requirement.

Teaching Requirement

A minimum of two years of teaching experience is optimal for the degree, which will ideally include at least three semesters of Teaching Assistantship (TA) and one semester Teaching Fellowship (TF). In some cases, such as when students receive external fellowships, this requirement may be amended and/or partially waived. See the fuller section on teaching below.

2) Advancement to Candidacy

The Preliminary Examination

After the completion of a student's coursework, a Preliminary Examination takes place. The exam asks that you demonstrate conceptual as well as bibliographical control over a range of scholarly interests and areas in which you plan to do research and teach. In the lead-up to the exam, you will work to identify those areas. Students entering the program with a B.A. take the Preliminary Examination at the end of the sixth semester, before Commencement. Students entering the program with an M.A. who are permitted to transfer three credits may take it at the end of the fourth semester, before Commencement. Passing this exam authorizes the candidate to proceed with the dissertation proposal. The Qualifying Review, all course requirements, and the foreign language requirement, must be successfully completed before the Preliminary Examination may be taken.

It is important not to delay arrangements and preparations for the Preliminary Examination. Since plans of study are individualized in MCM, much of the responsibility for this rests upon the student. Once you have selected a Primary Advisor, you can begin to talk together about your Preliminary Exam fields and select the two additional faculty members with whom you will work to realize those fields. As explained below, this will normally be MCM and/or MCM-affiliated faculty, though there can also be a member from outside the Department if the area of your inquiry requires it. You will begin preparation for the Preliminary Exam by working with your advisor and the extended committee members to finalize definitions of three exam fields and the accompanying bibliographical and materials lists. The nature of these fields is also explained below.

There are three phases to preparation and completion of the exam after you have selected your primary advisor: (1) the constituting of the Preliminary committee; 2) the defining and crafting of the exam fields; and (3) taking the exam.

1. *Defining the fields and constituting a committee:* As noted above, by the end of the second year for those entering the program with a B.A. or the end of the first year for those entering with an M.A. who are permitted to transfer three credits, you will have to constitute your faculty committee and work with those committee members to define three fields for the Preliminary Exam.

The exam committee will consist of at least three faculty members, at least two of whom should be MCM or MCM-affiliated faculty. You will work with your advisor and

committee members in constituting and preparing the three exam fields. Each committee member takes primary responsibility for working with you on one of your fields. It is the student's responsibility to approach faculty (beginning with the primary advisor) and ask if they are willing to serve on the committee. It is also the student's responsibility to make arrangements to work with committee members to prepare for the exam.

Taken together, the three exam fields should define the academic area(s) in which the student is preparing to teach, as well as the scholarly context(s) for the student's projected research.

2. *Defining and crafting of the exam fields:* Before the Preliminary Exam, the student will produce the following materials.

- Three Field Lists, one for each field composed of approximately 40 key scholarly books, or the equivalent composed of articles, chapters, and/or books. All of the texts and materials on the lists will be chosen in consultation with committee members and the final lists must be approved by the committee chair.
- A Fields Essay, written in consultation with the committee. The maximum length of the body of this text (i.e., not counting footnotes) will be 6250 words. The final approved version of the fields essay is due two weeks before the exam. This essay should articulate a broad but knowledgeable conception of the scholarly area(s) in which the student plans to teach and write. The essay will inevitably make references to specific items on the field lists; however, the purpose of the essay is not to cover or comment exhaustively or encyclopedically on the entirety of the lists—something that would be impossible within these length limits. Your goal should be to be able to engage substantively with the areas of your inquiry. Your essay should indicate key arguments and problematics that structure scholarly debate in those areas. The essay should indicate the kinds of research questions and scholarly discussions in which the student is preparing to intervene. And it should engage the conjunctions and intersections among your three areas. In sum, this essay constitutes a kind of intellectual and professional self-definition at the conclusion of your coursework and as you look forward to your first large-scale scholarly work, the dissertation.
- A file of Field Lists from previous Preliminary Examinations is kept in the MCM Department office. It is available for you to consult as you prepare for your exam. You should bring a copy of your essay with you to the exam.
- A guideline for thinking about fields is as follows:
Fields are areas of inquiry defined by a set of questions that are addressed through a list of bibliographic and arts materials. Fields may be oriented in one of several ways: A field may cover a historical period concerning some mode of production or method of making; it may explore a particular genre or medium or method =; it may explore an intersection of genres, mediums, methods, or approaches to something; it may engage specific schools of thought or theoretical approaches; it may engage in the history and theory of a particular medium or

mediums; it may work to secure competency in one mode of theoretical analysis; it may work to understand a comparative perspective; or it may work to understand a locality or translocality. It is helpful if each of your three field bibliographies is accompanied by a brief description (roughly 200 words) describing your area of inquiry. What questions are each field list poised to help you answer? Generally, a list includes between 40-60 entries from books and essays to media objects. (A file of previous fields lists will be kept in the MCM Department office and available for you to consult.)

3. *The Exam:* The Preliminary Examination is a 2-hour oral exam. The exam begins with a brief statement by the student concerning the fields essay in terms of process and outcome. The exam covers the Fields Essay and the field bibliographies. It will probe the student's understanding of their fields and debates within those fields. The purpose of the exam is to establish both the breadth and the depth of the student's competence and knowledge in areas where they plan to teach and do research. Upon completion of the exam, the committee will come to one of the following determinations: (a) Pass; or (b) Directed to retake the exam. Students may retake the exam once. If students do not pass the second time, they will be awarded a terminal M.A.

The Dissertation Proposal

After passing the preliminary examination, the candidate proceeds to the dissertation proposal. A dissertation proposal is a road map toward the dissertation.

To begin work on a proposal, the student must constitute or reconstitute a dissertation committee. The dissertation committee may change between the Preliminary Examination and the writing of the dissertation proposal. This is not uncommon. A student is required to set up a Dissertation committee before advancing with the proposal and the student must seek the agreement for a Dissertation advisor and a full committee to serve. Even if a student's committee remains the same between Preliminary Exams and the Dissertation Proposal – also not uncommon – reconstituting and/or seeking recommitment from members is required.

When the candidate (re)constitutes a Dissertation committee, they first designate a Dissertation director (or committee chair) and consult with that director about the constitution of remaining committee members. The dissertation committee normally consists of three faculty, at least two of whom should be MCM or MCM-affiliated faculty. (In some cases, a candidate may request an additional faculty member—even, in exceptional cases, one from another university—when it is necessary to add additional expertise pertinent to the dissertation.) The candidate then writes a dissertation proposal in consultation with committee members. The dissertation proposal should be between 3000 and 6000 words. It will introduce the topic, indicate the key problem(s) or issue(s), questions(s) or argument(s), as well as the objects of study or concern in the work; situate the scholarly context of the project (with which fields or subsets of fields is it engaging); outline the planned organization and structure of the study (such as a chapter breakdown); suggest an ideal timeline for research, writing, and completion; and offer a brief preliminary bibliography. If the dissertation will be a hybrid project (see the next section “Working on the Dissertation”), the proposal components may vary and you can work out a

plan for the proposal with your advisor.

Even if you have a firm idea about your dissertation project, do not assume that you can write the proposal quickly and gain fast approval of your committee. This is probably the first time you have worked on a project of this scale, and your committee will want to ensure that your proposal has depth, range, and significance. The committee will also be concerned that your conception of the project is practical and doable in a reasonable amount of time.

When the candidate and the dissertation director believe the proposal is ready, the advisor will call a dissertation proposal meeting with the candidate and the full committee to discuss the proposal collectively for a period of time to be determined by the advisor. There may or may not be revisions to the proposal after that meeting, meaning that approval may be achieved at or after the meeting. Approval of the proposal should aim to be achieved by November 15 of the student's fourth year. A file copy of the final approved proposal, with a cover sheet signed by all members of the committee, should be provided by the student to the Director of Graduate Studies and Student Affairs Manager by December 15. (A file of previous dissertation proposals is kept in the MCM Department office. It is available for you to consult.)

Working on the Dissertation

The dissertation project can be either a written book-length study or a hybrid project consisting of a written, scholarly component and a creative one. A hybrid approach should be imaginative and aim to tell stories or articulate theories in dynamic ways, for example through video, sound, multimedia installation, photography or exhibition, performance, digital art, or other experimental practices. A written, scholarly dissertation is expected to be between 150 and 250 pages, double spaced. In the case of a hybrid project, the nature of the creative project and the length of the written component will be agreed upon between the student and the committee. In both cases, the project must make an original contribution to its fields of concern and meet the highest standards of scholarly and (in the case of a hybrid project) creative competence.

Because this is probably the first time you have worked on a project of this scale, your committee will want to ensure not only that your project is reaching its intellectual, scholarly, and creative potential but that you are making adequate progress over time. Thus, during work on the dissertation, continued regular consultation with committee members is highly advisable. It is especially crucial that the candidate keep the dissertation director informed of the state of the work. When the dissertation director, in consultation with the full committee, deems that a final draft of the dissertation or the project is acceptable for ultimate completion, the candidate will schedule and arrange a dissertation roundtable.

Dissertation Roundtable

MCM requires a formal dissertation presentation in the form of a roundtable discussion (some programs call this a "defense"). This is a two-hour gathering to discuss the completed work. The candidate will present an opening statement and the committee will engage in questions and conversation about the work. At the candidate's discretion, the roundtable will be open to the public (this is encouraged), or it can be closed including only the candidate and the committee.

The candidate should be conversant with Graduate School guidelines for dissertations. These include regulations governing the format of the final draft as well as administrative matters that are the responsibility of the candidate. See the [Graduate School's page of rules and regulations](#) for details.

VII. Financial Support and Teaching

Financial Support

The Department only admits doctoral students it can support. While decisions about whom to support are those of the Department, the funding actually comes from the Graduate School. Therefore, Graduate School regulations and budgeting govern the administration of this support.

MCM doctoral students are awarded a six-year financial support package that consists of a first-year fellowship including tuition and a September-May living stipend (with no teaching responsibilities), followed by four years of teaching assistantships, which include tuition and September-May stipend, and another -year dissertation fellowship ([more information regarding financing and support is available on the Graduate School website](#)). The fellowship may be taken in your fifth or sixth year, depending on each student's research needs. Students also receive five years of summer support.

In addition to the first year fellowship and teaching assistantships, advanced graduate students are eligible for dissertation fellowships once their dissertation proposal is approved. In order to be considered for a dissertation fellowship in their fifth year, graduate students should submit a dissertation proposal by December 15 of their fourth year (seventh semester).

Graduate students may also apply for proctorships and fellowships offered by various units within the University, but acceptance of such opportunities must be approved by the DGS and can only be taken up when departmental teaching needs are adequately covered.

The Graduate School encourages candidates who have possible sources of support from outside the university. Those who come with outside support or who attain it while at Brown must make the Department and Graduate School aware of it. It may result in modification of the terms of funding from the Graduate School; however, you should end up better off than when you started. It is the policy of the Graduate School that the candidate should not be penalized for obtaining outside support. See the Director of Graduate Studies if any of this pertains to your situation.

Graduate Students are also entitled to various forms of travel support for [research](#) and [conferences](#).

Teaching

Teaching is considered a vital part of doctoral education in this program. Experiences of candidates in MCM as well as formal studies conducted across the university by the Graduate

School suggest that teaching is an important component of intellectual development and personal satisfaction for Brown graduate students. It is also of benefit on the academic job market.

A minimum of two years' teaching is optimal for the degree. Normally this is fulfilled during the academic year by serving three semesters as a Teaching Assistant and one semester as a Teaching Fellow. In practice, most financial aid packages involve more teaching than this. Normally, doctoral students do not teach during their 1-year. They usually serve as teaching assistants during their 2- and 3-years. In subsequent years, much of their support is also likely to take the form of teaching assistantships, depending on the type of funding made available to students and the Department by the Graduate School. The Department tries to provide opportunities for candidates to teach in areas related to their specific interests, but the need to cover courses or broaden the graduate student's teaching experience may affect assignments.

Many of the teaching assistantships are in undergraduate core courses. These include MCM 0150: Text/Media/Culture: Theories of Modern Culture & Media (students very often TA for this class in their second year and again in a subsequent year); MCM 0220: Print Cultures: Textuality and the History of Books; MCM 0230: Digital Media; MCM 0240: Television Studies; MCM 0250: Visuality and Visual Theories, MCM0260; Cinematic Coding and Narrativity; and MCM1110: The Theory of the Sign. Other courses may also require TAs. Sometimes large enrollments make T.A.'s necessary in other courses such as MCM 1200: Special Topics in Modern Culture and Media. MCM graduate students will most often have their first teaching experience in MCM 0150, whose subject matter makes it an excellent conceptual introduction to teaching in MCM fields. Being a teaching assistant generally entails conducting discussion sections and grading. You may also be asked to give a lecture, in order to broaden your own teaching experience. It is the general practice in MCM for faculty to conduct regular conferences with their teaching assistants, covering pedagogical goals, objectives, and strategies, course materials, and grading.

The Department also tries to provide all doctoral candidates in good standing with the opportunity to teach a course of their own, normally under the rubric of MCM 0900: Sophomore Seminars. This almost always occurs in the 4th year of study, but may be later, depending on the teaching needs of the Department. If you think you may be interested in teaching your seminar at a later date, you should discuss this with the DGS at the beginning of your third year, when planning for MCM courses for the upcoming year gets underway.

Since MCM 0900 is a seminar, its subject matter varies with the instructor. You will choose your course topic in conjunction with your advisor who, in subsequent discussion with the Department chair, will determine suitability. There may be undergraduate curricular constraints to be considered (for example, a similar or identical course might be planned by a faculty member.) Candidates are strongly encouraged to design a course related to their dissertation area and to consult with their advisor and other appropriate faculty when designing the course. Given that the course must be approved by the Department, and then the undergraduate College through the College Curriculum Committee (CCC), it is imperative to plan ahead. The CCC requires a formal application, which should be made the year before the course is to be taught so that it can be listed in the on-line Banner System. It is best to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Administrator about these procedures early in your third

year.

Teaching Appointments

Within MCM, individual teaching appointments will vary on a semester-by-semester basis as a result of course enrollment and need. The following appointment positions are recognized by the Graduate School and the Brown Graduate Labor Organization (GLO): Teaching Assistant (TA), Teaching Assistant II (TA II), Teaching Fellow (TF), Research Assistant (RA) or Proctor (PR). Within MCM, students can expect to typically be categorized as a TA, while each student's MCM 0900 appointment will be as a TF.

While each of these positions come with the expectation that the student will work no more than 20 hours per week, the following roles bring with them:

- TA: TAs are typically responsible for attending biweekly lectures, running a once-weekly discussion section or lab, and grading student work. Not all MCM courses have discussion sections, and TAs assigned to those courses may have other responsibilities to be outlined by the instructor prior to the start of the semester.
- TA II: This designation varies from its usage in other departments. In MCM, TA IIs are assigned in classes with multiple TAs. TA IIs are responsible for helping to coordinate a course's multiple TAs, in addition to their regular TA duties. Those appointed to a TA II position will gain in skills linked to communication and team building in the pedagogical environment and will receive a monetary top-up determined by the Graduate School. Note that not all courses with multiple TAs will have a TA II position. TAIi positions are selected and awarded at the discretion of the DGS in consultation with the Graduate Committee and Faculty of record for a course.
- Teaching Fellow (TF): When teaching their own MCM 0900, or in the rare case that a graduate student serves as the primary instructor of a course, each student will receive a monetary top-up determined by the Graduate School.
- The particular tasks and parameters of Proctorships and Research Assistantships will be determined on a case by case basis.

More information on what these roles entail is available in the [Brown Graduate School Handbook](#).

Appointment Notification Requirements, Teaching Feedback, Class Sizes

Students will be notified of their teaching appointment status (i.e. TA, TA II, etc.) in two steps. First, an appointment notification sent by the Graduate School, and then, a course assignment notification sent by the DGS prior to the start of the semester. While the department will do its best to avoid last minute changes, there is always the possibility that unexpected undergraduate enrollment crunches and shifts will force a change in appointment early in the semester.

Students appointed to TA, TA II, or TF positions typically have the following maximum class size limits:

- TA and TA II: no more than 20 students per section.
- TF: 20/50 students. Typically, MCM's Teaching Fellows will be teaching an 0900 course, which is limited to 20 students. Occasionally a Teaching Fellow might teach an MCM 1200 course, which is limited to 50 students.

While no TA, TA II, or TF will be required to accept enrollees in excess of the maximum class or section size, the Department has available methods for handling override authorization forms to override class size limits if the TA, TA II, or TF so chooses.

As per the Graduate Labor Organization contract with Brown University, each student with a teaching appointment will receive written feedback on their performance at least once during the course of their appointment prior to the commencement of the following semester. This feedback will come from the course instructor, DGS, or a delegated faculty member.

Teaching Resources and Opportunities

Each student with a teaching appointment will have access to space to undertake their duties to the extent available. This includes but is not limited to offices in the 135 Thayer St. building detailed in section IX, as well as access to mailboxes to receive student papers, announcements, and professional mail.\

Brown University offers the following resources and opportunities for teaching:

- [The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Summer Pre-College and Undergraduate Summer Session Teaching Opportunities](#) • [Deans' Faculty Fellows Program](#)
- [Brown/Wheaton Faculty Fellows Program](#)
- [Brown/Tougaloo Faculty Fellows Program](#)
- [English for International Teaching Assistants Program](#)

VIII. Graduate Student Union Information

Brown University PhD students are represented by the [Graduate Labor Organization \(GLO\)](#) of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) national labor union. Students who are eligible for membership in the bargaining unit include: Graduate students who are appointed to a semester long position and who work no more than 20 hours per week as a Teaching Assistant (TA), Teaching Assistant II (TA II), Teaching Fellow (TF), Research Assistant (RA), or Proctor (PR).

IX. Graduate Student Travel, Exchange Programs, and Leaves

Graduate Student Travel Support

The Graduate School makes **\$650** available to support travel to graduate student conferences per year. This sum can be used for multiple conferences or until exhausted and is no longer

restricted to a single conference. Students in their first through sixth years of study are automatically eligible to apply for both conference and international travel funding; students in the seventh year must include the approval of the DGS in the application. Applications must be submitted online using the [UFunds online module](#), Brown University's funding portal. Separate funding is available through the Graduate School for international conference travel. Additional funding for conference travel is also available through the Graduate Student Council.

Exchange Programs

The Graduate School has negotiated the following exchange arrangements with some of Brown's peer institutions. MCM students may participate if the exchange permits types of coursework unavailable at Brown, and if that coursework is especially useful for the student's plan of study. A student should only engage in an exchange arrangement if it is approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

Exchange Scholar Program: After completion of one year at Brown, graduate students are eligible to enroll for one or two semesters in the Graduate Schools of the following universities: University of California at Berkeley, University of Chicago, Columbia University, Cornell University, Harvard University, MIT, Princeton University, Stanford University, and Yale University. You will continue to pay tuition at Brown. Note that participation in this program may affect your financial support from Brown; for example, if your support is in the form of a teaching assistantship and you cannot fulfill your teaching responsibilities while studying at the other institution, you will not receive your stipend.

Cross-Registration at Harvard and RISD: There is a long-standing agreement between Harvard, RISD, and Brown to allow cross-registration of graduate students without paying tuition to the host institution. To do this, you must fill out the appropriate cross-registration forms on the Brown UFunds website, which includes approval from the DGS, as well as any appropriate forms at the host institution. If instead of one course you want to take an entire semester's course work at Harvard, then you need to enroll in the Exchange Scholar Program.

Advanced Status and Leaves of Absence

Advanced Status

Students within the six-year guarantee who have completed their coursework requirement and plan to be away from Brown for a semester or the academic year conducting dissertation research and who choose to defer Brown stipend support may apply for Advanced Status. Students approved for advanced student status are considered full-time students and receive full tuition coverage, as well as coverage of the annual health and dental insurance subsidy.

Leaves of Absence

A [Leave of Absence](#) assumes that the candidate is *suspending their studies*. If a student believes

they may have to suspend studies for any reason, that student should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies as soon as possible. A Leave of Absence should only be taken for the most serious of reasons, and in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Regulations regarding such leaves, readmission, tuition consequences, and so forth are summarized here. All leaves of absence must be requested through the appropriate forms on the Brown [UFunds](#) website.

X. Facilities and Offices, Resources, Contacts, Important Websites

Facilities and Offices

Faculty and Administrative Offices: Many MCM faculty and administrative offices are located at 155 George St. In 2004, MCM expanded into a second building at 135 Thayer St., just around the corner from the first building. The second building houses a graduate student office and meeting spaces, production facilities, screening rooms, and classrooms.

Graduate Student Offices: TA offices are upstairs in 135 Thayer St. The space includes access to wireless printing, a mini-fridge, and a microwave. A single office is available in the same building for students to hold office hours, which are assigned via a sign-up sheet at the beginning of each semester. Priority for using the single office defers to the sign-up schedule.

Mail: Every graduate student is assigned a mailbox in the department office. Significant notices and information from the Department and other university offices such as the Graduate School are sent there, so you should regularly check your mailbox. Mailboxes are located on the first floor of 155 George St.

Your Brown mailing address is:

Your Name
 Department of Modern Culture and Media
 Brown University
 Box 1957
 Providence, RI 02912

Building Access: The exterior doors of MCM and the TA offices are on the Card Access system, which means your Brown ID Card is your key. After getting your ID card, you will need to speak to the Department Administrator to arrange card access to the building and offices. Entry to 135 Thayer is limited to those taking or teaching classes in that building. It works through the same Card Access system.

Libraries: The main library is the Rockefeller Library (10 Prospect St.), whose holdings include Humanities and Social Sciences. The other large general use library is the Science Library (201 Thayer St.), which includes materials on psychoanalysis, and the history of science and technology among other things. If you wish, you may apply for a carrel assignment in the Rockefeller Library. Ask about this at the circulation desk of the library.

Brown students also have borrowing privileges at the [RISD Library](#) (2 College St.). Ask about this at the Rockefeller Library, as the RISD Library requires a letter of introduction from Brown.

The Brown library participates in various Ivy League, area, and national library consortium arrangements. Furthermore, interlibrary loan has become quite fast and can sometimes deliver journal articles to you electronically. You should explore the library website and become familiar with these resources.

MCM Media Archive: The [MCM Media Archive](#), located at 155 George St., is a constantly expanding pedagogical and research collection of film and television/video materials covering both U.S. and international media. As of this writing, it includes more than 1000 16mm film prints and thousands of videotapes and DVDs. It is a significant research resource whose holdings are not open to the general public. MCM's Media Archivist is located on the first floor of 155 George St. For information on accessing these collections for research, study, or screenings, please contact the MCM Archivist, Regina Longo (regina_longo@brown.edu).

Computing: During orientation, [Office of Information Technologies \(OIT\)](#) provides an orientation for graduate students, which may well be useful for you. You should be aware of the specific software OIT supports and consider changing to supported word processing, internet browsing and e-mail software if you do not already use it. Many of these programs are available on networked computers such as those in Department offices.

Brown Account: No matter what your software, you should establish a [NetID and password](#) through OIT as soon as you have your Brown ID card. Your NetID and password are required for using the computer clusters, gaining access to individual information such as grades, and using the Brown library system from off-campus.

The Malcolm Forbes Center: The Malcolm S. Forbes Center for Media and Culture sponsors conferences and lectures organized by MCM faculty. Topics of some conferences that have been sponsored by the Center include: Television and Nationality; Modernism and Modernity; The Archaeology of Media; Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. The Center has also sponsored or supported several public events that exhibit media texts normally difficult to access in the U.S. Examples include: a festival of Portuguese and Lusophone cinema; a festival of Turkish diaspora cinema in Germany; and annual festivals of French/Francophone cinema, and contemporary African cinema. The Center also supports the Modernist Journals Project, which is constructing fully-searchable online editions of English-language journals and magazines that were important in shaping modes of art and literature that came to be called modernist.

Resources

Multi-disciplinary resources: MCM has a long history of interdisciplinary collaboration across departmental lines. The Department maintains ties with many other university units, such as the Africana Studies Department, the American Civilization Department, the Comparative Literature Department, the English Department, the Pembroke Center for

Teaching and Research on Women, the Visual Art Department, and others.

Depending on their interests and coursework candidates may count work in other Brown departments towards their course requirements: this requires the approval of the DGS or their advisor. Students may include one faculty member from another department on their examination and/or dissertation committees. In addition, other units offer speakers, symposia, exhibits and conferences that are often pertinent to the concerns of MCM graduate students, sometimes with support from MCM.

Workshops: The Department regularly invites graduate students to professional development workshops for graduate students. Workshop topics include publishing, archival research, external fellowship and grant applications, and job market preparation.

Student and Employee Accessibility Services: Inform your DGS if you have a disability or other condition that might require accommodation or modification of any of these course procedures. As part of this process, you should be registered with Student and Employee Accessibility Services (SEAS) and provide the department with an academic accommodation letter from them. For more information, contact SEAS at (401) 863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu.

Wellness and Support Resources:

- Students seeking more information about Medical Leave should contact [Student Support Services](#) (Graduate Center E, 4th floor).
- [Diversity Initiatives](#) provides assistance with recording a lived or chosen name change into University systems to support T* students (Graduate Center, 4th floor).
- [Student and Employee Accessibility Services \(SEAS\)](#) coordinates and facilitates services for students with physical, psychological, and learning disabilities, and temporary injuries (20 Benevolent Street, 1st floor).
- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) provides free confidential counseling (Page-Robinson Hall, Room 512, 401-863-3476). CAPS offers Saturday appointments for graduate students from 9 am to 4 pm during the academic year at Health Services, 13 Brown Street.

Contacts

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Important Websites

[Brown University](#)

[The Graduate School](#)

[Department of Modern Culture and Media](#)

[Registrar's Office](#)

[Courses @ Brown](#)

[UFunds](#)

[Brown E-mail Access](#)

[Office of Information Technology](#)

[Brown University Libraries](#)

[Brown's Academic Code](#)

[Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity](#)

[Title IX and Gender Equity](#)