

Public Affairs Reporting

Master of Arts

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The Public Affairs Reporting (PAR) master's degree is designed for the student who wishes to specialize in news coverage of governmental affairs. A primary goal is for graduates to become professional journalists who can report and interpret governmental activity and public policy for news consumers. The 10-month program aims to develop news reporters able to understand public affairs and communicate those concepts with the clarity, accuracy and speed demanded of professional journalists of the highest rank. The centerpiece of the program is a six-month internship as a Statehouse reporting correspondent working for a professional news organization. Program faculty expect each graduate, whatever the skill level upon entering the program, to be proficient in reporting, editing and writing at graduation.

The Master's Degree

Advising

The program director serves as principal academic advisor for PAR students, although special advising requests may be referred to other faculty members with particular expertise. After students are accepted into the program, they should contact their academic advisors for an appointment before initial registration.

Grading Policy

PAR students must receive a grade of B or better in any required PAR course to receive credit toward the degree (grades of B- or lower will not be accepted).

NOTE: Students also should refer to the campus policy on Grades Acceptable Toward Master's Degrees, in the Academic Information for Master's Degree Students section of this catalog.

Degree Requirements

The M.A. in Public Affairs Reporting requires 40 hours of graduate-level course work. In the fall semester, students enroll in two required courses: PAR 501 (six hours), and PAR 510 (four hours). Students choose two other courses after consultation with their academic advisor.

During the spring semester, students begin an internship, PAR 504 (12 hours), with an experienced professional journalist covering state government and the Illinois General Assembly. PAR 503 (two hours) is also required during this semester. After consultation with an academic advisor, the student registers for one other course to maintain a full course load.

Students participate in the second phase of the internship, PAR 505, during the summer term (until July 1). This internship period is considerably more intense, as it coincides with the conclusion of the legislative session. During the six-month internship, students receive a monthly stipend and tuition waiver.

Before graduation, students must complete a professional portfolio that demonstrates mastery of public affairs journalism. The portfolio will include a variety of hard news, analyses, in-depth and feature stories the student has reported and written and that have been published or aired by a professional media outlet, along with project memos detailing the news judgments involved in reporting and writing the longer pieces.

Required Courses

PAR 501	Advanced Public Affairs Reporting	6
PAR 503	Legislative Issues	2
PAR 504	Internship I	12
PAR 505	Internship II	4
PAR 510	Developing Public Policy in Illinois	4
Electives ¹		12
Total Hours		40

¹ One elective should come from the Political Science Department and one should come from the Communication Department. The third elective is the student's choice, but restricted to Political Science or Communications.

Courses

PAR 203. State of the State. 3 Hours.

Introduction to the structure, operations, and politics of state government in Illinois, examining the interplay of these factors in determining public policy on key issues facing the state. Course Information: Same as PSC 203. This course fulfills a general education requirement at UIS in the area of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

PAR 404. Media Law And Ethics. 4 Hours.

Examines media law and ethical decisionmaking from the standpoint of media producers, critics, and users. Case studies include obscenity and indecency, libel, privacy, advertising, conflict of interest, and rights of access. Lectures and discussions examine social and cultural contexts in which laws and ethical principles develop. Optional course for PAR majors. PAR majors not allowed to take this course CR/NC. Course Information: Same as COM 404.

PAR 501. Advanced Public Affairs Reporting. 6 Hours.

Advanced newswriting and reporting techniques, with a focus on covering government and public affairs news for audiences on digital, print and broadcast platforms. Strong emphasis placed on the structure and operations of state government in Illinois to prepare students for a news reporting internship during the spring semester. Course Information: Prerequisites: Admission to the PAR program.

PAR 503. Legislative Issues. 2 Hours.

In-depth study of key issues before the Illinois General Assembly. Offered during spring semester. Course Information: Prerequisite: Admission to the PAR Program.

PAR 504. Internship I. 12 Hours.

Practical experience in reporting public affairs. Each student is assigned to full-time work with an experienced journalist at the State Capitol. Students receive monthly stipend. Weekly seminar. Course Information: Prerequisite: Admission to PAR program.

PAR 505. Internship II. 4 Hours.

Continuation of PAR 504, but more intense in conjunction with the conclusion of the legislative session at the Illinois capitol. Work supervised by media bureau chief/editor/news director and PAR director. Course Information: Prerequisites: Admission to PAR program.

PAR 510. Developing Public Policy in Illinois. 4 Hours.

Intensive study of the factors affecting the development of public policy at the state level in Illinois. Major topics include constitutional framework, historical influence, demographics, political culture, role of parties, and interest groups, role of the media, legislative process, role of the executive budgetary process.