

Degree Reactivation
Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts
College of Arts, Media, and Design

Friendly amendment: The degree reactivation is for the teach out for current matriculating Mills College students only; a working group of faculty from CAMD and CSSH will investigate the possibility for reinstating this degree beyond the teach out. If positive, a new proposal for the full reactivation will be put forward.

Executive Summary

The College of Arts, Media and Design (CAMD) proposes to reactivate the Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts, which is a terminal degree that focuses on new forms of creative work to foster public discourse, innovation, and societal impact. The primary motivation for the reactivation and remake of the MFA degree is to provide an option to Mills students in MA and MFA programs for which Northeastern does not have an equivalent degree (e.g., MFA in Book Arts, MFA in Dance, MFA in Studio Art, etc.). However, there is enormous potential to reactivate this degree beyond the teach out of Mills students, which a working group will investigate and seek later approval for. The College of Arts, Media and Design is now better positioned to make the MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts a flagship degree next to the PhD in Interdisciplinary Design and Media. Both degrees articulate the full spectrum of creative (interdisciplinary) research that CAMD aims to foster. It will tap into the growing and expanding offering of existing graduate degrees, research initiatives, and faculty expertise at CAMD and the Northeastern University network at large, and promotes students to go beyond their comfort zones, break disciplinary walls, and seek out new opportunities (e.g., AI art, biology with art). The degree will improve CAMD's standing in the world as a place for innovative and groundbreaking creative practice. As part of the reactivation, the degree has been revised to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the degree and include flexibility for students to craft their own intellectual and creative pathways. On the one hand, these revisions ensure that the degree will better leverage existing and future degrees as well as include options for students to switch to this MFA program. On the other hand, it includes a level of customization that will allow students to pursue unique and innovative opportunities.

Program Description

Students in the Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts use creative work to inquire and intervene in today's most pressing social and ecological concerns. Positioned at the intersection of the visual arts, architecture, music, visual and media studies, and the expanded field of design, the curriculum supports the development of ambitious projects by a diverse, international group of creative practitioners.

Our students use the tools and insights of contemporary creative practice to intervene in public discourse and the social imagination through media, research-, and/or community-based approaches. The curriculum centers around a series of core courses that provide a foundation and home base in creative practice research. Students then customize their education from a wide range of studio and academic courses, grounded in at least two distinctly different disciplines. Regular workshops with visiting faculty emphasize hands-on engagement in the creative process of leading artists, while summer residency or co-op experiences allow students to complete self-directed projects, supported by faculty and peer mentoring. The MFA degree requires a thesis project and companion paper, as well as a minimum 3.000 GPA over 60 semester hours of study.

Over the course of the two-year program, successful students learn to articulate their goals, context, and audience and develop the professional skills necessary to sustain their practices. Successful graduates are prepared to forge their own paths as publicly engaged artists working independently or in arts organizations, social entrepreneurship ventures, the nonprofit sector, and as faculty in academic institutions.

In the program revision related to this reactivation, students will complete 24 SH of core requirements, including 8 SH for their thesis, and have three discipline options (36 SH):

1. Two disciplines: Students choose two distinct creative disciplines and complete a set of electives of their choice.
2. Concentration and discipline: Students declare a concentration in addition to a creative discipline that is distinct from their concentration.
3. Third open discipline: An option that allows students to take on a third creative discipline or specialize beyond the arts (e.g., business, computer science).

Contribution to College and University Mission

The Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts supports the University's mission to promote interdisciplinary and humanics research by educating students who are well versed in multiple disciplines and seek to provide a critical and creative lens onto today's most pressing social and ecological concerns. Students in this degree leverage CAMD's expertise in public art, media advocacy, sustainable urban environments, data visualization, games, extended reality (XR), and experience design and complement this with other strengths and strategic directions of the University such as in Health, Security, Sustainability, Social Justice, and AI. To foster such intellectual exchanges and integration with the University, CAMD will seek out connections between this program and university-wide institutions and initiatives such as the Global Resilience Institute, Marine Science Center, and Experiential AI Institute as well as with the Northeastern University network (e.g., Roux Institute, Mills, Vancouver, London). The degree provides significant opportunities for collaboration between CAMD and CSSH in the area of creative writing in particular.