

Film and Media Studies

During the 21st century, as our national and global cultures become increasingly dominated by the visual in ubiquitous modes of technology-based communication, the need to become critical viewers — knowledgeable in the history of the most popular art forms of our time and possessing the analytical skills to understand and interpret mass media — is acute.

To address this need, the major in Film and Media Studies requires the rigorous study of history and aesthetics so that students come to understand the creative force of moving image texts, whether digital, electronic, or filmic. Courses examine the place of these texts in culture and how their production of meaning relates to industrial and business practices as well as to other artistic endeavors. By complementing the critical studies undergraduate curriculum in Film and Media Studies, courses in production and screenwriting provide — through acts of creation and collaboration — an understanding of the aesthetic and ethical choices that artists confront when working with moving image-based media. Such practical experience integrates theoretical and historical awareness to further enhance students' understanding of the ways in which visual culture makes meaning with established and emergent technologies in contemporary society. This major will benefit any student interested in gaining an intellectual perspective on the relationship between art and technology, culture and industry, and history and theory. This major trains students in rigorous analytical thinking and provides them with research skills and historical knowledge that will assist them in becoming effective participants in the mediated culture of the 21st century.

Film and Media Studies' academic mission is focused on the intellectual and professional development of students, but our faculty regard educating the larger Washington University and St. Louis communities about our field of study to be another important element of our work. To that end, we are committed to sponsoring events — including film festivals, academic lectures, and symposia — that further the discussion of and intellectual engagement with all forms of moving image media.

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