

Public Affairs Reporting

Master of Arts

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The Public Affairs Reporting (PAR) degree is designed for the student who wishes to specialize in news coverage of governmental affairs. A primary goal is for graduates to obtain employment in which they can report or interpret governmental activity for the population at large. The objectives of the year-long program are to graduate men and women who are able not only to understand and interpret public affairs but also to communicate with the clarity, accuracy, and speed demanded of deadline reporters of the highest rank. The program directs students to an investigation of the interactions between the news media and society and the news media and government and encourages students to expand the knowledge of such interaction through research and experimentation. Program faculty also expect that each graduate, whatever the skill level upon entering the program, be proficient in reporting, editing, and writing at graduation. The unique nature of the program is derived from the simultaneous pursuit of various goals; none is considered paramount.

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 other courses after consultation with their academic advisor.

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

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| 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 | | 12 |
| Total Hours | | 40 |