From the Chair

We at the Film Program at Columbia University School of the Arts believe that storytelling through the moving image remains the most powerful medium ever created to explore ideas, cultures, and the state of the world in which we live. We are committed to giving emerging filmmakers the vocabulary and skills that allow their talents to come alive. Our faculty and staff are dedicated to helping each student find and understand their own unique voice and realize their creative vision. Our directors, writers and creative producers come from all over the world to study at our program in New York, and the diversity of our students weaves itself into the very fabric of the Program, greatly impacting the work our students put out into the world. With film and media always evolving, it is our dedication to the craft and mastery of brilliant storytelling that is our constant—our North Star. And the proof is in the amazing achievements of our students and alumni—they regularly win awards at the top film festivals, participate in prestigious creative labs and upon graduation, make their mark in the worlds of film and media. We hear from incoming students that the quality of the films coming out of the Program is one of the reasons they choose to come to Columbia. We hope you will consider joining us.

Maureen A. Ryan, Chair and Director of Production
MFA Programs

The MFA programs—in Screenwriting/Directing and in Creative Producing—are among the world’s premiere training grounds for young filmmakers. Unlike other film schools, the two programs share a common first year, combining instruction in producing, directing, and writing with technical training, as well as history and theory. The course of study includes two years of creative workshops and related courses, followed by a year or more of thesis work. All the courses within this unique, integrated curriculum focus on film as a medium for the telling of stories.

Screenwriting/Directing

The mission of the MFA concentration in Screenwriting/Directing is to rigorously train storytellers in film, television, and digital media. TV Writing is also part of the Screenwriting program where students study and write episodic television work. Students are immersed in the principles and working methods of a variety of genres and dramatic forms, and each student is encouraged to explore and establish his or her personal voice.

Course offerings include Directing, Directing Actors, Screenwriting, TV Writing, Elements of Dramatic Narrative, Fundamentals of Editing, Intro to Cinematography, Practical Production, Role of the Producer, TV Directing, Script Revision and Thesis Seminar.

Creative Producing

The MFA concentration in Creative Producing takes advantage of Columbia’s unique geography at the center of the independent film world, with the mission of creating the next generation of producers. The program emphasizes the role of the producer as the creative force behind a project, requiring business and organizational skills, the ability to form creative collaborations and an understanding of an ever-changing marketplace.

Course offerings include Practical Production, Feature Film Development, Feature Film Financing, Writing and Script Analysis for Producers, Pre-Production of a Motion Picture, Business of Film, Business of Television, Directing, Screenwriting, TV Writing, Script Revision, Fundamentals of Editing, Intro to Cinematography, Role of the Producer and Thesis Seminar.
MA in Film Studies

The Master of Arts Program in Film Studies and the undergraduate Film Studies major give students a unique opportunity to study film history and theory in the midst of an active filmmaking community. The Program takes up the evolution of cinema as an art, an institution, an object of philosophical study and an international socio-cultural phenomenon. It is designed to consider current theoretical approaches and to look historiographically at trends such as the transition from film to digital media. The Program is uniquely situated adjacent to the MFA programs in Screenwriting/Directing and Creative Producing, reminding students of the importance of filmmaking practice. The many courses offered in Columbia’s Arts and Sciences departments create opportunities to individualize the course of study. Students are encouraged to take electives in national cinemas, cultural theory, economics, literary studies and philosophy. Our MA alumni enter top international PhD programs, as well as hold jobs as curators, distributors, and critical reviewers.

For more information on applying and Program news and events, visit arts.columbia.edu/ma.

Alumni Accomplishments

Since the MFA program began in 1965, it has been renowned for the global success of its alumni in film and television, including top prizes at Sundance, Cannes, Venice, Berlin, and the Academy Awards.

Since 1991, alumni and faculty have won Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Documentary, Best Animated Feature, Best Screenplay, Best Live-Action Short, and Best Original Song. Our students have won Student Academy awards in 15 of the last 17 annual ceremonies, including the 2016 Gold in the Narrative category for Jimmy Keyrouz’s Nocturne in Black.

Kathryn Bigelow ’81 became the first woman to win an Academy Award for Best Director, for The Hurt Locker, 2010.

Jennifer Lee ’05 is the writer and co-director of Disney’s Frozen, which won two Oscars, became the highest grossing animated film of all time and the highest grossing film ever directed by a woman.

Laura Ricciardi ’07 and Moira Demos ’08 are 4-time Emmy winners for their hit documentary series Making a Murderer, which premiered on Netflix in December 2015.

Phil Johnston ’04 co-wrote the screenplay for Zootopia, which was the second highest-grossing film of 2016.

Elizabeth Wood ’13, named by Variety as one of the “10 Directors to Watch,” premiered her directorial debut White Girl at Sundance in January 2016.

Lisa Rubin ’13 wrote and is the executive producer of the original series Gypsy, which was picked up by Netflix for a premiere in 2017. She has also been hired by Dreamworks to adapt the hit novel Food Whore for the screen.

Nicole Holofcener ’88 is the executive producer and director of the new Amazon series One Mississippi, a dark comedy starring Tig Notaro.

Recent graduate Clara Roquet ’16 won the 2016 BAFTA US Student Film Award for her short film El Adiós, which she wrote and directed during her time in the MFA Program.

Submarine, a short film by students Mounia Akl, Clara Roquet, Cyril Aris and Andrew Li, was an official selection of the 69th Cannes Film Festival. This year we had four short films by students at Telluride from our students. Our alumni are consistently selected for the Sundance Directors Lab and Screenwriters Lab.
Full-Time Faculty

Maureen A. Ryan, Chair
Ramin Bahrani
Nico Baumbach
Andy Bienen
Hilary Brougher
Ira Deutchman
Katherine Dieckmann
Trey Ellis
Jane Gaines
Bette Gordon
Annette Insdorf
Jamal Joseph
Tom Kalin

Robert King
David Klass
Jack Lechner
Eric Mendelsohn
Richard Peña
Nicholas Proferes
Frank Pugliese
James Schamus
June Stein

For a list of adjunct faculty and recent guest lecturers visit arts.columbia.edu/film-brochure.

Application & Financial Aid

The School welcomes applications for the fall semester of each year. Visit arts.columbia.edu/apply for all information about applying and application requirements; note specific guidelines for international students, including visa information.

The School of the Arts and Columbia's Office of University Financial Aid work carefully with current and admitted students to arrange the financing of their degrees. Fellowships, scholarships, federal aid, teaching opportunities and other options are available for eligible students, as well as guidance for finding outside funding.

For more information, visit arts.columbia.edu/admissions/financing-your-degree.
About the School

Columbia University School of the Arts awards the Master of Fine Arts degree in Film, Theatre, Visual Arts and Writing and the Master of Arts degree in Film Studies; it also offers an interdisciplinary program in Sound Arts. The School is a thriving, diverse community of talented, visionary and committed artists from around the world with a faculty comprised of acclaimed and internationally renowned artists, film, theatre and television directors, writers of poetry, fiction and nonfiction, playwrights, producers, critics and scholars. In 2015, the School marked the 50th anniversary of its founding. In 2017, the School opens the Lenfest Center for the Arts, a multi-arts venue designed as a hub for the presentation and creation of art across disciplines on the University’s new Manhattanville campus. The Lenfest will host exhibitions, performances, screenings, symposia, readings, and lectures that present new, global voices and perspectives, as well as an exciting, publicly accessible home for Columbia’s Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery.

Visit arts.columbia.edu/film-brochure for application requirements and financial aid information.