

Brandeis University

Program in Cultural Production

Graduate Student Handbook

2009-10

### **Introduction**

This Handbook is intended for the use of Brandeis students who are currently pursuing a graduate degree in Cultural Production. It contains the following information, which is valid for the 2009-2010 academic year:

- A summary of the requirements for completion of the MA degree, including a discussion of the final project or capstone options
- An overview of the course of study for the graduate degree
- A description of resources and facilities available to graduate students
- Funding opportunities and university policies regarding financial aid
- Grievance and petition procedures
- Brandeis policy and resources pertaining to students with disabilities

This Handbook will serve as both a *guidebook* to the various resources available to graduate students and a *rulebook* to help you complete all the steps required for your advanced degree in Cultural Production. For more information about general requirements applying to students in all Brandeis graduate programs, consult the current *Brandeis University Bulletin*, especially the section on “Requirements for the Degree.” Professor Auslander, Director of the program, is available to answer questions about the rules and procedures for graduate study in Cultural Production.

### **Requirements**

The M.A. program is designed to provide an organized course of study for students who wish to pursue advanced study in cultural production. Upon matriculating into the M.A. program, each student is assigned an M.A. advisor.

Requirements for completion of the Master of Arts in Cultural Production include:

- Coursework, including an internship course
- A final project (M.A. paper or, under special circumstances, M.A. thesis or creative capstone project)
- One full academic year of residence at Brandeis (eight semester courses)
- The degree must be earned within four years after beginning graduate study at Brandeis

M.A. students may not use transfer credits to fulfill the coursework or residency requirement.

There is no foreign language requirement.

## **Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Production**

### **Program of Study**

This graduate program involves one academic year in residence at Brandeis in which students complete eight semester courses, including an internship course and a master's research paper course. Students may spread their coursework out over a longer period than one year.

In consultation with the Director, each entering student selects one of the three clusters listed below as an area of concentration.

Cluster 1: Performance: Object/Body/Place

Cluster 2: Visuality: Image/Media/Signs

Cluster 3: Memory: Museums/Preservation/Archives

There is no foreign language requirement for the master's degree.

### **Coursework Requirement**

M.A. students are required to complete eight courses (one full academic year of coursework) passed with a grade of B- or better, as follows:

A.CP 201a Making Culture: Theory and Practice.

B.CP 202b Internship in Cultural Production.

C.CP 203a Directed Research in Cultural Production for M.A. Students.

D.Two courses in the student's concentration cluster, one of which is identified as a core course in that cluster.

E.Two elective courses, one from each of the other two clusters.

F.One additional course from the program's electives or another Brandeis course approved by the Director.

### **Master's Research Paper**

The Master's research paper must involve substantial research by the student and should be 35-45 pages long. The paper should be of professional quality. The paper may have been written previously for a Brandeis Cultural Production course; normally students will undertake substantial revisions on the paper before it is approved. The paper must be submitted to, and approved by, the student's M.A. advisor and one other faculty member (to be agreed upon by the advisor and the student.) Students who wish to graduate in May must submit a credible draft of the paper by April 1, so that a revised version can be submitted by May 1. Once approved, the final version of the Master's research paper must be submitted (two copies) to the Cultural Production program office by the date specified in the current academic calendar, located at the back of the *Brandeis University Bulletin*.

### **Alternate Final Projects: M.A. Thesis or Creative Capstone Project**

Under exceptional circumstances, a student may petition to the director of the program for permission to write a master's thesis or develop a creative capstone project (in contrast to the normally expected Master's paper.) It is expected that the thesis will be in the seventy-five to one hundred page range; the thesis must involve independent research and represent an original scholarly contribution. The capstone project is an original piece of work other than an academic paper. It might be an art installation or art show, a museum exhibition, a website, a work of performing art, or a comparable creative contribution. Each creative capstone project must represent the original work of a single individual student; collaborative capstone projects will not be authorized. A two- to three-page written proposal to write a thesis or develop a creative capstone project, signed by the student's adviser, should be submitted to the director two weeks before the end of classes during the semester before the semester in which the student intends to graduate. The director and a faculty review committee (normally consisting of the Faculty Executive Committee) will determine whether or not to grant the petition; in some cases, substantial revisions to the written proposal will be required before reconsideration of the petition. In the case of creative capstone projects, the student is expected to document in detail his or her entire creative process; the documented materials, constituting a "creative capstone portfolio" are to be submitted to the faculty reviewers by the announced deadline. The completed thesis will be evaluated by two faculty members, selected by the director in consultation with the student. The student is responsible for submitting an electronic copy of the thesis, in accordance with university regulations. A final creative capstone project, including the submitted portfolio, will be evaluated by the program director, the student's advisor, and one additional Cultural Production faculty member, normally the Faculty Executive Committee member overseeing the student's selected cluster.

The program will hold a one hour defense of each student's final Master's project (an M.A. paper, M.A. thesis or creative capstone project) open to faculty and graduate students in the program. The defenses are normally held during the final week of classes in the semester in which the student graduates.

### **Creative Capstone Project: A Note on the Process**

Since creative capstone projects call for an unusually high integration of scholarship and imagination, students are expected to seek careful guidance from their advisor and the Cultural Production faculty as a whole as they develop their projects. A student intending to submit a capstone project should submit a written proposal to the program director and administrator, approved by their advisor, at least two weeks before the final day of classes, in the semester before they intend to graduate. (For example, a student planning on graduating in May should submit a proposal in mid-November; a student planning on graduating in December should submit a proposal in mid-April.) The proposal should list the student's name, the project title, project genre, a one sentence description, the name of the advisor and the faculty second reader, an abstract of at least 250 words, and a timeline for project completion. If extra funds are needed for completion of the project, a proposed budget should be appended.

A faculty committee will meet to review proposals and provide constructive suggestions. The student may be asked to revise the proposal in a timely fashion before it is approved by the program director and the student's advisor. In the event that a student's revised proposal is not approved, the student may then opt to write a M.A. paper, as described above.

Once the capstone project is approved, a student should meet regularly with his or her advisor, and with other faculty as necessary, as the project is developed. It is important that the entire creative process be documented by the student in detail, through journaling, and, if appropriate, through an audio visual record. These edited materials will constitute the *creative capstone portfolio*. The portfolio and a 10-15 page paper on the creative process should be submitted to the faculty evaluators and to the program director two weeks before the final day of classes of the graduation semester. Before the end of the term, a one hour capstone project defense will be scheduled, at which the student explains the project and answers questions from his or her faculty evaluators, other Cultural Production faculty, and Cultural Production graduate students. A copy of the completed creative portfolio, preserved on a DVD or another accessible form, should be deposited with the administrator for storage in the Cultural Production office.

### **Internship**

Interning in a cultural institution (such as a museum, a heritage site, or national park), the student participates in the development of a specific project of cultural production, such

as an exhibition or public program. Students submit a report on their experiences to the program Director and may give a presentation on their internship work at an annual workshop/conference. Students undertaking the internship should register for **CP 202b - Internship in Cultural Production**

## **Resources and Facilities**

### **Colloquium Series**

Each year the program invites a scholar to present the Distinguished Lecture in Cultural Production. Throughout the academic year informal lunch sessions provide opportunities for students and faculty to discuss topics of mutual interest.

### *Graduate Cross-Registration Program*

Brandeis participates in a cross-registration program with Boston College, Boston University, Tufts University and the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies at Radcliffe College. Cultural Production students are eligible to take graduate-level courses at these institutions (no more than one course per term) with the prior approval of their advisors. Refer to the *Brandeis University Bulletin* for details.

### **Libraries**

The social science and humanities collections of the university are housed in the Goldfarb and Farber libraries. These materials are also accessible through an online catalog system called LOUIS. The libraries have facilities for computerized searches of bibliographic databases such as Academic Search Premiere, the Social Science Index, the MLA Index, and other periodical indices. The Interlibrary Loan Office provides books or photocopies of materials not owned by the university. Brandeis is a member of the Boston Library Consortium, composed of twelve academic and research institutions in the area.

### **Material Culture Study Center**

The Anthropology department and Cultural Production program share curatorial responsibility for a teaching collection of art and artifacts from Africa, Inner Asia, Australia, the American Southwest, Mesoamerica, Southwest Asia, and Oceania. The Center has a light table for digital photography, a computer and scanner, storage cabinets, work tables, and a 1000-volume research library. A rotating selection of objects is on display at the Anthropology department; Cultural Production students are encouraged to develop exhibitions and installations incorporating these objects. Students may apply to the Material Cultural Study Center committee for permission to install exhibitions in the Schwartz Gallery space.

**The Rose Art Museum** Program faculty and students work closely with the staff at

the Rose Art Museum, the University's contemporary art museum.

### **Grievance and Petition Procedures**

Program grievance procedures are governed by the University's policy statement on "Rights and Responsibilities," a copy of which is provided to each student. Any written petition from a student to the department will be considered at the next faculty meeting; generally it is advisable for a student to consult with a faculty member, preferably his or her advisor, prior to filing a formal petition.

### **Disability Resources at Brandeis**

At Brandeis University, a diverse body of people comes together to form a cohesive community. Brandeis welcomes all qualified individuals into the University community as students, faculty, or staff members. Brandeis is committed to providing "reasonable accommodation/s" to individuals with appropriately documented physical, learning, and psychological disabilities.

A person is considered to have a disability if s/he fits within any one of these three categories:

- The person has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of the individual;
- The person has a record of such an impairment; or
- The person is regarded as having such impairment.

"Major life activities" include functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

A "reasonable accommodation" is defined as any change in the work or educational environment or the way things are customarily done which will allow an individual with a known documented disability to perform the essential functions of a position or let an otherwise qualified student receive a reasonable modification or adjustment for his/her known documented disability. All accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis. Students, faculty, and staff must follow well-established procedures to obtain accommodations. Such accommodations can ensure access to education, work, housing, cultural enrichment, and recreation.

*For more information regarding reasonable accommodations, the GSAS Disability Coordinator, at (781) 736-3406*

