

Arts & Sciences

Advising and Recruiting • Edited By Alexis Brooks

MASTERS OF ARTS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES: *A UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY*

by Dr. Horace Fairlamb

UHV's Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies program is a rarity in the world of higher education. Where most graduate programs are designed for specialization, the MAIS program combines diverse specializations. In fact, it's exceptional even among interdisciplinary programs. Some interdisciplinary programs target closely related fields like biology and chemistry or ethnic studies and literature. Other interdisciplinary programs allow students to take courses across a broad area; for instance, master programs in liberal studies include coursework across the humanities. But the MAIS program is unique in allowing students to combine any concentrations from anywhere in the university curriculum. For UHV students, that would include all UHV graduate programs as well as limited transfers of graduate credits from other universities.

Due to its extraordinary flexibility, the MAIS program appeals to students for very different reasons. Most students find it useful for advancing their expertise in areas that happen to be useful for their careers. In the past, high school teachers welcomed the opportunity to take courses in literature and history. Others students have advanced their preparation in psychology or communication while adding coursework in business to enhance their preparation for the corporate world. Recently, students have combined coursework in computer science and business to create a skill set that has become increasingly useful as businesses become more computerized and networked. By contrast, our program has always had its share of students who want graduate work merely for their own edification. Many of those students find humanities courses enriching and more meaningful than they did when they were undergraduates eager to begin their careers. On the other hand, some students fresh out of undergraduate school enjoy sampling several disciplines if they are considering further study but are undecided about a specialized field.

Out of the thirty-six required hours, nine hours come from the core curriculum in interdisciplinary studies. The core courses prompt students to think about interdisciplinary problems in interdisciplinary terms. For almost all students entering the program, the last courses they took were advanced courses in their major areas. Thus few entering students are practiced in interdisciplinary thinking. The kinds of questions that cross disciplines tend to be the most general sorts of questions, such as concern the nature of knowledge, disciplinary boundaries, disciplinary methods, and the role of technique in the modern world. Rather than simply speculate about such questions, these courses include materials from different disciplines to show the extent to which specialized methods and materials

may or may not be adequate to resolve basic questions. For the other twenty-seven hours, students choose courses in consultation with their concentration advisers according to their degree plans.

At a time when job markets, technology, and expertise are all evolving more quickly than anyone can predict, the MAIS program has proven useful for expanding students' portfolios as well as providing opportunities for reflection and edification. Experts advise us that people entering the workforce today can expect to change jobs several times in their careers. In that case, multiple skill sets help people in the workforce be as flexible as the market requires. The MAIS program will continue to meet those needs.



WHAT'S NEW

Homeland & International Security

The University of Houston Victoria will be offering a new MAIS concentration in Homeland and International Security (HIN) beginning in Fall semester 2009. The new concentration is designed to prepare students for careers in counterterrorism, intelligence, international security, conflict resolution, and diplomacy. The HIN major will feature intensive language study and offer secondary educational choices in computer science, forensic science, history, and religion. Study abroad programs to England, Israel, or Egypt are encouraged. **For more information contact: Dr. J. Keith Akins at akinsk@uhv.edu**

Calendar of Events

- April 1:** Summer Schedule Available
- April 20:** Summer Registration Begins
- April 25:** Martin de Leon Symposium
- April 30:** UHSSL Open House
- April 30:** ABR Reading Series
- May 7:** Psychology: How to Get into Grad School
- May 9-15:** Final Exams
- May 16:** Spring Commencement
- May 25:** Memorial Day
- June 1:** Summer I First Class Day & Fall Schedule Available

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

CYNTHIA BREWER



To further enhance my knowledge of World War II, I looked through the UHV catalogue last year to see what history courses they offered. To my surprise, a class titled “Nazi Germany” was being offered at the bachelor’s level. Although I have a bachelor’s in sociology, I thought about taking the undergraduate course just because the class would be so interesting. When I called the university to learn more about the class, I was told that the course would also be offered at the graduate level in the fall of 2008.

As I’m the editor of The Catholic Lighthouse, the newspaper of the Diocese of Victoria, I figured I already had a great job, so I wasn’t planning to further my education to find a better job, but I figured if I were to take college courses, I should take classes that could be applied to a degree. So I decided to take the graduate level “Nazi Germany” class taught by Dr. Hall Smith out of Victoria in the fall of 2008.

We read from Ian Kershaw’s large, two-volume biography of Adolf Hitler, as well as from a book titled “Backing Hitler.” Although a lot of reading and hard work was involved, I was really enjoying it, so I began looking to see what I might take in the

next semester. It was then that I learned more about the master’s program offered at UHV.

They offer a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, which allows one to have concentrations in two fields of study. I knew I wanted one of the disciplines to be history and then found out that UHV just added religion to its program. Both these disciplines were just up my alley. That’s what made up my mind to work towards an MAIS in history and religion. I also figured it wouldn’t hurt to have a master’s degree to fall back on if the need were ever to arise.

The next semester, a course titled “Religious Terrorism” was offered as a criminal justice and/or religion class, so I signed up for it. It is taught by Dr. John Keith Akins out of the University of Houston-Sugarland. This course has been fascinating, as we’ve studied Christian, Muslim, Zionist, Sikh and Japanese terrorism. As we continue the course, we’re studying further into the subject of Islam Imperialism and how it is affecting the Western world. I will complete this course in May.

Dr. Akins has suggested that I write a thesis as part of my MAIS program. He explained, “the thesis is just about the most important element of a graduate degree, the part you’ll carry with you for the rest of your life, and almost no one here seems to bother writing one!” I hadn’t thought of doing one either, but now I’m so excited about it. I can’t wait to get to the point when I will be able to begin it.

CHECK IT OUT

MAIS Concentration in Publishing

The MAIS Concentration in Publishing at UHV focuses on the history, development, and current practice of publishing in America. UHV is home of the journals, American Book Review and Symploke, the alternative fiction press, FC2, and the critical theory organization, Society for Critical Exchange. Each offers opportunities for students to gain internship experience in publishing. We also offer a Certificate in Publishing which takes one year to complete with classes being offered online and face to face in Victoria. *For information please contact: Dr. Thomas Williams at williamst@uhv.edu*

ADVISING TIPS

The FIRST step in Advising is Selecting the Degree/ Program you want to pursue.

- Academic advising is handled differently depending on your major. A staff advisor will prepare your degree plan in consultation with your faculty advisor. List of degrees is located at:

www.uhv.edu/degree_programs

- If students have questions about what program to choose or what direction to proceed, help is available at Career Services:

www.uhv.edu/careerservices/aboutus/mission.

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Arts & Sciences**

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