

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

Handbook

Cohort 22



School of
Film & Photography

This handbook applies only to the 2022 Cohort whose MFA studies began in Academic Year 2022-2023. The effective date of this Handbook is August 24, 2022.

ver 22.0

Table Of Contents

Mission Statement	3
Introduction	3
MFA Program	4
MFA Program Curriculum	6
Curriculum Table	7
First Year Review	8
Comprehensive Exam	8
Time Limits	9
Production Work	9
Thesis Work	10
Thesis Film	11
Thesis Committee	12
Thesis Defense	14
Application to Graduate	16
Registration and General Policies	19
SFP Graduate Teaching Assistant	21
Protocols and Procedures	
Code of Conduct	23
Reading/Viewing List	26
Faculty Contact Information	30
Staff Contact Information	31

Mission Statement

The School of Film and Photography (SFP) is dedicated to providing quality education in film production for one graduate program, the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Science and Natural History Filmmaking (SNHF).

The mission of the MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking program 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.

The mission statement conveys the Program's emphasis on finding creative ways of expressing scientific information primarily through nonfiction filmmaking and related media. Scientific research is often based on innovation, and the faculty believe scientific media can and should challenge and transform traditional media models to work on more profoundly creative levels.

Introduction

This MFA Handbook contains the requirements and guidelines for the curriculum leading to your Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in Science and Natural History Filmmaking (SNHF). 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 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) and the MFA in SNHF website (<http://sfp.montana.edu/sciencenaturefilm/>).

In addition, there are a number of rules, regulations, and deadlines that are set by the Graduate School. It is the responsibility of the graduate

student to follow the policies of the Graduate School For the latest deadlines, forms, and policy updates, please refer to the Graduate School's website: www.montana.edu/gradschool/.

As you enter this program, the SNHF program is entering its 22nd year. The School has had time to reflect, revise, and refine the curriculum to offer a dynamic course of study that provides the skills needed for crafting a career in nonfiction film production, which includes thoughtful reflection on the historical and contemporary landscape of documentary filmmaking.

MFA Program

You enter the program alongside a co-hort of other individuals who share similar values and have made a similar commitment. As a community of artists and scholars you gain 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 relationships that will last throughout your career. The faculty considers you colleagues-in-training.

Program Support

A limited number of Graduate Teaching Assistant positions are open to you during your second year of the program and beyond and are distributed through a competitive selection process. These positions offer a stipend as well as in-state tuition rates and up to twelve credits waived. There are also work opportunities in the School 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 level academic responsibilities. It is now required that all students have their own personal computer. Follow the link to suggested computers that fit the specs needed for this program:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/18nfDliay_k3AMhAq1fmIgg3GPVHdnG6ziO2qrcMsZLg/edit.

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 with the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator. The SNHF Facebook page is an invaluable resource that links you to your fellow students, other cohorts and program alumni. This is a private group, and you will receive instruction on how to join during orientation. There may be additional communication streams that you will be asked to join.

Program Organization

The SFP is fortunate to have an experienced and skilled administrative staff. The Student Assistant MFA Coordinator will coordinate your scheduling, course requirement questions, registration, graduate teaching assistantship assignments, and thesis-related paperwork, including your application for graduation. Shelley Fleming, Business Operations Manager and Assistant to the SFP Director, coordinates graduate teaching assistantship's wages, scholarships, grants, and financial questions.

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 you may face. If you have a question or problem related to a specific class, please 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. You may also discuss a wide range of issues with the Graduate Student Representative, who is a fellow MFA student. The Graduate Student Representative will then bring this forward to administration.

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 and during your orientation. Please follow the rules. The equipment is a common resource for everyone in the MFA, BFA and BA programs. The gear needs to be used carefully and safely. Tony Purpura, the Technology Coordinator, and

Colette Campbell, the Assistant Technology Coordinator, are the primary staff in Checkout. A number of student employees assist them in their work.

Our reservation system is called Connect2 (<https://sfpcheckout.msu.montana.edu/>) and requires you to create an account before you can reserve any equipment or rooms. To create this account you will need your NetID, which can be found in your MyInfo account.

MFA Program 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 two decades of the program.

A minimum of 60 credits is required to complete the MFA degree in Science and Natural History Filmmaking. You must pass your Comprehensive Examination, successfully complete your second-year film, and have successfully completed a total of at least 45 credits before moving on to your thesis work. There are no exceptions to these rules.

Coursework, Credits, and Timeline

The first and second year comprise the coursework portion of the curriculum. These courses provide the foundation for your historical, theoretical, and production knowledge of filmmaking generally and science and natural history production in particular.

You are required to be in residence in the Bozeman area during your first two years of instruction. After successful completion of coursework and the comprehensive exam, most MFA candidates generally move towards thesis work. Bozeman residency is not required while enrolled in the thesis credits. You must, however, maintain the enrollment requirements outlined below.

Curriculum Table

First Year

Credits

FALL

504	FILM & DOCUMENTARY THEORY	3
510	FUNDAMENTALS OF FILMMAKING	3
519	POST PRODUCTION WORKFLOW	3
581-001	SEMINAR: FILM SCREENING & REVIEW	1
581-002	SEMINAR: SOUND	3

Subtotal **13**

SPRING

505	CRITICAL APPROACH NATURAL HISTORY FILMMAKING	3
515	SCIENCE & NATURAL HISTORY FILM PRODUCTION	3
517	PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT	3
518	WRITING FOR DOC & NONFICTION FILM	3
581-002	SEMINAR: FILM SCREENING & REVIEW	1

Subtotal **13**

Total Credits First Year **26**

Second Year

Credits

FALL

513	ADVANCED CINEMATOGRAPHY	3
523	SECOND YEAR FILM PREP	2
526	ALTERNATIVE NONFICTION	3
581-001	SEMINAR: FILM SCREENING & REVIEW	1

Subtotal **9**

SPRING

525	SECOND YEAR FILM PRODUCTION	3
560	INFO DESIGN	3
581-003	ACTING FOR SCIENTISTS	3

Subtotal **9**

Total Credits 2nd Year **18**

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

Credits

590	MASTER'S THESIS	15
-----	-----------------	----

Electives

Credits

592	INDEPENDENT STUDY	1-6
598	PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP	1-3

First Year Review

At the end of the semester of the first year you may be asked to meet individually with the MFA Program Director to discuss an assessment of your performance and the prospects for success in the program. This review is based on notes from first-year instructors in which they share their experiences of your academic performance. The intention is to offer you an in-depth evaluation at a critical juncture in the MFA degree process. If a review is heavily negative, the faculty may recommend that you leave the Program.

Comprehensive Exam

All degree candidates must take and pass the comprehensive examination prior to enrolling in thesis credits. 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. The exam will contain questions covering SNHF history, theory, and production. These questions may be essay form or short-answer and all will pertain to films screened as part of the curriculum. A "hands-on" practical exam, may be included as part of the comprehensive exam and will be determined by the faculty based upon review of production work prior to the exam semester.

A small group of your faculty will write, administer, and grade the exam. The questions will be based on the reading and viewing lists included in this handbook, readings and films from your first three semesters of 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.

The exam is marked high pass, pass, or fail and is graded by the faculty. 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.

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 in credits during the summer semesters. Note if you are pursuing internships or independent study courses, you will need to enroll for those credits during the semester in which they take place.

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. After you take a "leave of absence" you must complete the MSU Bozeman Online Intent to Register form in the Student Services tab in MyInfo before you can be enrolled.

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."

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

Production Work

The first year of the program is considered foundational. Your film production goals will include several production exercises designed to build towards a short 'portrait film' in the first semester. The second semester will build and expand the skills gained and students will each produce and complete a more open topic short film, generally referred to as their 'first year film.'

In the first semester of your second-year, you will begin pre-production of your 'second-year film.' Each student may develop a topic of their choosing for their film. Your second-year film may either be agenda-based (i.e. produced for a client or agency) or a project you research, develop and produce independently. Traditionally, the fall semester of the second-year is spent in pre-production on the film and the spring is spent in production and post-production. The faculty member in your second-year workshop class will be responsible for overseeing your second-year film. The film must be completed by finals week 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.

Note: All productions that you complete as final projects in each course are owned entirely by you as the producer. Each film shall include an acknowledgment in the end credits that the film was completed as part of your MSU MFA degree work using the following language:

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

Thesis Work

You must pass your Comprehensive Examination, successfully complete 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. The requirements for the MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking program are the following:

Thesis Credits - Completed 15 thesis credits, with a mandatory minimum of three thesis credits during your defense semester. This will give you a total of 60 credits to complete your degree.

Thesis Film - Completed, 10 minute minimum, nonfiction film on a topic and the style of your choosing.

Written Thesis Paper - A 20-40 page paper that reflects research into the making of the thesis film, including film approaches you are

studying by example and how your approach is informed by current and historical documentary filmmaking approaches.

Thesis Defense - A three-hour thesis defense is the final step toward degree completion. The film will be presented in public forum and there will be a private portion that includes the candidate and the thesis committee to discuss the film and the paper.

Some exceptions to these rules may be made at the discretion of your Committee Chair.

Generally, MFA candidates are encouraged to spend their third year in research, production, and post-production on their thesis films and papers. This work is done primarily in consultation with your committee chair and the process is outlined below.

Thesis Film

The films will be original productions that reflect ideas generated by you, and you retain the sole creative choices of the film's production. The thesis film is an independent production, not made for an agency or non-profit or any other entity desiring creative control of the film. MFA candidates are encouraged to choose topics that they are passionate about, have ample access to, and therefore can visit repeatedly for production purposes.

The thesis film will express your own ideas about science and natural history filmmaking through a production that pushes the boundaries of nonfiction filmmaking through content, form, or both.

The intent is that your thesis film will 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 Paper

The thesis paper will reflect the research you have done into the form of your chosen production approach and style. Generally, students are

encouraged to find case study films and relevant research that informs their work in some way. The paper will be an in-depth analysis of an aspect of the case study film examples using a scholarly bibliography that reflects a solid knowledge of historical and contemporary approaches to nonfiction filmmaking and how your own work adds to this body of knowledge. Your paper should have a clear central argument that you can defend and explicate in approximately 20-40 pages (no less than 5,000 words, exclusive of bibliography, footnotes, endnotes, or any supporting materials.) You will 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. There are specific formatting rules for the paper set by the Graduate School. You can find the formatting guidelines on the Graduate School site at:

https://www.montana.edu/etd/etd_format.html#format_guides

Thesis Committee

The Thesis Committee must include at least three SFP faculty members, either tenured, tenure-track, or non-tenure track. The Committee Chair must be a tenured or tenured-track faculty member. 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 are responsible for forming your 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. They will also need to be present at the Thesis Defense. The Chair will be responsible for reviewing drafts of your written thesis, rough, and fine cuts of your film, and the general administration of your thesis work.

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 paper must be completed and successfully defended no later than six years after you have begun your studies. Typically, the student works closely with the Chair to decide on a plan of work, what kind of drafts and rough cuts they will need to see and ultimately will give the final 'greenlight' for the defense. The student may want to work with the Chair of the Committee to recommend proper timing of showing work to the Committee. This may be at the rough draft/rough cut stage or waiting until more refined work is in place. Generally speaking, you want the Committee members to see both the paper and the film with ample time to make suggestions, notes, comments, and critiques at some point prior to the defense. When delivering your final version to the Committee prior to the defense you must plan **AT LEAST** two weeks prior to the defense to give the committee members ample time to read the papers, view the films, and make their notes for the defense.

Thesis Committee and Timeline

By the end of the first semester of the Second Year, you will submit the names of your proposed Committee members to the MFA Program Director and the School Director. They will review the requests and distribute students equitably to eligible faculty, attempting to honor students' requests and faculty workload.

Once you receive confirmation of your Committee Chair and members, you will complete the Graduate Committee Request in the Student Services tab in MyInfo and the Program of Study DocuSign form on the SNHF website. All the required forms are now digital DocuSign forms found on the SNHF website in the For Students section under Forms (<https://sfp.montana.edu/sciencenaturefilm/>) or within MyInfo. Read the instructions carefully to avoid your forms being rejected by the Graduate School. If you have any questions on how to fill out these forms, contact the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator. These must be submitted by the end of your second-year.

Changing your Committee

At any time during the thesis process, a faculty member may resign as Chair or as a Committee member. You may also decide to change chairs

or Committee members. If you wish to make these changes, you must inform all current Committee members and then select a new member of members with permission from that faculty member. You must then go to the Graduate Committee Request under Student Services in MyInfo and either Edit the current Committee members to change their positions or Remove the member completely. You will then need to add the new faculty member by selecting Add Member and filling out their name and email address, then clicking Submit. This request is then sent to the new faculty member, the Chair, and the SFP Director to accept. Once these are completed you will receive an email confirming the new committee changes. You must contact the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator, after receiving your confirmation email, detailing your new committee for the MFA records. These procedures are subject to change, so check the Graduate School website for the most up-to-date procedures.

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. Working with your Committee Chair, you will devise a schedule of thesis milestones to be completed by you. If you wish to complete the degree within three years, this goal will be reflected in the schedule.

Thesis Defense

Ultimately your Committee Chair will decide if adequate progress has been made that will permit a successful defense on the desired schedule. Your thesis Chair is under no obligation to follow your proposed schedule and may insist on delaying the defense if the work is not ready. 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. When your Chair and the other Committee members agree that you are ready to defend the film and thesis, a three-hour defense will be scheduled. The MFA candidate will work with the Chair and the Committee to choose a three-hour block of time that works with all schedules and that is in line with final submission dates established by the Graduate School for the relevant defense semester.

As per MSU Graduate School Guidelines - you must register for a minimum of three credits the semester you wish to defend and graduate.

Rights Clearances and MFA Acknowledgment

It is expected that you and your 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 acknowledgment found on Page 10 in the final credits of the thesis film, preferably at the conclusion of the film's credits right above or before the copyright notice. If the exact wording is not included, the film is considered incomplete and can be challenged even after its submission to the Graduate School. The acknowledgment must appear on all copies and versions of the film. An MSU logo is not required.

The thesis paper and film title, date, time, location of the defense must be publicly announced at least two weeks prior to the defense date through normal University media channels, including emails. You must email the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator at snhf@montana.edu with all thesis information.

At least two weeks before the defense, you must submit the written thesis draft to the Electronic Theses and Dissertations Formatting Information in the Submission Portal to have the thesis formatting approved. The Submission Portal can be found on The Graduate School site at <https://www.montana.edu/etd/>

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. You 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 you will then defend the thesis work before your thesis committee. The defense may be completed in fewer than three hours if the Committee agrees.

After your defense is completed, it is customary for you to be asked to leave the room (or, for virtual defenses, to temporarily leave the meeting) while the Committee deliberates a "pass" or "fail" judgment. You do not have to have a unanimously positive vote of the Committee to pass, but

majority of members must vote in favor of passing. If one or more members abstain and there is a tie the decision would have to go to the Graduate School for consultation.

You are then asked to return to the room. The Committee then delivers its decision. If you pass, the Committee may request changes to the film and/or written thesis to be made prior to submission. Traditionally, 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.

Thesis Paperwork

The responsibility for completing forms and meeting deadlines falls entirely upon you, so please be diligent about completing what is required.

Application to Graduate

Early in the semester you intend to defend, usually within the first three weeks, you need to initiate your Application to Graduate.

Steps:

- You must contact your thesis Committee Chair to confirm the Application to Graduate.
- The Chair must then set up a meeting with you to go over your DegreeWorks.
- If there are any missing documents or errors with your paperwork (i.e. Program of Study, Graduate Committee Request, Not Enough Credits, etc.), those must be corrected before proceeding.
- If there are no error warnings, then the Chair must make a note in Degree Works specifying you are ready to graduate.
- In MyInfo under the Student Services section select Apply to Graduate and fill out the form. This will only become available to select once the note has been made in DegreeWorks by your Chair.

This form is due early in the semester in which you intend to graduate (usually, the third week or so), please check the Graduate School's Dates and Deadlines page for the current deadlines (<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/dates-deadlines.html>).

There is a link to 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 the Graduate School.

Paperwork for Defense

Immediately after a successful completion of the defense, Committee members will sign the Graduate School form: Report on Comprehensive Exam/Thesis Defense, Master's and Doctoral. This can be found on the SNHF website under Forms and is for faculty only. You will also need to bring the SFP Film/Video/Digital File Submission form, which can be found on the SNHF website under Forms. This DocuSign only needs to be signed by the Committee Chair.

Please check the Forms link on the Graduate School's website for the most up-to-date submission information. All digital DocuSign form will be submitted to the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator and then submitted to the Graduate School. You will submit your thesis film as an H.264 compressed mp4 with a WebVTT encoded in UTF-8 format subtitle file, your thesis paper, and a paragraph description of the film directly to the Graduate School's Submission Portal immediately after a successful defense. The final film submitted to the Graduate School is more than 5 GB, please contact the submission advisor at gradformatting@montana.edu.

An H.264 compressed mp4 file, a high resolution Apple ProRes QuickTime uncompressed file, the thesis paper, the SFP Film/Video/Digital File Submission form, and the paragraph description of the film must be submitted to the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator for archiving in the SFP database and the Electronic Thesis Film Database (ETFD), accessible through the MFA website. Captions are not required for these submissions. It is your responsibility to submit the final film to the Graduate School.

During the global pandemic, the Graduate School may change or suspend the rules relating to defenses, and the defense may be entirely virtual. In that case, the procedures during the defense will be determined by both your Committee Chair and the SNHF Program Director with approval of the Graduate School. Make sure to read all messages from the Graduate School and the Provost to keep updated on defense developments and rule changes.

One Credit Extension

If you cannot complete the thesis work and defense by the semester deadline but can finish these requirements before the start of classes for the following semester, you 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.

MFA Archiving and Web Access Policy

The official MFA site includes a searchable database of the SNHF thesis films that permits on-line 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 (<https://arc.lib.montana.edu/msu-film-archive/>) to see the electronic versions of the written theses. The SFP and MSU may make the thesis films accessible in whole or in part, which you will indicate in the Submission Portal during your final thesis submission and the SFP Film/Video/Digital File Submission form submitted to the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator after a successful defense. The default action will be to make the thesis film accessible through the site. If you do not wish to make the film immediately available through the site, you must request the one-year delay exception in the Submission Portal. 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 <https://arc.lib.montana.edu/msu-film-archive/>

Registration and General Policies

Registering for Course 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 Assistant MFA Coordinator 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 the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator know if you intend to take a course outside of the required semester classes. This includes any internship, independent study, or thesis credits each semester.

It is your responsibility to:

Make sure that you do not have a HOLD on your account.
MyInfo > Student Services > Student Records > View Holds

Inform the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator of your semester's courses by the deadline.

The registration deadline for the following semester is sent via e-mail.

Check your MyInfo 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 by confirming your bill. If you do not confirm your attendance each semester the Registrar will automatically drop you from classes.

MyInfo > Student Services > Student Records > Electronic Billing and Payment > Select the Term > Confirm Bill

Registering for courses OUTSIDE of the MFA Program:

If you wish to take courses outside 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 the Student Assistant MFA Coordinator for help registering for the course.

Schedule of Classes

The Schedule of Classes can be found online.

MyInfo > Schedule of Classes - find CRN here

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 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 a minimum of five credits each semester.

In order to be automatically covered by MSU's Health Insurance, you must be registered for a minimum of seven credits each semester.

All classes must be at the 500 level or above.

Please consult with MSU's Graduate Policies Online 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 off 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 withdraw 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 and 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 you 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 graduate teaching assistantship (GTA) is a paid position and each GTA is an employee of Montana State University (MSU). As with all other MSU employees GTA's 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 GTA contract and initialing this list of procedures and protocols, you agree to observe these requirements:

- Each GTA must work a total of 19 hours per week.
- Each GTA must remain an SFP graduate student in good standing, which, at minimum means maintaining a B average and making steady progress towards the MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking degree.
- Each GTA must register for a minimum of six credits to be eligible for this position.
- Tuition will be waived for up to 12 credits for each semester taught.
- Before the start of each semester of a GTA appointment, the GTA must meet with the instructor or instructors with whom the GTA will be working. The GTA must ensure the meeting takes place and should take the initiative to contact the instructor(s).
- There are no unexcused absences for GTAs. If a GTA will miss a class for any reason, including illness or a death in the family, the GTA must make every effort to inform the instructor(s) as far ahead of the date of the absence as possible.
- If the GTA 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 GTA must inform the instructor(s) at least one week before the semester begins.
- GTAs must make every effort in finding a replacement for their position during an absence. If no other GTA is available, the

instructor(s) and the SNHF Program Director must be advised immediately so other arrangements may be made.

- GTAs 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 and may ask you to find a replacement.

- Any absence of more than one week must be approved in writing (e-mails 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).

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

- Email the MFA Program Director (cindys@montana.edu) about any prolonged absence as soon as practical, so that accommodations can be made in these emergency situations. Please note that documentation (a Doctor's note) for medical excuses is not required. MSU University Health Partners - as part of their commitment to maintain patient confidentiality, to encourage more appropriate use of healthcare resources, and to support meaningful dialogue between instructors and students - does not provide such documentation.

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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- I understand this code of conduct is the professional standard of conduct in the motion picture industry.

- 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 have discussed the following texts and films as important works informing their own research and the design of their courses. The works listed here may be referenced, assigned, or otherwise be relevant to your experience as you work toward your degree, your thesis, and your comprehensive exam.

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. 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>
- Gardner, Carl and Robert Young. "Science on TV: A Critique." Popular Film and Television. Eds. Tony Bennett et al. London: BFI, 1981. 171-193.
- 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.
- Haraway, Donna. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, eds., The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others." Cultural Studies. New York; Routledge, 1992. Pp. 295-337.

- Henson, Don. "Television Archaeology: Education or Entertainment?" 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.
- Raamsey, Nancy. "The Hidden Cost of Documentaries," *The New York Times*, October 16, 2005, newyorktimes.com.
- Rees, A.L. *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, London: British Film institute, 1999, Part One, pp. 15-76.
- 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

- An Inconvenient Truth (Al Gore, 2006)
- Bambi (Walt Disney, 1942)
- Blackfish (Gabriela Cowperthwaite, 2013)
- Capturing the Friedmans (Andrew Jarecki, 2003)
- Cartel Land (Matthew Heineman, 2015)
- Chasing Ice (Jeff Orlowski, 2012)
- Chasing Coral (Jeff Orlowski, 2017)
- Citizenfour (Laura Poitras, 2014)

Crumb (Terry Zwigoff, 1995)
Darwin's Nightmare (Hubert Sauper, 2004)
Exit Through the Giftshop (Banksy, 2010)
Food Inc. (Robert Kenner, 2008)
Gates of Heaven (Errol Morris, 1978)
Green (Patrick Rouzel, 2009)
Grey Gardens (Albert and David Maysles, 1975)
Grizzly Man, (Werner Herzog, 2005)
Harvest of Shame (Fred W. Friendly, 1960)
Helvetica (Gary Hustwit, 2007)
King Corn (Aaron Woolf, 2007)
March of the Penguins (Luc Jacquet, 2005)
Murderball (Henry Alex Rubin, Dana Adam Shapiro, 2005)
Nanook of the North, (Robert Flaherty, 1922)
Particle Fever (Mark Levinson, 2013)
Persepolis (Marjane Satrapi, Vincent Paronnaud, 2007)
Planet Earth (Discovery Channel, 2006)
Racing Extinction (Louie Psihoyos, 2015)
Roger and Me (Michael Moore, 1989)
Sans Soleil, (Chris Marker, 1983)
Sherman's March (Ross McElwee, 1986)
Standard Operating Procedure (Errol Morris, 2008)
Sweetgrass (Lucien Castaing-Taylor & Ilisa Barbash, 2009)
Tarnation (Jonathan Caouette, 2003)
Taxi to the Dark Side (Alex Gibney, 2007)
The Act of Killing (Josh Oppenheimer 2013)
The Cove (Louie Psihoyos 2009)
The Gleaners and I, (Agnes Varda, 2002)
The Story of the Weeping Camel (Byambasuren Dayaa and Luigi Falorni, 2004)
The Wild Thornberry's Movie (Jeff McGrath, Cathy Malkasian, 2002)
Thin Blue Line (Errol Morris, 1988)
This is Spinal Tap (Rob Reiner, 1984)
Touching the Void (Kevin Macdonald, 2003)
Waltz with Bashir (Ari Folman, 2008)
Warlords of Ivory (National Geographic, 2015)
Winged Migration (Jacques Perrin, 2001)
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.

School of Film & Photo Director

Pike, Alexis, MFA, Professor of Photography apike@montana.edu

School of Film and Photography Leadership Fellow

Anderson, Christina, MFA, Professor of Photography czanderson@montana.edu

MFA Director

Cindy Stillwell, MFA, Professor of Film cindys@montana.edu

Student Assistant MFA Coordinator

Olivia Andrus snhf@montana.edu

Aig, Dennis, Ph.D., Professor of Film daig@montana.edu

Arnold, Robert, Ph.D., Professor of Film rfarnold@montana.edu

Boles, Jennifer, Assistant Professor of Film jennifer.boles@montana.edu

Dale, Catherine, Assistant Professor of Film catherine.dale1@montana.edu

Lipfert, Theodore, MFA, Professor of Film tlipfert@montana.edu

Pruitt, Aaron, Director and Manager, MontanaPBS aaron_pruitt@montanaps.org

Ricciardelli, Lucia, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Film luciar@montana.edu

Scott, Spence, Graduate Student Representative srscott418@gmail.com

Sindelar, Hugo (R.J.), Assistant Professor of Film rjphoto13@gmail.com

van Coller, Ian, MFA, Professor of Photo ianvanvoller@montana.edu

Watson, Tom, MFA, Professor of Theater tom.watson@montana.edu

Staff Contact Information

Campbell, Colette, Assistant Technology Coordinator	colette@montana.edu
Fleming, Shelley, Business Operations Manager	rochelle.fleming@montana.edu
Gahagan, Katherine, Academic Advisor	katherine.gahagan@montana.edu
Pike, Alexis, School of Film and Photography Director	apike@montana.edu
Purpura, Tony, Technology Coordinator	purpura@montana.edu
Scheller, Brenden, Repair Technician	brenden.scheller@montana.edu
Welte, Shelby, Photography Manager	welteshelby@gmail.com