

Study Plan

Master of Philosophy in Visual Cultural Studies

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

Valid from 2014

Professional prospects

The VCS degree can open doors to a variety of national and international positions in social research, television and film production, administration, communication, museums, youth and education programmes, etc. Studying in such an international environment develops competences in cross-cultural communication as well as valuable assets to a number of career options. The exam films produced at VCS are well known for their quality, with many films having been selected for international documentary film festivals.

Qualification awarded

Master of Philosophy in Visual Cultural Studies.

Credits

120 ECTS

Admission requirements

Applicants must document a bachelor degree (180 ECTS) or equivalent qualification in the social sciences or related field in the humanities. An average grade of equivalent to C or better in Norwegian grading system is required. Applicants must document adequate proficiency in English on an advanced level, either through education or an internationally recognized examination/test. For more information see [Admission – Proof of English Proficiency](#).

Applicants must enclose a statement of purpose (max. 2 pages) written in English. This should include descriptions of their motivation for, interest in and expectations relating to their master´s degree studies. In addition the statement should also include ideas for their master´s thesis project.

Application deadline

Local admission, study code 5057.

Quota students: 1 December

Self-financed international students: 1 December

Norwegian and Nordic students: 15 April

Programme description

VCS offers a two-year full-time Master's program in Visual Cultural Studies. The students at the Master's program follow compulsory courses, and conduct an individual research project, based on fieldwork, writing a Master's thesis, and making an ethnographic film. The audio-visual material should reflect both the researcher´s and the informants' perceptions of given social situations. Film may create and contribute to a particular kind of knowledge that can often supplement textual representations. The exam films produced at VCS are well known for their quality. Every year several films are selected for international documentary and ethnographic film festivals.

The Master´s program in Visual Cultural Studies consists of 6 compulsory courses and the Master´s thesis, totalling 120 ECTS credit points, 60 ECTS by studying the obligatory

courses and 60 ECTS by finishing their master's thesis and film. The aim of the Master's program in Visual Cultural Studies is to teach students how to produce knowledge about people's lives and culture(s) through an exploration of their everyday lives based on the use of qualitative social science research methods and ethnographic film. The course combines lectures, seminars, and practical instruction in camerawork, sound recording and editing.

Compulsory courses

- SVF-3101 Approaching Social Realities: Understanding Other People's Life-Worlds (20 ECTS)
- SVF-3102 Conveying Social Realities: Exploring Audio-Visual Narrative Strategies (10 ECTS)
- SVF-3108 Processing Field Experiences (10 ECTS)
- SVF-3104 Anthropological Theory and Epistemological Issues (10 ECTS)
- SVF-3107 Visual Ethnography (10 ECTS)

Master's thesis

- SVF-3903 From Fieldwork Experience to Ethnographic Film and Text (60 ECTS)

For more information about the study programme, see the programme structure below.

Programme structure

Term	10 ECTS	10 ECTS	10 ECTS
First term (autumn)	SVF-3101 Approaching Social Realities: Understanding Other People's Lives		SVF-3102 Conveying Social Realities: Exploring Audio-Visual Narrative Strategies
Second term (spring)	SVF-3108 Processing Field Experiences	SVF-3104 Anthropological Theory and Epistemological issues	SVF-3107 Visual Ethnography:
First term (autumn)	SVF-3903 From Fieldwork Experience to Ethnographic Film and Text		
Second term (spring)			

Requirements for the independent work

The degree includes 60 ECTS which must be earned by writing a Master's Thesis and producing a film. During the first year each student chooses a topic in consultation with one of the academic staff, who will serve as a supervisor. Students conduct field work at the end of the first year, and during the second year students work with their thesis and film under supervision. The final examination consists of the following elements:

- Film of maximum 30 minutes duration
- Master's Thesis (50 pages +/-)
- Oral examination (about 60 minutes)

The evaluation of the film and the thesis will count equally, and an oral exam will follow to adjust or confirm the evaluation. Grading will be on the scale A to F, where F=Fail.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge

Students should:

- have knowledge of the evolution of the social scientific tradition in general, and thorough knowledge of selected theoretical perspectives within the field of visual and social scientific research.
- know the different genres within the ethnographic film and monograph tradition.
- have thorough knowledge of the region and/or the field where their proper Master projects take place.
- have solid knowledge of the cutting edge of their Master project's theme.
- have solid knowledge of ethnographic research methodology and the different steps in a research process which involves the use of the video camera.
- have advanced knowledge of the challenges of cross cultural communication: Be able to demonstrate and describe how their own, their field partners', fellow students', teachers', different audiences' perspectives are related to their respective positions.
- be able to reflect critically on the use of different filmic languages and narrative structures as 'ways of knowing' in specific historical and societal contexts.
- have advanced knowledge of how visual conventions can be used in the discovery and explanation of social processes.
- be able to identify, analyse and discuss different theoretical approaches to their own empirical material.
- be able to reflect critically on how visual anthropological knowledge has potentials for empowerment.

Video technique

- have knowledge of how to handle and use the video camera, of field sound recording, of lighting for video and of image composition.
- have knowledge of the concepts of creative storytelling with images and sound; audiovisual narratives, dramaturgy & film structure, grammar of film, directing.

- have knowledge of technical editing; capturing, creating bins, bin naming protocol, working on time line, colour correction, sound mix, titles & subtitles.

Skills

Students should:

- be able to independently and creatively identify social scientific questions on the basis of social scientific literature and empirical material.
- be able to carry out an independent project which makes use of participant observation and audio-visual tools.
- be able to capture the conceptualizations of their field partners by the use of video camera, and dramatize their progressively acquired understanding of their field partners' conceptualizations .
- be able to analyse how different ways of filming implies different ways of looking.
- be able to identify the culturally specific signs and values which are expressed in smells, tastes, sounds, objects, gestures ..., a precondition for the researcher's proper ethical behaviour.
- be able to manage, process and analyse material from various sources: field notes, photographs, rushes ..., quantitative data and relevant literature in a systematic way.
- be able to demonstrate how film and text mutually inform, inspire, and contradict each other.
- be able to recognize and critically evaluate the role of film in the creation of social scientific knowledge
- be able to exemplify expressions of global/local dynamics, including power relations.

Video technique

- acquire skills in video recording, creating images that convey meaning, under various lighting and sound conditions.
- be able to develop a film idea from conceptual stage.
- be able to plan and direct & execute the filming process.
- be able to develop a logical & comprehensive film structure
- independently be able to prepare adequately for the editing process, manage a systematic workflow in editing, and apply their own creativity in order to enhance their storytelling using video.

General competence

Students should:

- be able to create advanced knowledge about human beings/communities and some of the conditions /dynamics that influence their lives/viability.
- be able to incorporate reflexivity as a fundamental precondition for the creation of visual anthropological knowledge.

- be able to recognize and critically assess the power relations of own socio-cultural environments, including bureaucratic structures and administrative practices, and how this has an impact on the opportunity situation of the researcher.
- be able to implement the learned theoretical and methodological approaches in the description and analysis of “new” sociocultural phenomena.
- be able to demonstrate how time/space dimensions contribute to the establishment of meaning in an audio-visual narrative.
- be able to build up cinematic structures and stories within a social science framework.
- be sensitive to the narrative conceptualizations of the partners in the field, and at the same time be able to develop narrative strategies with a future audience in mind.
- acknowledge the importance and relevance of creativity and own initiatives when exploring the potentials of visual and analytical tools.
- be able to build up responsibility towards partners in the field and thereby a profound consciousness of the ethics of research and dissemination.
- be able to demonstrate how research methods are rooted in continuous dramatization and dissemination vis-à-vis field partners and various audiences.
- be able to convey to colleagues, partners, and public audiences, the methodological/analytical approaches used in- and the final results of- own work.
- be able to discuss critically how knowledge creation and reflexivity may be used as tools for empowerment of research partners and local communities.

Video technique

- be able to apply the tools of filmmaking that enable not only themselves but also their field partners to express themselves.
- understand the ethics, appreciate the physical and emotional demands of the profession
- be able to work independently on projects using film or as filmmakers
- independently be able to apply both visual tools and sounds creatively to enhance their story narratives.

Language of instruction and examination

English.

Teaching and assessment methods

The programme is organised as a continuous participatory learning process: lectures, screenings, writing and filming assignments, and seminars make up the unique cumulative learning process of the two year programme. Students are encouraged to collaborate with each other in developing skills and understandings throughout the study.

The programme includes various types of exams and coursework requirements, such as essays, research papers, and film presentations. Please note that some courses have coursework requirements. Only students whose coursework requirements have been approved will be allowed to sit the examination.

Teaching and assessment methods are described in the course plan for each course.

This Master's degree is an intensive programme. All courses are compulsory and demand active participation from the students.

Programme evaluation

The study programme is evaluated annually and the different courses at least once during each programme period.

Possibilities for studying abroad

Students have the possibility to carry out their fieldwork abroad.

Access to further studies

This programme qualifies for studies at PhD-level.