

# CAREER VIEW

## MEDIA STUDIES

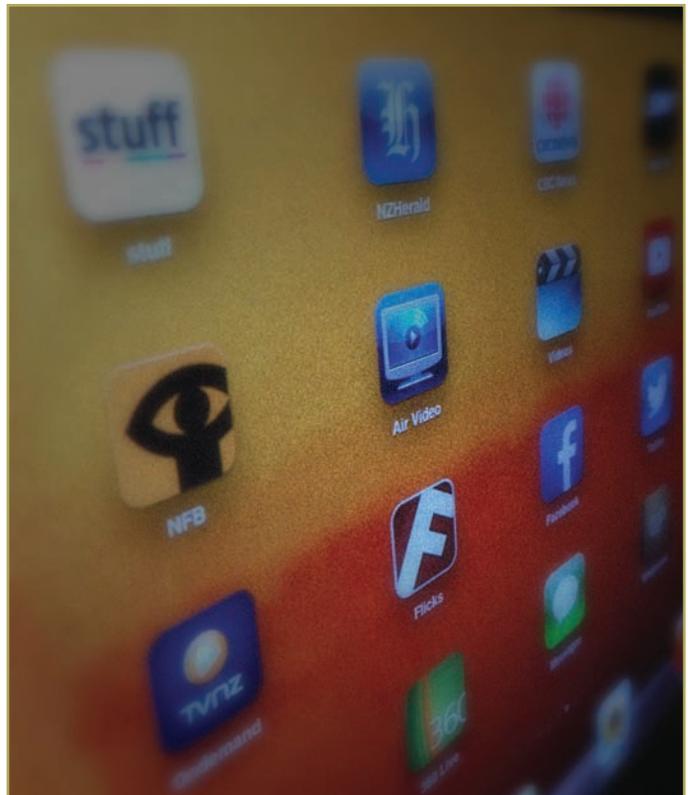
Media have evolved over time into both an institution within society and as a critical element of other institutions. We increasingly rely on media to inform us about society and our place in it. Our interactions with others are also increasingly mediated, leading to new practices and social formations. At the same time, our education, experiences, culture and beliefs all influence our interactions with media.

### WHAT IS MEDIA STUDIES?

From print media to television, popular music, the internet and mobile technologies, media are increasingly intertwined in our lives. At an individual level, the media we use influence our behaviours, activities and beliefs in a variety of ways, which in turn shape our understanding of media and what we can do with them. Media also play a role in communities, societies and cultures. We rely on media to learn about current events, for entertainment, to socialise with others, to share our thoughts and beliefs, as well as engage in political debates and social movements.

Media Studies is a field of study which examines the roles that various forms of media play in society and culture. These examinations are often historical and/or empirical in nature, not limited simply to content and technology but also policy and industries, media audiences, media technologies and media history. The goal of Media Studies as a discipline is to understand what media are, the relationships between the various actors in a media environment – technologies, institutions, policies and regulations, producers, content and audiences – and the media's role in larger processes and fields such as government, finance, globalisation and representation.

How do media impact on society and culture? How do we, as consumers (and often producers) of media influence their development and use? What role do governments, business, regulatory agencies and citizens groups play? How are emerging forms and technologies such as social media, collaborative and user-led information sources and mobile and



ubiquitous media altering these various roles and relationships? These are just some examples of the questions that the field of Media Studies seeks to answer.

*Topical coverage of career related issues brought to you by Victoria University Career Development and Employment.*

*Areas covered include how degrees and courses relate to employment opportunities, to life/work planning, graduate destination information and current issues or material relevant to the employment scene. Your comments and suggestions always welcomed.*

## WHAT SKILLS DO MEDIA STUDIES GRADUATES HAVE?

Media Studies students develop capabilities in written and spoken communication, independent research, teamwork, and the critical analysis of texts, practices and cultures. Mastering these skills provides Media Studies graduates with a profile that prepares them for a variety of employment possibilities, community service, research and governmental opportunities. Specifically, these skills include:

### *Written and Oral Communication*

Media Studies students practise a variety of forms of written and oral expression including formal writing, collaborative texts, reflective essays, group presentations, discussions and debates – including writing blogs and wikis – all of which provide students the opportunity to improve their communication skills. These skills enable students to clearly articulate their own ideas, but also to work effectively, creatively and productively with others.

### *Analysis and Critical Thinking*

One of the advantages of studying Media Studies at university-level is that you learn to master a range of analytical approaches. Students will be trained to analyse a variety of texts, including advertisements, television, popular music, websites and social media, in order to consider issues such as ethnic and gender representation, investigate the role of industries, policies and regulations and governments in media production and use, and assess the ways technologies influence behaviours, beliefs, culture and society and vice versa. Considering the ubiquity of media, these analytical skills are increasingly important, but they are also applicable to a broad range of issues, and students are encouraged to think critically about issues such as ideology, power, representation and social understanding.

### *Research*

Media Studies involves seeking out information from a wide variety of sources, including online databases and websites, ‘traditional’ media such as newspapers, television and radio, media archives and everything in between, in order to support a position or claim, test a theory, or illuminate a particular concept. These research skills are an increasingly important asset in a wide range of contexts beyond the university.

### *Leadership and Teamwork*

Media Studies courses encourage students to think independently, provide opportunities to design and carry out both individual and collaborative projects



and communicate effectively. Students will become practised at discussion and debate, but also consensus formation and finding mutual support. This array of experiences provides students with the flexibility and adaptability necessary to function in a variety of roles – from critical problem solver to leader and organiser.

## WHERE DO MEDIA STUDIES GRADUATES WORK?

The skills above have a clear relevance for a variety of career paths. In fact, while working within media industries is a goal of many of our graduates, media have become an integral element of many companies and institutions. Thus, students will have an opportunity to work in a wide range of fields and contexts.

### *Media Industry and Institutions*

Media Studies graduates complete their degrees with literacies and skills that have seen them find work in national and local media industries including radio, television and digital media, or in fields such as journalism, entertainment or administration. Students can tailor their educational experience to prepare them for a variety of roles, such as media producer, content writer, editor or media analyst. Graduates are attractive to a number of media institutions including Radio National and its online service *The Wireless*, broadcasters such as TVNZ and TV3, entertainment production companies, a number of regional newspapers such as *The Dominion Post* and *The New Zealand Herald*, online content providers such as *Stuff* as well as a range of overseas media institutions. Graduates can also take advantage of the opportunities afforded by digital media to develop and disseminate their own media offerings.

### Private Industry

Many Media Studies students have a strong interest in advertising, marketing and public relations. Those who wish to work in this industry are required to be active, critical and creative thinkers prepared to work in a demanding, fast-paced and challenging environment. There are a variety of roles Media Studies graduates can play, from media specialists who plan and purchase advertising space/airtime, to writers and designers who develop and execute advertisements or entire ad campaigns. Media Studies graduates have taken positions up with well-known public relations and advertising firms such as Clemenger and Saatchi & Saatchi.

As media play a central role in society, many institutions have an increasing need for employees skilled in media analysis, development, critique and use. Media Studies graduates are prepared to work in private industries as media consultants, public relations experts, social media advisors and communication officers. Combining a Media Studies degree with other majors such as Law or Marketing can also increase the range of opportunities. Graduates have the critical skills and preparation necessary to work as media specialists for a wide array of employers such as hospitals, law firms, the hospitality industry, manufacturers, the service industry and more. A Media Studies graduate would be an asset to any business that has a website or social media presence, uses advertising, or interacts with any number of other media forms.

### The Public Sector

Media Studies courses prepare students for careers in the public sector as well. Almost every government agency and ministry requires skilled, media-savvy employees to address a number of different tasks. In addition, technological developments such as the switch to digital television, the roll-out of ultra-fast broadband, the continued importance of traditional media institutions such as radio and television broadcasting, and even economic issues such as changes in media ownership and concentration, all highlight the need for media experts to guide the development of media policies and regulations that ensure there is a diversity of interests well represented in a shifting media landscape.

For students interested in politics, the press gallery and related matters, options include opportunities for internships and work as

media consultants, media liaisons, press secretaries and other government affiliated careers. Graduates have found employment in a number of organisations including The Press Council, the Broadcasting Standards Authority, the Advertising Standards Authority and the Office of Film and Literature Classification (the Chief Censor's Office).

Other possibilities include working for media-related government entities such as Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision (New Zealand Archive of Film, Television and Sound/Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua Me Ngā Taonga Kōrero), the NZ Film Commission and NZ on Air or government-run cultural institutions such as Te Papa.

### Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Media Studies prides itself on providing students with the ethical orientation and critical skills that serve a wide array of constituencies and communities, including those where issues of social justice and equity are paramount. Much like private and public sector institutions, NGOs, charities and other such philanthropic organisations require skilled media experts to craft and distribute messages across media platforms, or act as media consultants and advisors, media liaisons, social media experts, editors or communications officers. Though working for an NGO is not always as financially rewarding as working in the private sector, it is often more rewarding in other, more significant ways.



**Education**

The education sector is another area where Media Studies graduates find work. This includes taking up positions at primary and secondary schools in New Zealand and overseas. A Media Studies degree is also an important stepping-stone to further study and work in the field of academia, through a master’s degree and on to a PhD.

**Beyond Work**

A Media Studies degree provides students with creative and critical skills, intellectual rigour and independence as well as in-depth knowledge of local and international media practices that will serve them well in a diverse range of contexts.

Media Studies students are not simply prepared to take a job, but have the literacies and critical acumen to be aware, conscientious and productive members of a community.

**JOB TITLES**

- Account Executive
- Advertising Executive
- Advertising Sales Coordinator
- Assistant Producer
- Broadcast Monitor
- Client Services Executive
- Communications Advisor
- Content Officer
- Copy Editor
- Digital Media Consultant
- Editorial Assistant
- Film Publicist
- Creative Team Assistant
- Public Relations Officer
- Publicist
- Associate Publisher
- Journalist
- Television Presenter
- Marketing Assistant
- Media Analyst



- Media Researcher
- Media Assistant
- Ministerial Coordinator
- Multimedia Specialist
- Reporter
- Researcher
- Social Media Specialist
- Web Content Executive

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Belonging to a professional body provides students and graduates with the opportunity to make contacts, keep up-to-date with current industry knowledge and learn more about specific areas of interest. Some options include:

- ANZCA - Australian and New Zealand Communication Association
- Journalism Education Association of New Zealand
- Marketing Association - Auckland and Wellington
- Media Communications Association - International
- New Zealand Writers Guild
- SPADA - Screen Production and Development Association of New Zealand
- CAANZ – Communications Agencies Association

Social media networks, such as LinkedIn (including LinkedIn groups), Facebook and Twitter can connect students and graduates to networking opportunities, industry-related events and job vacancies.

# GRADUATE PROFILES

## Elle Hunt

*Producer, The Wireless*

I knew I wanted to be a journalist long before I moved to Wellington to go to university, but what drew me to study Media Studies at Victoria, as opposed to a more vocational qualification, was exactly that broad base of knowledge it offered. I knew there would be opportunities to learn about the inverted pyramid, and protecting sources, and shorthand down the track – what mattered more now was getting a solid grounding in the media landscape.

Plus, I knew I wanted to get involved in Victoria's weekly magazine. In the three-and-a-half years I spent studying, I spent as much if not more time working on *Salient* as I did on my coursework, but the two were very complimentary, and together grounded me in both the practical and the contextual. Often the features I was assigned to write for *Salient* informed my coursework, and vice versa.

The flexibility of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) meant I could pursue my other interests at the same time: in my first two years of study, I took courses in French, Classics, Anthropology, Design and Creative Writing, and as a student of the School of English, Film, Theatre and Media Studies I was able to graduate with a double major in English Literature, too.

What I appreciated about Media Studies was the fact it equipped me with filters through which to view the world that I still draw on today (admittedly not in 1800-word essays on representations of gender in *The Wire*). Majoring in Media Studies, I learned academic theories about why our society and culture is the way it is, and the critical thinking skills with which to practically apply them, and those have been a lot more worthwhile to me in my career thus far than the inverted pyramid.

If you're considering the subject, I'd suggest starting out by following a strand that appeals to you most in the first year and seeing where it takes you. In your second and third years Media Studies becomes a pretty sprawling discipline, so it's helpful to have a focus – for example, in news, politics, New Zealand media, music, gender and sexuality, or television. Even if you don't know what you want to do with your BA after university, majoring in Media Studies gives you an increased perception and understanding of all media, and it doesn't hurt to have a niche area of interest.



## Ben Longhurst

*Executive Assistant to an MP  
Parliament*

I started my studies at Victoria University straight out of high school in 2009, and now five and a half years later I have completed a Master of Arts and got a 'real' job.

Initially, I completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Political Science and Media Studies, and then went on to enrol in postgraduate work (an Honours and Master's) in Media Studies. I am now working as an Executive Assistant to a senior Front Bench MP in Parliament.

Much of the way that we experience the world is mediated in some way. As a discipline Media Studies is immensely useful because it provides us with the skills and tools to deconstruct these meditations, and to understand why things are represented the way they are. The media provides the frameworks which we use to negotiate our way in the world, and it is therefore important to understand this.

I enjoyed Media Studies as a discipline because it is incredibly varied. You can look at how social relationships are constructed through Facebook, how nitty-gritty broadcasting policy affects what we see on the news, how a TV channel can affect the politics of indigeneity, and how the particular wording of a gossip magazine can affect our ideas about gender and sexuality. I also enjoyed coupling Media Studies with another major in my Bachelor's degree. Although I did Political Science and Media Studies, Media Studies can also be combined with many other majors providing a secondary set of tools and frameworks through which to analyse the world.

Media Studies helped me move into my current career by providing me with a fundamental understanding of how the media works and an awareness of how things are likely to be represented. Working in a place like Parliament which generates so much media attention, it is immensely important to have a keen sense of what is going on, what stories that are likely to be picked up by the media and how issues are likely to be represented. In my job this is particularly important when I have to do tasks such as producing press statements or briefing an MP on a particular issue.



In an increasingly mediated world, Media Studies is becoming an increasingly important discipline, and one that I believe all students who want to more fully understand how and why different meanings are constructed would benefit from enrolling in.

### **Emma Richardson**

*Client Service Coordinator  
Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision  
(New Zealand Archive of Film,  
Television and Sound)*



Kia ora

Many years before I returned to study I saw a job advertised at the Film Archive and thought, “I could do that”. At the time I did not have the necessary qualifications (a degree) to even think about applying. I undertook my degree as a mature student and was surprised at how I could apply my previous work skills and life experiences to my studies. I was in the right place in life to attend university when I did: after finishing school I just wanted to go and explore the world. I have always been keenly interested in Film and soon figured out that Media Studies would be a good marriage as a second major.

I had to work hard, especially at essay writing. It does not come naturally to me to express myself in a written academic fashion, so I took heed of the feedback I received from lectures and tutors and honed my writing skills. My current job consists of communicating with people from all over the world explaining processes and protocols, so being able to correspond clearly and precisely is paramount.

Media Studies has enabled me to look at the world in a more critical fashion by applying the concepts and theories to texts and understanding them from a different perspective and on a deeper level. It has changed how I watch television and film, read a paper, look at a painting, or listen to music and has made for some lively and interesting debates and discussions! Certain Media Studies and Film courses I took involved looking at Generation X. Belonging to this generation myself meant I could lead a discussion on a text, music, play, film or photograph as I had experienced it in a different way to others in the class.

The ideas addressed in Media courses such as gender, race, age, culture, all cross over into many other disciplines and subjects at university and will enrich your degree as a whole. None of us are immune to

the media, whether we like it or not, so why not get a better grasp of what’s shoved in our faces constantly? I am surrounded by moving images, documentation, books and photographs on a daily basis in my job. Having the skills to interpret different media enables me to help clients in a way I couldn’t do prior to my studies.

I got my job at Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision the week after I completed my studies. The offer of employment stemmed from having volunteered there during the final year of my degree. The media industry in New Zealand is highly competitive and you need to stand out from the crowd so never underestimate the power of meeting and talking with people face to face.

### **Kania Sugandi**

*Account Manager  
Mission Hall Creative*



I started university knowing exactly what I wanted to study: Media Studies and English Literature. I took both subjects in high school and loved them, and I liked reading and writing; it felt like a logical choice.

As I finished high school I was sold on the idea of becoming a journalist and thought that a degree in Media Studies would give me a good theoretical grounding before I would go on to do a postgraduate journalism degree.

It really is no secret that Media Studies is a ‘fun’ degree; watching TV shows and films, listening to music, and reading magazines is not only allowed, it’s encouraged – it’s *research*. At the end of my first year I discovered that I was far more interested in the critical aspects of the media rather than the production. I loved analysing media texts, dissecting them to discover manifestations and representations of the world and our society and before I knew it, I was hooked.

Having grown up and lived in a few different places, I’ve always been interested in culture; how people come to see themselves and the world around them, their beliefs, behaviour and characteristics. I reflected on my own experiences, how quickly and eagerly I became a jandal-wearing, rugby-watching, fish and chips-eating Kiwi, and I became fascinated in the media’s role in the representation and construction of culture and identity. An interest quickly became a passion and I went on to pursue this in my Master’s

thesis. I studied travel programmes, examining the perceived difference between tourists and traveller, how this is represented on different genres of travel programming and its implications on the tourism industry.

I started working at a media intelligence company in my Honours year, working behind the scenes writing summaries of radio news, interviews and reports. After I graduated I took on a client-facing role, assisting corporate and government agencies manage their public profile and monitor industry activity by identifying key media content across print, broadcast and digital platforms, using my knowledge of the New Zealand media landscape to predict where stories are likely to pop up. A couple of years (and a 3-month traveling stint) later, I am now an Account Manager at a design and advertising agency, combining my passion for, and knowledge of, the media and my interest in the creative industry.

My dream to become a professional travel writer is yet to come through, but I will be eternally grateful to Media Studies for encouraging me to be inquisitive, to look at the world through a more critical set of eyes and to be more self-reflective.

### **Richard Robson**

*Media Assistant  
Ogilvy*



I have always been fascinated by the media. Since I was young, I have held a high regard for those in the industry as technology rapidly evolved and emerged on-screen. The decision to study at Victoria was simple. I was very motivated to pursue higher education through studying subjects I felt strong in and complemented each other - IT and Media Studies. During my studies I found that the courses on offer were extremely flexible and taken together, allowed me to further my understanding of both subjects. I was also able to explore new fields of media. Previously I had been unconvinced these would fit with my degree, however both the lectures and classroom tutorials stimulated my interest.

It is enjoyable to reflect on my years at Victoria University. Studying has enabled me to experience various opportunities and explore different constructs of thinking and understanding – such as



how the media shapes our social, economic and political lives. This has allowed me to develop a well-rounded set of skills to excel in my current profession in advertising. The skills which I have learned such as communication, critical thinking and a wider understanding of the place media has in a community, have been advantageous and hugely rewarding. My role as a Media Assistant involves the art of media planning and buying for a wide range of clients using a fully integrated media plan and strategy. Often it is a juggle of multiple tasks at once which can involve addressing issues with the publishers and media providers, to providing feedback to a client such as initial results of several advertising layers. I also assist with the development and implementation of new or existing ideas. Having the abilities to communicate with a range of people, express ideas clearly and analyse strategies are vital.

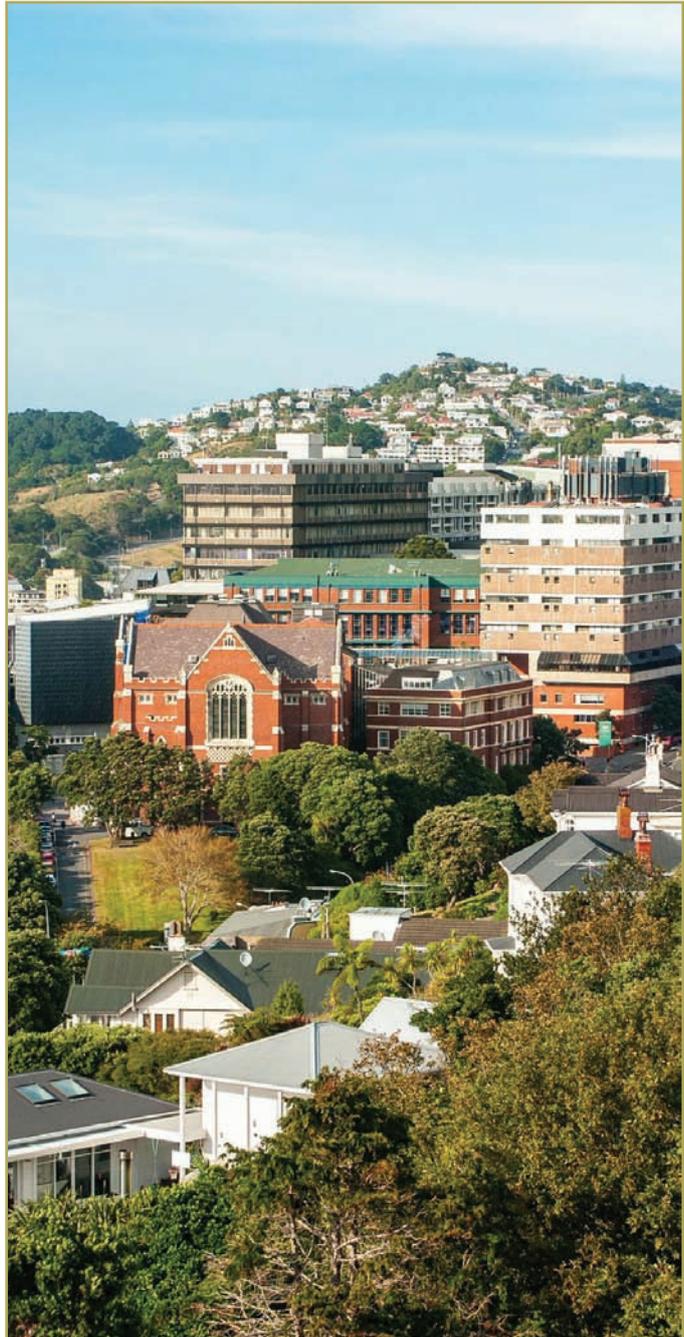
My advice to any student is to have a realistic expectation of how you want to use your time during university study. It is difficult to fully appreciate how valuable university is to your future until you are out into the wider world. The skills I gained through studying media have opened more doors to me than I ever imagined. Graduates of Media Studies are able understand the world around us and the phenomenal power of the media's ability to adapt, persuade and manipulate us on a daily basis. With Victoria's direction I was able to develop the necessary skills and competencies which were easily adaptable to the workplace.

## MEDIA STUDIES AT VICTORIA

The Media Studies Programme at Victoria University of Wellington employs a critical Media Studies approach in an attempt to understand the role of media in society and culture. The notion of criticism here does not necessarily mean critique, but rather implies a willingness to interrogate media forms, practices and policies – in essence, ‘defamiliarising’ the familiar in order to further our understanding of media. The ultimate goal of Media Studies at Victoria is to educate, illuminate and inspire for the betterment – as well as a better understanding – of society.

Media Studies courses at Victoria analyse the way media work, what they assume about their audience and what their audiences assume about them. Our range of courses is broad. Students studying in the programme can elect to focus on particular areas by choosing pathways in popular culture (including popular music), media in Aotearoa/New Zealand, media and subjectivity or identity, television, digital media, media and politics (including news media) or visual culture.

Students will be equipped with a critical understanding of the way the modern world constructs itself. Rational, problem-solving and analysis skills are developed, setting students apart in a media-saturated world. For this reason, Media Studies is a useful complement to many other programmes. There are clear affinities between our subject area and the related disciplines of Film, English, Theatre, Political Science, Māori Studies, Pacific Studies, Music, Art History, Sociology, Philosophy, Marketing, Design and Education.



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