

The background of the cover is a vibrant purple and pink gradient. On the left, two women are shown in silhouette, one in white and one in black, looking at a large abstract painting. In the center, a large black rectangular frame contains a close-up of a human eye. To the right, a tall skyscraper, the Willis Tower, is depicted in a stylized, layered manner. The title 'MFA Student Guide' is prominently displayed in the upper right quadrant. At the bottom right, the School of Art & Art History logo and name are visible.

MFA

Student

Guide

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School of
Art & Art History



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WELCOME!

The School of Art & Art History is pleased to welcome you to the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program. We hope that your time at UIC will be a stimulating and challenging experience, and that will grow in intellectual, artistic and personal ways.

Faculty of the School of Art & Art History are committed to offering graduate students the highest quality of instruction and response to their work. The city of Chicago is our working, cultural laboratory and, as you explore it, we will do what we can to help you find resources at UIC and the greater metropolitan area .

1 RULE OF THE MFA PROGRAM

Talk to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), Nate Young (njyoung@uic.edu)! The DGS is the person to talk to first if you have a question or concern about the program. They are here to guide you and support you through your graduate school experience, and so is your advisor! On that note...

It is the role of the DGS to:

- Help guide you through your MFA experience.
- Schedule MFA critiques with the faculty teaching in the graduate committee
- Outline important deadlines and information
- Explain all graduate requirements to you including the work you need to complete each semester leading to your written thesis and exhibition, and to a public lecture you will prepare for the community.

GRADUATE COMMITTEE

The Graduate Committee works closely with all the graduate students participating in the MFA program. It is usually comprised of a mix of three full- and part-time faculty and occasionally one outside guest. The committee changes each semester.

Each Graduate student is the responsible for scheduling studio visits with each individual Graduate Committee faculty member. During the first week of school, the faculty members will inform the graduate community as to where their sign-up sheets can be found (either on-line or in person). Please note that grads are welcome to set up group studio visits—i.e., a studio visit with more than one Graduate Committee faculty and/or invited guest at a time. Also, please note that grads are welcome to invite any full-time faculty in the Art department for a studio visit, even if that faculty isn't part of the Graduate Committee.

The Graduate Committee is a graded 4 credit hour course (ART 530), and as such it is important that grads meet with each committee member for the requisite number of studio visits each semester. In order to succeed in this course, you are required to schedule studio visits with all committee members, and to attend and participate in all the Midterm and Final critique sessions of all the MFA candidates. Not doing so can result in a lowered grade, or being deemed ineligible to teach or to hold a teaching practicum position in following semesters. The committee and all the grad students are present during the midterm critiques as well as at the public final critiques and a guest invited by the committee. The committee might ask you for a brief written statement about your work before each critique.

ADVISING

An advisor will be assigned to you for the duration of your studies. Graduate Advising, ART 580, is the required course for your one-on-one advising meetings. You must register for it online, and make sure you sign up for the section that corresponds to your specific advisor. Make an appointment to see your Faculty Advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies for questions or concerns related to the curriculum.

You are required to meet with your advisor at least every two or three weeks. For contact information, see the inside front cover for a list of Faculty.

Advisor Changes

If you want to change advisors at the end of your first semester, this change must be approved by the DGS and your current advisor. You must inform Brenda Roman in the main office. No paperwork is necessary, but you must make sure to register for the section that corresponds to your new advisor.

CREATING A PROFILE

The “People” section of the school’s website lists profiles of staff, faculty, adjuncts, and graduate students. This is optional for students, but if you would like for a profile of you and your work to be included, please send the desired information specified below to saah@uic.edu.

- Your full name
- Profile photo (In portrait orientation and preferably a headshot)
- Area of study (Studio Arts, Moving Image, etc.)
- Biography (related to your field of study/interests/goals)
- Email
- Website or portfolio site
- Education history
- Courses taught at SAAH

For works

- JPEG Images
Title format should be: First Name-Last Name_Title
Please keep images to no more than 1MB each.
- For videos, upload to a viewing site such as YouTube or Vimeo so that we can link to it. Please send a image still of your video following the JPEG title format above.
- Work Title
- The year the work was created
- Dimensions, if applicable (Length, Width, Height - in inches)
- Medium
- Description of work

Month by Month Overview and Important Dates

Exact academic dates can be found on
UIC's Academic Calendar:
<https://catalog.uic.edu/ucat/academic-calendar/>

FIRST SEMESTER, FALL

AUGUST

REMINDER

Register for classes using the course overview on [page 17](#). Remember to select the correct amount of credits. Follow the guide and check with your academic advisor.

Late-August

Classes begin

SEPTEMBER

Early-September

Last day for students to register online. All grad students need to be correctly registered by this date to avoid fees and additional office paperwork.

REMINDER

Contact DGS if you are interested in applying for an Award for Graduate Research (AGR). See complete details and deadlines on the Grad College website: <http://grad.uic.edu/>

OCTOBER

REMINDER

AGR application due to Grad College

Early-October:

Week of Midterm Critiques

(Check with the graduate committee)

NOVEMBER

Early-November:

SAAH Open House/Open Studios

DECEMBER

Early December:

Last day of instruction

Week of Final Critiques

(Check with your graduate committee)

SECOND SEMESTER, SPRING

JANUARY

Mid-January

Classes begin

Late-January

Last day for students to register online. All grad students need to be correctly registered by this date to avoid fees and additional office paperwork.

MARCH

REMINDER

Award for Graduate Research due to Grad College. Contact DGS if you are interested in applying. See complete details and deadlines on the [Grad College website »](#)

Early-March:

Week of Midterm Critiques

(Check with your grad committee)

MAY

ACTION NEEDED

Do a credit check with Brenda Roman to ensure you are on track.

Early-May:

Last day of instruction

Week of Final Critiques

(Check with your grad committee)

Continuation in the MFA program beyond the second semester requires an evaluation and recommendation of the Graduate Advisory Committee in the student's area.

THIRD SEMESTER, FALL

AUGUST

Late-August

Classes begin

SEPTEMBER

Early-September

Last day for students to register online. All grad students need to be correctly registered by this date to avoid fees and additional office paperwork.

The DGS and Gallery 400 staff members meet with you to discuss thesis exhibitions.

OCTOBER

REMINDER

AGR application due to Grad College

ACTION NEEDED

Second year students must identify their grad committee and notify Brenda in the office to add to their records.

Early-October:

Week of Midterm Critiques
(Check with the grad committee)

NOVEMBER

Early-November:

SAAH Open House/Open Studios

DECEMBER

ACTION NEEDED

Do a credit check with Brenda

1st Draft of thesis paper due to your advisor for review

Early December:

Last day of instruction

Week of Final Critiques
(Check with your grad committee)

FOURTH SEMESTER, SPRING

JANUARY

Mid-January

Classes begin

Thesis committees return requested revisions to thesis papers to students.

Late-January

Last day for students to register online. All grad students need to be correctly registered by this date to avoid fees and additional office paperwork.

FEBRUARY

Last day for 2nd year students to apply for spring graduation to Grad College.

MARCH

REMINDER

AGR application due to Grad College

Early-March:

Final draft of thesis papers due to thesis committees

Week of Midterm Critiques
(Check with your grad committee)

Late-March:

MFA Thesis Exhibitions open at Gallery 400

APRIL

ACTION NEEDED

Final thesis papers, documentation, and all signed thesis committee forms due to SAAH Admin office.

Late-April/Early-May:

Last day of instruction

MAY

Early-May:

Week of Final Critiques
(Check with your grad committee)

Commencement Ceremonies

LABS AND RESOURCES

As a graduate student in the School of Art & Art History you have access to a wealth of resources and amazing individuals to help realize your vision.

We have four area labs and full-time lab specialists dedicated to helping our students navigate and utilize the following spaces:

New Media Lab

Located on the 5th floor of Art and Exhibition Hall (AEH), the New Media Lab has a number of different tools to use for digital fabrication such as the 3D printer, digital embroider, laser-cutter, and more. For creative computing, the lab specialists can help you with questions about arduinos, projection mapping, and photogrammetry. Any and all media questions are welcome.

Available demos/trainings: laser-cutting, 3D printing, digital embroidery.

Also located on the 5th floor is the Graduate Printing Lab which includes a Mac pro computer, a high performance Windows computer, two Epson photo printers, and more. The Great Space and the 5th Floor Gallery are also valuable resources for MFAs as the Great Space is an open space for installation of work, and the 5th Floor Gallery houses the Donald Young Library.

Woodshop

Located on the 4th floor of AEH, our woodshop has tools and machines to create structures and sculptures out of a number of different materials. A selection of tools include table saw, band saw, metal cutting bandsaw, jointer, planer, miter saw, disc and oscillating spindle sanders, and welding tools!

Available demos/trainings: Woodshop orientation, stretcher bars, frames, metal shop, mold making

Moving Image (aka The Cage)

Located on the 3rd floor of AEH, The Cage has a number of different tools at your disposal for checkout to help complete any media projects for film or sound. Materials used to create different effects or pick up specific qualities in film or sound are available for checkout as well. These resources include, but are not limited to, the Graduate Film Edit lab, workspaces for interformatting editing and post production, HD camcorders, assorted microphones, tripods, light kits, LCD projectors, darkroom, and screening room.

Available demos/trainings: Upon request

Photo Lab

Located in the basement of AEH, the photo lab is where students have access to a number of different photo production processes and tools such as the darkroom and photoshop. It also has high quality printers that can print out images on different photo papers at different sizes. As students, you also have access to a variety of cameras and lenses to capture a range of images.

Available demos/trainings: Upon request

Daley Library

The Daley Library is an amazing resource for your research. You have access to journals, special collections, the catalogue, and interlibrary loans. Teresa Helena Moreno is the dedicated Art & Art History librarian. Feel free to reach out with research questions and special requests for additions to our library: thrmoren@uic.edu

Open hours for lab use vary from lab to lab, and from semester to semester.

School Administrative Staff



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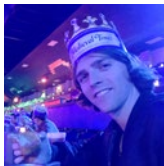


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Lab Specialists



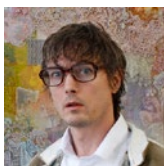
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Financial Aid + Graduate College



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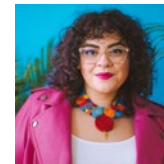


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ciCADA Lab + Library Staff



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CRITICAL CARE

The UIC School of Art & Art History is committed to the health and wellness of our students, faculty, and staff. We are working hard to create an environment that promotes a culture that ends stigma around mental health conditions and promotes support, awareness, and empathy.

If you have not yet done so, ask about picking up a Critical Care resource kit from the SAAH office. It outlines all the resources available to you on campus for mental health and well-being. You can also visit: artandarthistory.uic.edu/criticalcare to see these resources online.

This initiative encompasses addressing mental health community building, and creating and maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Holding the space in our creative practices to maintain our personal well-being, give into public exuberance, maintain relationships, face our emotions head on, and build community is what makes it possible for us to continue to do the important work of artists and scholars in the 21st century.

COURSEWORK

The MFA requires 64 credit hours. The courses for which you register are outlined on the next page. Each semester, all students must register for those courses as well as a section of ART 520: Seminar in Contemporary Theory for a total of 16 hours. The topics and instructors for this vary every semester. (With advance permission, students may be able to substitute another course for ART 520 one time only.)

All students are also required to complete 12 hours of electives. These courses must be at the 400 level or above and can be outside of the School of Art & Art History. A good course of action is to register for a 480 directed studies with the instructor directly if you are interested in a 200 or 300-level class.

ART 400 can be taken during any semester in your two years. Because this course is typically offered in the fall, we strongly suggest you take it during your first semester.

Students who are interested in teaching are encouraged to enroll in a teaching practicum (ART 500). You select your practicum in conjunction with the DGS and the faculty member with whom you will do the practicum. The course is offered for two optional credit hours that are not interchangeable with any of the required credit hours described in the overview.

Continuation in the MFA program beyond the second semester requires an evaluation and recommendation of the Graduate Advisory Committee in the student's area.

Please note that it is not possible to take 480 Independent Study elective credits with adjunct faculty.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Graduate Advising

16 credits total,
4 credits each

Required Courses

36 credits total,
4 credits each

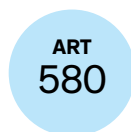
Graduate-Level Electives + Thesis

12 credits total,
4 credits each,
+ ART 597

Year One

Fall

Spring



Advising



Advising



Advanced Grad Critique



Advanced Grad Critique



Seminar



Seminar



Advanced Critique



Grad Elective

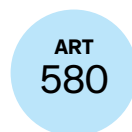


Grad Elective

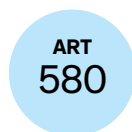
Year Two

Fall

Spring



Advising



Advising



Advanced Grad Critique



Advanced Grad Critique



Seminar



Seminar



Thesis Project

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES + HOW TO REGISTER FOR CLASSES

Schedule of Classes

The schedule of classes for the semester is available online, this information is updated on a regular basis and will include changes to classes. View it online:

<https://banner.apps.uillinois.edu/StudentRegistrationSSB-FED/ssb/registration>

Registration Process:

<https://my.uic.edu/>

<https://registrar.uic.edu/registration/>

It is important to create an Enterprise ID and password as well as NetID and password. In order to obtain any departmental approvals and permissions to register, contact Brenda in the office if you have trouble registering. You will need to provide your UIN and the exact CRNs you are trying to register for.

BE SURE YOU REGISTER FOR THE CORRECT AMOUNT OF CREDIT HOURS AS OUTLINED IN THE [OVERVIEW »](#)

Also note that many classes have two sections you need to register in—a lecture and a discussion/laboratory. To properly register, you need to register for both sections.

Only 400/500 level classes count as elective credits toward graduation. If you are interested in a lower level class, it's possible that a graduate section (400 or 500 level with separate CRNs) of the class exists. Otherwise, you can sign up for it as a 400 level independent study with the instructor of record. Contact the office for assistance.

CULTURE OF CRITIQUES

Critiques are a major part of the MFA program. They are intended to help your growth and development as an artist, build a community of support and rigor in the MFA program, and provide critical insight and feedback on your practice. This is a space of respect, care, generosity and intellectual challenge. Make room for others, give your opinion with consideration, and build a crit culture where many voices can be heard and valued.

Critiques fall under ART 530 and attendance is part of the grading consideration for this course. Each semester there are two crits, a midterm crit and an end-of-semester crit. The midterm crits are smaller and only UIC grad students and faculty are present, and slightly shorter, 30 min. The end of semester crits are 40 min and are open to the public, are larger, and feature an invited external critic/artist to provide feedback.

The DGS and thesis committee will work with all of the students to determine when you will present your work. You need to work with your advisor to determine their schedule and ensure you select a time where your advisor can attend your crit timeslot.

GRAD STUDIO RULES AND REGULATIONS

Studio Maintenance Issues

Please report any facilities maintenance issues to the Lab Specialist for your area of concentration. They will in turn report it to Facilities Management. Potential maintenance issues include: power outages, heating/air conditioning failure, elevator malfunction, door repairs, etc.

Lockouts

If you lose your keys or lock yourself out of your studio, go to the Art & Art History Admin Office in Jefferson Hall 106 to obtain a temporary spare. Lost keys will result in forfeiture of your key security deposit and the door will be re-keyed. You will also pay an additional security deposit for the new key.

Lab specialists have keys to studios, and are happy to help let you in when they are on duty. Additionally, Campus Police can help at any time, including at night when the office and labs are closed; students may call the non-emergency line at 312-996-2830. Explain the situation, and an officer will be dispatched.

Reminders

Studios can easily feel like private spaces akin to a rental apartment, but they are not. Campus Police and Lab Specialists have key access to all studios and are allowed to open studio doors (after a courtesy knock) to check on the spaces at any time.

Please make sure to lock your studio door whenever you are not inside, and do not leave valuables unattended.

Materials and Safe Practices

Some materials can create an unhealthy studio environment. Exposing others to harmful substances (even indirectly through fumes or dust) is unacceptable. Toxic, noxious, and hazardous materials cannot be used in the studios. The spray booth on the 4th floor is the only area in the building where aerosols can be sprayed. Fire is a major concern in our building and safe practices need to be implemented. The use of open flame or process that produce sparks is restricted to the metal shop on the 4th floor. Extra care is necessary when using tools that produce heat (soldering irons, heat guns, and even hot lights).

Before getting started, assess the risk of fire and take preventative measures. Do not block exit paths with projects, materials, or furniture.

Appropriate Items for Graduate Studios

In many of the grad studios, one desk or table surface as well as a chair will be provided. All other items that are brought in to your studio are your responsibility to maintain and remove when you move out of the space. A lab specialist should approve questionable items before these are brought into the studio. Hazardous chemicals, chemical waste, beds, candles, and harmful substances should not be in the studios.

Emergency

In the case of an injury or other emergency notify a lab specialist, the office, and/or a faculty member immediately. If an emergency occurs after hours, or if faculty and staff are unavailable, call the campus emergency number 5-5555 from a campus phone, or dial 312-355-5555 from a cell phone. It is a good idea to save that number on your phone.

(Emergency, continued from page 21)

You can dial 911 if you cannot remember the above number, but it is preferable to call UIC's security office: UIC security is able to promptly track down the location of any call from a campus phone. Furthermore, if you need to be taken to an emergency room, UIC security will take you to the University's Hospital, which is covered by CampusCare. Please note that not all hospitals would accept your CampusCare Plan.

Emergency eye wash stations and first aid kits are located throughout the building. Find them before you need them. The lab specialist will be happy to point them out. In addition, please familiarize yourself with the locations of campus phones.

Electrical

Most studios only have one circuit for electrical outlets. It is therefore crucial to exercise caution and common sense when using electrical equipment such as movie/photographic lighting, space heaters, microwaves, etc. Under no circumstances should you operate items such as space heaters in conjunction with motion picture lighting, for example. Lab specialists do not have access to circuit breaker panels. A basic rule of thumb to follow is to use no more than 1500 watts.

Internet Access

UIC's Academic Computing and Communications Center (ACCC) provides instructions for wireless access at: <http://accc.uic.edu>.

The ACCC website posts instructions for Windows and older Mac operating systems. Every studio is also equipped with a CAT5 network jack. Instructions for Ethernet connections are also posted on the ACCC website.

Public Space Use

Public spaces around your grad studios are just that, public space. Your projects cannot intrude on these spaces. All pathways must remain clear to meet fire code regulations as well as allowing other students to utilize this space for classes. All of your items must remain and be stored in your studio. Before beginning work on site-specific projects, please discuss your plans with a lab specialist and your faculty advisor.

Structural Changes

Nothing permanent can be done to the studios or the Great Space. All projects must be removed without leaving a trace. The spaces are built out and arranged the way they work best. Do not assume any structural additions or subtractions will be welcome. Do not change the color of the floors or walls. If a project includes painting a wall or the floor, it must be returned to its original color. Hardwood, tiled, and carpeted floors cannot be damaged. The lab specialists have supplies to repair studio walls and have matching paints. Wall repair and painting supplies for the Great Space are kept in a rolling cabinet usually located in the south gallery.

Studio Check Out

Before you graduate, you will be given a date with ample notice upon which your studio must be vacated and have the key returned. Your work or supplies (including furniture) that might be in the Great Space must also be removed by that date.

Time Limitations

The MFA program in the School of Art & Art History is a two year, full-time program. It is expected that you complete the program in that time frame, graduating in May of your second year. If something takes place that prevents this, it is important to discuss this with the Director of Graduate Studies and your faculty advisor.

ACCESS AROUND CAMPUS

UIC i-Card

All students must have a UIC photo ID (i-Card) to borrow books from the library and to use many other services on campus. You will also need an i-Card to access the building where the studios are located, the printing lab spaces in the basement, as well as the Great Space and Graduate Printing Lab on the 5th Floor outside of daytime building hours.

Building Hours for Art & Exhibition Hall:

Monday–Friday: 7:45 am–6:00 pm

Saturday: 12:00–5:00 pm

Sunday: Closed

To obtain your i-Card, print and take a copy of your class schedule and photo identification to the ID Center in Student Center East (SCE), Room 124. There is no charge for the ID, but, should you lose it, they will charge for replacing it. This card will be coded to allow you to access our buildings (and your studio) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Operations may have changed due to COVID. Please visit their website for updated information: <https://idcenter.uic.edu/>

Encoding

As soon as you have an i-Card, please contact Chris Markin (cmarki1@uic.edu) to have it encoded. If possible, do not wait until the beginning of the semester to do this—you will encounter inconvenient encoding traffic.

U - PASS

The CTA Ventra U-PASS is provided to eligible students during enrolled terms. The Ventra U-PASS provides unlimited use of CTA trains and buses. Distribution for new students is conducted in the ID Center (idcenter.uic.edu) in Student Center East (SCE) near the western entrance. You need to bring your valid i-card to pick up your U-Pass.

Eligibility

All full time graduate students in the Graduate College (9 credit hours, 5 summer credit hours) are eligible for a CTA U-Pass. In recent years, students have been able to opt-out of the U-PASS program if they desire. Otherwise, all full-time students are assessed the \$163 CTA Transportation Fee for each of the Fall and Spring semesters. Students who do not meet the minimum credit hour requirement are NOT eligible nor are they assessed the fee. If opted-out, the fee will either not be assessed or reversed within 7–10 business days.

The CTA Ventra U-PASS is always valid the Wednesday prior to the start of instruction according to the UIC Academic Calendar through the Wednesday following finals week.

MAILBOXES

MFA students have mailboxes in the SAAH Administrative Office, Jefferson Hall 106. Packages and other mail can be delivered to the office, and can be picked up during office hours, 9am–4:45pm. The complete mailing address is located on the back cover. Please note the MC, which stands for Mailing Code and is a part of the university's internal mailing system. It must be included.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Studio Deposit

You are able to move into your individual or shared studio in Early/Mid-August during regular business hours. Please contact the Lab Specialist in your Area for an exact date and to make arrangements for your move.

In order to take possession of your studio, you must first submit a security deposit of \$250.00 to Tenesha Edwards in 106 Jefferson Hall. Contact Tenesha to arrange this either by email: tenesha@uic.edu, or phone: (312) 996-3433.

Payment

Student account E-bills will be available online. The university does not mail student account bills to registered students. Please note: if your student account did not have any activity within the last month's billing cycle, then you will not have an E-bill for this month. This is all available on the web for students, which can be accessed at my.uic.edu under Student Self-Service Billing.

Financial Aid

Please contact the Office of Financial Aid (<http://www.uic.edu/depts/financialaid/>) with your questions. If you a recipient of a departmental scholarship or fellowship please contact Financial Aid immediately to learn how these funds will affect your financial aid package.

Your Financial Advisor is **Cori McManus**, corim@uic.edu. You can also contact Tenesha in the School of Art & Art History office with financial questions pertaining to your support package.

GEO GUIDELINES FOR ART

Graduate Employees Organization Guidelines for Art

Fall 2020 | Department of Art | UIC

Graduate Teaching Practicum

100-Level courses in Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Moving Image, New Media, and Photography

Teaching practicums provide an opportunity to MFA candidates to actively experience studio and/or seminar curricula alongside a faculty member in the Department of Art. The practicum takes place within the context of an undergraduate ART, IDEAs (Interdisciplinary Education in the Arts), or Art Education course, and offers a pedagogical opportunity for the MFA candidate to learn about teaching a college-level course through observation and participation. An additional significant pedagogical goal of the practicum is to give MFA candidates who might be interested in teaching in the Department as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (or Graduate TA)—or after graduation—the prospect to become familiar with our programs' undergraduate culture and curricula.

The faculty member assigned to teach the undergraduate students and administer the practicum is the sole instructor responsible for the course. All course planning, instruction, grading, and any other course-related work is conducted by the faculty instructor. While the input of the enrolled MFA candidate is encouraged and valued, practicums do not include an expectation that MFA candidates assist the primary instructor in any planning and decision making. This practicum is voluntary and intended strictly to provide an opportunity to MFA candidates to gain insight into different teaching styles and approaches. Students should select

their practicum course based on their abilities and on which course they hope to teach as a Graduate TA during their second year in the program. Only one graduate student is permitted to carry out a practicum per course, at a given time.

Voluntarily enrolled MFA practicum attendees may participate in classroom discussions and demonstrations but are not responsible for any activity outside of the classroom. They do not assist in developing or initiating the lesson plan/syllabus, and they do not administer grades or evaluations.

Participating graduate students may ask to be exempt from attending one session at any time during the semester so that they may concentrate on their other course and studio work without consequence. Additionally, they are not expected to attend any class sessions during the dates of their midterm and final critiques. They are, however, asked to communicate with the faculty whom they observe regarding any obstacles that impede them from being present and / or punctual.

As noted, the teaching practicum is a many-fold pedagogical opportunity for the MFA candidate aimed at facilitating their future development as an educator by observing the approaches and methods of a faculty member. The practicum can be a significant professional practice opportunity offered within our program: many of our MFA candidates enter our program in anticipation of succeeding as artists and college-level educators. While the practicum is not the only requirement for the allocation of available TA positions to MFAs in excellent standing, it is strongly recommended for MFA candidates interested in being considered for a TA position: the MFAs engagement in a practicum is an important gauge that faculty rely on to determine the readiness of an individual to teach their own course.

MFA Candidates must enroll in ART 500 (Teaching Practicum) via the specific course and section number assigned to the Faculty with whom they will observe. Refer to the table of contents for information on the registration process.

Graduate Teaching Assistantship in Art (Instructor of Record, also referred to as Graduate TA)

100-Level Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Moving Image, New Media, and Photography

The Graduate Teaching Assistantships are available to qualified, second-year MFA Candidates. These are essentially “Instructor of Record” positions, wherein a Graduate Student is given the opportunity to teach an introductory level art course within their disciplinary expertise. Graduate TAs receive support and mentorship from full-time faculty, including help on syllabus and curricula development, writing course expectations and objectives, crafting their teaching style, and carrying out successful in-class critiques. Teaching Assistantships provide rich, instructional experiences for our graduate students, and help prepare them for adjunct teaching, post-graduation.

Paid Teaching Assistantships are available to second-year MFA Candidates only. MFA Candidates are considered eligible for this position based upon excellent academic standing, their expressed interest in teaching, as well as the recommendation of their Faculty Advisor. Taking on a paid Teaching Assistant position is voluntary, and not a requirement of the MFA Program at UIC. Please note, paid TA positions can not be guaranteed for all second-year MFA Candidates at this time.

Expectations for course Graduate Teaching Assistants

- Newly appointed TAs are required to attend the TA orientation offered by the University shortly before the start of the Fall semester.
- In consultation with faculty, Graduate TAs will finesse their own syllabi—including lecture topics, project assignments, and readings. Graduate TAs are given access to syllabi and course material from courses previously taught by faculty in their assigned area.
- While an occasional absence is to be expected, Teaching Assistants are required to inform the Head of Art, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and their Area Coordinator of any absences—as well as to make appropriate arrangements to cover their class. Suggestions of how to cover a class due to extenuating circumstances can be found in the brochure: [*Teaching at UIC: A practical manual for instructors and teaching assistants*](#), pages 52–54. Teaching Assistants maintain office hours (totalling up to 2 hours per week). The TAs office hours may be arranged by appointment.
- Courses taught by Graduate TAs have enrollments capped at a maximum of 24 students, although generally, this number is lower due to capacity limitations of classroom facilities.
- Graduate TAs are expected to grade assignments and exams (if any are given) and are responsible for recording their students' midterm and final grades by the deadline set by UIC.
- Graduate TAs are responsible for coordinating the administrative aspects of teaching, including communicating with the Department of Art's Staff, Lab Specialists, and Area Coordinators.
- Graduate TAs are encouraged to communicate with the School's Academic Advisor. The Academic Advisor can offer guidance in situations when an undergraduate student is

absent for multiple classes or when other student-related challenges arise.

In addition to knowledge in their specific area of artmaking, Graduate TAs are expected to provide the following basic content in their classes:

- Introduction to professionally accomplished work in the designated field of study.
- Introduction to basic tools, hands-on approaches, and other instruction appropriate to course content and objectives.
- Introduction to appropriate critical engagement and conversation in the context of artmaking.
- Clear articulation of course syllabus with clearly stated assignments, goals, and processes for evaluation.
- Guidance in the use of the School of Art & Art History (SAAH) resources, such as Lab Specialists' workshops, as well as other matters that may require coordination with administrative staff and the faculty member who acts as Area Coordinator (for example, the Area Coordinator in Moving Image is a full-time faculty who teaches in that area).

Accountability and Evaluation

Graduate Student teaching opportunities are an important part of graduate education in Art. We are committed to offering teaching experiences to graduate students who wish to gain in practice knowledge in pedagogy. Generally, MFA candidates get to teach one or two courses in their second year of the two-year MFA program. However, the Department of Art cannot guarantee that an opportunity will be available for all MFA students. To equitably distribute teaching opportunities, we will consider the following criteria:

- Whether or not applicants have previously had a chance to develop their own courses.

- How the proposed course might support the applicant's progress through the program.
- The likelihood of successful outcomes for the undergraduate students enrolled to study with the Graduate TA.

TAs will be evaluated every semester by an assigned supervising professor (typically, their Faculty Advisor). A brief statement summarizing an evaluation will be presented to the Graduate TA at the end of the semester. Final decisions on all matters of teaching reside with the Administration and Faculty of the Department of Art. Any serious course-related problems related to Graduate TAs' academic performance—or any ethical or personal issues that might arise—should be brought to the attention of the Graduate TAs Advisor, the corresponding faculty Area Coordinator, the DGS, and / or the Head of Art.

Appointment Criteria

The Department provides Graduate TA appointments in the following areas: General Education and 100-level introductory courses in Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Moving Image, New Media, and Photography. In specifically qualified cases, a graduate student might be able to teach a 200- or 300-level Topics course in Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Moving Image, New Media, or Photography. Furthermore, in specific cases, a qualified MFA candidate may be assigned to teaching an undergraduate seminar. The latter is particularly rare.

The Department of Art will make considerable efforts to assign all appointments and reappointments for Graduate Teaching Assistantships according to the policy outlined below. The governing criteria are:

- Advancement of the Graduate Student Employee's educational and professional goals through appropriate TA appointments.

- Consistent distribution of workload across TA appointments. Typically the expected workload is an average of 10 hours per week throughout the semester, with the most substantial time demand frontloaded at the beginning of the semester.
- 25% appointment.
- TA training, mentoring, and oversight by an assigned faculty member in the Department of Art (such as the MFA candidate's advisor) and/ or the corresponding Area Coordinator.

Appointment Compensation

Teaching Assistantships for course instructors receive a tuition waiver and a stipend at a rate set by the University. See the Graduate College's guidelines: <https://grad.uic.edu/funding-awards/assistantships/>

Appointments are guaranteed only after an appointment letter has been signed by the Department of Art's Assistant Director and the MFA candidate. All Teaching Assistantship holders are encouraged to approach the Head of Art, the Director of Graduate Studies, and/ or their Faculty Advisor with any concerns about their appointment.

Planning for Sick Days and Other Emergencies

Should you need to miss teaching class due to illness, our policy is that you must notify the following people (via email) that you will not be able to teach class: the Department's Facilities Manager, the Area Coordinator for your class, and the Office of the School of Art & Art History (saah@uic.edu).

Below are suggestions for plans to have in place in addition to notifying the above should you be unable to teach:

Being sick is terrible, but if you couple being sick with the possibility of canceling your class or the need to cover the class due to absence and it is even worse. You can focus on resting and

recovering if you have a sick day plan lined up ahead of time. Sick day plans should account for two possibilities: canceling class, and having someone take over your class for the day. You should always plan for both of these situations because the decision over which happens will often fall to your department and not to you personally. A sick day plan for canceling class should have two parts: an email to your department and an email to your students. You also need to know ahead of time who in your department you should be contacting if you are ill; it could be your department's administrator, the department head, or the lead instructor. Make sure you have this information at the beginning of the semester so that you aren't scrambling to figure out what to do on an actual sick day! Here's a starter template for the email to your department:

Good Morning {name},

I'm very sorry, but I'm ill this morning and cannot possibly teach my {class number} class scheduled for {time}.

My plan is to cancel class today and continue with my normal teaching schedule from the next class period.

I will contact my students through email, but it would be a great help to me if you could also put a sign on the classroom door (building and room #) to avoid confusion.

I have also included a copy of the message I will be sending to my students below, in case you have inquiries from any of my students.

Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

And here is one for your students. In the email to your students, you will want to keep things as generic as possible so that you do not need to go back to your syllabus and try to figure out what they need to be ready for in the next class.

Good Morning Students,

Unfortunately, I am not well today, so today's class is cancelled.

Please have your assigned readings and homework for both today's class and the next class period ready when we next meet.

Any appointments/office hours planned for today are also cancelled. I will contact you to reschedule as soon as I am able.

See you all on {date}.
Sincerely,

Having someone take over your class requires more planning, but it also is better for your students. However, there are great ways to have productive classes even when you cannot be present that avoids the "just play a movie" strategy.

Students generally regard this as a waste of their time, and you may see repercussions in your teaching reviews if you use this strategy. Some students also take this to mean that attendance in class is not that important, and so you may find that this has a negative impact on attendance, especially if students begin reporting it on your evaluations, ratemyprofessor.com or other professor review websites.

However, there are times and specific concepts that can be well supported through the showing of a particular movie or series of video clips. To do this effectively, you need to plan for the movie along with a movie guide to help students connect the film with the course concepts. A series of clips can be used to address specific concepts or to act as a review of a larger set of concepts. Provide a PowerPoint that has questions for the students (and answers in the note section for your TA or colleague who will be filling in for you!) and discussion points for a variety of video clips. This opens both small and large classes to a discussion and a more interactive session. They will never know you are gone!

Strategy 1 - Guest lectures

While planned guest lectures are great additions to your regular teaching plans, setting up an emergency class swap with a colleague can be a great way to deal with an unexpected sick day. Find someone whose research is relevant to the class, and ask them if they would be willing to come and present their work if you are ever ill. This allows them to practice that conference paper they are working on or recycle old presentations about their research and prevents them from having to come up with something new on the spot. This also allows students to see what cutting edge work in the field looks like, get a greater sense of what kind of research is done at your university, and works well even without assigned readings. Of course, this option should always be used in conjunction with another backup, just in case your colleague cannot make it to class on such short notice.

Strategy 2 - Discussion leaders

Contact your students ahead of class and let them know that someone else will be teaching class and tell them that you expect that each of them will come to class with one question that they

would like to discuss (for many classes, this will just be a reminder of what they ought to be doing daily anyway). Remind students that those who come to class unprepared will lose participation points for the day. Let your colleague know that they simply need to call on students to share their questions and facilitate discussion of the answers. If you have concerns that your class will not be as talkative with a new instructor; ask your colleague to break them up into groups of three or four and to go between the groups to keep them engaged and on task.

Strategy 3 - Case Study

Prepare a case study assignment ahead of time that asks students to apply the major lessons of the class. This is something that you can use either as a great review tool near the end of the semester or as an activity that works well when a colleague takes over your class. Print out all of the material for this ahead of time so that your colleague simply needs to pick up the handouts, pass them out to the students, and keep student groups on task. If your colleague is in the same field as you are, it is likely that they will not only find this an easy activity to assist your students with, but that they will also bring a fresh perspective to it that makes the activity even more rewarding for students.

Preparing a sick day plan when you are at the start of the semester seems like a tremendous amount of work, but being sick is generally a surprise to everyone! This time spent planning, like all of your course planning, will be valuable in those cases you just cannot make it to class. And if you get to the end of the semester, find yourself tired, uncharacteristically unprepared for class, or just need a mental health break, you can always incorporate one of your sick day plans yourself. This planning is time well spent.

Sick Day and Emergency Planning: Summing It Up

Planning your lessons in advance and keeping a file of lesson plans that worked well for you and your students is the single most important thing you can do for your teaching career. Carefully planned lessons will ensure that your students learn the material, and will be reflected in student grades and end of the semester evaluations. These lesson plans will also help you to assemble a strong teaching portfolio that showcases your particular approach to teaching and provides concrete evidence of the perspectives and commitments you will describe in your teaching statement. These lesson plans will also be available to you for reuse in future classes, either as they are or as inspiration for when you sit down to prepare for new classes. Finally, years from now, you will be able to look back at the lesson plans you have collected and see how your teaching has grown and evolved over the years, helping you to continue honing your craft. Lesson planning is a difficult habit to begin, but it is well worth the effort.

Services for Students with Disabilities

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities as defined by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. As a TA you may have students in your class who present a note requesting accommodations for a disability. A student must first request approval for accommodations for a disability by contacting the Disability Resource Center located in room 1190 SSB. The Disability Resource Center (<https://drc.uic.edu/>) is a campus resource that provides academic assistance, advocacy, counseling, and information and referral to students with documented disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are made for students with disabilities on an individual and flexible basis.

These accommodations may take many forms such as sign language interpreters, readers, course or exam modifications, or note takers, to name a few. It is the responsibility of the student to seek assistance and request accommodations through the Disability Resource Center. Students who have received approval for classroom accommodations will present a note from the Disability Resource Center identifying the accommodation that must be made in the classroom by the instructor and/or TA. Any questions regarding the accommodations that need to be made for this student can be clarified by contacting the Disability Resource Center (drc@uic.edu or 312-413-2183). In addition, make the Director for Undergraduate Studies aware of the situation.

Avoiding Sexual Harassment

Teaching Assistants are in a position of authority over their students, and therefore it is essential that they protect themselves against claims of sexual harassment and conflict of interest by avoiding social or personal involvement with their students. It is very important for University employees -- in particular TAs -- to understand what constitutes sexual harassment and what to do if they become aware of it. TAs are responsible for understanding the University's policy on sexual harassment viewable on the Office of Access and Equity's website at <https://sexualmisconduct.uic.edu/policy/>

Claims of sexual harassment are time consuming and stressful to resolve. TAs should pay particular attention to these guidelines in an effort to avoid claims of sexual harassment. Claims of and questions about sexual harassment should be reported immediately to the Directors of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies. To avoid social and personal involvement with students, refrain from dating, touching, personally complimenting, or going to

parties with students. Do not provide students with your cell phone number, and make email correspondence with the entire class, not individual students, whenever possible.

Beginning July 1, 2020, the Department of Art will do the following:

- Distribute these guidelines to graduate students, faculty, and staff at the start of each academic year.
- Solicit the advice of graduate student employees when developing or revising appointment and reappointment guidelines.
- Communicate to MFA candidates which factors enhance their eligibility for a Teaching Assistant appointment.
- Ensure that appointments and assignments are not made in an arbitrary or inconsistent manner.

Beginning July 1, 2020, the School of Art & Art History will do the following:

- Issue letters of appointment no later than 45 days before the start of the appointment (in the case of appointments made less than 45 days before or 45 days after the beginning of the semester, the letter of appointment shall be expedited as soon as possible).

Additional TA/Teaching Resources on Campus

- [Teaching at UIC: A practical manual for instructors and teaching assistants](#)
- [UIC Graduate Handbook: Assistantships](#)
- [Graduate Employee Organization \(GEO\) Labor Agreement](#)
- [Certificate in the Foundations of College Instruction @ UIC](#)