

UMASSAMHERST DEPARTMENT OF ART

Master of Fine Arts Program Handbook

2021-22

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CONTACT INFO

Susan Jahoda, Professor and Graduate Program Director
Studio Arts Building
110 Thatcher Way
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst MA 01003
susan.e.jahoda@gmail.com

Faculty

<https://www.umass.edu/art/faculty/position/art>

Staff

<https://www.umass.edu/art/staff>

Constance Chatterton, Assistant to Chair
Studio Arts Building 220 (413) 545-6910
chatterton@hfa.umass.edu

Mikael Petraccia, Facilities Manager
SAB 120. (413) 545-1608
mpetracc@art.umass.edu

Evelyn Snyder, Ceramics Technician
SAB 151. (413) 545-1803
esnyder@umass.edu

Douglas Bick, Printmaking, Photo and Digital Technician
SAB 17, (413) 545-1608
dbick@umass.edu

Benjamin Cowden, Wood Shop Technician
SAB 142, (413) 545-2465
benjamincowd@umass.edu

Useful Links:

UMass Graduate School
<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/>

Enrollment, registration, education records, degree requirements, etc:
<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/policies/handbook>

University Registrar Frequently Asked Questions
<https://www.umass.edu/registrar/faq>

Forms and Documents:
<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/policies/forms-documents>

MFA PROGRAM IN ART

INTRODUCTION

The University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass Amherst) is the flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts system and part of the Five College consortium.

The MFA program fosters a transformative, interdisciplinary education for makers and scholars who aspire to explore ideas that are hospitable for the well-being of individuals, communities and the planet. Our faculty encourage students to engage in clearly articulated, specific contexts so that their work will find relevance in the world. In our supportive yet challenging community of makers and thinkers, we collectively engage in art practice as an essential human endeavor, questioning and exploring what it means to be an artist and how to be in our times.

The program is well positioned for students to benefit from the academic excellence UMass and the Five College consortium offer. Students are encouraged take courses in other colleges, departments and programs that deepen their research interests. The three-year MFA program also offers a comprehensive overview of teaching art in higher education setting, an introduction to critical pedagogy, and a solid teaching experience.

MISSION STATEMENT

To imagine is to think otherwise. The department of art is committed to fostering a transformative, interdisciplinary education for learners who aspire to explore ideas that are hospitable for the well-being of individuals, communities and the planet. As we evolve to address the demands and opportunities of current and future creative practices, we will continue to use the invaluable experience gained over time to refine our Undergraduate and Graduate programs.

Art's inherent capacities to generate multiple perspectives and interpretations allows for a nuanced understanding of our increasingly complex world. We aim to nurture self-care, care of others and cultivate empathy, so that we can engage with communities both within our department and beyond. Through deep listening and close looking we seek to expand our perceptual capacities; creating new forms of making, being, and thinking towards sustainable practices in art and design. We believe in art's potential to offer alternative modes of thinking, representations, and models, as well as to embody and enact our aspirations.

Art is Made in Context. We encourage our art, art education, and design students to situate their practices and their own creative identities within historical, theoretical, conceptual, geographic and institutional frameworks. We are fortunate to be a part of a tier one research university, enabling collaboration between artists and experts in other fields of inquiry. As such, we ask our students to engage in a process of rich qualitative research and reflection to locate the unseen work in the future, to hold collective ownership of our endeavors, and to envision and craft inclusive and equitable worlds for following generations.

VALUES

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We insist upon building and sustaining an equitable community of students and faculty that support each other. Of equal importance we support students with diverse learning and physical abilities, as well as cultivating divergent thinking and making. Please see our detailed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and accessibility statements (add links) for more information.

Material and Craft

We value the unique learning opportunities that material engagement offers. We take our ideas, manifest them through our materials, those materials resist us in myriad ways, and new ideas emerge. Skill-building is an important element for critical thinking *through* materials. We also encourage an awareness of the impact of our materials on the environment by sourcing materials as ethically as practically possible, and by considering where our materials go after we have used them.

Interdisciplinarity

We encourage investigating/exploration of diverse materials and ideas, questioning and analyzing the effect these have on the production of meaning.

Sustainable Practices

We strive to build and encourage an awareness of the impact of materials on the environment by sourcing materials as ethically as is practically as possible. Sustainable practices as a value refers to creating awareness about working sustainably. For example, understanding where materials come from, the labor practices that enable their availability, the impact materials have on bodies and ecosystems, and also an understanding of what happens to these materials when projects are no longer of value and they end up in a landfill. This becomes a part of how and what we teach.

Community Building

We work towards building collective learning communities where inclusivity, open-mindedness, tolerance, respect, self-care and care of others is valued.

Collaboration:

We are committed to helping students build an awareness of the agency they have as collaborative cultural producers. Students, for example, have opportunities to apply for the UMass Civic Engagement and Service-Learning (CESL), by engaging in intermediate and advanced level community art and design projects in partnership with local organizations, and the option to pursue a Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Certificate alongside their creative studies. These opportunities prepare students for lives of active engagement with communities and partners on and off campus.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, and INCLUSION STATEMENT

We strive to create learning spaces that affirm the dignity of **all** people. We commit to continuously educating ourselves and our students about the privileges and oppressions that people are subjected to, based on their race, class, age, cognitive and physical abilities, gender

expression, nationality and religion. Honoring the voice of Audre Lorde in her essay “The Transformation of Silence into Action,” we support our students and, remind ourselves, to have the courage to move from *silence into action*. We recognize that members of our community might experience rage, anxiety and grief that come from present day and ancestral trauma and we commit to holding space as allies and anti-racist educators. We commit to critical teaching that aims to understand the historical forces, root causes and conditions that make our present moment, personal experiences and worldviews possible. We commit to being vigilant about our biases as we question dominant narratives, ways of seeing and ways of being.

Actions

Student Recruitment and Wellbeing

- Actively participate in ongoing efforts of the university to increase the recruitment and retention of first-generation students, BIPOC students, students from racially concentrated areas of poverty
- Actively accommodate disabled students in our classes by developing a more proactive relationship with disability services.
- Connect students with the Center for Multicultural Advancement and Student Success (CMASS) for additional application, mentoring and support services.
- We will join our discipline’s diversity mentoring and recruitment programs and feature diversity resources and findings on our website.
- Work with Financial Aid to advocate for scholarships for students who want to study fine arts.

Hiring

- We will continue to review faculty and staff hiring practices so that they are aligned with our values for recruiting and retaining.
- We will actively seek opportunities to promote diverse faculty and graduate students for university awards, scholarships, and other forms of recognition.

Curriculum

- Support the research required of graduate students and faculty in order to teach new curricula.
- We will teach from the perspective that there are many art worlds, not one.

Engagement / Programming

- Support student-initiated activities that invite participation from BIPOC
- Intercultural competency training for faculty, staff, and students (link to [STRIDE](#) and LEED professional trainings)

Evaluation Accountability

- We commit to regular reviews of our program, reporting on faculty and student diversity within the university at large and, in comparison with similar programs in peer institutions.
- We acknowledge that our education system is fraught with inherent biases and inequalities. There is much unlearning to do.
- Collaborate with the office of Data and Reporting Research to collect data that accurately represents the demographics served by UMass Amherst Department of Studio Arts.

FACULTY

Our diverse makers and scholars bring a range of expertise and capacities to our programs. We consider ourselves to be both teachers and learners who cultivate openness, creative research, flexibility, and critical engagement, with an emphasis on situating our values within a social context. We prioritize each student's needs and challenges, keeping our classes small to engage in discussions, activities and critiques. We support and encourage peer mentoring and collaboration amongst ourselves and the student body.

VISITING ARTISTS and PRACTITIONERS SERIES

We recognize that creative practices are informed by research. As a tier 1 research university we emphasize the synergies among the many and rich fields of inquiry within the Five College Consortium and the importance of making and research working together as key components of creative practice.

Our Visiting Artists, Curators, and Practitioners offer a vibrant series of lectures and studio visits. We are committed to inviting practitioners who are addressing relevant and pressing societal concerns. In addition, our students are invited to attend and participate in the visiting artist series offered through the Five Colleges (Smith, Amherst, Mount Holyoke and Hampshire Colleges). Our students also have access to a wealth of visiting scholars whose research is aligned with their own.

Each semester, the Visiting Artist Program invite approximately three artists to campus to conduct studio visits with graduate students and lecture about their practice. These visits include longer term, (3-5 days) and short term, (1-2 days). In addition to the Art Department Visiting Artist series, the University Museum of Contemporary Art, as part of their exhibition programming, also invites artist to campus for lectures and critiques with graduate students.

Recent visitors include: American Artist, Katherine Behar, Eve Biddle, Lisa Dent, Craig Drennen, Eric Gottesman, Chris Klapper and Patrick Gallagher, Patric Jacobs, Larry Ossei-Mensah, Seph Rodney, Abigail Satinsky + Anthony Romero, Joanna Tam, Helen Toomer, Didier Williams, Martha Wilson, et al.

FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT

The Department of Art maintains facilities in four separate buildings: The Studio Arts Building (SAB), the Fine Arts Center (FAC), and Clark Hall, where a number of graduate studios are located. The Department provides extensive facilities in Studio Arts: Foundations and Art Education classrooms, Mac and PC computer labs with large scanners, digital print center, studios in animation, analog and digital photography, printmaking, painting, drawing, wood, clay, metals and plaster, as well as a new CNC router and laser cutter. Shops and labs are

maintained by highly trained technical staff.

Located in the basement of SAB, the equipment cage houses analog and digital cameras, tripods, audio equipment, etc., which students can borrow for a specified timeframe. The hours are posted on the door.

Graduate studios are located in the Studio Arts Building and Clark Hall. Studios are assigned to students based on material and space needs as well as seniority in the program.

Students must not alter existing architectural elements in the studios or public 'exhibition' spaces. Comprehensive clean-up is required before moving out of a studio. Non-UMass activities are not allowed on the property. Alcoholic beverages are not allowed in the buildings and UMass is a smoke-free campus.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Attendance at the Environmental Health and Safety training is mandatory in order to procure a studio in SAB or Clark Hall. Students must observe all safety standards and procedures in the use of tools, materials, and equipment, including the CNC router and laser cutter.

The following link provides detailed information on roles and responsibility for safety, general studio practices, management and handling of hazardous materials and waste, proper PPE, safety equipment, incident and injury reporting protocols, etc.

https://www.umass.edu/art/sites/default/files/assets/art/art_safety_presentation.pdf

STUDIO POLICY and CONTRACT

Students are required to read the policy and sign the contract in order to procure a studio.

https://www.umass.edu/art/sites/default/files/assets/art/grad_studio_contract.pdf

From the contract: "... neither the Department nor the University is responsible for damage to or the loss or theft of items in your studio, and you understand further that your studio is subject to sight inspection at any time. You further understand and agree that any violation of a fire, environmental health, or general safety-related provision in this agreement or University guidelines may result in loss of access to all studio space until conditions are remedied. Decisions regarding the assignment of studio space and, if warranted, the suspension of privileges and assessment of fines for violations of this Agreement are made by a committee consisting of the Department Chair, the Graduate Program Director for Studio Arts, and the Building Manager."

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

The University of Massachusetts campus boasts a total of five on-campus galleries, some of which offer students direct experience in exhibiting their own work and all of which offer opportunities to view contemporary art:

University Museum of Contemporary Art, Director, Loretta Yarlow
Herter Art Gallery, Director, Laura McGough, PhD
Student Union Gallery, Director, in transition, TBA
Hampden Gallery, Interim Director, Sally Curcio
August Savage Gallery, Director, Terry Jenoure

There are museums and galleries at each of Five Colleges: the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, the Smith College Museum of Art, the Mount Holyoke College Museum of Art, and Gallery at Hampshire College Art Gallery and Liebling Center for Film, Photography and Video at Hampshire College.

Along with the UMCA, the foregoing are members of Museums10, a collaborative of ten museums that inspire, engage, and enrich their communities through shared experiences of art, literature, history, and the natural world. Other members include the Beneski Museum of Natural History, the Emily Dickinson Museum, the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Historic Deerfield, and the Yiddish Book Center.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art is interdisciplinary and supports and encourages working across all disciplines. The emphasis in the program is developing work through extensive critique, classes in theory and practice, and intensive studio practice.

The Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art program requires a 60-credit, three-year on-campus residency. This includes an 18-credit Masters' Thesis, (during the final year), Graduate Seminar, TA Workshop, Visual Culture, and Art History. Using remaining credit, students are encouraged to devise their own plan of study, maximizing the opportunities of studying at a major Research University. Students are further encouraged to take classes within the four liberal arts colleges located within the area: Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, and Smith.

Incoming students enroll in the fall; there is no rolling admission.

DISCIPLINES

Although students are not admitted into a discrete discipline, the Art Department is home to the

following areas of study.

Animation

The animation discipline is tailored to meet the interest and self-directed needs of the individual student, and by its very nature, is cross-disciplinary. Courses in animation emphasize contemporary production processes and principles of animation that may be applied within traditional 2-D stop frame and digital time-based narrative animation. An emphasis on experimental applications is central to the pursuit of animation at the graduate level.

Ceramics

The Ceramics discipline is structured so that students participate in seminars and work independently in consultation with faculty until they enter their thesis year. Knowledge of, and expertise in, all areas of traditional and contemporary ceramic concepts is stressed.

Drawing

In the 21st Century, drawing has taken center-stage as a means of communication and mode of expression, no longer second citizen to other material forms of art making. The immediacy of drawing, combined with its broader conceptual definitions, define drawing as an integral part of our graduate curriculum.

Design

The discipline of design integrates visual art, creative technology, whole systems-thinking and problem solving, across various media, to prepare the next generation of forward-thinking creatives. In design studio courses, students create posters, books, graphic identities, typography, infographics, products, mobile app concepts, websites and more. Focus is placed on experimentation and critical engagement with contemporary culture, emphasizing topics core to design, such as: accessibility, equity, and sustainability. Coursework focuses on the aesthetic, technical, and intellectual skills necessary to pursue a design practice and career. Students undertake real world assignments in an internship and/or service-learning based course, honing their sense of art production and design in everyday contexts.

Intermedia

This discipline encompasses the overlapping areas of analogue and digital photography, video, performance, and installation engaging the methods and practices of captured image making using both digital and analogue formats. With the understanding that the computer itself is a meta-medium, students in more advanced courses are encouraged to incorporate different media into their projects. Theoretical and historical texts are studied in order to frame digital space as a means to an end rather than end in itself. Coursework focuses on strong foundation of technical skills in relation to the history and theory of intermedia. Students are encouraged to investigate concepts of time, space, and narrative within documentary and experimental practices.

Painting

The painting discipline offers students the opportunity to develop their creative skills and visual

vocabulary in the painting medium, both traditionally and experimentally. Painting will be investigated on familiar and highly unfamiliar surfaces and in spaces both two and three dimensional. Emphasis is placed on both independent development of the personal, and larger critical frameworks within the discipline.

Printmaking

This discipline encourages experimentation and testing of the limits of both traditional and digital printmaking practices in relation to the realization of individual ideas and interests. Students are exposed to a wide range of techniques and approaches to the multiple with an emphasis on strategies for creating unique, edition, and hybrid prints. Facilities and instruction are available in intaglio, stone, offset, and plate lithography, digital processes, silkscreen, relief, monotype and book arts. Archival large format pigment printing and over-size scanning facilities are also available.

Sculpture

The sculpture discipline is based on the self-directed needs of the individual student. Every effort is made to provide and provoke inquiry in this field, including traditional media exploration of plaster and wood, as well as branching out into the realms of video and installation. As in most of our disciplines, Sculpture and Intermedia intersect and these confluence points are encouraged and embraced. Facilities in the Sculpture discipline include plaster, wood, mold-making, and metals. Recent additions to the facilities include a CNC router and Laser Cutter.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Art 505 Visiting Artists Lecture Series (1 Credit, pending approval)

Each semester, the Department of Art offers a series of lectures by nationally recognized artists, scholars, curators, critics, gallerists, and writers. In addition to the noontime public lectures, the guest speakers also engage in conversations with students and conduct studio visits. Often based on recommendations by graduate students, the research and practice of the guests are pertinent to graduate students' own interests. Organized by the Visiting Artist Committee, which includes graduate student representatives, the lecture series broadens and deepens contemporary discourse in art practice and theory.

ART 671 WRITING SEMINAR (3 Credits, pending approval)

This required seminar will examine the elements of the essay form to prepare for the written component of their MFA thesis. The course will take students through the stages of researching and writing a thesis: defining the field of research, formulating a thesis question, developing a bibliography, detailing artistic process, organizing material, revising, and preparing a scholarly manuscript. The class will review research and style components of a well-constructed thesis text, making use of exemplary papers from past years. The course will also address with thesis writing on an individual basis through both one-on-one consultations with the instructor and group work in class. Students are encouraged to utilize the Writing Center.

Throughout the semester, students will document their process using text, image, video, audio, etc. in their process journals. This material will be incorporated into the written thesis. The final product of the course is a complete (if early) *draft* of the thesis that includes the following components: abstract, thesis statement, artistic influence, project statement, process/artistic research, and an annotated bibliography.

Art 691 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (3 Credits, pending approval)

A typical course in professional practice in art might entail exercises in crafting cover letters, CV, artist statement, mock grant and proposal writing for projects and solo exhibitions. While these are necessary skills one will likely have to acquire to survive as artists, grants are usually awarded for specific project-based endeavors, and granting bodies give Webinars and writing workshops artists should access. Artists also need to learn to access help from staff to enhance funding potential. Furthermore, emerging artists are not likely to deal with these issues immediately after finishing their MFA programs. In short, artists who are determined to thrive will acquire eventually these skills when needed, and the help is now readily available.

Therefore, this course will instead introduce complex mechanisms that constitute the 'art world' so as to demystify it. It offers a holistic view of the life after MFA program by focusing on important practices, factors, and entities that are relevant in order to help emerging artists to navigate the multiple art worlds and sustain careers in the arts. The course will also engage with various professional capacities that artists may assume, such as educator, curator, writer, or organizer.

This class is divided into five main topics, each exploring an aspect of post-MFA life: Making Art/Making Community; Understanding Funding Ecosystems; Understanding the Exhibition Complex; Artistic Labor; and Artistic Research.

ART 795-01 GRADUATE SEMINAR (3 Credits)

Required for all first- and second-year MFA candidates, the course is intended to serve multiple functions: a platform for developing and sharing ideas, concepts, and studio practice through reading, writing, discussion, on-going group critique; for engaging select issues in contemporary art through attending (invited) lectures in the Department and Five Colleges / Museums.

Course objectives include:

- To provide a forum for discussion of student work
- To deepen and broaden your understanding of art
- To introduce a range of contemporary critical paradigms
- To situate and contextualize your practice by examining and clarifying systems of understanding that inform your practice
- To engage in critical dialogues and learn how ideas, theories, and institutional framework inform the practice of art
- To learn about and assist your peers' studio practice and research interests
- To become part of a community of practicing artists

SAMPLE COURSE SCHEDULE (pending approval)

1st Year	Course	# of credits
Fall	Art 791 Graduate Seminar/ MFA Critiques	3
	Art 697W Teaching Workshop	1
	Elective studio, or history/theory/criticism, or Independent Study	6
Spring	Art 791 Graduate Seminar/ MFA Critiques	3
	Art 697W Teaching Workshop	1
	Elective studio, or history/theory/criticism, or Independent Study	6
2nd Year		
Fall	Art 791 Graduate Seminar/ MFA Critiques	3
	Art 691 Professional Practice Seminar	3
	Elective studio, or history/theory/criticism, or Independent Study	6
Spring	Art 791 Graduate Seminar/ MFA Critiques	3
	Art 671 Writing Seminar	3
	Elective studio, or history/theory/criticism, or Independent Study	6
3rd Year		
Spring	Masters' Thesis 799	9
Fall	Masters' Thesis 799	9
	TOTAL CREDITS	62

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION:

Independent study credits cannot exceed 21. The Art History requirement must be at the graduate level and preferably taken during the first of second year. Outside the Art Department but within the University, courses must be at the 400-level and no more than 6 credits are allowed in other departments. At the four other colleges: Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, and Smith, courses must be at the 300-level and approved by the Graduate Program Director.

COURSE REGISTRATION

It is important that you sign up for at least 6 credits by the end of add/drop period in September to avoid delays in financial aid and health insurance. Please note that you must enroll at least 9 credits in order to maintain full time status.

Art Department Courses

First, sign up for Graduate Seminar (3 credits) and Teaching Workshop (1 credit), as both are

required for the first year. Then sign up for another graduate level course in the Dept. of Art or in another department to enroll minimum of 9 credits. However, you may find it necessary to complete the registration after arrival on campus, if you wish to enroll independent studies by meeting with faculty or attend the first classes to shop around.

Independent Studies

In your first semester in fall, you may, but are not expected, to undertake them as you may need time to get to know the faculty.

How it works:

1. Identify a sponsoring faculty and discuss your proposed studies.
2. Submit a written outline of your plan to sponsoring faculty and revise it after faculty feedback. The plan is akin to a course syllabus, including detailed weekly plan of action, materials, reading list (if applicable), etc.
3. Fill out the independent study form (available at Lisa's office), and get it approved by obtaining signatures from the sponsoring faculty and Graduate Program Director (YMM).
Lisa will then enroll your independent study on Spire on your behalf.

The course number Art 696 is for independent studies. Please note that it is simply a placeholder, and you must follow the above procedure and ask Lisa to complete registration.

You can request a minimum of 1 to maximum of 6 credits each semester. A typical workload equivalent to a course, about 10 hours of work per week, is 3 credits. It is conceivable that you undertake 2 separate independent studies for six credits in a semester, with separate instructors and terms of agreement. However, a maximum of 12 credits (for M.F.A. students) may be used to fulfill master's degree requirements (as you are expected to write a thesis.)

UMass courses

You may sign up for graduate level courses within Studio Art (500 and above) or other departments throughout the University (400 and above, taught by a member of graduate faculty). Last year grads have taken courses in:

- performance theory with Prof. Kimberlee Perez, Dept. of Communication
- modern and contemporary art history with Prof. Karen Kurczynski, Dept. of Art History
- medieval art history with Prof. Sonja Drimmer

Please note that graduate level *studio art* courses meet with undergraduates at the same time. If you wish to learn new materials and techniques, you might want to consider taking such courses. Faculty will expect you to complete advanced work at graduate level.

Graduate courses for MFA program include Grad Seminar, Teaching Workshop, Visual Culture (offered in Spring), New York Professional Outreach Program, and Contemporary Critique (with Tom Friedman).

Five College courses

You will have to contact the instructor and get approval for grad level study. The faculty has to agree to give you additional work for grad level credit, and inform Connie Chatterton in writing of their approval. At the end of the semester, the faculty must also provide a written memo to Connie Chatterton, acknowledging your completion of graduate level work. There is a bit of simple paperwork for this, and Connie will help you. Recently grads have taken courses with:

- Christopher Cox at Hampshire College: an expert on audio culture, sound art, frequent contributor to many art journals and museum publications
- Niko Vicario at Amherst College: contemporary art and globalization

After completing the course, it is student's responsibility to request the faculty to write a memo certifying that you have completed graduate level work. The memo must include:

- Course title
- number of credits
- fall 2019
- Brief description of the student's work completed, and the scope of involvement and/or the nature of the contribution in class
- Grade

Request the faculty to send the memo to GPD, Connie, and copy you, so that GPD can request Graduate School to honor your course work. This documentation is required in order for you to graduate on time.

Please feel free to contact Susan Jahoda or Connie Chatterton you have any questions.

See this page for more information.

<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/policies/handbook/enrollment>

REVIEWS AND ACADEMIC STANDING

During the first and second years of study, before approval for beginning the Master's thesis, graduate students are subject to review by the faculty as a whole. These reviews or 'critiques' occur at the mid-point and end of the fall and spring semesters. The duration of the mid-terms is forty-five minutes per student and the final critiques are one hour.

Criteria for gauging progress and success differ slightly for 1st and 2nd year review.

1st Year Review:

- Candidate demonstrates ability to develop clear questions and strategies leading to work that reflects conceptual cohesiveness.
- Candidate demonstrates the ability to engage in an open dialog in response to faculty member's review questions.
- Candidate is engaged with sufficient experimentation (materials and conditions of

presentation), as well as research, in order to develop work within stated intentions.

2nd year Review:

- Candidate demonstrates ability/promise to create a body of artwork for Thesis Exhibition that reflects conceptual cohesiveness, creativity/originality and contribution to the field.
- Candidate demonstrates ability to articulate, verbally and in writing, what concepts are driving the art work in a clear and effective manner in response to faculty member's review questions.
- Candidate solves creative research problems within stated intentions, including research and synthesis of technical, aesthetic, historical, and conceptual knowledge.

Grades and program reviews determine a graduate student standing and advancement to the thesis year. A student must receive a 'B' or higher in all courses leading towards the completion of the degree. On the basis of two or more 'C' or lower grades, the faculty may recommend withdrawal. On the basis of a poor review, the faculty may recommend, in writing, that the student be placed on probation. On the basis of two semesters of poor reviews, or following a second semester of work following the probation that is not of appropriate quality, volume or substance, the faculty may recommend withdrawal. If a student is on probation, the faculty may withhold the assistantship during the probationary period. The standards for all recommendations, whether to pass reviews or advance to thesis, are determined by the professional and academic judgements of the faculty as a whole and will be delivered formally in writing.

A portion of this section has been adapted from the UC Davis MFA Handbook.

MASTERS THESIS & EXHIBITION

At the culmination of the second year, prior to entering in to the final year, the faculty will determine whether or not a graduate student is 'thesis ready' and the Graduate Program Director will approve this decision, in writing. The Master's Thesis occupies the student's last two semesters and is a three-part process: a solo exhibition, written thesis paper and oral examination. MFA candidates select a thesis committee comprised of one chair and two additional members. The chair of the thesis committee assumes responsibility for directing the written thesis statement and mentoring the student through all stages of installing a one-person thesis exhibition. Each year Graduate Program Director convenes a meeting with the third-year cohort to discuss the process of completion of thesis. Information on writing thesis is available at Graduate School website.

Checklist of Requirements to Graduate:

<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/form/masters-degree-checklist-requirements-graduate>

Thesis Guideline:

<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/form/guidelines-thesis-and-dissertation>

ADVISING

In their first semester, graduate students are assigned a faculty advisor. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their advisor at least twice per semester to seek advice on the following:

- Consulting course selection, independent studies options
- Resources: people, facilities, funding
- Studio practice, research, references
- For third year: thesis advisor
- Professional practice, development

After the first year, students may work with another advisor by requesting another faculty of their choice.

STUDIO VISITS

Students are strongly encouraged to invite faculty for studio visits throughout the entire three-year program. Forming your thesis committee may also depend on the nature and experience of working with faculty over the first two years. Students may also consider inviting faculty from outside the art department, if their area of expertise is relevant to their work.

TEACHING

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP POLICY

Teaching Fellowships are an integral part of the MFA program. They offer a variety of opportunities to develop teaching and other professional experience through working with faculty and staff in the department, and, occasionally, in collaboration with University Museum of Contemporary Art. MFA candidates provide valuable support for the department both inside and outside the classroom.

By assisting and/or teaching courses in the department, graduate assistants learn various practical and pedagogical aspects of teaching and learning visual art at higher education setting. They can also acquire certain technical skills by assisting in specific courses.

1. Types of Teaching Assistantship

In the Department of Art graduate students are generally assigned in three different capacities as teaching assistants. Generally, they involve:

- assisting and observing (first year grads)
- team-teaching (Foundations and other courses)

- instructor of record positions

For the first two types of TAs, the supervising faculty shall determine the responsibilities and communicate with the TAs. The third type is typically for courses such as Art 104 Basic Drawing, which serve non-art-majors from across the University and fulfill the General Education requirements. TAs as Instructor of Record shall rely on their experience of assisting and team-teaching, and the Teaching Workshop for identifying the responsibilities and preparing for their courses. Graduate Program Director and other faculty are also available for mentorship.

2. Responsibilities of the supervisor

The primary responsibilities of the supervising instructor or staff member are to negotiate and communicate the specific job description with and to the graduate assistant; to endeavor to make the work of the graduate assistant a worthwhile learning experience; and to integrate graduate assistantships with the undergraduate program.

3. Workload

Graduate assistants work shall be limited to **10 hours per week**, including the contact hours in the classroom.

4. Assigning Assistantship Supervisor

Assignment of graduate assistant supervisors is a complex process that considers student class rank, student and faculty preferences, students' areas of expertise; and the desirability of a variety of assistantships with a variety of faculty supervisors.

5. Teaching Responsibilities for Graduate Teaching Assistants

There are different responsibilities associated with each type of position. In the cases of assisting and team-teaching, the supervising faculty shall determine the responsibilities and communicate with the TAs. TAs as Instructor of Record shall rely on their experience of assisting and team-teaching, as well as the Teaching Workshop, for identifying the responsibilities and preparing for their courses.

Graduate assistants are expected to take the initiative to encourage quality educational experience for themselves. The specific job description for each graduate assistant is determined in agreement with the supervising instructor or staff member.

Graduate assistant responsibilities may include any of the following duties:

- attending classes taught by their supervisor;
- observing and participating in group and individual critiques;
- developing and explaining assignments;
- preparing classes including carrying out research, and setup of still-life, audiovisual equipment, technical demonstrations, and furniture;
- preparing studio demonstrations;
- collecting, organizing, and presenting slides and other media;

- informal student advising;
- evaluating artwork, papers, and exams;
- making class presentations;
- assisting faculty in organizing field trips;
- Attend field trips (provided that 10 hr. limit is observed by making necessary arrangements to compensate for time)
- monitoring upkeep of facilities;
- monitoring the tools and equipment in labs/shops in off-hours and evenings, and ensuring proper closing of labs/shops;
- reporting maintenance issues in labs/shops, e.g. repairs and updates needed;
- monitoring EH&S standards to be followed;
- managing and distributing supplies acquired through lab fees;
- assisting with facility tours for prospective students, admissions, faculty searches, lecture series, and other administrative or other special projects; and
- other responsibilities specified by instructor.

The FAQ below provides basic information on the responsibilities of both faculty and TAs. For questions not addressed below, please direct your queries to GPD and/or the faculty assigned to work with TAs.

A portion of this section has been adapted from Carnegie Mellon University School of Art's Handbook.

FAQ for faculty and grads

Who assists TAs teaching General Education courses Art 104 Basic Drawing?

The faculty specializing in drawing and painting, and/or those who teach Art 110 oversee and assist TAs teaching Art 104. They shall provide guidance to TAs for writing course syllabus, devising curriculum content and projects, methods of critique, utilization of resources, etc. TAs are also encouraged to reach out to the faculty for help and suggestions. Teaching Workshop, taught by GPD and required of all incoming grads, will cover various aspects of teaching Art 104 and other courses as instructor of record.

What are the Department's syllabi guidelines?

There are various elements that must be included in course syllabus, such as, learning objectives, course requirements, evaluation criteria, grading guideline, attendance policy, accommodation policy, academic honesty, weekly plan, required materials, etc.

Faculty in drawing and painting area and/or GPD will provide a syllabus for Art 104, The course material is available here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jGOAjyAE_cLaVeYd8M31HKa70HvMLnFn?usp=sharing

As for the courses team-taught by full time faculty and graduate TAs, such as Art 131 Foundations Studio 1 and Art 142 Foundation Studio 2, the faculty will devise the syllabus and the projects, which will be shared with the TAs, unless the faculty invites TAs to collaborate on devising a project(s).

Who are responsible for consistency of instruction?

For Art 104, the faculty specializing in drawing and painting, and/or those who teach Art 110 are responsible for consistency of instruction. In team-teaching in Foundations Art 131 and Art 142, both the faculty and TAs ensure the consistency of instruction across the sections.

In some instances, the primary contact may be a senior faculty in the given discipline, for example, Prof. Susan Jahoda for those teaching Image Capture. See the department website for the faculty contact info. <https://www.umass.edu/art/people/listings/faculty>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees for full-time students (9 credits per semester), in-state, out-of-state and New England Regional, may be found at the Bursar website:
<http://www.umass.edu/bursar/tuition/graduate-tuition-rates>

Graduate Assistantship

Graduate assistantships in the Studio Arts Program are in the form of teaching, with the exception of one assistantship available in the Student Union Gallery, when available. Teaching assistantships augment the Program's pedagogy while providing excellent opportunities for graduate students to gain hands-on college-level teaching experience. As assistantship includes a stipend paid by-weekly, a tuition waiver, health, dental, and vision insurance coverage.

UMass Arts Council Grants

Graduate students may apply for UMass Arts Council Grants for projects that will benefit the UMass community. There are two main categories: Single Project/Event Grants, which support a single arts-related project, event, or series; and Mini Grants, which supports small art events on campus. Eligible projects include exhibitions, screenings, performance, or other events that are held on UMass campus. Though the awards are limited, ranging from about \$400 to \$1000, they help defray the expenses associated with the projects.

https://fac.umass.edu:8070/Online/default.asp?BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::permalink=ArtsCouncilGrants&BOparam::WScontent::loadArticle::context_id=&sessionlanguage=

Travel Grants

Made available by Graduate School, travel grants are available for conference presentation, professional meetings, exhibition presentation, curatorial work, etc., subject to approval by GPD and Graduate School. Fill out the form Application for Graduate Student Travel Award available at the end of this handbook, and submit it to GPD, and GPD will coordinate with Graduate School to secure the funds.

<https://www.umass.edu/graduate/funding/internal-funding#return>

Research Enhancement and Leadership (REAL) Fellowship

The **Research Enhancement and Leadership** (REAL) Fellowship aims to enhance the recruitment, retention, and success of outstanding graduate students from historically underrepresented groups. The fellowships are awarded to top graduate students seeking admission to UMass Amherst doctoral programs and include 2–4 years of summer support (\$4,000 fellowship each summer), as well as mentoring, professional development, and community-building programs.

The nomination process and nomination form are available on our [website](#).

- Nominations must come from the Graduate Program Director or Graduate Admissions Director. *Students are not permitted to apply directly for these fellowships.*
- The program admitting the student must make a commitment of five years of academic year assistantship support (three years for students in MFA programs)
- The program must commit to assigning an advisor who will mentor the student's research during the summers when fellowship support will be provided. Assigned mentors are strongly encouraged to participate in the **Faculty Mentor Training Program**.
- Nominated students will be notified and asked to submit a supplemental personal statement to complete their nomination. This is a required component for eligibility and review of their nomination.

Boscov Fellowship

Each spring the Graduate School invites nominations for the Joseph L. Boscov Fellowship. According to the terms of the endowment, it is awarded annually to a woman who is 35 or older, with financial need, "whose studies will equip [her] for increased service to the needs of people and/or the environment." Every department or interdepartmental degree program is eligible to nominate one student for the Boscov Fellowship. Nominations include an application packet and should be submitted by the GPD to the Graduate School.

Other Financial Aid

Financial Aid services, located at 255 Whitmore (413) 545 0801, can help provide information about further financial aid for graduate students. Students may supplement their income through Work Study. Information about this can be found at 243 Whitmore, (413) 545 1503.

External Grants

Each year Dedalus Foundation seeks nomination for their annual MFA Fellowship in Painting

and Sculpture (\$15,000). Students do not apply for this highly competitive grant, but are nominated by the faculty. In this context, “sculpture” appears to be inclusive of digital media installation with sculptural elements.

<https://www.dedalusfoundation.org/programs/mfa>

RESOURCES

IT Services

Information Technology offers a huge range of services. It maintains: your University IT account and email, network connectivity, Moodle, Spire, and online storage; offers various instructional technologies, classroom technologies, blogs and web hosting, printing service, and discounts. It also offers workshop for instructors. For example, “Hybrid Campus Classroom webinar gives you “a live online demonstration and walkthrough of the hybrid model classrooms set up to use Zoom for Spring 2021. Instructors teaching in these rooms will be able to present your content to in-person and remote students synchronously. We will also discuss tool settings and features, potential uses cases, and ways you can use the in-room technology to meet your pedagogical goals.”

<https://www.umass.edu/it/>

University Store

University Store, located on the ground level of Campus Center, offers art supplies, Apple and Windows computer systems, peripherals, software, and accessories at educational rates. The store also occasionally offers sale items.

<https://www.umassstore.com/technology-department>

Surplus Barn

The Surplus Barn, a part of Office of Waste Management, offers used surplus office furniture for free to the UMass community. However, the barn is closed indefinitely due to the health and safety issues associated with the deterioration of the building structure. They are seeking an alternative place to resume their service.

<https://www.umass.edu/wastemanagement/surplus-barn-has-been-closed-due-safety-concerns>

Appendix 1: Application for Graduate Student Travel Award

Application for Graduate Student Travel Award

Applications for the Graduate Student Travel Award are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis.

Name:

Student ID:

Email:

Graduate GPA:

Years in Graduate Program:

Anticipated Graduation Date:

Name of Conference/Exhibition/Event:

Location of Conference/Exhibition/Event:

Dates:

Have you previously received this award? No Yes If yes, when? _____

Your Presentation consists of:

Curatorial work

Exhibition of own work

Paper

Poster with oral presentation

Poster with no oral presentation

Submit a single pdf with the following items in the order listed below:

1. Copy of the official information about the conference/exhibition/event (webpage acceptable)
2. Notification of acceptance of artwork, paper, poster, etc.
3. Abstract submitted for the conference, if applicable.
4. Unofficial transcript
5. Updated CV
6. Estimated budget

Please give a brief description (in less than 100 words) of why it is important that you attend this conference/exhibition/event:

Research Statement: Please describe (in less than 300 words) the research or creative work you plan to present.