Join UNLV’s Journalism and Media Studies M.A. program

Our intensive yet flexible two-year media studies and journalism degree is housed in new research and production facilities on the culturally diverse UNLV campus. In the heart of the booming American Southwest, Southern Nevada is a multinational hub for entertainment, scenic tourism, and new technologies.

Las Vegas hosts two of the nation’s largest media conventions each year, as well as new-economy companies such as Zappos and Switch. The region offers compelling research opportunities in media ownership; 21st century social, environmental, and economic challenges; public health; and emerging technologies. Students have access to multiple research libraries and archives, including the Smithsonian-affiliated Atomic Testing museum.

For more information, email Julian.kilker@unlv.edu or visit: http://www.unlv.edu/ma/jms

How long does it take to complete the degree?
Our M.A. program has a total of 37 course credits, and can be completed in two years with some work during the summer. Some working students choose a lighter course load and take more time. Many graduate courses are in the evening to work around job schedules.

What do students typically learn in the M.A. program?
Our courses focus on three areas: applied research techniques, concepts related to journalism and media studies, and specific topics such as technology, law, and advertising. You’ll learn the basics during the first year, and spend most of your second year working on a major project, mentored by professors, that brings together these techniques, media concepts, and specialized topic areas. Our graduate program encourages personalization: After the first semester you select courses from across the UNLV campus and bring your newfound expertise back into your research. You’re also encouraged to practice presentation skills; our previous students have successfully presented their research locally and nationally at campus events and conferences.
I don’t see myself as an academic. Is this program appropriate for someone who’s interested in practical or creative options? 
You might be surprised! Part of going to graduate school is learning more about your own strengths and honing your analytical skills, even if you don’t fit the traditional image of a scholar. Most graduates eventually write a research thesis, and we also offer creative project and exam alternatives. We encourage a balanced approach to practical and academic work: You will have access to professional production facilities, and we offer independent study courses in which practical, internship-like work is combined with graduate-level readings.

Is there funding support? 
We have Graduate Teaching Assistantships that provide teaching experience and cover graduate education expenses. In addition, we can help connect students with job and grant possibilities, especially after we become familiar with your work and interests. Our graduate students’ skills in writing, research, and presentation make them quite competitive for campus jobs.

What are the admission requirements to the program? 
We welcome applicants with a bachelor’s degree in any field with a minimum 3.0 GPA and competitive GRE scores (we do not have a fixed GRE cutoff). There is no entrance exam. Instead, we review your entire application for your potential to excel in our program.

How do I get started on the application? 
We recommend that you start in the fall, well before the final deadline of March 15. Begin by clicking on the “Apply to Graduate School” icon on the Graduate College website. You’ll submit all materials via the graduate college’s online system. Sign up early to take the GRE. Ask three people (two from academic backgrounds) to write letters of recommendation. Include a writing sample and explain its relevance. Arrange to have all transcripts sent to UNLV. Prepare a personal statement highlighting your interests and goals.

Can I start the program in the spring semester instead of the normal fall semester? Can I defer an acceptance? 
Our program starts in the fall. If you would like to start at a different time, we encourage you to apply as a “Non-Degree-Seeking” student. After taking a few courses, you can apply and, if accepted, have the relevant courses count towards your degree program.

What can I study in the program? 
Our graduate faculty are experts in audience analysis, communication law, emerging technologies, global media, integrated marketing communication, media history, science and health communication, social media, sports journalism, narrative journalism, and visual communication. Each graduate student is guided by a committee of three media studies faculty members and one additional faculty member from an outside field such as sociology, film, or the arts. Graduate students also have access to professional staff with expertise in public relations, publishing, and audio and video production.

What have previous graduate students done over the past few years? 
Our graduates have entered or continued successful professional careers in media or communications, entered law school, or joined doctoral programs. Recent research projects have explored data journalism and criminal justice reform, health and media consumption patterns, and a social media analysis of fandom. Some more in-depth profiles of recent Master’s projects include:

- Jennifer came to UNLV via the East Coast, with interests in investigative journalism, research, policy, and art. Her thesis researched media coverage of the Iraq War in The New York Times and The Guardian. After graduation, she was hired by a Government Affairs department of an energy company in Washington, DC.
- Michael, coming from a background in the Clark County School District, redesigned the journalism school’s web presence, using it as a research platform for his thesis to study how to “increase user engagement through bounce rate analysis.” He now works with IBM as a developer in their Cloud Services group.
- Nevada native Jason focused his research on risk, science, and environmental communication in his thesis examining climate change messages in the desert Southwest. Now a doctoral student at Cornell University in New York, he is studying how messages in areas vulnerable to climate change influence attitudes about climate change and support for new policies.
- Val, an international student, examined the role played by Chile’s El Mercurio newspaper during and after that country’s 1973 coup. After graduating, she was hired as a communications professional and social media liaison for the Teacher’s Union of Nevada before joining the Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy as a program coordinator.
- Professional journalist Matt returned to graduate school to study audience engagement and the development of the modern newspaper. His thesis explored how Nevada lawmakers and journalists worked together to write one of the nation’s strongest shield statutes during the political and social tumult of the 1960s and early 1970s. Matt now teaches journalism courses at Texas A&M University-Kingsville and advises the student newspaper and television operations.
- Denitsa, a first-generation college student, explored photography’s influence on the framing of visual messages, and whether photographs and visual rhetoric are effective as tools for social change. She was awarded a fellowship from the University of Maryland, College Park, where she is pursuing a doctoral degree in Journalism Studies. She’s found “higher education to be a very transformative experience that…has inspired me to pay it forward and dedicate my career to educating and mentoring students.”

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