

## LSU MA PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY

The graduate program in art history is designed to prepare students for positions in teaching, research, museums and other careers in the art world. We accommodate students seeking an MA degree as preparation for professional work as well as those who plan further study at another institution. Graduate study in art history involves the acquisition of specialized skills, foreign languages and in-depth training in a specific area. The small size of the MA program at LSU ensures flexibility and close working relationships with faculty. The program's strengths are in the arts of East Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe and North America. Students are encouraged to take courses in related fields of the Humanities and in Architecture and Design. Of primary importance is the development of the student's ability to undertake creative research.

To qualify for the MA degree, students are required to take classes for a total of 30-credit hours, pass a reading proficiency exam in French or German and a comprehensive exam in their major field of study, submit an acceptable thesis and pass the final oral defense.

### **Coursework**

Over the course of their enrolment in the program (usually 4 semesters), graduate students will take a total of 8 courses (24 credits) plus ARTH 8000 twice (6 thesis-hour credits) for a total of 30-credit hours. All courses must be at the graduate level (4000-level and above) and at least 3 courses (9 credits) at the 7000 level. Graduate research seminars (7441 and 7442) are offered frequently and, occasionally, ARTH 7400 (Art Theory and Criticism). Students may also take one semester of ARTH 7490 (Independent Study in Art History). Consider every paper you write in graduate school the initial draft for a potential MA thesis. The more developed the draft, the further along your thesis will be.

### **Distribution Requirements**

An appropriate course of study should be developed in consultation with the Art History Graduate Coordinator during the first semester. Students are expected to take at least one course in three of the following four areas: (1) Ancient and Medieval art; (2) Renaissance through 18th-century art; (3) 19th through 21st-century art; and (4) Non-western art. During their first year, students should also take ART 7410 (Colloquium in Art Historical Methods), a one-credit course that meets once a week for an hour throughout the Fall semester. The Art History Area Coordinator, as well as the

Graduate Coordinator, are available to answer questions as to whether a course fulfills a given distribution area.

### **Foreign Language Exam**

All students must satisfy the program's language requirements by passing a reading proficiency exam in French or German as soon as possible after enrolling and no later than their third semester. Other relevant language exams are arranged through the department in case a student's thesis topic requires expertise in a language other than French or German.

### **Major Field of Study and Thesis Topic**

Students will choose a major field of study within art history by the end of their second semester. They should consult as early as possible with the professor associated with their desired field of study, who will then become their primary advisor. Students should plan to take a minimum of three courses in their major field of study and, by their third semester at the latest, choose the topic of their MA thesis.

### **Comprehensive Exam**

Students are required to pass a comprehensive exam in their major field of study. Comprehensive exams are usually taken in the third or fourth semester. Students should schedule the exam in consultation with their advisor. The comprehensive examination is designed to test the student's ability to integrate general and area knowledge, as well as to cover material relevant to her/his thesis topic (which must be chosen in advance of the comprehensive exam). The advisor determines the nature and scope of the comprehensive exam, which is pass/fail. Students may pass one section of the exam and fail another. In this case, they are required to retake only the portion of the exam that they failed.

### **Thesis Committee**

In consultation with her/his advisor, the student chooses a thesis committee of three members: the primary advisor, who chairs the committee, and two more LSU faculty; one of them may be from a field outside of Art History.

### **Thesis Topic**

Students settle on a topic for their thesis in consultation with their advisor and then write a prospectus, i.e. a preliminary description of the topic and plan of work accompanied by a brief

bibliography. The sooner this is done the better: students who settle on a topic at the end of their first year can use the summer to write their prospectus and the following academic year to complete their thesis. Normally, students require the better part of two semesters to write a thesis (and they can take two 8000-level thesis credit seminars while writing). Keep in mind that final theses are due to the Graduate School a few weeks before the end of the semester in order to graduate. Time is also necessary for committee members to read and respond to the final draft of the thesis.

### **Thesis**

MA theses vary considerably in length and in nature and scope. Students may think of them as twice the size and effort of a research paper written for a graduate seminar. Most MA theses in art history at LSU average between 40 and 60 pages. Students are asked to demonstrate their ability to deal thoroughly with a topic, to think critically about the issues involved, to read and evaluate the relevant literature, and to write eloquently about it. A thesis is not just a report: it does not only gather information and sources on a topic, but it organizes the presentation around a primary idea – “the thesis”, which is developed and supported in full. An MA thesis should strive to make a new point and not just rehearse those already made in the literature on the subject. It is often convenient to start from a question about a topic and seek to answer it in the course of the research. This may lead to discoveries that require an adjustment of the original question. The final thesis may well take the form of a fully-developed and persuasive answer to a specific question.

Careful planning helps with writing. Students should regularly check in with their advisor and schedule discussion session. Arriving at a research question and a thesis statement are key stages in the progress towards the completion of an MA thesis.

### **Electronic Format**

Theses are submitted to the LSU Graduate School in electronic format. A how-to guide plus links to LSU theses available in the library can be accessed by logging onto the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Home Page at <http://etd.lsu.edu/>.

### **Oral Defense**

Once the final draft of the thesis is complete, students must give a copy to each of their committee members several weeks prior to the date they intend to have their oral defense. Two weeks is the minimum necessary for members of the committee to be able to read and respond with comments. In consultation with the committee and the Graduate School, students schedule a date and time for

the oral defense and arrange a location for it (rooms are reserved in the Dean's Office). At the defense, students make a brief presentation about their thesis and then field questions from the committee. They should be prepared to defend their choice of topic and the development of their thesis. After the defense, students might be asked to revise the text for minor mistakes or, in fewer cases, to rewrite sections of the thesis.

**Timeline** (can be modified in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator for individual cases)

Summer <i>before</i> 1 <sup>st</sup> semester	Students consider enrolling in a language reading course like FREN 1020 or GERM 4005 (or an equivalent class elsewhere).
First semester	Enroll in three 3-credit courses, including at least one at the 7000 level, as well as in ARTH 7410 (1-credit course offered only in the Fall semester). Consider enrolling in a language course if you have not already done so.
Second semester	Enroll in three 3-credit courses, including at least one at the 7000 level. Schedule and take language exam. Choose major field of study and primary advisor. Settle on a thesis topic.
Summer following 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	Prepare thesis prospectus. Complete language studies if not already done. Consider participating in a study-abroad program (not mandatory).
Third semester	Enroll in one course at the 7000 level plus one 8000-level thesis research seminar. Begin thesis and write as much as possible. Schedule and take Comprehensive Exam. Read over Graduate School Guidelines and discuss deadlines with advisor. Make sure ARTH 7410 requirement is fulfilled.
Fourth semester	Enroll in one course plus one 8000-level thesis research seminar. Choose the thesis committee and schedule the oral defense. Distribute final draft of thesis to committee members. Make final corrections, if needed, and schedule review by Graduate School editor. Submit thesis and accompanying paperwork.

### **DEGREE-ONLY REGISTRATION**

If any of the deadlines are not met within the fourth semester, students may receive their degrees at the end of the following (usually summer) semester by registering for “degree only” and paying a small graduation fee. In this case, the thesis must be submitted to and approved by the Graduate

School before the last day to add courses in the semester of graduation; all other degree requirements, including oral defense, must be completed in the previous semester.