Master curriculum

Media Culture & Art Theory

at the University of Art and Design Linz

Academic degree: Master of Arts, abbreviated MA

decision of the Curricula Committee of 2 June 2010

In accordance with the University Organisation Act (UG 2002, BGBl. Nr. 120/2002), the Senate of the University of Art and Design Linz adopts the curriculum for the master programme Media Culture & Art Theory in its present form.

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The master programme Media Culture & Art Theory in the field of cultural studies is implemented by the three academic disciplines media theory, art history and theory (with a focus on gender studies) and cultural studies with a close connection to the artistic programmes of the University of Art and Design Linz. The programme responds to the current challenges of media culture, art and politics.

Contents:

§ 1 Curriculum

The concept of the master programme Media Culture & Art Theory reflects the complexity of medial, artistic and cultural forms of expression and utilisation. It connects theory and practice as well as research and art. A transdisciplinary approach focuses on constructive exchange and provocative dialogue between scientific and artistic subjects and reacts to an increasing hybridisation in the fields of media, art and culture. The interconnection of text, web and virtual spaces, or cinematic forms of expression, performative arts and installations has become the rule. Smooth transitions between art and industrial application are a common phenomenon. In this rapidly growing and complex field, it is important to take into account cultural and historical contexts and to develop conceptual and argument-oriented strategies as well as analytical, reflective and communicative skills.

The project-based curriculum focuses on a transdisciplinary scientific-artistic education which combines various teaching, learning and working methods and facilitates individual work practice and the development of a personal profile. Team work, communication skills and the ability to actively participate in collaborative processes are important prerequisites in the emerging professional field of media culture research and the art and cultural sector.

The programme promotes a broadly based practice of media culture- and art-oriented research and development, taking into account well-known established techniques and media formats (photography, time-based art etc.), new digital and interactive media (media and net art, games, digital communities etc.) as well as varied historical and contemporary artistic forms of expression (two-dimensional art, installation, performance, video, film etc.). In this context, students explore cultural systems, forms, institutions and practices. The master programme positions itself at the interface of art, media and cultural studies. It focuses on inter-discursive, transcultural aspects and gender policy and aims to connect them in the frame of research and analysis. Research subjects located across the boundaries between disciplines form the basis of the master programme. The exploration of fields such as digital gaming culture, trans-media spatial installations or contemporary sound art requires aesthetic-semiological, media-technological, music-theoretical, gender-specific, discourse-analytical and political approaches. Theories and models of cultural sciences and gender studies are particularly appropriate for integrating methods and positions developed by different disciplines (psychology, literary studies, art history, sociology etc.). Historical and systematic analysis allows graduates to establish themselves not only in the existing professional fields of media culture, art and art theory, but also in emerging trendsetting sectors.

§ 2 Educational and qualification profile

2.1 Teaching and learning objectives

The master programme Media Culture & Art Theory imparts theoretical knowledge especially in the fields of audio-visual culture, everyday culture and historical as well as contemporary art production, and trains students to analyse works, products and phenomena. They learn to find their bearings in the complex professional fields of media design, art, cultural and media studies. and to develop individual positions and profiles. The programme imparts knowledge of scientific methods, work techniques, argumentative strategies, forms of presentation and publication processes and the aesthetics of production, utilisation and effects.

Process- and problem-oriented modules allow the master students to develop scientific-artistic, transdisciplinary and gender-political research projects. Furthermore, they expand on competences in connection with media history, art theory and media-cultural studies from an intermedial perspective. Modules promote independent development of research questions, problems and analytical methods. Increasingly complex projects form the core of the master programme, which simultaneously prepares prospective PhD students for the PhD programme. The joint development and discussion of the positions of art and media culture theory enables graduates to take a differentiative approach to the products and works of media culture and art as well as to their own research. They learn to position their academic work within specific disciplines and transdisciplinary fields.

2.2 Qualification profile

Project work, research and teaching contents prepare students for professional work in fields such as art, cultural and media theory, media communication and publishing, conception and curation for film and television, a continuously diverging art sector as well as audio-visual culture and everyday culture as a whole.

Subject and project areas include:

1. analysis and testing of old and new media formats as well as historical and contemporary arts, strategies and formats

2. the exploration of mechanisms and strategies of communication and popularisation of media products (especially digital media) and artistic works, including their political, interest-driven exploitation

3. the development and realisation of media and art projects in urban, social and digital spaces as well as theoretical analysis and assessment

4. design and experimentation as independent media-cultural and scientific-artistic methods

§ 3 Programme structure and schedule

The master programme Media Culture & Art Theory comprises four semesters and a minimum of 120 ECTS. It is structured in modules and offers students a chance to set their individual priorities. Average workload is a minimum of 30 ECTS per semester.

3.1 Module types

Modules combine thematically or technically related courses. They train students to design, plan and realise artistic-scientific projects independently or in teams, and to conceptualise and implement research projects. A module consists of at least three course types (e.g. lecture, seminar, reading class). The master programme Media Culture & Art Theory offers two module types – Basic Modules and Project Modules – and elective as well as compulsory subjects.

3.1.1 Basic Modules consist of one theory course (7 ECTS) and two advanced courses (4 ECTS each), totalling 15 ECTS. Each module must be completed once in the course of the programme.

Media Culture & Art Theory comprehends three different Basic Modules:

- Transdisciplinarity: Students acquire knowledge and train the methods of art history as well as cultural and gender theories with a focus on transdisciplinary approaches, theories and methods.

- History and Analysis of Media Culture and Art: Students gain insight into media-theoretical problems, subjects and methods of analysis and the historiography and technology of analogue and digital media.

- Cultural Systems, Practices and Apparatuses: This module imparts the ability to analyse cultural- and media-historical mechanisms, the formation of knowledge and its institutions, instruments, practices and strategies.

The most important course types of the Basic Modules are seminars and scientific-artistic labs, which are complemented by other courses depending on thematic focus (e.g. media technology, excursions etc.). Text-based teaching and learning methods which require active student participation are combined with lectures.

3.1.2 The Project Module can be chosen from one of the Basic Modules of the programme Media Culture & Art Theory or from another artistic master programme offered by the University of Art and Design Linz (e.g. Interface Cultures, Visual Communication, Architecture/Urban Development). The Project Module allows students to combine theoretical research and artistic-practical work within a larger context which builds on interdisciplinary team work. The scope and workload should be equivalent to the Basic Modules of the programme Media Culture & Art Theory. Furthermore, the project module offers students a chance of systematic exploration of transdisciplinary and collaborative work methods.

3.1.3 Elective and compulsory subjects comprise the Free Electives (13 ECTS minimum) and the compulsory course "English for Presenting and Publishing" (2 ECTS).

The Free Electives allow students to participate in projects or courses offered by the University of Art and Design Linz or by another institution.

The compulsory course "English for Presenting and Publishing" must be completed at least once during the course of the programme.

3.2 Module and programme structure

Selection, combination and prioritisation of classes enable students to specialise and to develop an individual profile. They improve their skills regarding the use of media and the exploration of historical and contemporary art in theory and practice. A special focus is put on the development of argumentative competence. The selection of the Project Module, the Basic Modules and the Free Electives allows students to acquire a project- and problem-oriented theoretical education and to pursue their individual interests and priorities.

1. Basic Module: Transdisciplinarity (15 ECTS)
- one theory course (7 ECTS) in cultural studies, art history or theory, or gender studies offered by the University of Art and Design Linz
- two advanced courses (4 ECTS each)

2. Basic Module: History and Analysis of Media Culture and Art (15 ECTS)
- one theory course (7 ECTS) in media theory, digital media and literary methods offered by the University of Art and Design Linz
- two advanced courses (4 ECTS each)

3. Basic Module: Cultural Systems, Practices and Apparatuses (15 ECTS)
- one theory course (7 ECTS) in art history or theory, cultural studies, media theory and perception theory offered by the University of Art and Design Linz
- two advanced courses (4 ECTS each)

4. Project Module (15 ECTS)
Project Module selected from the range of master programme modules offered by the University of Art and Design Linz or a Basic Module of the programme Media Culture & Art Theory

5. Elective and compulsory courses (15 ECTS) -
- Free Electives: selected from courses offered by the University of Art and Design Linz or by another university (13 ECTS)
- Compulsory course "English for Presenting and Publishing" (2 ECTS)

6. Master project (30 ECTS)
- Master thesis (20 ECTS)
- Master examination (10 ECTS)

The ECTS points for each course can only be credited once (for one module).

Theory courses (7 ECTS) explore theoretical, analytical or historical problems of the subject and require the writing of a seminar paper. Advanced courses (4 ECTS) deal with the central subjects of the discipline. They include project work, essays, reading classes, presentations and excursions.

Average workload is 30 ECTS per semester. Modules may extend over several semesters. The Project Module can only be selected once. Each semester, the three Basic Modules "Transdisciplinarity", "History and Analysis of Media Culture and Art" and "Cultural Systems, Practices and Apparatuses" set a new thematic or technical focus.

The compulsory course "English for Presenting and Publishing" must be completed at least once during the course of the programme.

Suggested schedule:

1st semester	Basic Module Transdisciplinarity	Project Module
2nd semester	Basic Module Cultural Systems, Practices and Apparatuses	Basic Module Transdisciplinarity
3rd semester	Basic Module History and Analysis of Media Culture and Art	Elective and compulsory subjects
4th semester	Master thesis	Master examination

3.3 Teaching and learning methods

Depending on contents and projects, the modules combine different teaching, learning and working methods.

1. Artistic-scientific lab (WKL)
2. Reading class (LK)
3. Lecture (VL)
4. Keynote lecture (IVL)
5. Lecture and exercise (VU)
6. Exercise (UE)
7. Seminar (SE)
8. Colloquium (KO)
9. Workshop (WSP)
10. Excursion (EX)

Artistic-scientific lab (WKL):
Artistic-scientific labs are carried out as project classes. They comprise the development and exploitation of scientific findings, methods and instruments and the conception and implementation of theory-driven research projects. Artistic-scientific labs include individual or group supervision depending on requirements and subjects.

Reading class (LK):
Reading classes promote the understanding and sensible use of texts. They focus on questions of structure and argumentation of different types of texts, allowing participants to take a critical position on academic and artistic theses and theorems. Furthermore, students discuss and practice the methods of textualisation.
Reading classes may replace the artistic-scientific lab.

Lecture (Vorlesung - VL):
Lectures aim at a systematic or specialised transfer of knowledge. They provide insight into the current state of research, the subjects and methods of the respective field and they analyse scientific findings. The active role is usually reserved to the lecturer.

Keynote lecture (Impulsvorlesung - IVL):
Keynote lectures correspond to other artistic or scientific course types. They impart knowledge and introduce students to methodological problems, aesthetic strategies and forms of action regarding the topic area of a module or project.

Exercise (Übung - UE):
Exercises allow students to test, review and improve the acquired knowledge on a specific subject. They refer to theoretical teaching contents or to concrete projects and require active student participation.

Seminar (SE):
Seminars are at the interface of knowledge transfer and independent knowledge acquisition. Scientific dialogue clarifies positions and improves skills of articulation. Seminars are based on the exploration of theories, the reading of texts and the analysis of media-cultural and artistic products. Students contribute actively through reading, research, presentations etc. Seminars may replace the artistic-scientific lab.

Colloquium (KO):
A colloquium facilitates advanced academic and artistic discourse as well as the joint development of current topics and problems of media, art and cultural studies. Theoretic or artistic specialisation, critical review and analysis, development and discussion of thesis papers, individual works and participants' designs are the focus of this course type.

Workshop (WSP):
Workshops impart specific theoretical knowledge and technical skills regarding scientific or artistic implementation. Depending on technical requirements and previous knowledge, the number of participants is usually limited to fifteen. Workshops may be held as block courses and require continuous assessment.

Excursion (EX):
Depending on subjects and requirements, all module types may include an excursion. These field trips allow students to experience artistic works and media productions onsite, to learn about problems and to explore different cultural, gender-specific, infrastructural and technical conditions.

§ 4 Examination regulations

Courses are completed with an assessment corresponding to the course type (one or several oral or written exams or artistic-scientific projects). Examiners must inform the students on teaching contents and examination modalities, allowing them to prepare according to the examination requirements.

Master examination:
Admission to the master examination requires students to have amassed at least 90 ECTS points.
In preparation for the master thesis, students must attend at least one theory course held by their supervisor. They specify the subject of their maser thesis in consultation with their supervisor. Students have the right to propose a subject or select from a number of suggested subjects. Completion of the thesis must be possible within a period of six months. With their master thesis, students prove their ability to explore a scientific or artistic-scientific subject independently and appropriately with regard to contents and methods. The supervisor grades the master thesis and elaborates on the assessment.
The master examination consists of two parts:
• the written part: master thesis
• the oral part: master examination
Admission to the oral board examination requires positive assessment of the master thesis.
The oral examination is a final board examination. The examination board consists of three members, one of which is the thesis supervisor, who is also entitled to vote. The board is made up of lecturers of two different subject areas. In duly justified cases, a fourth member from an artistic field may be included.
The board examination consists of two parts: The first part comprises the presentation and discussion of the master thesis. The presentation format is agreed upon with the supervisor. For the second part, students decide on a topic not identical to that of the master thesis in consultation with the second examiner.
The grade of the master thesis is calculated proportionately from the grade of the written thesis (two thirds) and the grade of the oral board examination (one third).

In addition to the assessment of individual courses, students receive an overall grade of "passed" if every subject has been completed successfully, or "failed" if this is not the case. If no subject was assessed with a grade worse than "gut" (good) and at least half of all subjects were graded "sehr gut" (very good), the overall assessment is "mit Auszeichnung bestanden" (passed with distinction).

The master examination is open to the public.

§ 5 Admission requirements

Admission to the programme Media Culture & Art Theory requires a bachelor's degree in media, film and television studies, art history, art and cultural studies or an equivalent programme. If the master programme Media Culture & Art Theory follows an artistic bachelor programme, applicants must provide evidence of at least 24 ECTS points in theoretical and scientific courses. Otherwise, they must fulfil this criterion in the course of the master programme, including an introductory course on scientific methods and at least two seminars in the fields of media theory, art history or theory, cultural studies or gender studies.