



Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
School of Communication, Arts and Critical Enquiry

MEDIA STUDIES PROGRAM

GUIDE TO HONOURS

For Prospective and Current Honours Students

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Media Studies Program La Trobe University

Information circular for Honours Students

Welcome to Honours in the Media Studies Program. The information below is intended to assist you in finding your way in your course and working with the Media Studies staff.

Your responsibility as a student

Information

It is your responsibility to ensure, at all times, that correct current home (and work where relevant) postal, and email addresses and phone numbers are on file with the Media Studies Program office. We wish to provide all Media Studies postgraduate students with a directory of Honours and postgraduate students. Please advise the Media Studies office if you are willing to have your contact details provided to other Media Studies Honours and postgraduate students. Unless you provide that permission your contact details will only be accessible by Media Studies staff.

Coursework

Attendance

Attendance at 80% of tutorials and / or seminars is a compulsory hurdle requirement for all subjects in Media Studies. Students not fulfilling this requirement in any subject will not pass the subject.

Attendance records are kept in Media Studies subjects, and it is your responsibility to ensure that when a roll is marked your attendance is noted.

Preparatory reading and participation in tutorials is also expected. It is a courtesy to notify your lecturer wherever possible in advance of your absence. Unless attendance requirements are met, lecturers may refuse to accept assignments for assessment.

Postgraduate students wishing to audit classes (that is, to attend classes when they are not enrolled but the content of the class may provide valuable background or theoretical support) are advised to seek permission from the lecturer involved and will be expected to contribute to the work of the class.

Assessment

Assessment varies with each subject, but due dates should be scrupulously met. If this is impossible, an extension should be negotiated with the lecturer concerned. Late penalties are not usually applied at postgraduate level, however honours students are expected to take responsibility for their own progress.

Academic progress

Acceptable progress is pre-condition of enrolment in subsequent years, so you may not be able to re-enrol while work is outstanding from a previous subject.

Thesis

Contact with supervisor

Each student will have one or two members of staff assigned as supervisor. Use your supervisor intelligently.

It is your responsibility to maintain regular contact with your supervisor/s, during the supervisor's posted hours or at a mutually agreed time. You should come to an agreement with your supervisor early in your candidature concerning a timetable for the completion of parts of your thesis and the regularity of meetings. What constitutes 'regular contact' will vary from supervisor to supervisor, but it is advisable to see your supervisor at least every fortnight, and to set yourself a goal to finish as each meeting comes around. How well and how wisely you use your supervisors can be crucial in the development and presentation of your research.

It is also your responsibility to come to such sessions prepared, with a report of what you have been doing towards your thesis. You should give your supervisor plenty of advance warning if you are unable to make an appointment. It is advisable to ask your supervisor to confirm that they have received this notification. You should email to your supervisor(s) a section of your work, or some notes for discussion. If you do not submit this work in time it is unreasonable to expect your supervisor to have read it, and prepared comments upon it.

That submission should have at least the following:

- 1) a header or footer containing your name, the date of printing and a page number.
- 2) a bibliography – at least for the document being submitted, but preferably for the work as a whole.
- 3) proper and full citations for all sources being cited in the work.
- 4) Issues or questions which you would like to discuss.

You should begin writing at an early stage: remember that writing is a form of thinking.

Seminars

Honours and postgraduate students are required to attend Media Studies Program seminars as part of their coursework, and to maintain some breadth of interest alongside your more specific research. You will be required to present at least one seminar per year of candidature.

Seminars provide an opportunity to air your topic and to get opinions, guidance and criticism from the academic staff. Comments on your seminar presentation will often be of value to you. To present your topic properly, it is necessary to structure it so that it is comprehensible to the audience. This may also be useful for sorting out your own ideas and writing the final product.

You should aim to present it: a) fully but concisely b) interestingly, with illustrations where necessary c) in a structured manner d) clearly and confidently e) in tune with your audience.

Disseminating information and discussing the work of others is important. Therefore you should not only be prepared to present your own research but actively participate in all of the seminars during the year. Asking a question, sharing knowledge or giving your opinion in the group can be as important as presenting information.

Progress Reports

The University requires that postgraduate students report annually on the progress of their thesis. It is your responsibility to ensure that the completed report form reaches your supervisor by the due date.

Your supervisor(s) and the Honours and / or Postgraduate Coordinator will meet with you at least once in each semester to discuss your progress.

Thesis Drafts

The coursework subject MST4/5 MRI is intended to provide you with training in research methods, including details of acceptable style for thesis writing, techniques for making the most of resources available to you, making most effective use of word processors and databases (including the Endnote program). This subject will also deal with the important issues of plagiarism, acknowledging sources, and the ethics of research to which you are required to adhere. Please speak to John Tebbutt for more information.

Presentation of honours theses

Honours theses (normally 10,000 words in length, with an absolute maximum of 12,000 words) are due by

4 pm on the last Monday of October.

If you are intending to apply for postgraduate study your results are needed for scholarship assessment and so no extension is possible on the submission deadline.

The Media Studies Program reserves the right to refuse to mark a late thesis. Aim to complete a final draft by late September, to allow time for final editing, typing and binding. These all take longer than you think.

You must submit **three copies** (one copy will be retained by the Media Studies Program, and the others returned to you).

Theses should be typed on A4 paper (210mm x 297mm), using double line spacing and a minimum of 12 point type in a clear font. You should have margins of not less than 38mm in width on the left-hand side and 19mm on the right-hand side. The top and bottom margins for each sheet shall be not less than 19mm. Your thesis must be proofread to remove errors, and must contain a bibliography

and, where relevant, appendices at the end of the thesis. See the final page of this document for title page layout.

Style guide

The media studies program uses the Chicago styles as the recommended style for staff and students within the Program. These styles allow you to use either in-text citation or notes (endnotes or footnotes).

The most authoritative source of information on the style is:

Turabian, Kate L. 1996. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Sixth ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [The library has a copy in the reference section.]

The Media Studies Program keeps a bound copy of your thesis. You are encouraged to make your thesis a public work unless there is a compelling reason for it to be kept from public view. Please ensure you fill in forms for Media Studies Program control/ access to your thesis.

Creative Theses

If completing a 'creative thesis' you should see the relevant production stream coordinators for details of requirements: Audio/radio (John Tebbutt) Journalism (Lawrie Zion) TV/ video (Angie Black). You will need to negotiate use of the studio facilities with technical services staff to ensure that your production schedule does not conflict with peak teaching periods in the studio facilities.

Ethics approval

From 2001 all candidates in Masters by coursework, Honours degrees and graduate diplomas submit a declaration that all work has the approval of the relevant ethics committee or that none of the work undertaken requires such approval. All research projects involving human participants as subjects (i.e. surveys or interviews as much as laboratory experimentation) require such approval. You are required to complete a form (obtainable from the Faculty of Humanities Office), obtain your supervisor's endorsement of this, and forward it to the Secretary of the Faculty's Human Ethics Committee, **by mid semester one**. As the administrative processes involved may take some time, students considering this kind of research are advised to seek details as soon as possible. Consult either the Honours Co-ordinator or your supervisor about this. If your research requires ethics approval, you must not commence your research until you have received written approval from the Chair of the Faculty's Human Ethics Committee.

Statutory requirements relating to research data collection now require the university to retain research data for a period of 5 years from date of publication (except in clinical research where data must be retained for 15 years). You should discuss ways of ensuring that this statutory requirement is adhered to with your supervisor.

Dealing with the Administration – Postgraduate Students

It is YOUR responsibility to maintain your enrolment, through the recognised procedures of the University administration, AND to keep the Media Studies Program informed: it is not enough just to let your supervisor know informally, nor just to complete the legal requirements without consulting with the Media Studies Program. As a general rule if making any changes to your enrolment at any stage you will need to complete formal requirements of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and/or the Research and Graduate Studies Office. Changes which need approval include (but are not restricted to):

1. change supervisors and/or research topic;
2. withdraw, defer, or suspend candidature
3. extend candidature
4. change course load (e.g. full time to part time)
5. enroll concurrently in another course of study (at La Trobe or elsewhere)
6. intention to submit a higher degree thesis (MA and PhD students only)

You should initially discuss any changes to your candidature with your supervisor, and then possibly with the Honours Coordinator: John Tebbutt.

Your Rights as a Postgraduate Student

Supervision

Your chief right is access to staff (particularly your principal supervisor – most people will be allocated two supervisors to ensure continuity during periods of staff leave), for guidance both in taught subjects and in thesis writing. For thesis supervision, this normally entails regular meetings with your supervisor (on average, a one-hour meeting each two weeks).

You have a right to expect your supervisor(s):

1. To read and be prepared to comment upon any submission (provided it is submitted one week in advance of the meeting).
2. If you feel it would assist you, to provide a written (usually by email) response to each meeting within one week of the meeting. This may be as simple as a brief summary of the discussion and an indication of what is expected for the next meeting.
3. To ensure that they are available for scheduled appointments and to give plenty of advance notice should they be unable to make appointments.
4. To notify you as far as possible in advance of any periods of leave or absence on duty which are likely to occur during the candidature.

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your supervision during your honours studies, you should consult with the Coordinator. Where the supervisor is the coordinator then you should consult with the head of the Media Studies Program.

The Faculty has a site licence for the bibliographic database software Endnote. This entitles all Honours and Postgraduate students to use a copy of the software on their computer, whether Macintosh or PC, at no charge. This is an invaluable program, which you should learn to use as soon as possible in your candidature. You can borrow the CD Rom to install the

software from staff in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Information Technology Services office, and should do so as soon as possible. You will be trained in the use of this software in the subject MS4/5 MRI early in semester one. **All Honours students are advised to acquire this software and to attend the training sessions in MST 4/5 MRI.**

Library Resources:

You should make it your business as soon as possible to meet with Ann Copeland, the Humanities Librarian who deals with Media Studies. Ann is one of your most valuable resources, and is most willing to assist you at any time. She will prove to be both a source of boundless information and will informally provide you with invaluable research training. One of the great benefits of being an Honours or Postgraduate Student is that you are able to draw on Ann's considerable research expertise – make sure you do so.

You can obtain information about your entitlements from the Library Reference Desk, but there are two services that are of particular value to postgraduate (often part-time) students. The CAVAL Reciprocal Borrowing Programme enables students to borrow directly from a number of tertiary libraries: this service is free. The interlibrary loan service acquires material for research and study which is not held in the Library: you must cover your own costs if any are incurred in this process (for instance, if the material must be obtained from overseas). In both cases, apply to the Loans Desk.

Guidance and tuition in English language, and academic skills

If English is your second language:

Study skills and language help is available for you in the LAS(ESL) Unit, where you can also make an individual appointment to work on your writing skills and gain help where you need it. Get in touch with Julianne East or Jennie Lynch on 9479 2788

Humanities 3, 4th Floor, Room 417

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/www/lasu/esl.htm>

If English is your first language

Language and academic skills help is available for you in the Humanities Academic Skills Unit.

Contact Kate Chanock - Ph: 9479 2535

Humanities 3, 4th Floor, Room 422, C.Chanock@latrobe.edu.au

Opportunities to participate in, and contribute to, seminars and academic functions

There will be a regular series of seminars organized for honours and postgraduate students. Mostly these will be of an informal nature, but in each semester at least one will be more formal. Honours students are required to make a presentation to a formal seminar in second semester (usually August or September), but other thesis students are invited to make a presentation whenever this is appropriate. Some presentations are simple reports of work in progress, others are more polished presentations, perhaps in preparation for a later conference presentation. These occasions are friendly and supportive: most students find the experience of presenting a very positive one. There are a number of benefits of such seminars, such as the opportunity to share ideas, to discuss

common issues, to discuss readings, and so on. Writing a thesis can be a lonely business: you are strongly urged to attend such functions whenever they occur, in order to develop and feel part of a research community.

A program of seminars will be made available early in first semester.

Appropriate social support all candidates and also counseling facilities:

Even if you are part-time and seldom on campus, you have exactly the same access to all the University's services as undergraduates. The staff of the Department of Media Studies are keenly aware of the difficulties facing higher degree students. We want to smooth the path, as the shorter and more tension-free your period of candidature the better for everyone. Please talk about any of the above with your supervisor, or with the Honours Co-ordinator - we will do our best to accommodate you.

Important Contacts:

Kylie Gunn, Media Studies Program Administrator 9479 2616 email: media@latrobe.edu.au

John Tebbutt, Honours Co-ordinator 9479 5098 email: j.tebbutt@latrobe.edu.au

Sue Turnbull, Postgraduate Coordinator 9479 2513 email: s.turnbull@latrobe.edu.au

Mary Debrett coordinates Coursework Students: MA, Graduate Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma in Media Studies. 9479 2167 email: m.debrett@latrobe.edu.au

Marking criteria for honours – Media Studies Program La Trobe University

H3 (third class honours)

50-59 This thesis demonstrates a grasp of the basics of research: the research question or project has been clearly articulated, there is evidence of a systematic program of reading and / or research and an awareness of suitable methodologies and / or theoretical frameworks appropriate to the research project. The project has been placed into an appropriate context of previous research. The thesis exhibits critical thinking and analysis of the research material and / or theoretical literature surveyed, and a structured, coherent argument has been developed, supported by evidence, either based on empirical research and / or the synthesis of theoretical reading.

The thesis exhibits limitations in such areas as documentation, quality of research, clarity of expression, or structure and development of the argument which suggests that the candidate's potential to undertake a higher degree by research is limited.

H2B (Second class honours division B)

60-69 In addition to the demonstration of the basics of research this thesis demonstrates an advanced level of critical engagement with the research findings and / or theoretical arguments surveyed, perhaps with some originality, but is deficient in one or more aspects of the research, compared to a student who may be awarded Upper Second Class honours. May be able to proceed to higher degree work, but at this stage only shows the potential to undertake a Masters level degree.

H2A (Second class honours division A)

70-79 This thesis demonstrates a sound grasp of the research process. Overall it is well written and argued, demonstrating an ability to draw perceptive conclusions and make an intellectually valuable contribution to the field. May demonstrate particular distinction in some respects such as research, argument, insight, conceptual innovation, or it may demonstrate a high level of competence in all aspects. However, there are weaknesses or limitations evident which exclude the thesis from the excellence category. Clear ability to proceed to higher degree work is evident.

H1 Band (First class honours)

80-84 Accomplished work which demonstrates some capacity for originality and sound research potential. Sure grasp of current critical and theoretical approaches to the topic and of sustained research methodology. Exhibits some interpretative subtlety and genuine research capacity reflected in the level of analytic insight. Well written.

85-89 Outstanding work of a quality well above average for the Honours 1 grade. Has potential for publication in a quality refereed journal, with revision. Substantially original *where that is an appropriate expectation in the discipline*. Strong grasp of current critical and theoretical approaches to topic and of research methodology. Exhibits great interpretive subtlety. Very well written.

Truly exceptional. Publishable in a quality refereed journal (with perhaps minor revision). Makes an original contribution to knowledge. Exceptional grasp of current critical and theoretical approaches to topic, and of research methodology. Exhibits rare interpretive subtlety. Extremely well written. Awarded once in every 10 years.

95 plus Outstanding achievement equivalent to the best scholarship in the academic field. Some material publishable. Awarded once in every 25 years. Exhibits rare interpretive and analytic insight.

Ethics Approval

This form is to be completed by all candidates in cases where the nature of the research requires ethics approval. Information about ethics approval for research can be downloaded from the following web site:

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/resources/forms.html>

You will need both the Ethics Committee Guidelines (PDF) which provides information on the application process; and the FHEC Application for Approval - Form R (research) (PDF) (RTF) which is the actual application form.

You should apply for ethics approval, if relevant, by week six of first semester as it will take up to one month before approval is obtained. YOU MUST NOT begin work with 'human subjects' (including interviews, surveys, questionnaires, filming or recording) until approval is obtained.

When obtained complete this form and deliver a photocopy to the Media Studies Program Honours Coordinator. You should keep the original, with your data, for 5 years.

I have applied for and received ethics approval for the research component of my Honours Thesis.

Name:

Research topic:

Supervisor(s)

Date approval received

Signed:

Date

Title Page Layout

Your thesis should have a title page with the following information:

- a) The full title of your thesis
- b) Your name and the degree for which the thesis is submitted, and a statement whether the thesis is submitted in full or partial fulfilment of the requirements for that degree (in honours it is partial fulfilment)
- c) Media Studies Program, School of Communication, Arts and Critical Enquiry, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086
- d) The year in which you are submitting the thesis

The following statement should also appear on the title page.

This thesis is my own work containing, to the best of my knowledge and belief,
no material published or written by another person except as referred to in the
text.

Ethics approval for this research was sought and obtained. [where relevant:]
Ethics approval number is:

[Or: Ethics approval for this research was not required.]

(signed and dated)

Do **not** include the supervisor's name on the title page.

On a separate page, not bound into the thesis, but accompanying it, you should include a statement from your supervisor(s) that:

I have read / viewed / listened to this thesis in full and consider it ready for
examination.

Signed (Supervisor 1 [if more than one])

Signed (Supervisor 2 [where relevant])

Date