

DIVISION OF EMERGING MEDIA STUDIES

MA Handbook 2024-2025



Effective Date: September 1, 2024

All policies and guidelines in this handbook are subordinate to College of Communication and Boston University policies. In case of any conflict, the superordinate policies govern.

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USEFUL RESOURCES

Getting to know BU:

- [Academic calendar](#)
- [BU Educational Resource Center](#)
- [BU Graduate Education](#)
- [BU Housing](#)
- [BU Newbury Center for First Generation Students](#)
- [BU Maps](#)
- [MyBU Student Portal](#)
- [BU Today](#)
- [BU Student Health Services](#)
- [BU Campus Wellbeing Resources](#)
- [BU Office of the Provost](#)
- [BU Connect](#)

Getting to know COM & EMS:

- [Center for Mobile Communication Studies](#)
- [College of Communication calendar](#)
- [Communication Research Center](#)
- [COM Twitter](#)
- [COM Facebook](#)
- [COM Instagram](#)
- [COM Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion resources](#)
- [COM Career Services](#)

Getting to know Boston:

- [Boston neighborhood guide](#)
- [BU Graduate Education's "Living in Boston" portal](#)

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Master of Arts in Emerging Media Studies (EMS)! Please note that this is a supplemental handbook that aims to provide information specific to you as an EMS student. For information on the College of Communication's graduate policies and

procedures, please follow [this link](#). Students in the EMS Master's program must also meet all eligibility and progress guidelines set forth by Boston University. Further resources regarding these University-level policies and procedures are [available online](#).

The MA program in Emerging Media Studies seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of topics ranging from human behavior to organizational communication to large data analysis - all of which are important to be successful on social, personal, and professional levels. The program has both a practical and theoretical dimension. The psychology of users and the co-creation process, as well as the regulatory structure within which emerging media exist, are topics that are brought into sharp focus in the curriculum. Students will also become adept at conducting and using social science research concerning emerging media. They will have an opportunity to participate firsthand in research, and develop a portfolio of meaningful research outcomes that are immediately relevant to project sponsors and can also be shared with future potential employers.

This handbook serves as a general guide and frame of reference for progressing through the Master's program in Emerging Media Studies at BU. Of course, no handbook, no matter how thorough, can possibly address every issue or question you may have. Additional questions should be brought to the attention of your advisor, or other faculty and staff from EMS. Over time, policies may change as circumstances require and the EMS program reserves the right to make adjustments. Moreover, all policies and guidelines in this document are subsidiary to those of the College of Communication and Boston University, which take precedence over them.

We are delighted to be able to offer an exciting and dynamic course of study leading to a Master's degree in Emerging Media Studies, and this document will help to navigate the process smoothly.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes are the benchmarks by which we measure successful completion of the program. Each of these learning outcomes is represented in the coursework and activities our students complete as part of their required and elective courses.

1. Demonstrate by means of written papers and other coursework a theoretical, philosophical, historical, and practical understanding of how emerging media technologies come to affect cultures, industries, and the lives of individuals and communities.

2. Make methodological and empirical skill and strategic, integrated thinking evident through coursework that addresses issues related to emerging media technologies. Coursework may encompass novel empirical research (including original data collection and analysis), systematic reviews of existing literature, and the development of prototype media applications.
3. Display research skills related to cutting-edge and specialized hardware and software to analyze data collected via advanced quantitative analysis, text mining, machine learning, or physiology/psychology experiments.
4. Via oral presentations - within class, at campus research symposia, and at national and international conferences - exhibit competence in communicating scientific information to audiences of peers, industry leaders and scholars.
5. Co-create a project report, based on original research, that demonstrates value to a client, and incorporate this project into the student's portfolio. Depending on the student's interests, this report could address commercial, service, nonprofit, governmental or academic sectors.

TIMEFRAME & CREDITS

The EMS Master's program is normally a 10-month, 40-credit program, and includes a final project as the result of participation in a three-semester collaborative research project seminar (known as the Master's Collaboratory, EM 777). Though most students complete the degree on a full-time basis, the curriculum may be completed part-time. Taking the thesis or internship option (discussed below) may require a student to extend the duration of the program an additional semester (internship) or even two (thesis). The student should discuss this with their advisor, followed by a request for an extension to the EMS administration and the College of Communication's Graduate Affairs office.

Required Courses 28 CREDITS

- COM EM 700 Introduction to Emerging Media Studies
- COM EM 747 #Trending Insights: Social Data Analysis and Visualization
- COM EM 757 User-Producers 2.0: Developing Interactivity
- COM EM 777 Master's Collaboratory in Emerging Media

- COM EM 797 Connecting Humans: Networks, History, and Social Media

If a student wishes to replace a required course with an alternative elective, they must seek final approval from the Program Director. The petition form can be found [here](#) and should be submitted to the Division Administrator.

Electives 12 CREDITS

In addition to the required courses, students must successfully complete three approved electives. For students doing a thesis, one of these electives must be COM EM 909 Thesis Project. For students taking the internship option, one of these electives must be COM EM 911 Internship.

While we do suggest some electives to students during the registration window each semester, we encourage students to explore the wide range of courses on offer whether in EMS, COM, BU or in the Boston-area consortium to enhance their research and/or professional interests. The rich menu of electives provides a great opportunity to acquire valuable skills and insights.

If taking a course outside of the Division of Emerging Media Studies, students must pay close attention to prerequisites for any course they seek to take. Students must email the Division Administrator with their elective choices to seek faculty approval. Non-EMS courses must be approved by the faculty before the student can enroll.

ADVISORS

Each student will be assigned an EMS faculty advisor prior to the start of the fall semester. The advisor will arrange to meet with the student once every semester, or more frequently as required, to address questions or concerns. The advisor is the first point of contact for academic queries, for example if a student is seeking advice on electives or if they are considering the internship or thesis track. This mentoring role provides an opportunity to address any questions or concerns the student may have; to express what they do/do not like about the program; and to provide information to them about available resources, such as health services, career advice, and other issues that may arise.

OPTIONS

Students in the MA program are able to complete their degree via one of three options: professional, thesis, or internship.

Professional

For this track, students are not required to complete an internship or a thesis. Rather, they will complete the required courses and three electives. This track is recommended for students who wish to complete the program in 10 months or on a part-time basis. You do not need to submit a form to select this track. All students are automatically on this track unless we receive a thesis or internship form from you.

Thesis

The thesis option (also known as the pre-doctoral option) is recommended for students who seek an in-depth research experience. Often, these students will apply for entry to a doctoral program following completion of the MA degree. Although MA students are eligible to apply for the PhD in Emerging Media Studies, admission is not guaranteed. Please note that selecting this option will extend your course of study by at least two semesters as a thesis requires an original research project that takes about a year to complete. A student on an F-1 visa should consult with BU's International Students & Scholars Office before making a commitment to this option.

During the thesis, a student will enroll in EM 909 for summer/fall and spring/summer if necessary. If the student decides not to complete the thesis, it may be possible to change their enrollment status to EM 901 Independent Study which is usually a one semester commitment. EM 901 receives a letter grade. EM 909 receives a pass/fail grade. Please note that enrolling in EM 909 will result in additional tuition fees.

To select the thesis option, students should:

1. Consult with their advisor on their topic and select a thesis supervisor - the

advisor may serve as the thesis supervisor, or may recommend other faculty for that role. In summary, the first step is to identify a topic and find a thesis advisor who is a match for the topic.

2. By January 15 (beginning of the second semester in the program), submit a brief summary for a thesis topic to the EMS Division Administrator. This summary should not exceed two pages (references included), be written in APA style, and contain the following: an introduction of the idea, justification for why it is important, how it fits with existing research/theory, the method, timeline for completion, and the faculty member(s) considered to be a good fit for advising the thesis topic. The student's name should appear in the header of the document.
3. EMS faculty will review these summaries and make approval decisions based on the clarity and quality of the research idea, a student's academic standing in the program, and the availability of faculty to serve as a thesis advisor for the proposed thesis project. Students will be notified about the faculty's decision by the middle of that spring semester. Approval of a submitted thesis summary means a student is approved for the thesis option of the EMS MA program and an advisor for the thesis is identified.
4. The next step is to submit a [thesis track form](#). Once that is approved by the thesis advisor, the student will be enrolled in EM 909 for the summer. This marks the beginning of work on the formal thesis proposal. The thesis supervisor will work with the student on a timeline for submitting the longer and formal MA thesis proposal which will contain much more information about the thesis project than the initial thesis summary.
5. Please review the [EMS Guidelines for the formal Thesis Proposal](#) and the [EMS Guidelines for the Thesis itself](#).
6. A second reader is required for the completed MA thesis. A student and thesis advisor will discuss options and decide on a second reader. The student will contact the second reader. It might take a few invitations to find a second reader who is available. The second reader does not need to be an EMS faculty member but should preferably be a faculty member at a university or at least an advanced degree-bearing practitioner. The second reader will review the formal proposal and offer feedback and later on will review the completed thesis for approval.
7. Both the first and second readers and the Program Director must provide signature approval on the final MA thesis document. Students can expect to make

revisions on the thesis, based on suggestions from the advisor and the second reader, before they provide approval.

8. Here is a summary table that provides some indication of the timeline for completing an MA thesis within an additional half year or a full year.

Milestone	Additional Half-Year Extension Deadlines (Typically for Big Data & Content Analyses)	Additional Year Extension Deadlines (Typically for Surveys & Experiments)
Readers Approve Initial Proposal	April 15*	April 15*
First Draft of Literature Review	July 1*	July 1*
Study Design	August 1	September 15
Readers Approve Formal Proposal	September 1	October 15
RRB or IRB Application Submitted	Not Often Expected	November 1
Data Collection	September 15	February 1-March 1**
Results Section	November 1	April 1
Thesis Revision and Final Version to Readers for Approval	December 1*	May 1*
<p>*Firm Deadlines. Other deadlines are approximate but recommended. They are dependent on the complexity of the project, quality of the argument and writing, methodology, and the author's ability and availability to make edits. Expect your First Reader's availability to fluctuate with their own workload.</p> <p>**Dependent on research design and advisor availability to support research progress.</p>		

Internship

Students who seek a professional career in emerging media immediately following completion of their Master's degree may choose to complete an internship to gain professional experience.

To select the internship option, students should:

1. Consult with their advisor and/or [COM Career Services](#) on internship options. Note, they can provide guidance but the student is ultimately responsible for finding an internship.
2. Once the student has found an internship, they must submit the [internship form](#). The advisor will then approve the internship based on its relevance to the program.
3. International students must also obtain [CPT approval](#) and should discuss this with ISSO.

Ordinarily, we recommend that students extend into an additional fall semester to complete their internship once they have completed the rest of their coursework. If the student wishes to enroll in an internship during the first 10 months of the program, the advisor will approve this based on the hours required and the student's academic performance to determine if it is advisable.

Please note, international students may not complete an internship in the US in their first academic year. This means that international students must wait until Summer Session 1 to enroll in the internship track if completing an internship in the US. This is to ensure the student meets the requirements for CPT eligibility. As circumstances may vary, we recommend international students reach out to ISSO to discuss CPT eligibility.

Typically, students should select a 4-credit internship for full-time positions (more than 20 hours per week) or a 2-credit internship for part-time positions (20 hours or less per week). However, this is considered on a case-by-case basis and full-time positions can be reduced to 2 credits if the additional 2 credits are not needed for program completion. Part-time positions will be considered for 4 credits at the advisor's discretion where credits are required for program completion.

Students are permitted to complete more than one four-credit internship. However, regardless of whether the student completes a second internship, they must still complete at least two non-internship electives (8 credits) to meet the degree requirements.

Internships are usually assessed through an assignment issued by the student's advisor and completion of a feedback form by the student's supervisor. EM 911 receives a Pass/Fail grade.

You are welcome to seek out your own internship opportunities if you wish or contact

the [Career Services Office](#) or comjobs@bu.edu.

AUDITING

Students wishing to audit a class must submit a [Permission to Audit form](#) signed by the instructor of the class in question to registrar@bu.edu. Once permission has been obtained, the student will be registered with an auditing status and any associated credits will not count towards their degree. Students should note that they are still charged standard tuition if they are auditing.

ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

Students interested in working with an EMS faculty member as a Graduate Assistant or a Research Assistant should email their resume to the Division Administrator. The student's resume will then be circulated to the faculty. Please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of assistantships. If you will be working within the Division of Emerging Media or College of Communication, please complete the following steps:

1. Complete the [Assistantship Contract](#) and submit it to the Division Administrator no later than the University's official last day to add a class in the semester in which you will hold the position. Please note that this form must be signed by you and your assistantship supervisor prior to submission.
2. For domestic students: If you have not previously held a position on campus, you must complete the [W-4 tax form](#) and [I-9 tax form](#) and submit them to COM Room 110 (Dean's Suite, 640 Commonwealth Ave).
3. For international students: If you have not previously held a position on campus, you must visit the ISSO office (888 Commonwealth Ave, 2nd Floor) to complete your I-9 form in person. Once this is completed, you can fill out the [W-4 form](#) and return it to COM 110. You can also get the necessary paperwork from COM 110 if you need to apply for a social security number. International students should discuss with ISSO and review the [Employment Guide for International Students](#) before starting a position.
4. Once you are hired, if you wish to set up a Direct Deposit, you can do so [here](#).

Please note that during term time, graduate students at BU are limited to a maximum of 20 hours per week of University employment. Generally, international students on an F-1

visa are limited to 20 hours per week, but international students should check with ISSO for specific regulations. Though a student may hold more than one assistantship in COM, the number of total weekly hours may not exceed 20 across all University employment. Please ensure you read your Assistantship Contract thoroughly as this contains important information.

Students may also apply for on-campus employment through the [Student Employment Office](#). Please contact the Student Employment Office directly at 617-353-3594 or seo@bu.edu if you have any questions about positions posted on the Job Board.

CREDITED RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS (INDEPENDENT STUDY)

Students can work on research projects with faculty for credit. These positions are unpaid and faculty will make a distinction between the responsibilities for paid assistants and students completing independent studies. The student does not need to submit an assistantship contract, but should inform the Division Administrator who will enroll them in COM EM 901 for 2 or 4 credits (at the discretion of the instructor). This course will receive a letter grade at the end of the semester.

OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

For full-time domestic students, off-campus employment is permitted during term time, provided it does not impede the student's ability to attend classes and complete coursework. International students need work-authorization (CPT) anytime they work off-campus and should seek advice from ISSO.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

We welcome feedback from students at any time. Comments can be submitted via email to any member of the Division or to our general inbox (dems@bu.edu). If you wish to make an anonymous comment or suggestion, a comment box is available in the Communication Research Center.

At the conclusion of the program, we circulate our annual survey to the students. This survey gives students the opportunity to reflect on their completion of the program learning outcomes as well as to provide feedback on the program itself.

PRIZE FUNDS

Prize funds for research and travel are administered by the Graduate Affairs Office. For more information, please email comgrad@bu.edu.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our students have many diverse career interests, representing the broad spectrum of industries and research areas in which emerging media is relevant. Students who hope to progress to doctoral study will have the opportunity to liaise with our current PhD students and to engage with MA alums who have enrolled in doctoral programs at other institutions. Students who plan to enter industry will be able to take advantage of [BU Connects](#), a networking platform exclusive to BU alumni and students, providing them with the opportunity to reach out to our graduates working in areas such as digital marketing, interactive design, research coordination, content writing, and market research analysis.

RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

Our goal is to help students make the most of the wide-ranging research areas on offer at Boston University. We encourage students to take electives that interest them and are relevant to the program, exploring the interdisciplinary nature of emerging media studies.

The student's designated advisor will be a great resource in making introductions to other faculty members at COM and beyond. Students are also welcome to reach out to any faculty, in particular our EMS Faculty Affiliates, who work closely with the Division to foster research connections across disciplines.

EMS FACULTY

[Dr. Maria "Betsi" Grabe](#), Professor and Division Chair/Program Director, mgrabe@bu.edu

[Dr. James Katz](mailto:katz2020@bu.edu), Professor, katz2020@bu.edu

[Dr. Chris Wells](mailto:cfwells@bu.edu), Associate Professor, cfwells@bu.edu

[Dr. James Cummings](mailto:cummingj@bu.edu), Associate Professor, cummingj@bu.edu

[Dr. Chris Chao Su](mailto:suchao@bu.edu), Assistant Professor, suchao@bu.edu

Dr. Joan Donovan, Assistant Professor, donovanx@bu.edu

Dr. Ayse Lokmanoglu, Assistant Professor, alokman@bu.edu

EMS FACULTY AFFILIATES

The Division has a robust Faculty Affiliate program which recognizes the efforts and contributions of faculty colleagues in the College of Communication, encouraging interdepartmental connections between faculty and students.

Faculty Affiliates can serve as primary advisors for MA thesis projects (EM 909) or independent studies (EM 901).

Faculty Affiliates

[Dr. Michelle Amazeen](mailto:mamazeen@bu.edu), Associate Professor (Communication), mamazeen@bu.edu

[Dr. Ray Carney](mailto:rcarney@bu.edu), Professor (Film & TV), rcarney@bu.edu

[Dr. Kathryn Coduto](mailto:kdcoduto@bu.edu), Assistant Professor (Media Science), kdcoduto@bu.edu

[Dr. Edward Downes](mailto:edownes@bu.edu), Associate Professor (Public Relations), edownes@bu.edu

[Dr. Michael Elasmr](mailto:elasmar@bu.edu), Associate Professor (Communication), elasmar@bu.edu

[Dr. Yi Grace Ji](mailto:ygji@bu.edu), Assistant Professor (Communication), ygji@bu.edu

[Dr. Arunima Krishna](mailto:arunimak@bu.edu), Assistant Professor (Public Relations), arunimak@bu.edu

[Dr. AnneMarie McClain](mailto:mccalin@bu.edu), Assistant Professor (Media Science), mccalin@bu.edu

[Dr. Patrice Oppliger](mailto:oppliger@bu.edu), Assistant Professor (Communication), oppliger@bu.edu

[Dr. Sung-Un Yang](mailto:yang223@bu.edu), Professor (Communication), yang223@bu.edu

[Dr. Denis Wu](mailto:hdw@bu.edu), Professor (Communication), hdw@bu.edu

INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY

The official Boston University code of conduct, as well as its statement on academic dishonesty, is available in its entirety [online](#). Students are expected to be fully aware not only of all expectations, but also consequences of violations. Additional questions about appropriate academic conduct should be brought by students to their course instructor, primary advisor, or the Program Director before, not after, work is submitted.

Each course within the program may have unique policies regarding the use of generative AI tools in coursework. Violations of such policies go against the instructor's expectations of intellectual integrity and may constitute academic misconduct. If you have any questions or concerns, talk to your instructors about this matter. We are also including a link here to how the faculty of BU's Computing & Data Science thinks about this:

<https://www.bu.edu/cds-faculty/culture-community/gaia-policy/>

RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

Students should familiarize themselves with Boston University's responsible conduct of research (RCR) which is a campus-wide program tasked with educating students, trainees, and scholars in the ethical foundations of research. Further information is available [here](#).