

# MFA in Documentary Expression Handbook (updated April 2020)

## The MFA Curriculum

The MFA in Documentary Expression requires 30 hours of coursework: 21 hours of content-based classes and 9 hours of thesis credit. MFA students must complete SST 601 (Graduate Seminar I), SST 533 (Fieldwork & Oral History), SST 610 (MFA Seminar), and SST 633 (MFA Fieldwork). They must also complete at least one of the following: SST 534 (Documentary Photography), SST 537 (Documenting the South in Film), or SST 538 (Advanced Documentary Film), plus three credit hours of SST 699 (MFA Critique). Students who enter the program with an MA in Southern Studies from UM may apply 6 hours of that degree for SST 533, 534, 537, 538, or 601 but they may not repeat classes taken for credit while earning the MA.

Students may begin taking thesis hours upon arrival, provided that the Admissions Committee finds their project idea to be sufficiently developed. MFA students complete a written prospectus (12-15 pages, plus bibliography) and have it approved by their three-person supervisory committee by the end of their second semester in the program. Final projects may take the form of still photography, film, oral history, audio recordings, or some combination thereof, plus a written component, approximately 50-75 pages in length, that both addresses the writer's process and situates his or her project within relevant scholarly discourse. As with the MA, students pass an oral defense in order to complete the degree.

## Documentary Workshop – 3 Credits Required

MFA students are required to attend Documentary Workshop and will receive one credit hour per semester. All students must present their original work at least once per semester. Students will provide feedback to their peers on presented work. Documentary Workshop also provides critical information including news and updates about the program and thesis requirements.

## End of First Semester Showcase and Screening

All MFA students will present a completed new work (or work in progress) with artist's talk at the end of the first semester. The event will be open to the public and include Q&A with each producer.

## Assembling an MFA Committee

By **April 1\*** first-year MFA students should choose a committee chair to direct their MFA project and at least two other faculty members to serve as their supervisory committee. You will work most closely with the director, but you need to consult periodically with the other members of the committee as well. Committee members may be from departments other than Southern Studies. Students should notify the graduate director once the committee is in place and complete the [GS2- Graduate Advisory Committee Form](#).

## Thesis Prospectus and Defense

By **May 1\*** first-year MFA students must successfully defend a written project prospectus (8-10 pages, including bibliography) with their supervisory committee. The prospectus should consider both written and documentary project components of the final thesis including intended medium, structure, and public presentation options for the documentary project. Successful prospectus defense must be on file with graduate director to be eligible for summer funding.

## **Documentary Project and Written Thesis**

Final projects may take the form of photography, oral history, film or audio documentary, or some combination thereof. While students may continue work begun prior to enrollment the bulk of the thesis production must be within the MFA program. The written component, approximately 50-75 pages in length, addresses 1) the writer's process; 2) their artistic intention; and 3) situates the project within relevant scholarly discourse. MFA students must pass an oral defense of their documentary project and written thesis in order to complete the degree. All materials must be provided to the committee at least two weeks prior to defense.

*\*Students starting the MFA after obtaining MA in Southern Studies will form committees and defend their prospectus during first semester of MFA study.*

## **End of Program Public Talk and Thesis Exhibition**

MFA graduates will schedule and organize a public event showcasing their final MFA project including a talk with Q&A prior to thesis defense. It is recommended that the event take place off-campus at a location that will be determined by the project type. MFA faculty and staff will help provide suggestions and assistance.

## **Visiting Documentarian Meetings & Lectures**

Throughout the program several working documentarians will be invited to campus to show and discuss their work in public screenings and/or lectures. These visitors have agreed to open their schedules for one-on-one meetings with MFA students to view their works and discuss ideas pertaining to their portfolio, works in progress, or their thesis project. All MFA students are strongly encouraged to attend these events and to sign-up for meetings with our visitors. Priority will be given via a first-come-first-served online sign-up.

## **Equipment and Facilities**

All MFA students have access to equipment available in the SouthDocs equipment room in Kinard Hall (2nd Floor, Wing D) via [Cheqroom](#), an online equipment reservation system. Any questions about reserving equipment should be addressed to Karen Tuttle ([ktuttle@olemiss.edu](mailto:ktuttle@olemiss.edu)). A temporary 15-minute parking space has been designated behind Kinard Hall for equipment loading and unloading. SouthDocs provides 24/7 access to their audio recording booth, multimedia editing suite, and classroom lab. A reservation system may be implemented for these resources during times of heavy use. There is also a computer with Adobe in the Barnard Observatory Grad work room, 2nd floor.

## **MFA Core Faculty and Staff**

Andy Harper, SouthDocs [acharper@olemiss.edu](mailto:acharper@olemiss.edu) (Kinard Hall 242)

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## **Classes Available to MFA in Documentary Expression Include\***

SST 533. Studies in Documentary Fieldwork

SST 534. Documentary Photography

SST 535. Anthropological Film

SST 536. The Southern Environment

SST 537. Documenting the South in Film

SST 538. Advanced Documentary Film in the South

SST 544. Advanced Documentary Photography

SST 555. Foodways and Southern Culture

SST 560. Oral History of Southern Social Movements

*\* Courses outside Southern Studies can be added with approval*

SST 598. Special Topics

SST 601. Graduate Seminar I

SST 605. Advanced Individual Study (6 hours maximum)

SST 611. Regionalism

SST 612. Globalization and the U.S. South

SST 633. MFA Fieldwork

SST 697. Thesis

SST 699. MFA Workshop