Master of Science in Journalism

The master of science in journalism (M.S.J.) program in the Reed College of Media is designed to help persons involved in various aspects of mass communication to better understand and to cope not only with the increased complexity of their own majors but also with fields outside mass communications.

The program, created to assist each student in reaching his/her potential as a worker, teacher, or scholar in mass communications, prepares a master’s candidate not only for a first job but also for long-term and productive career development through the study of mass communications and related fields. Students who obtain the M.S.J. degree should excel in professional skills.

The M.S.J. program is intended to afford liberal arts graduates an opportunity to concentrate on advanced study in mass communications; to provide intensive study for persons who have undergraduate journalism training and who wish to pool their journalistic skills with extensive knowledge in another substantive area or areas (e.g., political science, economics, science); and to give persons who have had considerable professional experience an opportunity to broaden their academic bases through carefully selected advanced studies.

Assistantships and Tuition Waivers

Approximately five assistantships are available in the College of Media each academic term. Graduate assistants teach laboratories and assist professors with their courses and research. Interns work in mass communications-related jobs on campus to obtain solid professional experience.

Students may receive stipends for the academic term and may apply for tuition remission for the entire year. Although sometimes renewed for a second or third term, assistantships and internships are granted for one academic term. Graduate assistants and interns work an average of twenty hours per week during the academic year.

Persons who wish to be considered for assistantships or internships should have their applications on file with the Director of Graduate Studies before March 1 of the same year.

Tracks

The College of Media offers two tracks—the teaching/research track and the professional track—within the M.S.J. program.

Teaching/Research

The teaching/research track is generally a program for persons who wish to pursue a Ph.D., to teach at the college/university level, and to conduct research in areas of mass communications. Persons in this track normally take research and theory courses both inside and outside the College of Media, statistics, and social science courses. The program culminates in a thesis, which is a scholarly theoretical study of an important aspect of mass communications.

Professional

The professional track is designed primarily for persons who wish to become excellent practitioners in some field of mass communications and who have less desire to teach or to become mass communications researchers. Persons in the professional track normally take communication and outside area courses that will help them to become better practitioners. The program culminates in a professional project, which helps a student to extend his/her practical and theoretical knowledge about a given aspect of mass communications and should be a non-routine project on which the student could work as a professional.

Time Limitation

Students must complete all graduate degree requirements, including either a thesis or a professional project, within eight years of beginning the initial coursework of the program. After this period, courses must be revalidated according to the procedures set forth in the WVU Graduate Catalog.

Maintenance of Scholarship

A journalism graduate student must maintain satisfactory progress toward his/her M.S.J. The candidate’s graduate record begins with the first course credited toward the master’s and includes all subsequent courses. Every graduate student must maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average and complete all requirements within eight years. Anyone who fails to meet this standard will be subject to academic probation and possible dismissal from the program.

Each person working toward the M.S.J. should register for at least one hour during every regular (fall and spring) term. This enrollment may be in coursework or in research.

International Students

Believing that mutual benefit is derived when scholars from other countries study in the Reed College of Media, the faculty welcomes international students. At the same time the faculty recognizes that journalism, more than any other field, requires language skills. To profit from journalism study,
international students must have a ready understanding of English. International students, for whom English is not their official language, must include TOEFL scores. The minimum TOEFL scores needed for consideration at WVU are 550 (paper test), 213 (computer test), and 79 (internet test).

**Admission**

Admission to the M.S.J. program is limited to recipients of baccalaureate or equivalent degrees from institutions of higher learning. Applicants should have combined verbal and quantitative Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Aptitude Test scores of 153 Verbal and 144 Quantitative and should have earned at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale. Each applicant should submit to the College of Media Director of Graduate Studies a detailed statement of purpose explaining why the student wishes to undertake graduate study in journalism, what the student hopes to glean from the graduate journalism program, what his/her long-term goals are, and how graduate education in journalism can help achieve those goals.

An applicant who does not meet the minimum GRE and/or GPA requirement(s) may be accepted only if the low GPA or GRE scores are offset by extraordinary factors. Excellent recommendations, unusual grading patterns (e.g., a steady rise of grades), an outstanding statement of purpose, or examples of professional accomplishment sometimes can offset low GRE scores or a low GPA.

Students applying for admission to the M.S.J. program are encouraged to send nonreturnable supporting material to the College of Media Director of Graduate Studies. A list of these materials can be found at: http://journalism.wvu.edu/graduate/master-of-science-journalism.

All other materials (e.g., transcripts, GRE scores, application forms) should be sent to the Office of Admissions.

Students may also apply online at: https://app.applyyourself.com/AYApplicantLogin/ApplicantConnectLogin.asp?id=wvugrad.

**Degree Requirements**

A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required in all courses

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JRL 600</td>
<td>Introduction to Graduate Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRL 604</td>
<td>Mass Media and Society</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRL 620</td>
<td>Advanced Journalistic Writing and Research</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRL 689</td>
<td>Ethics of Mass Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRL 698</td>
<td>Thesis or Dissertation</td>
<td>1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Media electives</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Electives Outside the College of Media *</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
<td>3-6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Hours</strong></td>
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* A minimum of 18 credit hours must be earned in the College of Media. Remaining credit hours should be taken outside of the College of Media. Students who choose to write a thesis must register for at least 3 credits of Research (JRL 697) and 3 credits of Thesis or Dissertation (JRL 698). Students who write a professional project must register for at least 6 credits of Research (JRL 697).

**Suggested Plan of Study**

**First Year**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tr>
<td>JRL 600</td>
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<td>JRL 620</td>
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<td>JRL 604</td>
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<td>JRL 689</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electives *</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<th>Second Year</th>
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<th>Hours</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JRL 697**</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>JRL 697*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>JRL 698*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electives*</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td><strong>9</strong></td>
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Total credit hours: 37

* Various electives. In both programs, sixty percent of the graduate credits submitted for the degree (eighteen credits) must be in courses numbered 500–799

** Students who choose to write a thesis must register for at least 3 credits of Research (JRL 697) and 3 credits of Thesis or Dissertation (JRL 698). Students who write a professional project must register for at least 6 credits of Research (JRL 697).
Students should note that the majority of credits submitted for the degree must be in courses numbered 500 or above.

The thesis or professional project will be graded as an S or U (satisfactory or unsatisfactory).

Except for thesis, professional project, and internship courses, no student may take a course on a P/F or S/U grade basis without prior approval of the Director of graduate studies.

**THESIS/PROFESSIONAL PROJECT**

Each student must complete a thesis or a professional project involving original work in his/her area of interest. The master's candidate should have a thesis or professional project proposal written by the end of the academic term in which the first twelve hours of coursework are completed.

Each student is responsible for developing ideas for the thesis or professional project. Through consultations with journalism faculty, the student can determine faculty interests and areas of expertise; he/she then refines a preliminary idea to a significant, feasible thesis/project topic.

Normally students will enroll for six credit hours of theses/research courses. The Director of Graduate Studies must approve any deviations from this norm.

In addition to this six-hour limit, no graduate student will be permitted to enroll in more than six hours of research and/or colloquium courses without approval from the director of graduate studies.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The student, with approval of the director of graduate studies, selects a journalism graduate faculty member who would be best able to chair his/her Advisory Committee, subject to the agreement of the faculty member. If questions arise about a faculty member’s interest or knowledge, the student should consult the director of graduate studies. With the chairperson, the student further refines the topic to a “preliminary proposal” stage, in which concepts and appropriate methodology are on paper but not necessarily in formal proposal form.

After the student has written a preliminary proposal and selected a faculty chairperson, the student should select other members of his/her committee, subject to their willingness to serve. The committee must consist of no fewer than four members and at least two persons must be members of the WVU faculty; others may be from other departments at WVU. Committee chairs must be members of the College of Media graduate faculty. The fourth member of all theses committees must be affiliated with the graduate program at an accredited university (or another department at WVU). The fourth member of professional project committees may be from the professional realm.

**PROPOSALS**

At this point, students in the thesis/professional track must submit proposals to their committee, which must approve all topics (but not research methods, specific research questions, or hypotheses, etc.). Students may attend the meetings at which their proposals are discussed. After securing committee approval, students schedule a proposal defense date. Proposal defenses are required of all students.

Working under the committee’s guidance, each student revises the thesis or project proposal, extended from the preliminary proposal. Guidance for designing a proposal is available from the Director of Graduate Studies.

Once the committee agrees that the proposal is ready, a proposal defense is scheduled.

**FINAL THESIS/PROJECT APPROVAL**

After the thesis/project proposal defense, the committee votes to accept or to reject a proposal. The student whose proposal is approved works closely with a committee to complete his/her final thesis or project. A master’s candidate must inform his/her committee and consult its members for advice (as needed and as desired by them) as the thesis or project develops.

After each advisory committee member is satisfied with the thesis or project, a final defense is scheduled. Announcements of the defense should be posted in Martin Hall. Students also should make certain that they file their thesis/project signature form with the director of graduate studies (and the University Libraries) two weeks before their defense date.

Only committee members may vote on acceptance or rejection of a thesis. Although someone may cast a recorded dissenting vote, a majority vote is sufficient to approve a thesis/project. Furthermore, at least three signatures (two of which must belong to College of Media faculty members) must appear on the approval sheet.

Master’s candidates should follow APA or another approved stylebook during preparation of a thesis or professional project.

Each committee chairperson will ultimately decide whether the candidate has properly made the requested corrections (after the final defense); that chairperson also will check the style and form of the final version. Every graduate student is responsible for delivering a copy of a final thesis or professional project to the director of graduate studies; he/she also must file a thesis or professional project electronically (to the University Library) before the academic term’s deadline.
Major Learning Goals

JOURNALISM

Whether students in the M.S.J. program are interested in teaching and research or strictly professional pursuits, upon completing the program, they will be able to:

1. Understand economic, ethical, historical, legal, political, social and technological forces that shape the roles and structures of the media.
2. Employ writing, researching and editing skills to be a professional in the graduate's chosen field.
3. Articulate journalistic concepts, values and skills.
4. Understand methodology used in historical, legal, cultural and other types of qualitative and quantitative research.
5. Conduct original research that contributes to knowledge in the field.
6. Effectively communicate orally, through writing, and through various media.
7. Understand and critically evaluate public opinion polls and other types of quantitative and qualitative research.