

## Emphasis - Community Based Research

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### **M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies** **Description**

The Master of Arts in interdisciplinary studies provides graduate students the opportunity to complete a tailored program of study that integrates knowledge and scholarship from two or more disciplines traditionally associated with a Master of Arts. Students seeking graduate study in emerging interdisciplinary fields or cross-disciplinary specialties for which the University of Mississippi does not yet offer a defined degree select two or more concentrations to integrate as they develop mastery.

Students may select a thesis or nonthesis track. The thesis track requires completion of a thesis that reflects original research conducted during their enrollment in the Master of Arts in interdisciplinary studies. The nonthesis track requires a capstone project that applies the cross-disciplinary knowledge.

### **Minimum Total Credit Hours: 36**

### **General Education Requirements**

- A minimum of 36 graduate hours, to include at least 6 hours of formal classroom lecture courses from at least two different disciplines (the latter distribution requirement must be completed in residence at UM);
- A thesis or non-thesis option may be pursued;
- A final oral examination;
- Other Graduate School requirements for a master's degree.

### **Course Requirements**

Students must complete a minimum of 36 graduate hours, to include at least 6 hours of formal classroom lecture courses from at least two different disciplines (the latter distribution requirement must be completed in residence at UM).

Students must complete a final oral examination and any other requirements designated by the Graduate School for a Master of Arts degree.

### **Other Academic Requirements**

#### **Admissions:**

Applicants must meet one of the following requirements:

- First be admitted into an existing degree program
- Be admitted via application to a designated emphasis within the Master of Arts in interdisciplinary studies
- Submit with their application:
  - three letters of reference,
  - a CV,
  - a statement clearly outlining the plan of study they intend to pursue (identifying the two or more disciplines of study they will pursue with potential coursework), and
  - either (students should select the option that they believe most closely aligns with the disciplines they will integrate during their studies)
  - a score from the GRE/GMAT or
  - a portfolio

Applicants must have a bachelor's degree by the start of the program and have a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Conditional admission is not available for the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies.

#### **Adviser and advisory committee and admission to the MIS program:**

To enter the MIS program, a graduate student must gain the approval of a graduate faculty member (associate or full) to serve as his or her adviser as an MIS student.

A student already admitted to the Graduate School for study in another program must then submit to the Graduate School a request to enter the MIS program. This request must include:

- the names of the adviser and two other qualified faculty members who will serve as the advisory committee, and
- a brief explanation (e.g., preliminary plan of study) of the interdisciplinary nature of the intended program of study.

The advisory committee must comprise at least one faculty member with graduate faculty status from each discipline to be emphasized in the plan of study. A student admitted via application to a designated emphasis within the Master of Arts in interdisciplinary studies will follow the application process for that emphasis.

A student applying for direct admission to the Master of Arts in interdisciplinary studies shall complete the application for direct admission. The dean of the Graduate School will consult with the graduate program coordinators (GPC) for the selected disciplines the student wishes to integrate into his or her interdisciplinary studies degree to determine if those disciplines agree to the admission of the student. The GPC or another member of the graduate faculty from each discipline must be placed on the student's committee, and one of the three members must agree to be the chair of the student committee. Prospective students may want to contact the Graduate School prior to application for assistance with identifying disciplines with faculty able to serve on the committee for interdisciplinary studies students.

For direct admission applicants and those already admitted to another degree program, the application is reviewed for approval by the MIS Program Steering Committee. An important criterion for admission to the MIS program is whether the intended program of study can only be pursued as an interdisciplinary program, rather than being possible within an existing master's program of study, and whether the chairs and program coordinators from the involved departments support the request.



**Plan of Study:**

Within the first semester of entering the MIS program, a student must submit a formal plan of study. This plan must include a list of courses to be taken (or already taken) that will fulfill the interdisciplinary distribution requirement. The plan should also indicate whether the student will pursue the thesis or nonthesis option and the general nature of the final oral examination. The plan of study will be reviewed by the MIS Program Steering Committee. For either the thesis or nonthesis option, the plan of study should meet the expectations of an interdisciplinary program of study. That is, the plan should explain how the proposed coursework and research are interdisciplinary in nature and why the degree cannot be pursued within an existing master's program.

When submitting the plan of study, the primary adviser is responsible for ascertaining whether the proposed coursework will be offered during a reasonable period of time. Also, the adviser is responsible for assuring that the student has a reasonable opportunity to access materials needed to conduct thesis research.

The plan of study will also include a recommendation of whether the degree should be an M.A. or M.S. in interdisciplinary studies and the college/school to which the degree should be aligned.

Once a plan of study is approved, any significant change to the plan of study (e.g., anything beyond a course substitution, committee member substitution, or minor change in research direction) must be approved by both the MIS Program Advisory Committee and the dean of the Graduate School. Also, either the MIS Program Steering Committee or dean of the Graduate School may require a periodic review of the progress of a student.

## Emphasis - Community Based Research Description

The emphasis in community based research in the Master of Arts in interdisciplinary studies provides graduate students the opportunity to complete a tailored program of study that integrates knowledge and scholarship in community based research from two or more disciplines traditionally associated with a Master of Arts.

Students may select a thesis or non-thesis track. The thesis track requires completion of a thesis that reflects original research conducted during their enrollment in the Master of Arts in interdisciplinary studies. The non-thesis track requires a capstone project that applies the cross-disciplinary knowledge.

The thesis option prepares students to conduct research/scholarship needed for research careers and doctoral study. Thesis students conduct original research, completed in entirety during enrollment in the Master of Arts in interdisciplinary studies degree, which integrates community based research in two or more selected disciplines. Graduate faculty associated with Center for Population Studies, UM CREW, and graduate faculty representing the selected disciplines comprise the examination committee for the thesis.

The non-thesis option equips students to apply cross-disciplinary knowledge. Students complete a capstone experience in which they gain applied experience in community based research integrating two or more disciplines. Students design the capstone experience, with guidance from a committee of graduate faculty associated with Center for Population Studies, UM CREW, and graduate faculty representing the selected disciplines, to integrate their unique cross-disciplinary expertise in a non-research setting to address a particular theme or goal directly related to real-world problems/needs.

## General Education Requirements

- A minimum of 36 graduate hours
- 12 hours of core courses (two courses each across two domains)
  - 6 hours of theory coursework (Soc 607: Studies in Community; Engr: Engineering Community Growth; other theories courses approved by the Center for Population Studies and UM CREW graduate faculty),
  - and 6 hours of methods coursework (Soc 508: Methods in Community Research; Pharm Ad: Primary Data Collection; CJ 664: GIS and Crime Mapping; an approved statistics course), from the designated course options
- 15 additional hours of coursework
- at least 9 hours from two disciplines must comprise the total seminar hours
- A thesis or project, completed with 9 thesis or project hours. The thesis must focus on community based research, combining two (or more) disciplines in its methodology OR the capstone project must combine at least two (or more) disciplines in applying community based research.

**Admissions:**

Applicants will apply to the interdisciplinary degree in community based research; the admission committee will include the dean of the Graduate School, the director of UM CREW, and the director of Center for Population Studies.

The student has the option to name a member of the UM graduate faculty who is willing to serve as a co-advisor/advisor and who will write a letter of recommendation agreeing to serve as such. Either the director of UM CREW or the director of the Center for Population Studies can be their academic co-advisor for the program.

In the letter of interest, the student will provide a brief explanation of their research or project interest and the nature of the program of study, and identify at least three UM graduate faculty with whom they would like to work. Students should be mindful that the nature of the degree requires that they integrate two or more disciplines in the application/pursuit of community based research.

An important criterion for admission to the MIS program is whether the intended program of study can only be pursued as an interdisciplinary program, rather than being possible within an existing master's program of study, and whether the chairs and program coordinators from the involved departments support the request.

## Course Requirements

**Plan of Study:**

During their first semester students will be assigned to a single advisor, and will then be asked to select an appropriate advisor based on their interests in their first spring semester. Part of the transition to a permanent advisor, is the development of a plan of study. The plan of study should include:

1. A list of courses to be taken or that have already been taken.
2. Indicate whether the student will be pursuing a thesis or non-thesis option
3. A written statement on the nature of the final oral examination:



- Thesis option: a thesis statement and research questions
  - Non-thesis option: community-based organization placement and proposed work
4. An explanation of the interdisciplinary nature of the research or project and why the degree cannot be pursued within an existing master's program
  5. A recommendation of whether the degree should be an M.A. or M.S in interdisciplinary studies and the college/school to which the degree should be aligned.

When submitting the plan of study, the primary adviser is responsible for ascertaining whether the proposed coursework will be offered during a reasonable period of time. Also, the adviser is responsible for assuring that the student has a reasonable opportunity or access to materials needed to conduct thesis research or the community based professional experience. The plan of study will also include a recommendation of whether the degree should be an M.A. or M.S. in interdisciplinary studies and the college/school to which the degree should be aligned. Once a plan of study is approved, any significant change to the plan of study (e.g., anything beyond a course substitution, committee member substitution, or minor change in research direction) must be approved by both the MIS Program Advisory Committee and the dean of the Graduate School. Also, either the MIS Program Steering Committee or dean of the Graduate School may require a periodic review of the progress of a student.

