

**The Master of Fine Arts Program  
in Science and Natural History Filmmaking**

# Handbook

Cohort 19



This handbook applies only to the 2019 Cohort whose MFA studies began in Academic Year 2019-2020. The effective date of this Handbook is August 15, 2019.

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## Introduction

Welcome to Montana State University! You are now part of the premier graduate degree program in science and natural history filmmaking. We believe you will find the program to be exciting, insightful, and challenging. The School of Film and Photography (SFP) faculty and staff along with the students in the cohorts preceding yours will guide you in understanding the program's structure and procedures. Our goal is to help you develop your filmmaking knowledge and skills through the many opportunities offered to you in the program.

This MFA Handbook contains the requirements and guidelines for the curriculum leading to your Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Science and Natural History Filmmaking (SNHF) degree. The Handbook will also inform you about the overall philosophy of the program as well as the procedural process for registration, equipment use, comprehensive examinations, and thesis work. Over the course of three years, there may very well be changes and adjustments to the curriculum and procedures, so please be attentive to emails, website postings, and class announcements. The handbook is a School publication and subject to the respective rules of the SFP, the College of Art and Architecture (CAA), the Graduate School, and Montana State University-Bozeman and the Montana Board of Regents. Additional information can be found on the MSU website ([www.montana.edu](http://www.montana.edu)) and the MFA in SNHF website (<http://sfp.montana.edu/sciencenaturefilm>).

As a formal academic discipline, SNHF is entering its nineteenth year. Compared to more traditional fields of study such as mathematics or philosophy, which have thousands of years of tradition and instruction behind them, SNHF is an infant. As a result, the curriculum of the MFA program has undergone several revisions during its short life. Your curriculum reflects years of discussion and work by faculty, SNHF students, and alumni. Our goal is to create a dynamic course of study that provides the skills needed for a successful career in production, academia or both. There will continue to be revisions to the curriculum that reflect the ever-changing nature of filmmaking, the larger role of science media production, and the evolving distribution platforms.

## The Goals of the Program

### The Program Mission Statement

“The mission of the MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking is to train aspiring filmmakers with an interest and background in scientific disciplines to develop the creative, technical, and critical skills needed to create work that will contribute to the public understanding of science.”

Your degree will be an MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking. There is a vocabulary, skill set, and knowledge base common to all filmmakers, whether they make multimillion-dollar studio features, low-budget independent films, episodic television, or web-based productions. You need to share that background even as you pursue your own respective specialties.

The mission statement conveys the Program’s emphasis on finding creative ways of expressing scientific information primarily (although not exclusively) through nonfiction filmmaking and related media. While scientific research is often based on innovation, scientific media too often settles for conventional, even formulaic structures. The MSU program seeks to graduate filmmakers who will challenge and transform traditional media models to work on more profoundly creative levels.

### The Filmmaking Life

Filmmaking is an art of excruciating details. Even the shortest films require hundreds of decisions and many hours of unglamorous work. While almost all our MFA graduates find employment after graduation, it can take a decade or more to become truly established in the field. Salaries are low at the beginning of your career. Those of you transitioning into filmmaking from other jobs or professions need to prepare for a period of time in which your primary reward in your new career will be experience and resume credits rather than money. As in many other fields, you have to prove yourself to others before you can command a high salary.

You may also experience periods of unemployment, underemployment, or job frustration. This is all part of the shared filmmaking experience in the profession.

The MFA degree is your starting point; it is evidence that you have acquired a solid foundation for your future career. It will often get you in the door of a production company, a respected agency, organization or university. Your professional progress afterwards will be determined by your talent and persistence as well as your filmmaking skills. Your MFA is a terminal degree, which means it qualifies as a credential for a college or university tenure-track position at many institutions.

## **Program Costs**

The MFA program is financed directly by the University, like other graduate programs on campus. There are some teaching and graduate assistantships that offer a stipend as well as in-state tuition rates or tuition fee waivers. These positions are open to students in the second and third years of the program and are distributed through a competitive selection process. There are also work opportunities in the School (e.g., Checkout), and on productions related to grant work and professional filming. It is recommended that during your first year you keep your work commitments to a minimum. Your academic workload will be significant, and we have found that students often cannot manage demanding jobs and course work. After the first year, students are usually better able to balance employment and graduate academic responsibilities.

## **What You Are “Buying”**

Whatever your previous media experience has been, you are not a filmmaker yet. The School, faculty and staff are committed to delivering the curricula they believe are necessary for you to develop as filmmakers.

Many academic programs have unfortunately adopted a consumer view of tuition. That is not true of the MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking. Your tuition allows you access to experienced faculty and up-to-date facilities, training in a desirable and continually challenging profession, opportunities for self-expression and self-improvement, admission to an exclusive alumni network, internship advantages with major production companies and organizations, and collegial relationships that will last throughout your career. The faculty consider you colleagues-in-training, not “customers.”

## Protocols

You will find that the administrators, faculty, staff, and the MFA student representative are open to discussion about virtually any subject and are willing to diligently work with you to resolve problems. There are, however, specific protocols to be followed if you have questions about policy, problems with faculty or administrators, or financial concerns.

If you have a problem related to a specific class, discuss the matter first with the instructor. If the matter is not resolved, discuss the issue with the Program Director. Finally, if these avenues are exhausted, make an appointment with the SFP Director.

If you have registration issues, discuss them with the Student Advisor, Vicki Miller.

You may also discuss a wide range of issues with the Graduate Student Representative, who is a fellow MFA student.

## Enrolling On The MFA List-Serve, Facebook Page, and Other Services

The MFA in SNHF program maintains an active email list-serve. During the year we send important notices and information via the list-serve. Please keep your contact information current. The MFA in SNHF Facebook page is an invaluable resource that links you to your fellow students, other cohorts, and program alumni. This is a “closed” page, and you will receive instruction on how to join. There may be additional communication streams that you will be asked to join.

## Staff Responsibilities

The SFP is fortunate to have an experienced and skilled administrative staff. Vicki Miller, the Student Advisor, will coordinate your scheduling, course requirements questions, registration, and thesis-related paperwork, including your application for graduation. Jeanette Goodwin, Assistant to the SFP Director, coordinates teaching assistantships, scholarships, and financial questions. Nick Hill, the Graduate Program Assistant, is available for assistance with program issues and event updates.

## **Equipment Checkout**

Equipment Checkout will be the source of most of your gear, especially during the first year of production. There are very specific rules about borrowing and using the School's film and video equipment. You will be instructed in these procedures as you begin production. Please follow the rules. The equipment is a common resource for everyone in the MFA and BA programs. The gear needs to be used carefully and safely. Tony Pupura, the Equipment Manager, and Colette Campbell, the Assistant Lab Manager, are the primary staff in Checkout. A number of student employees assist them in their work. You will need to read the general Checkout rules and sign a contract that will allow you to check out course-specific gear for the academic year. There are no rental charges for borrowing Checkout gear, but you may be fined for late returns or damaged gear.

## The Curriculum

The current curriculum was developed based upon the overall goals and principles of the SNHF Program, the MFA requirements of the Graduate School, and the experiences of the faculty, staff, and students during the first decade of the program.

You are required to be in residence in the Bozeman area during your first two years of instruction. After the first two years, you will be working on your thesis, and Bozeman residence is not required. You must, however, maintain the enrollment requirements outlined below.

**Time Limits:** You are required to register for full-time continuous enrollment for the first two years of study. You must complete your degree within six years (72 calendar months) of your first enrollment. You are not required to be enrolled during summer semesters although you will need to be enrolled if you have internships or independent study courses during that time.

**Leaves of Absence:** You may take a “leave of absence” (i.e., not enroll for credits) for a maximum of three semesters during the six-year period.

Exceptions to these time limits are granted only in extraordinary circumstances and require joint approval from the head of the SNHF Program, the SFP Director, the Dean of Students, and The Graduate School.

**Third year (and beyond):** After the first two years of study, you must register for a minimum of three credits each semester in order to be considered “enrolled.” (International students will have different enrollment requirements as do recipients of certain kinds of financial aid.) The “leaves of absence” rules above pertain, but you still must complete your degree within the six years of your first semester of enrollment. A leave of absence or unenrolled semesters do not stop or delay your graduation “clock,” except under extraordinary circumstances and exceptions.

# Curriculum Table

## First Year

		Credits
FALL	504 FILM & DOCUMENTARY THEORY	3
	510 FUNDAMENTALS OF FILMMAKING	3
	519 POST PRODUCTION WORKFLOW	3
	581-001 SPECIAL PROFESSIONAL PROJECT: SOUND	3
	581-002 MANDATORY SCREENING	1
	Subtotal	13
SPRING	505 CRITICAL APPROACHES SCIENCE & NATURAL HISTORY FILMMAKING	3
	515 SCIENCE & NATURAL HISTORY FILM PRODUCTION	3
	517 PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT	3
	518 WRITING FOR DOCUMENTARY & NONFICTION FILM	3
	560 POST PRODUCTION WORKFLOW INFO DESIGN	3
	581-002 MANDATORY SCREENING	1
	Subtotal	16
	Total Credits First Year	29

## Second Year

		Credits
FALL	523 SECOND YEAR FILM PREP	2
	526 ALTERNATIVE NONFICTION FILMMAKING	3
	581-002 MANDATORY SCREENING	1
	Subtotal	6
SPRING	513 ADVANCED CINEMATOGRAPHY	3
	525 SECOND YEAR FILM PRODUCTION	3
	581-001 SPECIAL PROFESSIONAL PROJECT: ACTING FOR SCIENTISTS	3
	Subtotal	9
	Total Credits Second Year	15
	Total Cumulative Credits First and Second Year*	44

\*All students must complete at least 1 credit of elective work to fulfill the requirement of 45 completed credits at the end of the first two years. All 45 credits must be completed before beginning thesis work.

## Third Year and Beyond

590 MASTER'S THESIS	15
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## Electives

581-001 SPECIAL PROFESSIONAL PROJECT: 360 VR & DOME**	3
592 INDEPENDENT STUDY	1-6
598 PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP	1-3

\*\*360 VR & DOME is taught every other year in fall semester.

## The Three Years

A minimum of 60 credits is required for the MFA Degree in Science and Natural History Filmmaking, 15 of which need to be taken as your thesis work.

### First Year

The first year courses in the MFA Program provide the foundation for your historical, theoretical, and production knowledge of filmmaking generally and science and natural history production in particular.

**First Year Review:** At the end of the second semester of the first year each student will meet individually with the SNHF Director to receive an assessment of his or her performance and the prospects for success in the program. This review is based on a meeting of the first-year instructors in which they share their experiences with and opinions of the members of the first-year cohort. The intention is to offer each student an in-depth evaluation at a critical juncture in the MFA degree process. If a review is heavily negative, the faculty may recommend that a student leave the Program.

### Second Year

The second year offers the opportunity to consolidate the knowledge learned in the first year through more in-depth studies and more challenging production work. You will be enrolled with other members of your cohort in courses related to contemporary production history and trends, science filmmaking, the second-year film production workshop, and a course in alternative nonfiction filmmaking. You will need to enroll in at least one course of elective work.

**Comprehensive Exam:** All degree candidates must take and pass the comprehensive examination prior to enrolling in thesis credits. The written portion of the exam is administered during the first full week of the spring semester of your second year. There will not be any exceptions to the schedule or location of the exam. If you miss the examination, then you may not take it again until the following year, which could seriously disrupt your course completion schedule. The exam will consist of two parts. The written exam will contain essay questions covering SNHF history, theory, and production as well as a short-answer section pertaining to films screened as part of the curriculum. The written

exam will be four hours in length. A “hands-on” practical exam, which will require completion of a short production assignment that will be shot, edited, and posted online within a three-hour period will be conducted within the week following the written exam.

**Comprehensive Exam Content:** The Comprehensive Exam Committee (CEC) will write, administer, and grade the exam. The questions will be based on the reading and viewing lists included in this handbook, your course work, and any additional information provided during special seminars, lectures, or presentations during your time in the program up until the date the exam is administered (excluding summers and holiday breaks). **It is extremely important that you have watched ALL 45 of the films listed in this Handbook.** There will be a mandatory weekly screening during each semester week between Orientation and your Comprehensive Exam semester to facilitate your completion of this required viewing. For the production part of your exam, you will be asked to complete a short production assignment. All necessary tools will be provided.

**Comprehensive Exam Grading:** The exam is marked high pass, pass, or fail and is graded by the three members of the committee. If any member of the Committee fails you on either the entire exam or one part of it, you will fail the exam. If you fail, you will be re-tested with a different but similar exam during the last week of the spring semester. If you fail the exam a second time, you will be asked to leave the program.

**The Second-Year Film:** In the first semester of your second year, you will begin production of your second-year film. Most of the fall semester will be spent preparing for your film, although you may be required to begin shooting in the fall if the variables involved (weather, location, time needed) require it. The faculty member in your second-year workshop class will be responsible for overseeing your second-year film, which must be completed by finals week in May of the second year. “Completed” means that the film is ready for public or commercial exhibition; that is, the final sound mix has been completed, the color grading is finished, titles, captioning, and credit sequences are completed, and all rights have been officially secured. Your second-year film may either be agenda-based (i.e., produced for a client or agency) or on a subject of your own choosing.

You must pass your Comprehensive Examination, successfully com-

plete your second-year film, and have completed a total of at least 45 credits before moving on to your thesis work. There are no exceptions to these rules.

## Third Year

### The Thesis and Thesis Film

**The Thesis Committee:** Students are responsible for forming their Thesis Committee in accordance with the guidelines and deadlines communicated by the Graduate School and SFP. This committee will oversee both your written thesis and your thesis film. The Committee must include at least three tenured or tenure-track faculty members from the SFP. With special permission from both the Committee Chair and the SNHF Director, you may include a fourth faculty member from outside the School whose special expertise will be valuable to the completion of your thesis and your thesis film. You will submit your Committee members' names on the Program of Study Graduate School form to Vicki Miller. One faculty member must be listed as the Chair. The Chair will be responsible for reviewing drafts of your thesis, rough and fine cuts of your film, and the general administration of your thesis work. The Chair will be your mentor for the thesis. The Committee members must be submitted to the Graduate School by the end of the first semester of the second year.

At any time during the thesis process, a faculty member may resign as Chair or as a Committee member. A thesis student may also decide to change chairs or Committee members. If the student wishes to make these changes, he or she must inform all current Committee members and then select a new member or members. The Committee paperwork called the Program of Study form must then be re-filed with Vicki Miller for resubmission to the Graduate School. The Program of Study Form may be found on the Graduate School website at <http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>. The form should be signed by your Committee members and submitted to Vicki Miller.

While many students require more than one year to complete the thesis work, many are able to finish the SNHF Program, including the thesis, within three years. You must register for a minimum of three credits the semester you wish to graduate.

The MFA graduate program requires that you submit both a thesis

film of at least 10-15-minutes in length (animated works may be shorter) and a written thesis of no less than 5,000 words (exclusive of bibliography, footnotes, endnotes, or any supporting materials). Some exceptions to these rules may be made at the discretion of your Committee Chair. The film must reflect your own ideas and subject matter, even if the footage is acquired through work with an agency, company, or organization. The written thesis will follow the case study model in which the student discusses the planning, production, rationale, aesthetic choices, and goals of the film.

**Focus of the Thesis Film:** The thesis film should express your own ideas about science and natural history through a production that pushes the boundaries of nonfiction filmmaking through content, form, or both. With your thesis film you should reveal your knowledge and understanding of other dominant modes of documentary techniques. You are being asked to explore the process of making a science or natural history film that is freed from the more formal or informal considerations of mainstream filmmaking.

**Thesis Proposal Requirements:** Once your Committee is appointed and you have passed the Comprehensive Exam, you can begin your thesis work following completion of your fourth semester. Your first steps are to submit the following materials to your Committee Chair for approval:

**A Proposal for a Thesis Film.** You must prepare a proposal for a film that thematically, technically or aesthetically attempts to push the boundaries of science and natural history filmmaking. Make sure your proposal clarifies the aesthetic vision for your film as well as its subject matter.

**A Proposal and Outline for a Thesis Essay.** You must propose a topic and a central argument for your essay that will explain your choices and process in the film. Your thesis, which should be between 20-40 pages in length, must include appropriately formatted research citations and a bibliography of works used in your thesis. The SFP uses the MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing, 3rd Edition, from the Modern Language Association, as the style sheet for citations and usage.

Your Chair will set specific requirements about the form of your proposals and the scheduling of your work. You should also make sure you have signed up for the Grammarly software.

**Supervision of the Thesis and Role of Committee Members:** The Chair of the committee has a great deal of discretion in terms of how the thesis process will proceed. The thesis experience is usually a mentoring situation, and the only universal guideline is that both the written thesis and the thesis film should be completed within the required period of time and in accordance with accepted academic standards of intellectual rigor, professionalism, accuracy, and excellence. Both the thesis film and essay must be completed and successfully defended no later than six years after you have begun your studies. Typically, committee members are first shown the thesis film at the rough cut stage and the written thesis at the rough draft stage.

**A Note About Summer:** Summer is not an appropriate time for students to seek mentoring from the Thesis Chair or Committee Members. Faculty have additional responsibilities during these months and should not be asked to view rough cuts, read written drafts, or help brainstorm ideas. Please see the information on page 18 about summer defenses.

**Changes in the Chair and Committee Members:** Students may request a new Chair and Committee Chairs may elect to step down at any time during the process. In either case, the student is responsible for selecting a new Chair and submitting the appropriate revised paperwork.

**Rights Clearances and MFA Acknowledgement:** It is expected that the student and Chair will ensure that all music, literary, material, location, and personal release rights will be cleared before the thesis defense. If there are any rights encumbrances, the thesis may be rejected by The Graduate School or SFP, even if successfully defended.

All thesis films **MUST** have the MFA acknowledgement below included in the final credits of the thesis film, preferably at the conclusion of the film's credits right above or before the copyright notice. The following exact wording must be included:

*Produced as part of the degree requirements for the MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking Program in the School of Film and Photography, Montana State University-Bozeman*

If this exact wording is not included, the film is considered incomplete and can be challenged even after its submission to The Graduate School. The acknowledgement must appear on all copies and versions of the film. An MSU logo is not required.

**Thesis Paperwork:** The student must complete the Application for Advanced Degree form found on The Graduate School Site Form section. This form is due early in the semester in which you intend to graduate (usually, the third week or so), so check The Graduate School site for the deadline. There are links to both the forms and the deadline calendar on the SNHF site as well. The form should be signed by the appropriate faculty members and then submitted by you to Vicki Miller. The responsibility for completing forms and meeting deadlines falls entirely upon the student, so please be diligent about completing what is required of you. You must be enrolled for at least three credits during the semester in which you intend to graduate.

**Thesis Schedule:** Each Committee Chair will provide a schedule of thesis milestones to be completed by the student. If a student wishes to complete the degree within three years, this goal will be reflected in the schedule.

## **The Thesis Defense**

If a student wishes to graduate within a specific academic year and within a specific semester, the student should first consult with the Committee Chair to ensure that adequate progress has been made that will permit a defense on the desired schedule. The student should announce his or her intention to defend as early as possible. The Chair is under no obligation to follow the student's proposed schedule and may insist on delaying the defense. The defense must be scheduled no later than one week before the "submission date" established by the Graduate School and listed on The Graduate School website. This schedule will allow the candidate an oppor-

tunity to make revisions if required to do so by the Thesis Committee.

When your Chair and the other committee members agree that the student is ready to defend the film and thesis, a three-hour defense will be scheduled. The thesis and film titles as well as the date, time, and location of the defense must be publicly announced at least two weeks prior to the defense date through normal University media channels including emails, websites, social media, and posted announcements.

At least two weeks before the defense, the candidate should submit the written thesis draft to the appropriate Graduate School staff member so the thesis formatting may be approved. The formatting guidelines are found on The Graduate School site at <http://www.montana.edu/etd>.

**Scheduling the Defense:** The defense must be scheduled for three hours. Friends, colleagues, faculty, and the general public may be invited to attend the first hour of the defense. The candidate will give a formal presentation about the thesis, screen the thesis film or excerpts (depending on the film's length), and answer questions from the gathered group. After the first hour, all the guests will be asked to leave, and the candidate will then defend the thesis work before his or her thesis committee. The defense may be completed in fewer than three hours if the Committee agrees.

**Committee Deliberation:** After the student's defense of his or her work is completed, it is customary for the candidate to be asked to leave the room while the committee deliberates a "pass" or "fail" judgment. A candidate does not have to have a unanimously positive vote of the committee to pass, but a majority of members must vote in favor of passing. If one or more members abstain and there is a tie, the decision would then have to go to The Graduate School for consultation. After the Committee votes and discusses any changes to the film or thesis that it would like made before final submission, the candidate is asked to return to the room. The Committee then delivers its decision. If the candidate passes, the Committee will then request the changes, if any, it wishes to be made before submission. Only the Chair needs to verify that the changes have been carried out before the film and thesis are submitted to the SFP and Graduate School.

**Defense Paperwork:** Each candidate should bring the following two required Graduate School forms to the defense: Report on Comprehensive Exam/Thesis Defense, Master's and Doctoral; and the Certificate of Ap-

proval Form. The thesis candidate should also download the SFP Film/Video /Digital File Submission Form located here: <http://sfp.montana.edu/sciencenaturefilm/forms/>. Immediately after a successful completion of the defense, committee members will sign the two Graduate School forms. The SFP Film/Video /Digital File Submission Form needs to be signed only by the Committee Chair. The three forms should then be taken to Vicki Miller, who will assist the successful candidates in correctly routing the completed forms. The student will submit their thesis and an H.264 compressed mp4 directly to the Graduate School at [gradformatting@montana.edu](mailto:gradformatting@montana.edu) immediately after a successful defense. If the file for the Graduate School is more than 5GB, please contact the submission advisor at [gradformatting@montana.edu](mailto:gradformatting@montana.edu). Two digital copies of the film (both an H.264 compressed mp4 file and a high resolution Apple ProRes QuickTime uncompressed file) must be submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant in VCB 225 for archiving in the SFP database and the Electronic Thesis Film Database (ETFD), accessible through the MFA website. The Graduate Program Assistant will also submit the thesis film files to the Graduate School as part of the degree requirements.

## Example Thesis Work Timeline

**Important Note:** The required deadlines for submission to The Graduate School and the SFP of your thesis work and forms are usually two weeks prior to finals week, not the end of the semester. The faculty will not accept “last-minute” defense work. A suggested schedule for your defense semester is the following:

<b>Rough Cut of Film/Early Draft of Paper</b>	<b>10 Weeks Before Submission Due Date</b>
<b>Next Cut of film/Next Draft of Paper</b>	<b>7 Weeks Before Submission Date</b>
<b>Fine Cut of Film/Advanced Draft of Paper</b>	<b>5 Weeks Before Submission Date</b>
<b>Defense Cut of Film/Defense Draft of Paper</b>	<b>3 Weeks Before Submission Date</b>
<b>Defense</b>	<b>1 Week Before Graduate School Submission Due Date (To allow revision time)</b>

**NOTE:** Because faculty serve on multiple committees, earlier timeframes may be required.

**Graduate School Submission:** Following a successful defense, you are required to turn in an electronic copy of your correctly formatted thesis to The Graduate School. The Graduate School Assistant will submit the electronic copy of your film to the Graduate school. The appropriate forms as outlined above must be submitted as well.

**One Credit Extension:** If a student cannot complete the thesis work and defense by the Graduate School deadline but can finish these requirements before the start of classes for the following semester, the student may register for a one-credit extension. Please see the Graduate School website for additional information about this option.

**Summer Defenses.** No faculty member is required to either chair or participate in a defense during the summer semester. Note that most faculty are “off contract” during the summer months and are typically involved in their own production and research work, often away from campus. A summer defense will be scheduled only if the Chair and the other Committee members unanimously agree to conduct the defense. Otherwise, the defense will be delayed until the following fall semester.

**A Note about the MFA Archiving and Web Access Policy:** The official MFA site includes a searchable database of the SNHF thesis films that permits online access to the productions. This database mirrors the written thesis accessibility, involving all graduate degree-granting departments on campus, available through The Graduate School. (Please visit <http://etd.lib.montana.edu/etd/view/> to see the electronic versions of the written theses). The SFP and MSU may make the thesis films accessible in whole or in part (for example, on the MFA website) as indicated in the Student Agreement Section of the Certificate of Approval Form for Theses and Dissertations signed by each student upon the successful completion of the thesis defense. (Please see above.) The default action will be to make the thesis film accessible through the site. If a student does not wish to make the film immediately available through the site, the student must request the one-year delay exception on the Certificate of Approval Form. If the delay is granted by the Committee, a one-year delay will go into effect before the film is available on the MFA website. The SNHF Thesis Film Database may be accessed at: <http://sfp.montana.edu/sciencenaturefilm/film-archive.html>

## SFP MFA in SNHF Defense Procedures

Here is the outline of the procedures and forms required for the MFA defense of written thesis and thesis film in the School of Film and Photography. All the required forms EXCEPT the Film Digital Submission form are found at <http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html> The Film Digital Submission Form is found under Student Forms at <http://sfp.montana.edu/productionforms.html>. Adherence to the following steps, except as otherwise noted, is the responsibility of the Chair of each student's Graduate Committee.

1. Students must update their Program of Study Form to make sure it reflects the three current members of the Committee.
2. The student must submit the Graduation Application form and consult the Graduation Checklist. This is an important step because it then signals an audit of courses and credits in the Graduate School. Changes in the Program of Study or the Committee require the forms for these purposes.
3. Students must complete a minimum of 15 credits of 590 (Thesis) work. These credits may be divided among multiple semesters.
4. A student MUST be enrolled for three credits during the semester in which the thesis work will be completed.
5. When the Chair is confident the written thesis is at or near completion, the student must submit it to the Graduate School for a formatting review PRIOR to the defense. The thesis should be emailed to [gradformatting@montana.edu](mailto:gradformatting@montana.edu).
6. The Chair is responsible for scheduling the defense. Assistance can be obtained from the Graduate Program Assistant (currently Nick Hill) to find and schedule a date, time, and room.
7. The Chair should attempt to give the other Committee members at least two weeks to review the completed written thesis and film. The written thesis and film may be shared with the other two Committee members at any time and as often during the writing and production process as the Chair deems appropriate.
8. The SFP Student Advisor (currently Vicki Miller) MUST be informed of the planned defense at least two weeks prior to the date of the defense. This allows the required campus-wide announcement to be sent out through the usual MSU communications channels.

9. If the Chair does not think the candidate can complete the work by the required Graduate School deadline, (which is usually two weeks earlier than the last day of classes), then a one-credit extension may be granted. The form and details for this process may be found on the Graduate School website: [http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq\\_com-mencement.html#commencement\\_extension](http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_com-mencement.html#commencement_extension). This extends the time for the successful completion of the defense until the first day of classes of the following semester.

10. All the forms involved in the above process MUST be submitted to the Student Advisor, who will forward them to the Graduate School.

11. The student must bring three forms to the defense: the Certificate of Approval Form; Report on Comprehensive Exam/Thesis Defense, Masters and Doctoral form; and the Film Digital Submission Form.

12. SFP follows the “science” model of a defense. The defense may last up to three hours, and that amount of time should be allowed in the scheduling. The first hour is open to the general MSU Community and includes a screening of the film and a short summary of the written thesis presented by the student. Questions (theoretically on any subject) may be asked of the candidate by anyone in attendance. After the first hour, the non-Committee attendees are asked to leave, and the Committee and the candidate then discuss the written and filmed work. When the Chair is confident that the candidate has been given adequate time to defend the work, the Committee deliberates on whether the defense has been successful. The candidate is asked to leave the defense room during these discussions. The Committee then decides on a pass, high pass, or failure decision, invites the candidate back into the room to hear the decision, and then the candidate and Committee sign the appropriate forms. The Committee may request revisions to either the film or written thesis or both before signing the forms. The Chair coordinates and schedules these changes.

13. The two Graduate School Forms are submitted to the Student Advisor, the Submission Form and a QuickTime and a 422 ProRes copy of the film are submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant for the SFP archives, and the student submits the written thesis as a PDF along with a H.264 compressed version of the film to the Graduate School Formatting email [gradformatting@montana.edu](mailto:gradformatting@montana.edu). If the file for the Graduate School is larger than 5GB, please contact the submission advisor at [gradformatting@montana.edu](mailto:gradformatting@montana.edu).

## Registration and General Policies

### Registering for Courses in the MFA Program

The Science and Natural History Filmmaking courses are restricted entry, meaning that students must have special permission to take these courses. Therefore, the Student Coordinator (Vicki Miller) registers you in courses each semester. An e-mail is sent out to all MFA students each semester with a registration notification. You must let Vicki know which classes you intend to take by the deadline accompanying this notice.

It is your responsibility to:

- Make sure that you do not have a HOLD on your account. MyInfo > Student Services and Financial Aid > Student Records > View Holds
- Inform Vicki Miller of Your Semester's Courses by the deadline. The registration deadline for the following semester is sent via email.
- Check your "My Info" account each semester. Verify that you are registered for the correct courses.
- Confirm your Attendance with MSU. This must be done by every student at the beginning of every semester. Print your account balance (zero or a credit), sign the bottom of the page and return it via mail (Student Accounts, Box 172640 Bozeman, MT 59717), fax (406-994-1954) or the drop box in Montana Hall. If you do not confirm your attendance each semester the Registrar will automatically drop you from classes.

### Registering for Courses OUTSIDE of the MFA Program:

If you wish to take courses outside of the SFP's graduate program courses, you will need to get the approval of the SNHF Director and the SFP Program Director. If approved, see Vicki Miller for help with registering for outside courses.

## Schedule of Classes

The Schedule of Classes can be found on-line.

MyInfo > Schedule of Classes

## Important Registration Concerns & Considerations

Here is some additional information that may apply to your situation.

- If you are an International Student, you need to be registered for nine credits each semester (excluding your final thesis semester).
- If you have an appointment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant or are receiving other financial aid, you do need to be registered for a minimum of six credits each semester.
- If you are living in On-Campus Housing, you will need to be registered for five credits each semester.
- In order to be **automatically** covered by MSU's Health Insurance, you must be registered for a minimum of 7 credits each semester.
- All classes must be at the 500 level or above.

Please consult with MSU's Graduate Policies On-line at <http://www.montana.edu/gradstudies> or talk with the Division of Graduate Education for further information. **Not all policies are listed here.**

## Absences And Incompletes

**Absences:** Each instructor has her/his own guidelines regarding absences from class and you should consult the syllabus for a course to determine what that policy is.

From time to time, however, students have asked permission to miss one, two, three or more weeks of class because of a special opportunity. The program does not allow students to exceed the normal number of absences allowed by the instructor under any circumstances.

The first year depends upon your ability to attend classes, and if you feel you have an opportunity that you cannot resist, then you should with-

draw from the course. In a lock-step curriculum, withdrawing from one course usually means withdrawing from the Program.

**Incompletes:** An instructor may give a grade of “I” (Incomplete) when students have been unable to complete their academic obligations because of circumstances beyond their control. In order to receive an incomplete, you will have to petition the course instructor and submit the appropriate forms to the Registrar.

The Incomplete form requires two important pieces of information:

- what must be done to complete the requirements for the course;
- by what date this work must be completed. This information should be shared between the instructor and the student.

Your instructor may require that you finish the work on a specific date or may give you until the end of the following semester.

**Please note the following very carefully:** All responsibility falls upon the student to complete the coursework and to complete it on time.

- An Incomplete will automatically turn into an “F” on the expiration date. Once you have been given an “F” that grade then becomes a permanent part of your academic record.
- Do not expect to be reminded either by the instructor, the department, or the university that you have an incomplete or that your deadline for completion is approaching.
- Extensions for Incompletes are given only in exceptional circumstances. The program expects all work to be completed within the time allotted on the original incomplete form. The maximum amount of time anyone can have to complete an incomplete is one full semester.

Information about dropping, withdrawing, or requesting an incomplete can be found here: <http://www.montana.edu/wwwds/withdraw.html>.

## SFP Graduate Teaching Assistant Procedures and Protocols

The following procedures and protocols must be observed by all graduate teaching assistants in the School of Film and Photography (SFP). A teaching assistantship (TA) is a paid position and each TA is an employee of Montana State University (MSU). As with all other MUS employees TAs have attendance and performance requirements that must be fulfilled. Failure to do so can result in a reduction of the stipend and/or fee waiver or, in the worst cases, dismissal. By signing your TA contract and initialing this list of procedures and protocols, you agree to observe these requirements:

1. Each TA must work a total of 19 hours per week.
2. Each TA must remain an SFP graduate student in good standing, which, at a minimum, means maintaining a B average and making steady progress towards the MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking degree.
3. Each TA must register for a minimum of six credits for each semester in which classes will be taught.
4. Tuition will be waived for up to 9 credits of each semester taught.
5. Before the start of each semester of a TA appointment, the TA must meet with the instructor or instructors with whom the TA will be working. The TA must ensure the meeting takes place and should take the initiative to contact the instructor(s).
6. There are no unexcused absences for TAs. If a TA will miss a class for any reason, including illness or a death in the family, the TA must make every effort to inform the instructor(s) as far ahead of the date of the absence as possible.
7. If the TA knows that an absence is likely to occur during the upcoming semester (for example, to attend a festival or to work on a second-year or thesis film), the TA must inform the instructor(s) at least one week before the semester begins.
8. TA who will be absent from a teaching assignment must make every effort to have another TA substitute in the missed class. If no other TA is available, the instructor(s) and SNHF Program Director must be advised immediately so other arrangements may be made.

9. TAs may miss no more than one week of class during a semester for festival or academic commitments. The instructor(s) must be informed as far ahead of the absence dates as possible.

10. Any absence of more than one week must be approved in writing (emails are acceptable) before the dates of the absence take place. In cases of illness or a death in the family, any absence of more than a week should also be agreed to by the instructor(s).

11. Failure to observe the above procedures and protocols may be grounds for reduced pay or dismissal in accordance with University regulations and procedures.

## Student Code of Conduct

This policy is part of the instructional design of this program and is intended to create and sustain a dialogue concerning the professional, artistic, and personal standards of conduct in the film industry. Everyone who remains in this program is expected to adhere to this professional standard.

1. I will treat everyone in this program with respect. At all times my behavior will reflect this respect for others both in their presence and outside their presence. This is to develop trust, which is the core of all meaningful relationships. I understand that without trust, all progress and all work in this program will eventually fail.
2. I will speak and conduct myself in a manner that demonstrates respect for others at all times. I understand it is disrespectful and unethical to speak of others' talent, abilities, actions, or reputation outside their presence, and to complain about, demean, or degrade others in any way is inappropriate and unethical, and I will not tolerate it. I pledge to speak directly [one-on-one and privately] to anyone who I perceive has wronged me or with whom I have a "conflict" and I promise not to speak about them to others outside

of their presence.

3. I will actively engage in the workshop milieu of this program. I understand this is an atmosphere that encourages critique, which is defined as a healthy, supportive, and constructive dialogue with each other about our work. I will do everything in my means to distinguish for myself and for others the vast difference between professional critique and personal criticism. I will not get defensive or take personally critical input from others about my work, especially when it is offered in the spirit of professional critique. I will only grow if I have the integrity to be honest with each other, and with myself.
4. I understand this code of conduct is the professional standard of conduct in the motion picture industry.
5. I understand this code of conduct is intended to help me hone the critical analysis skills necessary to achieving at the highest tier. I also understand that this policy is meant to assist me in developing the integrity and honesty required to effectively critique the work of others, let alone be honest about my own work with myself. I pledge to treat everyone with respect.

## Reading and Viewing List

Faculty may make additions to this list during the course of study. In addition, any texts or films assigned in any *required* class may be referenced on the Comprehensive Exam or during a thesis defense.

### Books

- Austin, Tom and Wilma de John. *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives and Practices*. ISBN-13: 978-0335221912
- Bernard, Sheila Curran. *Documentary Storytelling, Creative Nonfiction on Screen*. 3rd Edition. 2011.
- Brown, B: *Cinematography* ISBN-13: 978-1879505414
- Bousé, Derek. *Wildlife Films*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
- Bordwell and Thompson. *Film Art*, 8th Edition
- Bruzzi, Stella. *New Documentary: a Critical Introduction*

- Burt, Jonathan. *Animals in Film*. London: Reaktion Books, 2002.
- Corbett, Julia B.: *Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages*. ISBN-13:978-1597260688
- Chris, Cynthia. *Watching Wildlife*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Cronon, William. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. N.Y.: W. Norton and Co., 1996.
- Daston, Lorraine and Gregg Mitman. *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Ellis, Jack C. and McLane, Betsy A, *A New History of Documentary Film*. New York: Continuum Press, 2005.
- Evernden, Neil. *The Social Creation of Nature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Haraway, Donna. *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. New York and London: Routledge, 1989. ISBN 0-415-90294-0.
- Hess, David J.. *Science Studies: An Advanced Introduction*. New York and London: New York UP, 1997. ISBN 0-8147-3564-9.
- Jones, Caroline A. and Peter Galison. *Picturing Science, Producing Art*. New York and London: Routledge, 1998. ISBN 0-415-91912-6.
- Latour, Bruno and Steve Woolgar. *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986. ISBN 0-691-02832-X.
- Lippit, Akira Mizuta. *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife*. Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 2000. ISBN 0-8166-3485-8
- Macdonald. *The Garden in the Machine: a Field Guide to Independent Films About Place*
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. London: Oxford UP, 1964. ISBN 0-19-500738-7.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Mitman, Gregg. *Reel Nature*. Cambridge, MA: University of Harvard Press, 1999.
- Murch, Walter. *In the Blink of an Eye*. Los Angeles: Silman-James, Rev. 2nd. Edition, 2001.
- Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Rabiger, Michael. *Directing the Documentary*. 5th Ed. Boston: Focal Press, 2005.
- Renov, Michael, ed. *Theorizing Documentary*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Rony, Fatimah Tobing. *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Stam, Robert. *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2000)
- Tobias, Ronald. *When the Wolf Rises in the Heart: Theodore Roosevelt and the American Moral View of Nature*. TBP, 2001, Michigan State University Press.

## Articles

- Barthes, Roland. "The Photographic Message." *A Barthes Reader*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1980. 194-210.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken, 1968. 217-251. ISBN 0-8052-0241-2.
- Berger, John. "Why Look at Animals?" from *About Looking*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. 3-28.
- Braudy, Leo. *The Genre of Nature. Refiguring American Film Genres: Theory and History*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1998. 278-309.
- Crowther, Barbara. "Viewing What Comes Naturally: A Feminist Approach to Television Natural History," *Women's Studies International Press*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 289-300, 1997.
- Fay, Michael J. "In the Land of Surfing Hippos." *National Geographic Magazine*. August 2004, p. 100-126.
- Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism." *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984. 206-213. ISBN 0-394-71340-0.
- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." 1987. <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>
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- Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," *Social Text*, No. 11 (Winter, 1984-1985), pp. 20-64.
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- Henson, Don. "Television Archaeology: Education or Entertainment?" [www.history.ac.uk](http://www.history.ac.uk), 1-4.
- Hindery, Jr., Leo. "Hindery's Rules of Dealmaking: Learning from the Masters," *OnMedia Newsletter*, January 14, 2003, 1-14.
- Johnson, Bill. "Techniques for Creating a Story Premise," *Internet Screenwriter's Network*, 2003.
- Landecker, Hannah. "Cellular Features: Microcinematography and Film Theory." *Critical Inquiry*. 31 (Summer 2005). 903-937.
- Martin, Emily. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." *Feminism and Science*. Evelyn Fox Keller and Helen E. Longino (Eds.) 103-117. ISBN 0-19-875146-X.
- David Pierson, "Hey! They're Just Like Us! Representations of the Animal World in the Discovery Channel's Nature Programming," *The Journal of Popular Culture*. 38, No. 4 (2005). 698-711.
- Plumwood, Val. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London and New York: Routledge Press, 2002. 13-61.

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- Ross, Andrew. "The Drought This Time." *Strange Weather: Culture, Science and Technology in the Age of Limits*. London and New York: Verso, 1991. 193-249. ISBN 0-86091-567-0.
- Sitney, P.Adams, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford Univ. press, 2002. "Meshes of the Afternoon," pp. 3-16; "Ritual and Nature," pp. 17-41; "Recovered Innocence," pp. 315-346.
- Wilson, Alexander. "Looking at the Non-Human: Nature Movies and TV," from *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992. 117-155.
- Wynne, Brian. "Misunderstood Misunderstandings: Social Identities and Public Uptake of Science." *Public Understanding of Science*, No. 19 (4) July 2010. P. 19-46

## Films

The following 45 films have been selected by the Faculty to represent the bare minimum we expect students to know in order to be successful in the comprehensive exam. There may be additional films screened in your classes that are also required viewing. These films will be screened over the 45 weeks (3 semesters of 15 weeks each) between your orientation to the program and your comprehensive exam. Screening times will be announced. Attendance is mandatory. Films will not be screened in the order listed below.

1. An Inconvenient Truth (Al Gore, 2006)
2. Bambi (Walt Disney, 1942)
3. Blackfish (Gabriela Cowperthwaite, 2013)
4. Capturing the Friedmans (Andrew Jarecki, 2003)
5. Cartel Land (Matthew Heineman, 2015)
6. Chasing Ice (Jeff Orlowski, 2012)
7. Chasing Coral (Jeff Orlowski, 2017)
8. Citizenfour (Laura Poitras, 2014)
9. Crumb (Terry Zwigoff, 1995)
10. Darwin's Nightmare (Hubert Sauper, 2004)
11. Exit Through the Gift Shop (Banksy, 2010)
12. Food Inc. (Robert Kenner, 2008)
13. Gates of Heaven (Errol Morris, 1978)
14. Green (Patrick Rouzel, 2009)
15. Grey Gardens (Albert and David Maysles, 1975)
16. Grizzly Man, (Werner Herzog, 2005)
17. Harvest of Shame (Fred W. Friendly, 1960)

18. Helvetica (Gary Hustwit, 2007)
19. King Corn (Aaron Woolf, 2007)
20. March of the Penguins (Luc Jacquet, 2005)
21. Murderball (Henry Alex Rubin, Dana Adam Shapiro, 2005)
22. Nanook of the North, (Robert Flaherty, 1922)
23. Particle Fever (Mark Levinson, 2013)
24. Persepolis (Marjane Satrapi, Vincent Paronnaud, 2007)
25. Planet Earth (Discovery Channel, 2006)
26. Racing Extinction (Louie Psihoyos, 2015)
27. Roger and Me (Michael Moore, 1989)
28. Sans Soleil, (Chris Marker, 1983)
29. Sherman's March (Ross McElwee, 1986)
30. Standard Operating Procedure (Errol Morris)
31. Sweetgrass (Lucien Castaing-Taylor & Ilisa Barbash, 2009)
32. Tarnation (Jonathan Caouette, 2003)
33. Taxi to the Dark Side (Alex Gibney, 2007)
34. The Act of Killing (Josh Oppenheimer 2013)
35. The Cove (Louie Psihoyos 2009)
36. The Gleaners and I, (Agnes Varda, 2002)
37. The Story of the Weeping Camel (Byambasuren Dayaa and Luigi Falorni, 2004)
38. The Wild Thornberry's Movie (Jeff McGrath, Cathy Malkasian, 2002)
39. Thin Blue Line (Errol Morris, 1988)
40. This is Spinal Tap (Rob Reiner, 1984)
41. Touching the Void (Kevin Macdonald, 2003)
42. Waltz with Bashir (Ari Folman, 2008)
43. Warlords of Ivory (National Geographic, 2015)
44. Winged Migration (Jacques Perrin, 2001)
45. Zoo (Frederick Wiseman, 1993)

## Faculty Contact Information

Faculty and staff have offices in the VCB (Visual Communications Building) or the Black Box Theater, which is attached to the VCB.

The best way to reach faculty is via email.

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