MFA in Film

Lichtenstein Center

Stony Brook Manhattan Center for Creative Writing & Film

Associate Provost: Paul Harding, (631) 632-5028

Artistic Director: Christine Vachon, 646) 472-2025

Executive Director of Programs in Film and Television Writing: Magdalene Brandeis, 646) 472-2025

Director of the Manhattan Center: Scott Sullivan 646) 472-2025

Degree Awarded: MFA in Film

Web Sites: https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/lichtenstein-center/academic-programs/Film_TV/index.php


MFA in Film

The MFA in Film is a two plus year program that includes dedicated Tracks in Directing, Screenwriting, Producing, and an Independent Track, with production periods culminating in a feature screenplay, a 20-minute or feature MFA thesis film, a screenwriter’s portfolio, or a feature producer’s package, which includes serving as producer on a minimum of three films. Faculty Christine Vachon, Pamela Koffler, Alan Kingsberg, Magdalene Brandeis, Perry Blackshear, Jennie Allen, Simone Pero, Lenny Crooks, Niav Conty, Summer Shelton, Karen Offitzer, and Jordan Roberts, along with top industry professionals, guide participants through the essential elements of independent film production and TV Writing. Hands-on, experiential, in-depth, project driven.

The curriculum requires 45-48 credits.

Interested students should request information from the department and find application information at https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/mfa-film-tv/admissions.php

Students are encouraged to apply as early as possible, especially if they plan to apply for financial aid.

Admission to the MFA Program in Film

This MFA program in Film is intensive and admission to it is highly selective. Upon review, finalists are invited for an interview.

Please use Stony Brook Graduate School's Online Application. You must create an account to start a new application. You can also log in to continue an application after an account has been created.

For admission, the following, in addition to the minimum Graduate School requirements, are required.

1. A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university.
2. Undergraduate grade point average of at least 3.0.
3. Three letters of recommendation.
4. A current résumé
5. A statement of purpose. Describe in a page or two why you are interested in this opportunity, how you would benefit, and what makes you a particularly deserving candidate. Upload this to the Additional Supplemental Materials, personal statement section of the application.

6. Your specialization: Director/Screenwriter/Producer/Independent Track (add to bottom of personal statement)(If Television Writing, select Television Writing MFA).

7. Video Pitch (Go to Portfolio Instructions and upload Video Pitch to the Digital Portfolio section of the application.)

All candidates: This is one of the more important elements to your application. You have probably seen people pitching for donations on a crowdsourcing site. In this case, you can pitch to us anything you want: yourself as a candidate, a project you want to work on, or something else that is exciting to you. The video pitch should be creative, polished, inventive. We want you to win us over here! SUGGESTED LENGTH: 3 MINUTES

8. Directing and Producing Video Samples.

Directing candidates only (not required for Screenwriter, Television Writer, or Producer candidates): Please include a link (or links) to up to 4 video samples of work to which you made a significant contribution. Be clear about what role you played: producer, writer, director, editor, production designer, cinematographer, etc. You may submit links for more than one piece but the total running time should not exceed 15 minutes. If you submit an excerpt, please describe the full work. Unless you are applying as a cinematographer or production designer, the entirety of your video sample should not be in the format of a professional reel but should also show us the substance of your work. (A reel might accompany another sample). In lieu of video, you may submit up to ten photographs, design samples, or photographs of your artwork.
9. Written materials: (All written materials may be uploaded in the Additional Supplemental Materials section)

Your written material should include:

a. All Candidates: The Scene. Write a short, 2-3-page scene inspired by and using one of these words that have no English language translation. We prefer a scene with two characters where one character wants something from the other and that you do NOT explicitly use the word you have chosen.

- Glas wen (Welsh)
  A smile that is insincere or mocking. Literally, a blue smile.
- Yuputka (Ulwa)
  The phantom sensation of something crawling on your skin.
- Iktsuarpok (Inuit)
  You know that feeling of anticipation when you’re waiting for someone to show up at your house and you keep going outside to see if they’re there yet? This is the word for it.

b. All Candidates: The Logline. Write an extended log line or a paragraph describing a project you’d like to realize with us. Attach this logline to the bottom of your scene.

c. Screenwriting, Television Writing and Directing Candidates: The Writing Sample. Please include a writing sample of up to 10 pages. This can be a complete short film, web episode, play, short story, or an excerpt of a feature screenplay, a TV Script, a websisode, a sketch or series of sketches. If you choose to submit an excerpt, please include a few lines describing the full work.

d. Producing Candidates: The Writing Sample. Please include a writing sample of up to 10 pages, including an excerpt of a feature screenplay critiques, production program notes, and/or literary criticism of a chosen screenplay, or excerpts of a film or screenplay you have acquired or produced; or a brief statement describing your view of the role of Producing in today’s platform agnostic film industry.

10. Proficiencies. Directing Candidates Only

Please include a list of technical proficiencies in: camera, lighting, editing, and any related skills. This may be listed below the logline

UPON ACCEPTANCE BY THE MFA IN FILM PROGRAM

Any deficiencies in these or the Graduate School admission requirements shall not automatically bar admission, but it is understood that inadequacies in undergraduate preparation normally will require the student to take additional work, the amount to be determined by the appropriate graduate advisory committee. Additional work may not be used to fulfill MFA degree requirements.

Eligibility

Applicants to the Master of Fine Arts program must have a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university and, except in special circumstances, have earned a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4-point scale. It’s fine to have an undergraduate degree in an area outside of the arts and humanities. A candidate with outstanding promise in film but a less-than-stellar academic transcript may be admitted on a conditional basis.

Transfer Credit

The program permits the transfer of up to 12 hours of credit in suitable graduate work done elsewhere that resulted in a grade of B or better. To obtain transfer credit, the student must make special application to the program, submit official transcripts and provide course descriptions or syllabi. Transfer credits are only approved at the discretion of the academic department and the Graduate School. Courses older than five years will be accepted only in rare circumstances. No courses that have been credited toward another degree, such as an MA or an MFA in a different field, can be transferred. Transfer credit request forms are available on the Graduate School website.

Facilities

The MFA in Film is located primarily at the Stony Brook Manhattan Center for Creative Writing and Film at 535 8th Avenue, and also in the Carriage House on the Stony Brook Southampton campus, which includes the Avram Theater and Gallery, a 429-seat theater that was substantially renovated in 2007. The program features an impressive range of industry standard camera, light, grip and sound equipment. Highlights include the RED Epic-W, Canon C100 MKII, Canon XC10, Canon 5D and 7D, Go Pro Hero 4, Canon Cine Prime Lenses, Zooms, Kino Flos, ARRI 4 and 3 Light Kits, Lite Panels, Dedos, Tascam Field Recorders, RODE, AT and Sennheiser Shotguns, Countryman Lavs, Kessler Slider, and several one ton grip packages. Our post-production offerings include 27” iMacs equipped with Adobe Creative Cloud, AVID Media Composer and Pro Tools. The University Library holds in excess of 15,000 items comprised of books, eBooks, videos, periodicals, music scores, dissertations, and audio files related to the study of film, which are easily accessible through interlibrary document delivery. Our book collection contains over 7,500 volumes.

Degree Requirements

The MFA in Film requires a minimum of 45 credits. In addition to the minimum Graduate School requirements, the following are required:

Program requirements: 45 – 49 credits
Required Core Courses: 19 credits
FLM 500 Introduction to Graduate Studies, 4 cr.
FLM 501 Film Tools, 3 cr.
FLM 537 Production I, 3 cr.
FLM 638 Directing I, 3 cr.
FLM 650 Screenwriting Workshop, 3 cr.
FLM 660 Acting Workshop, 3 cr. (SOUTHAMPTON)

Experiential Option: 3 credits
One or more of the following Experiential options:
FLM 591 Independent Project
FLM 690 Professional Internship; or
FLM 550 Teaching Practicum, 3 cr.

Required MFA Project & Thesis: 6 credits
FLM 691 MFA Project, 3 cr. (SOUTHAMPTON)
FLM 692 Thesis, 3 cr. (SOUTHAMPTON)

Select one Track from the following: 17 – 21 credits

Directing Track
Select six or more of the following (17-21 credits):
FLM 505 Film Management I
FLM 508 Editing I
FLM 509 Cinematography I
FLM 510 Film History
FLM 525 Topics in Film (1-3 cr.)
FLM 576 Film Workshop
FLM 639 Directing II
FLM 670 Directing III
FLM 637 Production II
FLM 669 Advanced Tools
FLM 680 Art Direction Workshop

Producing Track
Select six or more of the following (17-21 credits):
FLM 505 Film Management I
FLM 506 Film Management II
FLM 510 Film History
FLM 530 Directed Readings in Film
FLM 575 Adaptation
FLM 525 Topics in Film
FLM 576 Film Workshop
FLM 637 Production II
FLM 680 Art Direction Workshop
CWL 530 Forms of Scriptwriting

Screenwriting Track
Select six or more of the following (17-21 credits):
FLM 505 Film Management I
FLM 510 Film History
FLM 520 Film History II
FLM 530 Directed Readings in Film
FLM 575 Adaptation
FLM 525 Topics in Film
FLM 576 Film Workshop
FLM 651 Screenwriting Workshop II
FLM 652 Screenwriting Workshop III
CWL 530 Forms of Scriptwriting
With permission of MFA Director, one additional course from Creative Writing and Literature (CWL 510 or above).

Television Writing Track
Select six or more of the following (17-21 credits):
FLM 505 Film Management I
FLM 510 Film History
FLM 526 Topics in TV Writing
FLM 536 Forms of TV Writing
FLM 575 Adaptation
FLM 525 Topics in Film
FLM 576 Film Workshop
FLM 651 Screenwriting Workshop II
FLM 652 Screenwriting Workshop III
CWL 530 Forms of Scriptwriting
With permission of MFA Director, one additional course from Creative Writing and Literature (CWL 510 or above).
Individualized Track

Select six or more of the following (17-21 credits):

FLM 505 Film Management I
FLM 506 Film Management II
FLM 508 Editing I
FLM 509 Cinematography I
FLM 510 Film History I
FLM 520 Film History II
FLM 525 Topics in Film (1-3 cr.)
FLM 526 Topics in TV Writing (1-4 cr)
FLM 530 Directed Readings in Film (1-4 cr.)
CWL 530 Forms of Scriptwriting (4 cr.)
FLM 536 Forms of TV Writing (1-3 cr.)
FLM 575 Adaptation
FLM 576 Film Workshop (1-6 cr.)
FLM 608 Editing II
FLM 609 Cinematography II
FLM 637 Production II
FLM 639 Directing II
FLM 640 Film Design Workshop
FLM 651 Screenwriting Workshop II
FLM 652 Screenwriting Workshop III
FLM 669 Advanced Tools
FLM 670 Directing III
FLM 680 Art Direction Workshop

With permission of MFA Director, one additional course from Creative Writing and Literature (CWL 510 or above, 4 cr.).

G. Residence Requirement

This program is normally completed in three years of full-time residency. Three credits must include Southampton residency, FLM 660 Acting for Directors, (or course substitution, pending approval from Director).

University Requirements

The granting of master’s degree is based upon the completion of any special departmental requirements in addition to the items listed below:

A. Courses and Grade Point Average

A student must maintain a 3.0 overall grade point average

B. Registration

Degree candidates must be registered in the program granting their degree. Students must be registered for the semester in which they intend to graduate. Spring (May) and Fall (December) candidates must register for at least one graduate credit; Summer (August) candidates may register for zero credits in either summer session, but it still must be graduate level.

C. Time Limits
The time limit for the MFA is three years for full-time study and five years for part-time study. A student’s full- or part-time status is based on registration, and the time-limit may be modified if enrollment switches between part- and full-time. The student may petition for an extension of time limit for the degree. Such requests must be filed before the limit is exceeded and must contain a significant justification.

Faculty of the MFA in Film Program

Associate Professor

Reeves, Robert, Associate Provost. M.A., 1977, Harvard University

Visiting Professor

Vachon, Christine, Artistic Director. B.A., 1983, Brown University

Visiting Assistant Professor

Brandeis, Magdalene, Director. M.F.A., 2008, Stony Brook University
Koffler, Pamela. B.A., 1987, Yale University
Pero, Simone. M.P.P., 1994, University at Albany

Lecturer

Summer, Shelton. M.A. Wake Forest University, 2006
Offitzer, Karen. M.F.A. University of Arizona, M.A. NYU.

NOTE: The course descriptions for this program can be found in the corresponding program PDF or at COURSE SEARCH.