MA CURATORIAL PRACTICES
and the PUBLIC SPHERE

STUDENT HANDBOOK
Fall 2022

Updated August 3, 2022

University of Southern California
Roski School of Art and Design

Master of Curatorial Practices and
the Public Sphere Program

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roski.usc.edu/academic/ma
roski.usc.edu/events
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<tr>
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<th>Extension</th>
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MA Program Curriculum and Guidelines

OVERVIEW

The MA Curatorial Practices and the Public Sphere is an intensive master's-level program in curatorial history, theory, and practice. Studied through the lens of critical theory and the history of art and museums, the program focuses on the research and exhibition of contemporary art, and broader conceptions of curating such as programming performance art and public events. Instructors lead students in asking critical questions about the exhibition of a broad range of art in relation to its publics. Over two years of full-time academic study, students explore modes of curatorial practice in a curriculum combining seminars and professional training. Courses are led by USC Roski's internationally acclaimed faculty, which includes renowned artists, scholars, critics, and curators.

The MA features courses on the history of art, exhibitions and aesthetics, with a focus on contemporary art and theory. Other courses such as the Curatorial Practicum seminars emphasize direct practical experience that results in an exhibition or another type of curatorial project and includes a public interface project such as a catalogue or website. The Roski Talks and a related seminar afford an opportunity to hear lectures and have intimate discussions with leading artists, critics, art historians, and curators.

There are many advantages of studying at a major university, particularly in terms of interdisciplinary approaches to art and curatorial practices, course offerings and cultural programming across the campus. Students may take electives outside of the Roski School starting in the first semester and are encouraged to take advantage of graduate-level courses in art, art history, cinema, performance studies, new media, comparative literature, philosophy, gender studies, communications, and the sciences, to name just a few. Additionally, USC sponsors readings, performances, and lectures, including the USC’s Visions and Voices Arts and Humanities Initiative, a high-profile series hosted by various USC professional schools and affiliated organizations.

Admitted students join a major research university with six art schools, renowned for their promotion of the arts as an essential component of civil society.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- BA, BFA, or equivalent, from an accredited school (minimum 3.0 overall GPA)
- USC Graduate Application
- Official academic transcripts
- Three letters of recommendation
- Curriculum Vitae or Resume
- 1500-word personal statement
- Writing sample
- Curatorial Essay
- TOEFL or IELTS (for international students only)

Details of application requirements are found at [https://roski.usc.edu/admissions/ma-admission](https://roski.usc.edu/admissions/ma-admission) and [http://gradadm.usc.edu](http://gradadm.usc.edu) *Students admitted on a conditional basis must fulfill certain requirements by the end of their first semester of enrollment before further enrollment is permitted.*
MA CURRICULUM/ REQUIREMENTS

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
The Masters in Curatorial Practices and the Public Sphere is an intensive program in the practice and history of curating studied through the lenses of critical theory, art history and visual culture. During two years of full-time academic study that combines seminars with professional training, you will explore different modes of curatorial practice. Focused on the research and exhibition of contemporary art, the program conceives curatorial practice broadly and includes film and video, performance art and public programs.

It is expected that the program will be completed within two years, with courses taken primarily in the fall and spring semesters of each year, though some USC summer electives are also available. In order to maintain full-time status, a master’s student should be enrolled in 8 or more units per semester.

Required electives provide a broader platform for interrogation and experimentation, so students may explore complementary fields of research at one of the world’s leading research universities. Students should be aware that certain university courses, including some at Roski, have fees attached to them that are in addition to the tuition cost. These fees can cover the costs of various special supplies and equipment needed for a course, or to support expenses such as transportation, visiting artists, or field trips.

SPECIFIC DEGREE REQUIREMENTS
The MA Art requires a minimum of 39 units to be distributed as follows:

ACADEMIC COURSES (27 units)
- CRIT 510 History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions (4)
- CRIT 512 Art and Curatorial Visits (2)
- ART/CRIT 515 Visiting Artist/Scholar Seminar (2 + 2)
- CRIT 525 Making and Curating Art: Pedagogy and Praxis (4)
- CRIT 555 Methods of Curating: Introduction to Practicum (4)
- CRIT 556 Curatorial Practicum: Group Projects (4)
- CRIT 557 Curatorial Practicum: Group Project Summation (4)
- CRIT 591 Internship (1)

ELECTIVES (8 units)
- 4 units of 400-, 500-, or 600-level (ART, CRIT or DES) courses offered by the Roski School.
- 4 units of 400-, 500- or 600-level outside of the Roski School*
*Courses selected from the professional schools at USC or the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Science

MASTER’S THESIS (4 units)
- ART 594a, Master’s Thesis (2)
- ART 594b, Master’s Thesis (2)
MANDATORY ADVISEMENT
When registering for classes each term, all MA students must consult with the program director and academic advisor. Whenever meeting with your advisor, a student should always bring a laptop or tablet to schedule classes. The most productive meetings occur when students arrive prepared and have already reviewed course offerings via the USC Schedule of Classes website. Mandatory Advisement occurs during specific weeks. Students should consult the Advisement section of https://roski.usc.edu/resources/student for appropriate times. Students should also read and follow directions that their advisor emails to them. MA students will not be able to register for classes until they meet with their advisor. Timely attendance of Mandatory Advisement meetings and timely registration are requisites for satisfactory progress.

SAMPLE PROGRAM GRID Two years, optional summer session, 39 units total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR 1 FALL</th>
<th>CRIT-510 (4) History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions</th>
<th>CRIT-512 (2) Art and Curatorial Visits</th>
<th>CRIT-515 (2) Visiting Artist &amp; Scholar Seminar</th>
<th>8 units</th>
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<tr>
<td>YEAR 1 SPRING</td>
<td>CRIT-525 (4) Making and Curating Art: Pedagogy and Praxis</td>
<td>CRIT-555 (4) Methods of Curating: Intro to Practicum</td>
<td>CRIT-515 (2) Visiting Artist &amp; Scholar Seminar</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUMMER</td>
<td>ART/CRIT 500-level Seminar (4) [possible elective]</td>
<td>CRIT-591 (1, max 2) Field Internship Experience</td>
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<td>5 units</td>
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<tr>
<td>YEAR 2 FALL</td>
<td>CRIT-556 (4) Curatorial Practicum: Group Project</td>
<td>CRIT-594a (2) Master’s Thesis</td>
<td>Elective (4) Recommended here</td>
<td>10 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR 2 SPRING</td>
<td>CRIT-557 (4) Curatorial Practicum: Group Project Summation</td>
<td>CRIT-594b (2) Master’s Thesis</td>
<td>Elective (4) Recommended here (if summer seminar not taken)</td>
<td>6 units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACADEMIC COURSES

Required Core Courses:
CRIT 510 History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions - 4 units
Gives broad and deep overview of history of art as a conceptual and practical category, emphasizing development of exhibition sites and engagement with public sphere.

CRIT 512 Art and Curatorial Visits - 2 units
Site visits and meetings with professional curators and other arts professionals in museums and non-profit organizations, artist-run galleries and studios, public art agencies and performance venues.

ART/CRIT 515 Visiting Artist and Scholar Seminar - 4 units (2/semester)
A weekly forum of visiting artists, curators, writers and scholars in conjunction with Roski Talks. The lectures alternate with discussion sections. Students are expected to engage the visiting artist in discussion of the material presented and additional assigned readings when required. In addition to being exposed to a cross section of contemporary work in the field and meeting important art world figures, students will observe and engage in the range of presentation methods and lecture styles used by recognized professionals.

CRIT 525 Making and Curating Art: Pedagogy and Praxis - 4 units
Provides students with a foundation in the history and theory of studio art and curatorial education and develops their teaching skills in these areas. Includes professional development such as syllabus preparation and a final pedagogical project.

Curatorial Practicum Series:
CRIT 555 Curatorial Practice: Introduction to Methods of Curating - 4 units
The first course in the Practicum series, this class includes the history/theory of modern and contemporary curatorial practices and introduces methods for developing the MA Curatorial group project.

CRIT 556 Curatorial Practicum: Curating the Group Projects - 4 units
The second course in the Practicum series, this class provides a conceptual, practical, and logistical framework for the professional activity of curating the MA project.

CRIT 557 Curatorial Practicum: Group Project Summation - 4 units
The third course in the Practicum series, students organize a public interface/summation of their MA Curatorial group project, which may be a publication, website or program.

Thesis and Internship Credits:
CRIT 594ab Master’s Thesis - 4 units (2/semester) Credit on acceptance of Thesis. Graded CR/NC.

CRIT 591 Internship - 1-unit Supervised internship in an art institution, or an art agency. Recommended preparation: Completion of first year of courses.

400 or 500-level Electives:
CRIT 599 (selected topics) and/or ART/CRIT/DES 400 and 500-level seminars – 4 units
These seminars will generally be taught by a Roski/Critical Studies faculty member on topics relating to contemporary art practice, theory, and history drawn from her/his research. Examples include: “Contemporary Art and Its Publics,” “Activism, Visual Culture, and Art in the Public Sphere,” and “Performing Identity in Art, Culture, Theory since 1950.”

400/500-level seminar outside Roski – 4 units
Students may take elective courses in Art History, Gender Studies, American Studies and Ethnicity, all at the Dornsife College of Letters and Sciences; media theory at the Annenberg School of Communications; cinema and film theory in the Cinematic Arts, etc.
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
The MA Curatorial Practices and the Public Sphere program aims to bring students to a high level of understanding of the history and theory of curatorial practices, with attention paid to questions of how curating activates art in relation to a range of publics. The seminars and the Roski Talks/Visiting Artist and Scholar Seminars address theories and histories of art and performance, and focus on theories of social practice, the public sphere, what constitutes art’s publics, and how curatorial practice can address and engage various audiences.

The curriculum of the MA is designed to give students extensive experience in devising a final curatorial project through the three-semester-long Practicum course sequence, and to achieve the noted intellectual and professional goals through seminars in theory and history of art. Courses also focus on aiding students in developing a range of research and writing skills, culminating in a written thesis mentored by a faculty member and thesis committee.

A further aim of the program—achieved through the Roski Talks/Visiting Artist and Scholar Seminars, the field trip course, and the internship requirement—is to introduce students to curators, artists, and scholars working across the range of art, performance, and curatorial venues in Los Angeles and beyond. For example, the Art and Curatorial Visits 2-unit fieldwork course CRIT 512 gives students an opportunity to visit curatorial departments at museums and galleries, public art venues and institutions, artists' studios, and related art institutions across Los Angeles, meeting key players and observing professional curatorial and public arts programming contexts. In addition, students complete a field internship, receiving course credit for working directly in a curatorial environment such as a museum, another kind of non-profit organization, or a civic/public art department.

Throughout the program, MA students work closely with art, design, and other USC faculty in the Roski School and across the university, as well as fellow MFA students. To this end, the MA includes two core courses taken with the MFA cohort, including a seminar entitled History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions, CRIT 510, a deep history of the role of the artist, views about the public sphere, and art institutions, including curatorial and museum practices; and Making and Curating Art: Praxis and Pedagogy, CRIT 525, a course on the history of art schools and pedagogical practices and theories. Praxis and Pedagogy also leads students through practical issues such as the composition of an artist or curator’s statement, composing a syllabus, and developing teaching strategies. Other courses (notably those of the Practicum series) emphasize direct practical experience leading towards the realization of art exhibitions, performance art programming, and other hybrid modes of arts curating.

Thesis and Curatorial Practicum
Students research and write a thesis and develop a curatorial project with a public interface component as capstones to their degree. The thesis is produced with the close guidance of faculty (a supervisor and two additional members). In the thesis, students develop individual, original research on topics relating or complementary to their curatorial projects. The curatorial project, developed through the Curatorial Practicum course series, is a three-term laboratory of studying the history of curating, exhibition making and arts programming, emphasizing the presentation of work in a final exhibition or alternative project and the creation of a public interface such as a catalogue, website, or other program. In the Practicum series, students examine case studies of curatorial practices around the world and then work collaboratively to conceptualize, research, and organize a curatorial project either in the Roski MFA Gallery or in an alternative venue (actual or virtual). As a culmination of this project, students produce a catalogue, website, and/or another public interface.

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ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY
At the end of the second semester of the first-year, students may be advanced to candidacy for
the MA degree by the Roski School of Art and Design faculty if:
1) They remain in satisfactory standing following the spring semester.
2) They have successfully completed eighteen (18) units according to the
curriculum above. 18 units represent the normal minimum for two semesters of full-
time course work.
3) They have maintained a 3.0 GPA.

MA THESIS REQUIREMENTS
The thesis committee is established and contingent upon satisfactory completion of the second
semester's course work. Advancement to candidacy is determined by the director of the program,
in consultation with the Vice Dean of Research and other Critical Studies/MA faculty.

The written thesis is carried out under the guidance of the thesis committee and the USC
Graduate School: ACCORDINGLY, STANDARDS MUST MEET THOSE SET BY
THE LATTER.

The deadlines for the written thesis are set each academic year. For complete USC guidelines and
standards please see: http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-
submission/submission-deadlines/

NOTE: IT IS THE STUDENT’S OWN RESPONSIBILITY TO ADHERE TO ALL THESIS
DEADLINES AND REQUIREMENTS AS STATED ON THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
WEBSITE. THIS IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE THESIS CHAIR OR OTHER
COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

1) Thesis Committee
The student is responsible for forming a thesis committee before the end of April of
their first year, which is achieved by circulating a thesis proposal to potential
committee members (see p. 12 THESIS MILESTONES).

The thesis committee, consisting of three members of the USC faculty, works
closely with the individual candidate to complete the thesis requirements and acts as
a formal review committee for the graduate student’s written thesis. Two members
must be drawn from the Roski School’s current full-time faculty and holding an
MFA, PhD, or their equivalent (extensive professional experience may serve in lieu
of a terminal degree, with approval by the Vice Dean of Research). The third
member can be any full-time tenure track, tenured, or non-tenure track USC faculty
member, either within the Roski School or from outside Roski. The third member
can be any full-time tenure track, tenured, or non-tenure track USC faculty member,
either within the Roski School or from outside Roski. One of the three thesis
committee members is designated as the Chair by request of the candidate in
consultation with this desired Chair. For full guidelines regarding faculty eligible to
serve on thesis committees, see
http://catalogue.usc.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=1767#graduate_school_polic
ies_and_requirements
The Chair or thesis supervisor provides leadership and guidance to the committee, usually reads drafts and advises the student up to the point where a full draft is available to be submitted to members two and three on the committee.

2) Formation of the Thesis Committee
The student forms their thesis committee upon advancement to candidacy at the end of spring semester in the first year. The student contacts faculty individually and formally finalizes their committee by having the faculty sign the Appointment of Committee Form: https://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/required-documents/. This signed form is then submitted to the MA academic advisor by the last week of September in the fall of the second semester; after submission, the academic advisor will contact the Dean for a signature. All committee appointments are subject to approval by the Dean. Once all the signatures are finalized, the student must fill in committee information and upload the form to their Thesis Center Profile.

The student meets with the faculty on their thesis committee as part of CRIT 594, beginning in the second year of study, and will hold regular meetings to discuss the drafts of the thesis with the faculty. The recommended minimum is one in-person meeting per semester with the full committee and one in-person meeting per semester with your individual committee members. It is up to the student, not the Chair or other committee members, to arrange these meetings.

3) The Written Thesis
The written thesis text is generally expected to be 40-50 pages total, with properly formatted bibliography and footnotes, following the Chicago Manual of Style. Committee members read and make comments, which they share among each other and with the student. The student then revises the thesis and the final, revised draft of the complete thesis is read and approved by all committee members.

In addition to formal approval of the written thesis by the thesis committee, the student must format and submit their thesis according to the guidelines of the USC Graduate School. The USC Graduate School website can provide guidance in how to properly format and submit the written thesis: https://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/manuscript-formatting-guidelines/

4) Checklist Upload and Final Library Submission
After the requested revisions are made all committee members approve the thesis via the Online Checklist and the thesis is uploaded. The manuscript is then reviewed by the USC Thesis editor and returned to the student to make changes before the final pdf is uploaded by the USC Library deadline. See USC’s information on electronic filing: https://libguides.usc.edu/dissertations/esubmission
THESIS MILESTONES

All students must adhere to these milestones and USC deadlines in writing their MA Thesis:

1st Milestone: Proposal and Forming a Committee
Requirements: The student forms a thesis committee on the basis of an initial written thesis proposal. The Dean approves the committee.
Thesis proposal: the thesis proposal should be 1-2 pages including a title, abstract (paragraph summarizing the point and key arguments of the thesis), brief bulleted or numbered list of sections to give a sense of thesis organization, and list of 5-10 sources (legitimate articles or books in the library) central to the research.
Due: Before last day of classes of spring semester, typically end of April, first academic year

2nd Milestone: Expanded Thesis Proposal
Requirements: The student revises and expands the proposal and begins to write the first draft of the thesis. The expanded thesis proposal indicates clearly the scope of the research and how it relates to her/his individual practice. Student meets with members of the committee jointly or separately to discuss the proposal.
Due: By September 30, second academic year

3rd Milestone: Full Draft to Chair
Requirements: The student works closely with Chair to research and write a full draft of the thesis.
Due to Chair: December 1, second academic year

4th Milestone: Thesis Draft to Committee
Requirements: After obtaining comments from Chair of committee, student should make revisions and submit a polished, complete draft of thesis to all committee members.
Due: February 1, second academic year

5th Milestone: Final Thesis Draft
Requirement: After obtaining comments from all committee members and revising thesis per the comments, student should submit full final thesis to all committee members.
Due: March 1, second academic year

6th Milestone: Final Thesis Review
Requirement: Student arranges final review and discussion of written thesis with all committee members, via email or in person.
Due: March 15, second academic year

7th Milestone: Checklist Submission Approval
Requirement: Committee to electronically approve the thesis via the USC Thesis Center checklist.
Due: Mid-March, second academic year

8th Milestone: Submission of Manuscript
Requirement: Submit the final thesis to USC Thesis Editor
Due: End of March, second academic year

9th Milestone: Final Submission to USC Library
Requirement: All edits have been incorporated into final pdf for upload to USC Library
Due: Mid-May, second academic year
CONDUCT INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

As a graduate student, you have the responsibility of conducting yourself, in all educational activities, in a befitting manner, showing respect to faculty, staff, your student colleagues, and the surrounding community. Engagements in debate should be respectful and productive. We are here to enrich you, stoke your intellectual curiosity, and push your artistic growth.

A fair amount of conflict and friction is normal in a high-level learning environment, up to a point. Ideally, you should be aware that disagreements occur and that you should find constructive ways to deal with your emotions about them directly with your colleagues. When necessary, faculty can be enlisted to help deal with conflicts in the classroom or elsewhere at USC. We want to ensure everyone feels supported, and that the classroom is a space of openness and debate. While intellectual and creative disagreements occur, debate should remain respectful and productive, and feedback should come from a place of generosity.

In the classroom, learning to negotiate rather than escalate is a crucial part of learning to conduct yourself as a professional in your field. All comments and engagements in class and beyond must remain respectful and productive; if you need tips on how best to achieve this, talk to your faculty mentors for suggestions. Every effort should be made to resolve conflicts yourselves as individuals and should be addressed in-person, face-to-face. Texting, posting on social media, or emailing about a perceived slight is not only ineffective, but counterproductive. If you have taken steps to resolve a conflict on your own and have been unsuccessful, take the time to meet with your instructor(s) outside of class. Class time should be used for course material and not to discuss or vent about conflicts.

The syllabus for any given course is a guideline as to the expectations for the type of work being done in the course, including in-class participation and assignments as part of the course. If you are unable to engage in the course material as denoted by the syllabus and directed by the instructor, your grade will reflect this.

If you feel an instructor is hostile or abusive, talk to the MA Director; if the MA Director is not helpful, or is the instructor of the course, you can talk to the Roski Dean; OR you can always go directly to Student Affairs for support and bypass Roski faculty.

We understand that students have a life outside of Roski and that at times, life takes a course of its own. If you experience difficulties that you feel are impeding your academics, please speak with head of the program or your advisor, or contact USC Campus Support and Intervention office uscsupport@usc.edu or visit https://uscsa.usc.edu or call 213-740-0411, where trained professionals can help you problem solve, understand options, and connect you with campus resources. In addition, counseling and mental health services support is offered through the office of USC Student Counseling Services, studenthealth@usc.edu, or visit https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/ or call 213-740-7711.

We take your well-being, as well as your academic growth, seriously, and want all our students to thrive. While conflicts, at times, may not be avoided, they should be handled in a productive manner that does not take away time and energy from our mission to learn and expand our creative and intellectual practice. It is important to find ways to achieve these goals without disruption.
For more information on university resources to help offset conflict, additional policies and procedures, please refer to the SC USC Student Handbook: http://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/.

Lastly, students should make themselves aware of USC Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (USC SJACS) and of Section 13 – Academic Integrity Review: https://sjaes.usc.edu/students/academic-integrity/. Sanctioning Guidelines are provided in Appendix A: https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/files/2015/09/appendix_a.pdf
Sanctions for second offenses will be more severe and generally can include suspension or expulsion.

**ROSKI TALKS & VISITING LECTURER HOST DUTIES**
All Roski Talk lectures have been invited through the Academic Program Administrator’s office. MA and MFA students in ART/CRIT 515 will be engaged in these visits and will generally be asked to introduce one visitor during the semester. This is a great opportunity to get to know these professional guests.

Typically, the lecture takes place on Tuesday evening and the related seminar take place Wednesday.

**Audiovisual Equipment**
Audiovisual equipment such as speakers, DVD players, projectors and other items can be checked out for a period of one week with the staff. Photography equipment can be checked out at the Advanced Photography Lab at IFT.

**EQUIPMENT CHECKOUT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

1. Equipment may be checked out for periods of one week with the exception of holidays, when students may be able to check out equipment for extended periods. Checkouts are processed by Timmy Chen, Roski’s Makerspace Manager at Mateo timmyc@usc.edu.

2. To guarantee availability, it is recommended that students reserve equipment a minimum of 2 weeks in advance, by emailing Timmy Chen. Students who wish to reserve equipment must specify a checkout period and the specific equipment they will be checking out.

3. Students must return equipment by noon on the due date. Students who wish to extend a checkout period must let Timmy Chen know by emailing him. If no other student has reserved the item, an extension may be granted.

4. More than two incidences of returning equipment late may result in loss of MFA Art AV equipment checkout privileges.

**TEACH-OUT PLAN FOR ROSKI GRADUATE PROGRAMS**
If the program terminates or discontinues, the courses required for degree completion will remain available for a period of at least one year, along with faculty to teach them. Beyond that time appropriate course substitutions can be made if specific courses become unavailable.
Depending on the timing, if the location changes or closes, the physical space needed to support the program can be temporarily housed at the IFT building, Roski’s other satellite location, as well as studios in Watt and Harris Hall on the main USC campus. These alternative Roski locations are fully equipped with classrooms, workshops, meeting rooms and studios to support the students in the program on a temporary basis until another facility has been found.