

CMS Research Assistantship Expectations 2019-2020 Academic Year

Congratulations on being awarded a Comparative Media Studies Research Assistant (RA) position. RA positions offer a host of benefits: a significant opportunity to extend your CMS education, to hone different skill sets, and to cultivate real-world networks of media practitioners, artists, activists, educators and scholars. In addition, your tuition expenses will be covered, and you will be paid a stipend for living expenses.

RA assignments are based on a variety of factors including available funding, project skills, and student interest. Changing RA assignments is strongly discouraged and subject to the approval of the research directors and the director of graduate studies.

Balancing a research position in addition to coursework and responsibilities outside of CMS can be challenging. The following list outlines your responsibilities and rights as a Research Assistant:

CMS RAs are required to:

- Work the allotted number of hours per week required by the RAship. Full-time RAships require twenty hours per week. The CMS academic curriculum requires at a minimum three 12-unit courses per term plus Colloquium (3 units), for a total of 39 units; this academic load represents about 20 contact hours (time spent on campus in class, lab, or lectures) and a full-time RAship requires another 20. In other words, a CMS graduate student employed full-time as a Research Assistant will spend at least 40 hours on campus.
- Complete assigned projects and tasks in a timely and professional manner. Balancing the workload against the hours allotted is part of the challenge of being an RA. RAs need to speak with their Research Director if their workload runs, or is expected to run, significantly over the time allotted. It can be difficult to manage the workload during March, April, and early May of the second year, when the thesis presentation, writing, and submission take place. It is important that you coordinate in advance with your Research Director about your obligations to the project during this period.
- Attend project meetings, symposia, and other project-related functions as requested by your Research Director.
- Participate in periodic performance reviews by the Research Director. The "RA Work Plan" will guide this process throughout the semester, through which RAs and the Research Director agree upon and document specific tasks and expectations. *The results will determine your eligibility for future RA funding in CMS or other departments.* We encourage RAs to take these opportunities to discuss their experience frankly with the Research Directors. Inconsistent or poor performance can result in withdrawal of tuition and stipend support.
- Submit hours worked every Monday, online. We acknowledge that RAs may not work 20 hours every week per semester, but the total number of hours

worked for the semester is expected to balance out to an average of twenty hours a week across the semester.

- **RAships begin during the first week of classes and continue through May 31st of the following calendar year.** RAs are not required to work during term breaks, but they are required to work throughout the Independent Activities Period (IAP). Winter break extends from the last day of exams in December to the beginning of IAP in January; spring break typically is the last week in March. Research managers may make exceptions to these work requirements for thesis-related travel.

Failure to fulfill these responsibilities will jeopardize your standing as a Research Assistant, and may result in a withdrawal of support.

CMS RAs have the right to:

- Negotiate project tasks and completion dates with the Research Director, as project deadlines permit.
- Engage in work that is appropriate to one's interests, skills, and academic coursework, as project responsibilities permit.
- Receive and request training to improve skills necessary for project work.
- Request a transfer to new project at the end of a semester. Although the administration will do whatever possible to honor requests, please bear in mind that a transfer may not always be possible. Also be advised that RAs may be transferred to different projects to provide the best possible match between student interests and project requirements.

Any grievances are to be addressed first with the Research Director, then with the Director of Graduate Studies or graduate administrator. Students are encouraged to utilize the Director of Graduate Studies as an advocate as well as a source of advice, support, and mediation.