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 twenty-first century.

The MAVCS program is designed for students who are interested in both the scholarly and creative investigation of the production, circulation, 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 are internationally recognized practitioners in their fields and share a common interest in taking disciplinary knowledge beyond the borders of conventional practice. The faculty include artists, designers, critics, writers, and scholars with diverse backgrounds: sound and performance, critical race studies and anthropology, mass culture and gender/sexuality studies, photography and social history, cinema/media studies and political theory, conceptual practices and textual criticism, as well as a range of emerging disciplines. The VCS faculty have won Guggenheim awards for both studio practice and critical scholarship.
DEPARTMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS

Professor Joseph Grigely has recently had solo exhibitions at Grazer Kunstverein, Graz; Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg; Francesca Pia Gallery, Zurich; Nadine Gandy Gallery, Bratislava; and Marian Goodman Gallery, London.

Professor Maud Lavin, together with her coeditors Ling Yang (Xiamen) and Jing Jamie Zhao (CUHK), has recently completed the book Boys’ Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer Fan Cultures in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Hong Kong University Press, 2017).

Associate Professor Romi Crawford coauthored a book, The Wall of Respect: Public Art and Black Liberation in the 1960s (Northwestern University Press, forthcoming 2017), and co-curated the exhibition The Wall of Respect: Vestiges, Shards and the Legacy of Black Power at the Chicago Cultural Center. She also contributed an essay to the catalogue Theaster Gates: Black Archive for the Kunsthaus Bregenz in Austria.

Associate Professor Karen Morris has started a research project on the role of culture in new forms of medical care for gender non-conforming children and adolescents, which empowers these youth to begin the process of medically transitioning before puberty.

Adjunct Professor Terri Kapsalis published the essay “Hysteria, Witches, and the Wandering Uterus: A Brief History” on Literary Hub, and collaborated with others across the school to create Radical Care Workshops for the SAIC community. She is the fall 2017 Artist in Residence at the International Museum of Surgical Science.

Assistant Professor Kamau Amu Patton recently participated in The Shape of CO — to Come, an exhibition and symposium at the ABF house in Stockholm, Sweden, and performed in Art Forms of Dimensions: Tomorrow, Sound, Black Study, and the Multidisciplinary Artist at the Tang Museum at Skidmore College.

Professor Shawn Michelle Smith published a book coedited with Sharon Slawinski, Photography and the Optical Unconscious (Duke University Press, 2017), and delivered a keynote address at the After Post-Photography 3 conference in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Adjunct Assistant Professor Kristi McGuire was the Spring 2017 Critical Studies and Humanities Fellow at the Cranbrook Academy of Art.

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

VCS 5003 History and Theory of Visual Studies 3
VCS 5004 Research and Production 3
VCS 5010 Topics in VCS 9
VCS 5999 Thesis I 3
VCS 6999 Thesis II 3

External criticism, theory, or methodology courses relevant to individual research 6

Electives 9

Advanced academic courses, studio advising, internships, or otherwise relevant engagement including directed and independent studies

Completion of thesis

TOTAL CREDIT HOURS 36

THESES

- Nostalgic Historiography: An Evocation Before the Archive
- Sympathetic Resonances: Relationality and Affect in the Sonic Field
- Essays on Weather for a Post-Katrina Society
- Revising the Pharmacist and Its Imaginary Twin: A Strange Cartography and an Intentional Agent in the Process of Being Distinguished Again
- Meme in America: The Role of Viral Videos
- "Rather a Grave Subject..." The Critical Role of the Nineteenth Century Postmortem Photograph
- From Snapshot to Screenshot
- From Away: Viewing Shades of Whiteness Through the Lens of Tourism
- Concocting Corporeality: The Body in Contemporary Visual Art by Artists from South Korea
- Contemporary Pastness: Affect, Gender, and National Memory in New York City’s 9/11 Memorial Complex
- Comfort of Strangeness: A Conversation on Molecular Gastronomy, Taste, and Memory
- Objects of Palestine: Narratives of Chicago’s Diaspora

For complete faculty listing visit: saic.edu/vcs