SAIC’s Visual and Critical Studies program integrates scholarly, studio, and hybrid research practices as part of an evolving paradigm that addresses the complexity of visual and critical practices in the 21st century.

The MAVCS program is designed for students who are interested in both the scholarly and creative investigation of the production, dissemination, and impact of the visual world.

Through research intertwined with the process of making (whether through studio practice, writing, or both), students explore ways of seeing and representing social, cultural, and visual phenomena. The curriculum balances topic-based seminars, independent work with advisors, and electives to create a singularly interdisciplinary course of study.

The program’s faculty includes an impressive array of artists, designers, critics, writers, and scholars who come from diverse fields, including history, performance, art history, film, video, new media, visual communication, sociology, political science, sculpture, anthropology, and literature, among others. Each semester, curators, gallerists, and writers outside of SAIC participate in interdisciplinary critiques of MAVCS student work.
DEPARTMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Professor Shawn Michelle Smith’s book At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen (Duke 2013) won the 2014 Lawrence W. Levine Award for best book in American cultural history from the Organization of American Historians.
- Professor Maud Lavin is currently co-authoring the book East Asian Androgyny: New Femininities Circulating in Mass Culture with SooJin Lee and Fang-Tze Hsu and co-editing Queer Fandoms in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan with Ling Yang and Jamie Zhao.
- Former MAVCS Fulbright Fellow Martin Waldmeier has organized an exhibition, “The Translator’s Voice,” which will travel between three European art institutions starting in early 2015: FRAC Lorraine (Metz, France), MARCO Vigo (Vigo, Spain) and SFKM Sogn og Fjordane (Forde, Norway).
- VCS Professor and Chair Joseph Grigely participated in the 2014 Whitney Biennial. During the past year he also had exhibitions at Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Le Plateau, Paris; CAPC, Bordeaux; and FRAC Aquitaine. He also published essays on Microarchives (Royal Academy of Fine Art, Antwerp) and the paraperspective (Cleve Carney Gallery, Glen Ellyn, Illinois).
- Professor Terri Kapsalis collaborated with John Corbett to curate “Calling Planet Earth: The Graphic Cosmos of Sun Ra and El Saturn Records,” which took place at Rice University in Houston in fall 2014.
- MAVCS graduate Lise Haller Baggesen published Mothernism, a book that knot together feminism, science fiction, and disco (Chicago: Green Lantern Press and the Poor Farm Press, 2014).