

# Public Affairs Reporting

## Contact Information

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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 government and politics. 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, writing and editing.

## 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). Students also must maintain a B average overall each semester.

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.

### Program Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are important components for all academic programs at the University of Illinois Springfield and are required by the Higher Learning Commission. Questions related to the learning outcomes for this program should be addressed to the applicable department/school.

### 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 graduate-level elective 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 graduate-level elective course to maintain a full course load.

Students participate in the final 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 tuition waiver and university stipends.

### Required Courses

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

<sup>1</sup> 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. Students can file a petition to enroll in electives outside of Communication and Political Science. Contact your adviser for more information.

### Master Closure

As part of PAR 505 students must complete a professional portfolio that demonstrates mastery of public affairs journalism. The portfolio will include a variety of spot news, 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.

Students who do not complete the portfolio by the end of the summer term must register for PAR 506 (zero credit hours, one billable hour) in all subsequent fall and spring semesters until the portfolio is submitted and approved.

### Public Affairs Reporting Program Accelerated Joint Degree

Students who are interested in pursuing a graduate degree in journalism or public affairs reporting should consider applying for the accelerated joint degree program with the UIS Public Affairs Reporting Program. This accelerated joint degree offers students the opportunity to complete a bachelor's in communication and a master's in public affairs reporting more efficiently than completing the degrees separately.

To be formally accepted into the accelerated joint degree program, students must have completed (or be on track to complete following the current semester) 60 hours toward a bachelor's degree in communication with a GPA of at least 3.0. Students must notify the School of Communication and Media and Public Affairs Reporting directors of their desire to be considered for the accelerated degree program. If accepted, the student must begin (or continue) pursuing a communication bachelor's degree that fulfills the Public Relations tracks. Alternatively, students pursuing bachelor's degree in other disciplines can become Communication minors and begin taking

courses for the journalism and Media Studies Minor or the Strategic Communication and Public Relations Minor.

Students admitted to the accelerated joint degree program must satisfy all the requirements for the B.A. in Communication. The requirement for the M.A. in Public Affairs Reporting remains the same, except that the student may apply for up to 12 credit hours of undergraduate work in 400- or 500- level courses towards the master's degree. This allows the students to waive the 12 hours of electives required by the public affairs reporting program. Students will work with an advisor to choose 400- 500 -level courses that can be applied toward both degrees with those reductions, only 28 credit hours are required to complete the M.A. degree.