Art History, M.A.

Requirements

The Master of Arts program in art history requires a minimum of 30 s.h. of graduate credit. Students are expected to acquire a broad knowledge of art history and to become familiar with major periods and monuments of world art. They also become proficient scholars, receiving training in research methods and theory necessary for subsequent scholarship at the Ph.D. level.

Students must maintain a g.p.a. of at least 3.50. Only one semester of academic probation is allowed. All M.A. candidates, including transfer students, must complete at least 24 s.h. in residence at the University of Iowa.

Students must earn a grade of B or higher in semester-long courses numbered 3000 or above in five of the following 10 distribution fields: African (including Oceanic), architecture, Asian, ancient (3000 B.C.E. to 300 C.E.), medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, 18th- and 19th-century European, American (including pre-Columbian, Native American, and African American), and modern/contemporary. These courses must be taken after the B.A. is granted.

Students must complete a qualifying paper that demonstrates their ability to conduct scholarly research and convey ideas in writing appropriately for the discipline and for the student’s specialization field.

The College of Education offers an M.A. program in art education; see Teaching and Learning in the Catalog.

Required Courses

Students must satisfactorily complete ARTH:4999 History and Methods during their first fall semester of enrollment and must register for an art history seminar in their first, second, third, and fourth semesters of enrollment.

They also must satisfactorily complete ARTH:6020 Art History Colloquium every semester that they are enrolled for 9 s.h. or more or are serving as teaching or research assistants. Students who are not employed as teaching or research assistants or are registered for less than 9 s.h. are strongly encouraged to attend the colloquium.

Courses outside the curriculum of the School of Art and Art History’s art history division do not carry art history credit. Cross-listed courses not taught by art history faculty members also do not carry art history credit.

Directed Studies

Directed Studies (ARTH:6040) is designed for graduate students who already have taken one or more advanced courses in a specific art history field. It provides students with an opportunity to work one-to-one with a professor to continue specific research interests developed in lecture courses or seminars, or on topics that eventually may be the subject of a thesis or dissertation. Directed Studies cannot be substituted for a lecture course already offered in the program. Students must discuss their decision to take Directed Studies with the professor involved and obtain the professor’s approval. The Directed Studies topic must be within the professor’s range of expertise.

Students meet with their Directed Studies professor once a week. The hours of work and written assignments required for Directed Studies must be equal to a comparable regularly scheduled course.

Language Requirement

Students must demonstrate proficiency in French or German by the end of their third semester. Proficiency is determined by a translation exam administered under the direction of the art history division. Credit earned in language courses does not count toward the degree.

M.A. Committee

The M.A. committee consists of a student’s advisor and two additional tenured or tenure-track faculty members in art history.

M.A. Qualifying Paper

Prior to graduation, each candidate must complete a qualifying paper on a topic that stems from a term paper written for an art history graduate seminar or a 3000-level course. The paper should be between 5,000 and 7,500 words in length (20 to 30 pages exclusive of bibliography and illustrations). A student chooses an advisor who specializes in the student’s field of concentration. In cases where a student wants to focus on a topic that involves more than one field, the art history faculty strongly recommends that the student work closely with faculty members in both fields.

Final Examination

The final examination constitutes an oral defense of the qualifying paper. The final examination meeting with the M.A. committee normally takes place toward the end of a student’s last semester of course work.

Admission

Deadline date for submission of materials to the Office of Graduate Admissions is December 15 for the art history program; admission is for fall.

Application materials should be uploaded onto a student’s admissions profile (see instructions below under “Application Procedures”). All applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College and the School of Art and Art History requirements.

School of Art and Art History Requirements

Applicants whose first or official language is not English and whose previous academic degrees were not earned at an English-language institution must score as follows on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): for art history applicants, at least 100 (internet-based). All applicants must have a minimum TOEFL iBT speaking score of 26 and a listening score of 25. An application will not be reviewed if scores are lower than the requirements specify.

Prospective graduate students must meet the School of Art and Art History’s admission requirements for the specific degree program they plan to enter. They must submit application materials to the University’s Office of Graduate Admissions and to the specific program they wish to enter. Program-specific application requirements and deadline dates are listed below.
All applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College.

Although exceptions may be made when other components of the application are strong, art history applicants should have a combined verbal and quantitative score of at least 300 and an analytical writing score of at least 5 on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) General Test. Art history applicants must have a bachelor's degree, preferably in art history or a related field, and have an undergraduate g.p.a. of at least 3.25.

Non-native speakers of English should note that most students are financially funded through teaching, and the Iowa Board of Regents mandates that all non-native speakers of English pass an oral English test in order to teach.

Application Procedures

Prospective students may apply online through the Office of Admissions website. After submitting their application, applicants will receive email instructions on how to access their admissions profile on MyUI. Applicants then upload the required supplemental documents through a secure portal.

Required documents:

transcripts from all colleges and universities an applicant has attended;

contact information for three individuals (able to assess applicants’ potential for graduate study) designated to provide letters of recommendation; and

a statement of purpose.

Art history applicants should supply a research paper (preferably from an art history course) or thesis that demonstrates potential to undertake graduate-level research in art history, and a personal statement of 1,000 words describing their intellectual development, academic interests, and career goals. The statement must name the University of Iowa faculty member under whose guidance the applicant hopes to work and indicate how that faculty member’s area of expertise, or how the art history program is especially suited to the applicant’s interests and goals.

Applicants should consult the Art History Graduate Bulletin on the School of Art and Art History website.

The Office of Graduate Admissions notifies all applicants by mail of admission decisions.

Financial Support

Fellowships, teaching assistantships, research assistantships, and tuition scholarships are awarded to graduate students on the basis of artistic and/or scholarly record.

Iowa Arts Fellowships

The Graduate College awards Iowa Arts Fellowships to two incoming or first-year studio art graduate students each year. For more information, see Iowa Arts Fellowships on the Graduate College website.

Teaching and Research Assistantships

Assistantships are awarded to graduate students on the basis of academic record, promise as scholars or artists, and demonstrated ability to do the job. Quality of performance in one's graduate program at Iowa is generally the major criterion for awarding teaching assistantships. The number of hours of work required depends on the amount of the award.

Scholarships and Fellowships

The School of Art and Art History offers a variety of scholarships and fellowships made possible by contributions from alumni who wish to support promising artists and scholars. These awards are made on the same basis as teaching and research assistantships.

Information and application materials for graduate scholarships and fellowships are included in the admissions package. They also are available from the School of Art and Art History main office.

Renewal or reappointment for fellowships and assistantships depends on adequate progress toward the degree (students must accumulate at least 18 s.h. of graduate credit each calendar year and maintain a grade-point average above the required minimum) and satisfactory performance of assistantship duties.

Decisions on assistantships and financial aid generally are made during the latter part of the spring semester for the following academic year. Applications and all relevant materials should be on file by January 15.

Career Advancement

Many art and art history graduates pursue careers that match their degree specializations, such as commercial or graphic designer, conservation or museum curator or administrator, art educator, public artist, gallery and museum administration, art appraisal, and restoration, or community art center coordinator or instructor.

The Pomerantz Career Center offers multiple resources to help students find internships and jobs.