Television Writing

Stony Brook Manhattan Center for Creative Writing & Film

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

Artistic Director: Christine Vachon, (646) 472-2025

Director: Alan Kingsberg, (646) 472-2025

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

Degree Awarded: M.F.A. in Television Writing

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

Application: https://graduateadmissions.stonybrook.edu/apply/

MFA in Television Writing

The MFA in Television Writing is a two plus year program that is designed to enable the aspiring Television Writer to expand their artistic vision, hone their skills and build their writing portfolio in order to break into this growing and dynamic field and thrive once working in the profession. Students will graduate with a portfolio of three pilot scripts. In addition, each student will write, direct and produce a micro pilot for an original web series. Students will also learn how to work in collaborative writers rooms with showrunners to break stories and build season arcs on both open ended and limited series. Faculty: Christine Vachon, Pamela Koffler, Alan Kingsberg, Magdalene Brandeis, Scott Burkhardt, Syd Sidner, Jim Jennewein, Kris Lefcoe, Adam Yaffe, Stephen Gates, Perry Blackshear, Jennie Allen, Simone Pero, Karen Offitzer, and Jordan Roberts, along with top industry professionals, guide participants through the essential elements of 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.

Admissions APPLICATION DEADLINE

The scholarship application deadline is January 1, 2024 for Fall 2024

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ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

This MFA program is intensive, and admission to it is highly selective. Upon review, finalists may be invited for an on-campus 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 resume
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. 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 should pitch us yourself as a candidate. You can mention a project you want to work on, or something else that is exciting to you but we are interested in who you are as a creative artist/storyteller. The video pitch should be creative, polished, inventive. We want you to win us over here! SUGGESTED LENGTH: 3 MINUTES
   • Written materials: (All written materials may be uploaded in the Additional Supplemental Materials section)
     Your written material should include:
• All Candidates: The Scene. Write a short, 2-3-page scene inspired by 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.

• 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. Please note here as well: MFA in Television Writing.

UPON ACCEPTANCE BY THE MFA PROGRAM IN TELEVISION WRITING

If a student accepted into the M.F.A. program wishes to offer, either for credit toward the degree or for exemption from enrollment in courses required by Stony Brook, analogous courses taken at another university, transcripts and other supporting material must be presented for consideration by the graduate program director before the end of the student’s first semester in the program (see Transfer of Credit from Other Universities).

Robert Sklar Diversity Fellowship

In Fall 2024, we will award a handful of full and partial Graduate and Teaching Assistantships to our incoming students, particularly to those students who can contribute to the diversity of Stony Brook. All applications for full-time study in the Fall term are considered, provided that the application is submitted by January 1, 2024. These GA/TA awards are extremely competitive.

A full TA/GA offer comes with an academic-year stipend of approximately $20,000, a 15-20 hour/week workload, full tuition waiver and subsidized health insurance. A partial TA/GA offer comes with a 50% tuition remission scholarship, and an academic-year stipend of approximately $10,000, as well as subsidized health insurance and an 8-10 hour/week workload; after 8-10 hour/week workload; or with a 25% tuition remission scholarship, and an academic-year stipend of approximately $5,000, as well as subsidized health insurance and an 4-6 hour/week workload. Students in good standing could expect to have their funding renewed for their second year, when they teach film and screenwriting courses to Stony Brook undergraduates.

Recipients of funding offers who can contribute to the diversity of Stony Brook may be additionally eligible for the Turner Fellowship. Those with outstanding academic promise may be eligible for the Graduate Council Fellowship. These fellowships award an additional $30,000 over the course of three years to their recipients, along with tuition waiver and stipend.

GRE - Even though the application will ask for it, you do not need GRE scores.

In the program drop-down menu, please choose MFA in TV Writing, and indicate whether you are applying as a part-time or full-time student. Type “Manhattan Track” in the “Specialization” line.

If a recommender does not want to submit a letter online or doesn’t use email, you may print out a blank recommendation form for him or her to fill out and mail directly to the program.

Electronic official transcripts from any undergraduate and graduate institutions you have attended should be sent to the Office of Graduate and Health Sciences Admissions, at gradadmissions@stonybrook.edu.

or snail-mailed directly to the graduate school:

Office of Graduate and Health Sciences Admissions
Stony Brook University
Health Sciences Tower, Level 2 - Rm. 271
Stony Brook, NY 11794-8276

For questions, please call Margaret Grigonis at (631) 632-5028

Qualified graduate students without TA/GA funding are encouraged and, in their second year, eligible to apply for teaching artist and administrative jobs as they arise.

To favor one incoming student over another, by awarding assistantships or prizes, runs counter to our philosophy that we are all in this together, faculty and students alike, struggling with the extraordinarily difficult work of putting words together. If you earn admission to our program, with funding or without, we guarantee that you will be treated with the same respect as any other member of our community.

Then there’s your own resourcefulness in defraying the costs of graduate study. Applicants are encouraged to explore opportunities for external funding independent of our program’s limited resources. For more information on other types of financial aid, contact the Office of Student Financial Aid Services at (631) 632-6840.

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For More Information

The fine print about transfer credits, international students, and other admissions arcana is revealed in the Graduate Bulletin.

Or contact us:

MFA Program in Television Writing
Chancellors Hall, Room 239
Stony Brook Southampton
239 Montauk Highway Southampton, NY 11968
Phone: (631) 632-5028
Fax: (631) 632-2576
E-mail: MFAManhattan@stonybrook.edu

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 Television Writing 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
TVW 500 Introduction to Graduate Studies, 4 cr.
TVW 501 Film Tools, 3 cr.
TVW 537 Production I, 3 cr.
TVW 638 Directing I, 3 cr.
TVW 650 Screenwriting Workshop, 3 cr.
TVW 660 Acting Workshop, 3 cr. (SOUTHAMPTON)

Experiential Option: 3 credits

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

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

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

Stony Brook University Graduate Bulletin: www.stonybrook.edu/gradbulletin
TVW 505 TVW Management I
TVW 510 TV Writing History
TVW 526 Topics in TV Writing
TVW 536 Forms of TV Writing
TVW 575 Adaptation
TVW 525 Topics in TV Writing
TVW 576 TV Writing Workshop
TVW 651 Screenwriting Workshop II
TVW 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).

Residence Requirement

This program is normally completed in three years of full-time residency. Three credits must include Southampton residency, TVW 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:

Courses and Grade Point Average

A student must maintain a 3.0 overall grade point average

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.

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 Television Writing 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

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

Stony Brook University Graduate Bulletin: www.stonybrook.edu/gradbulletin

Lecturer


Gates, Stephen, MFA, 1990, NYU.

Jennewein, Jim. University of Notre Dame


Offitzer, Karen. M.F.A. University of Arizona, M.A. NYU.


Adam Yaffe, MFA, 1996, Columbia University.

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