

# PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORTING, M.A.

**Faculty** Charles N. Wheeler III

**Adjunct Faculty** Bill Wheelhouse

**Degree offered:** Master of Arts

The public affairs reporting program 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.

**Contact:** Information about the public affairs reporting program is available at (217) 206-7494. Information can also be requested at [par@uis.edu](mailto:par@uis.edu).

## ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

The program is open only to students who have completed the baccalaureate degree. Students are selected primarily on the basis of writing ability, interest in government and public affairs, potential for a career in journalism, and academic record.

The deadline for filing applications with the program director is April 1. Application forms may be obtained by contacting the program office. Applicants must submit samples of their written work, a narrative statement on why they feel qualified and want to enroll in the program, and three references. Applicants are required to take a literacy/competency and writing test and are interviewed by the PAR Admissions Committee, comprised of faculty and journalists.

## ADVISING

The program director serves as principal adviser 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 advisers for an appointment before initial registration.

## GRADING POLICY

PAR students must receive a grade of B or better in any required course to receive credit toward the degree.

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The master of arts in public affairs reporting requires 40 hours of graduate-level course work. In the fall semester, students enroll in two required courses: PAR 501 Advanced Public Affairs Reporting (six hours) and PAR 405 Illinois Government and Politics (four hours). Students choose other courses after consultation with their advisers.

During the spring semester, students begin an internship with an experienced professional journalist covering state government and the Illinois General Assembly. This internship (12 credit hours) includes a

weekly seminar. PAR 503 Legislative Issues (two hours) is also required in this semester. After consultation with the adviser, a student registers for other courses to maintain a full course load.

Students participate in the second phase of the internship (four credit hours) 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 master's project, including preparation of a formal research paper on some phase of the media, state government, or public affairs, followed by development of one or more magazine-length articles or radio/TV documentary programs.

### REQUIRED COURSES

PAR 405 Illinois Government and Politics	4 Hrs.
PAR 501 Advanced Public Affairs Reporting	6 Hrs.
PAR 503 Legislative Issues	2 Hrs.

PAR 504 Internship I	12 Hrs.
PAR 505 Internship II	4 Hrs.
Electives	<u>12 Hrs.</u>
Total	40 Hrs.

## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

### **\*PAR 404 Media Law and Ethics (4 Hrs.)**

Examines media law and ethical decisionmaking from the standpoint of media producers, critics, and users. Case studies include obscenity and indecency, libel, privacy, advertising, conflict of interest, and rights of access. Lectures and discussions examine social and cultural contexts in which laws and ethical principles develop. See COM 404.

### **PAR 405 Illinois Government and Politics (4 Hrs.)**

Policy-making process as it operates in Illinois. Major topics include constitutional structure, political culture, role of parties and interest groups, initiation of public policy, legislative process, role of the governor, politics of the budgetary process, and implementation of public policy. See POS 405.

### **PAR 501 Advanced Public Affairs Reporting (6 Hrs.)**

Newswriting and reportorial techniques, including inves-

tigative reporting, journalism ethics, news analysis, and interpretation. Relevant, pertinent, and salient news standards are probed, with emphasis on coverage of governmental news. Prerequisite: Admission to the PAR program.

### **PAR 503 Legislative Issues (2 Hrs.)**

In-depth study of key issues before the Illinois General Assembly. Offered during spring semester. Prerequisite: Admission to PAR program.

### **PAR 504 Internship I (12 Hrs.)**

Practical experience in reporting public affairs. Each student is assigned to full-time work with an experienced journalist at the State Capitol. Students receive monthly stipend. Weekly seminar. Prerequisite: Admission to PAR program.

### **PAR 505 Internship II (4 Hrs.)**

Continuation of PAR 504, but more intense in conjunction with the windup of the legislative session. Work supervised by media bureau chief and program director. Prerequisite: Admission to PAR program.

*\*Optional course for PAR students.*