



COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

# MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN PROFESSIONAL SCREENWRITING

## Write the Stories that Drive Great Entertainment

Learn to write compelling, well-structured stories with memorable characters and you can build a career in film, TV, and transmedia—without moving to Hollywood. The MFA in Professional Screenwriting program includes year-round enrollment in three immersive areas of study: screenwriting, television writing, and transmedia (graphic novels, Web entertainment, comics, etc.).

The program prepares you to work in fields like commercial, industrial or independent film, TV and transmedia writing or development, digital entertainment media and communication, and educational or instructional media programs. You'll complete the program with a minimum of two feature-length screenplays, teleplays, or transmedia projects, along with a compelling aesthetic statement and a marketing plan and pitch.

You'll gain the knowledge and skills needed to write professional-level scripts, to participate in the ongoing scholarly and critical discussions of issues in the field of film, TV, and transmedia writing, and to present your work to the entertainment industry.

### Program highlights:

- Explore critical points of view by analyzing and interpreting films and other entertainment
- Generate original and adapted narrative screenplays, TV scripts, or transmedia pieces using the principles of each discipline
- Develop your unique marketing plan following the principles of the entertainment industry

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## MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN PROFESSIONAL SCREENWRITING

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The MFA in Professional Screenwriting program provides an in-depth study of the art of film, TV and transmedia writing wherein students learn to create compelling, well-structured stories with memorable characters. Students will also acquire a foundational understanding of how to market themselves and their work in the entertainment industry.

This program is hybrid, with the majority of classes delivered online. There is a two week required on-site residency in Los Angeles. Graduate candidates develop skills in advanced film, television and/or transmedia writing, the ability to critically evaluate film, television and/or transmedia scripts for practical and commercial outcomes and critical acumen in the area of media studies.

After foundational screenwriting instruction, students may choose one of three advanced tracks: screenwriting, television writing, or transmedia writing. Students may take courses within the three areas and produce thesis projects in more than one area. Graduate candidates will complete the program with one feature length screenplay and the option to complete a second screenplay or teleplay or transmedia project. Other thesis deliverables include an aesthetic statement reflecting their artistic development and a marketing plan and pitch.

The program prepares graduates to work in a variety of capacities in the following fields: commercial, industrial or independent film, TV and transmedia writing and/or development, digital entertainment media and communication, and educational or instructional media programs. Course work covers screenwriting, television writing, transmedia writing (graphic novels, comics, web narratives, etc.), script analysis, script development, pitching, and marketing, as well as business aspects of entertainment programming. Internships and special extra-curricular electives are also available.

Upon completion of the Master of Fine Arts in Professional Screenwriting program, students will possess the knowledge and skills needed to evolve their writing to a professional level, participate in ongoing scholarly and critical discussions of issues in the field of film, TV and transmedia writing, and present their work to the entertainment industry. The MFA also provides the graduate with the degree required to teach at the university level.

### Application Requirements and Program Prerequisites

To be considered for admission, prospective students must meet the university graduate admission requirements listed in the catalog under Academic Information for Graduate Degrees. There is no separate application process for this program.

Students are expected to possess or have reliable access to a high-speed internet connection including an email account outside of National University for course projects and assignments. Students need to have access to a DVD rental and/or streaming service or other reliable source for obtaining access to films, television shows and transmedia. Students must have personal access to a computer that meets the system requirements for viewing films and film clips online and other relevant media.

The following software (at a minimum) is required: Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) or comparable software capable of outputting PDF documents, and a variety of standard browser plug-ins (i.e. JavaScript, Flash, Shockwave, QuickTime, Real player etc.). Access to screenwriting software such as Final Draft or Scriptwriter is necessary. The use of free screenwriting software is discouraged due to technical issues. Students must also have reliable access to a headset and microphone capable of supporting online course technological requirements.

Students enrolling in the program are expected to have written and spoken proficiency in English at the graduate level. If in doubt about your English language skills, please contact the Academic Program Director.

### Program Prerequisites

The Professional Screenwriting MFA is a rigorous graduate-level program. Prior to entry it is expected that students have acquired the knowledge and skills needed to write, evaluate and engage in critical thought at the graduate level. Proficiency in basic writing skills such as spelling and grammar is a must. Prospective students are expected to have written and spoken proficiency in English at the graduate level.

Students who do not have such experience or skills should take appropriate courses before entering the program. It is recommended (although not absolutely required) that students have had undergraduate courses or experience in one or more of the following areas: communication, film, television, English, literary or media studies, history, philosophy, psychology or sociology or other relevant areas.

### Faculty and Content Creators

Instructors bring the benefit of professional film, television and other industry experience to their teaching. Faculty, content creators, and guest speakers include writers, directors,

executives, agents, producers and others who have worked in affiliation with high level industry entities such as (but not limited to): DreamWorks, Warner Bros., Lawrence Bender Productions, Cruise/Wagner Productions, HBO, Showtime, PBS, Sony Pictures, ABC, CBS, NBC, Miramax, Disney and Fox Studios.

Faculty, content creators, and guest speakers include Emmy, Humanitas and Nicholl Fellowship award-winning writers who have worked on such diverse projects, as *Wall Street*, *Masters of the Universe*, *Little Fockers*, *Ray*, *Life As We Know It*, *Red Eye*, *Disturbia*, *Source Code*, *Snow White and the Huntsman* and *TV series such as From Earth To The Moon*, *Band Of Brothers*, *Deadwood*, *The District*, *Nip/Tuck*, *Picket Fences*, *Law And Order*, *Camarena Drug Wars*, among many others, and transmedia projects such as, *The Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (graphic novel), and *Todd, The Ugliest Kid on Earth*.

### Program Curriculum Core and Advanced Core

The program is offered as a hybrid, online/on-site low-residency program. All core courses, electives and advanced courses with studio practica are delivered online. After completing the core sequence, students may elect one of three Advanced Focus Tracks: Screenwriting, Television Writing, or Transmedia Writing. Each track has three required courses that must be taken to fulfill that track. In addition, students may select two elective courses from the electives list. A three-course thesis sequence completes the program requirements.

### Residency

The residency component of the program consists of two courses which are taken concurrently. One is online and one is on site at the Los Angeles campus.

The residency courses provide students with the opportunity to learn in a collaborative environment which introduces them to working professionals. Students will synthesize crucial elements of film, TV, and transmedia writing, pitch presentations, and learn how business is conducted in the entertainment community. The two residency courses are educational opportunities to create relationships with professors and industry professionals and learn about the entertainment industry by direct experience. They are not designed to serve as venues for sale of creative material, for obtaining agent or manager representation, or to procure employment.

### Thesis Sequence

To excel in the Master of Fine Arts in Professional Screenwriting thesis sequence, the successful MFA candidate must demonstrate her/his ability to work under the guidance of a thesis advisor(s). Students must have a minimum 3.0 GPA upon entering thesis. All prior required courses must be taken before thesis can begin. The thesis advisor and/or thesis committee determines whether or not the student has met or exceeded the qualification requirements for the Professional Screenwriting Master of Fine Arts. The final thesis course is IP (In Progress) grade eligible. A candidate must satisfactorily complete each thesis course within the maximum specified time period. A candidate who is unable to satisfactorily complete each course during the specified time period must retake the course. Any thesis course that receives an unsatisfactory evaluation must be repeated. For thesis portfolio, students are expected to complete the following under the guidance of thesis advisor(s):

- Independently develop, write and revise one project (i.e., screenplay and/or TV script and/or transmedia project) with the option (time and resources permitting) for a second project.
- Independently develop and write an aesthetic statement documenting the artistic choices that resulted in the student's thesis projects and their overall evolution as a writer.
- Create a marketing plan and audio or video pitch to introduce the student's work to the entertainment community.

The Professional Screenwriting thesis portfolio is developed during a three-course sequence that may last from 6-12 months and students should anticipate the longer timeline.

For thesis portfolio students are expected to accomplish the following under the guidance of thesis advisor(s):

### Program Fees

All fees are financial aid eligible.

### Residency Fees

SCR 675.....\$750  
SCR 670P.....\$250

Additional fees may apply to residency workshops including purchase of film or tour tickets, expendables, supplies and some meals. These can vary and are determined at the time of each on-site residency. Costs for accommodation and transportation are not included in the tuition or fees. Students are responsible for arranging their own

accommodations and transportation as well as any meals not provided. For more information contact the Academic Program Director.

### Thesis Fees

SCR 690.....	\$350
SCR 691.....	\$350

Thesis fees provide compensation for committee members' time and attention to thesis projects.

### Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to:

- Differentiate critical points of view in the analyses and interpretation of films, television shows, screenplays, and other entertainment content.
- Using films, television programs, and transmedia IPs, analyze the principles of writing in these varied media.
- Demonstrate critical reflection and viewpoint in evaluating the work of peers and others.
- Generate original and/or adapted narrative screenplays, TV scripts, or transmedia IPs employing the principles of these respective disciplines through various stages from introductory level to mastery.
- Articulate a critical understanding of self in relation to creativity and the influence of cultural and societal issues.
- Analyze and/or design and generate a marketing plan/pitch using the principles of entertainment industry marketing.
- Collaborate with others in achieving writing and/or pitching goals.

### Degree Requirements

To receive a Master of Fine Arts, students in the Professional Screenwriting program must complete at least 78.75 quarter units of graduate work, of which a minimum of 65.25 quarter units must be taken at National University. With approval of the Academic Program Director, students may be able to transfer up to 13.5 quarter units at the graduate-level from a regionally accredited institution in the areas of screenwriting, communication, film or media studies, or other appropriate areas of study provided the units have not been used to satisfy the requirements of an awarded degree. Students wishing to transfer credits into the program should contact the Academic Program Director. Refer to the section in the graduate admission requirements for additional specific information regarding application and evaluation.

### Core Requirements

(6 courses; 22.5 quarter units)

**Note:** Practica are the "studio labs" generally associated with writing workshops.

SCR 650	Script Reading and Coverage
SCR 679	Cinematic Writing
SCR 680	Screenwriting I <i>Prerequisite: SCR 679</i>
SCR 680P	Screenwriting I Practicum (2.25 quarter units) <i>Prerequisite: SCR 680</i>
SCR 681	Screenwriting II <i>Prerequisite: SCR 680, Corequisite: SCR 681P</i>
SCR 681P	Screenwriting II Practicum (2.25 quarter units) <i>Prerequisite: SCR 680P, Corequisite: SCR 681</i>

### Advanced Core Requirements

(6 courses; 22.5 quarter units)

SCR 671	Character and Dialog
SCR 682	Adv. Screenwriting Workshop <i>Prerequisite: SCR 681 and SCR 681P</i>
SCR 682P	Adv. Screenwriting Practicum (2.25 quarter units) <i>Prerequisite: SCR 681, SCR 681P and SCR 682</i>
SCR 670	Dev-Prod Writing <i>Prerequisite: SCR 681 and SCR 681P</i>
SCR 670P	Development/Production Practic (2.25 quarter units) <i>Prerequisite: SCR 681, SCR 670 and SCR 681P, Corequisite: SCR 675</i>
SCR 675	The Business of Screenwriting <i>Prerequisite: SCR 681, SCR 681P and SCR 670, Corequisite: SCR 670P</i>

### Advanced Focus Elective Track

(3 courses; 11.25 quarter units)

Select **one (1)** of the following Advanced Focus Tracks: Screenwriting, Television Writing, Transmedia Writing

SCR 667 Marketing for Film & TV

#### AND

SCR 683 Adaptation Workshop  
*Prerequisite: SCR 681 and SCR 681P*

#### AND

SCR 683P Adaptation Practicum (2.25 quarter units)  
*Prerequisite: SCR 681, SCR 681P and SCR 683*

#### OR

SCR 665 Introduction to TV Writing

#### AND

SCR 684 TV Pilot/Series Writing Worksh.  
*Prerequisite: SCR 665 with a minimum grade of "B"*

#### AND

SCR 684P TV Writing Practicum (2.25 quarter units)  
*Prerequisite: SCR 665 and SCR 684*

#### OR

SCR 668 Introduction To Transmedia

#### AND

SCR 685 Transmedia Writing Workshop  
*Prerequisite: SCR 668 with a minimum grade of "B"*

#### AND

SCR 685P Transmedia Writing Practicum (2.25 quarter units)  
*Prerequisite: SCR 685 and SCR 668*

### Electives

(2 courses; 9 quarter units)

Students select **two (2)** courses from the following list of approved electives. Students may not repeat a course as an elective that is taken as a core requirement.

SCR 665	Introduction to TV Writing
SCR 667	Marketing for Film & TV
SCR 668	Introduction To Transmedia
SCR 692	Graduate Internship <i>Prerequisite: SCR 675 with a minimum grade of "B" and SCR 670P with a minimum grade of "B." Recommended Preparation: MFA students from other disciplines may be required to fulfill specific prerequisites prior to taking an internship, to be determined by Academic Program Director.</i>
SCR 693	Guided Study <i>Recommended Preparation: Students must demonstrate advanced skills and talent in order to be considered for participation.</i>
SCR 693P	Guided Study Practicum (2.25 quarter units) <i>Prerequisite: SCR 670P with a minimum grade of "B" and SCR 675 with a minimum grade of "B"</i> This internship can only be taken after onsite residency is completed. MFA Students from other disciplines should contact the lead faculty for their program for required prerequisites prior to taking an internship.

A specially constituted course. Students must demonstrate advanced skills and talent in order to be considered for participation.

### Thesis Sequence

(3 courses; 13.5 quarter units)

Thesis courses must be taken in order (SCR 690, SCR 690A and SCR 691)

SCR 690	Screenwriting Thesis <i>Prerequisite: All other program courses with potential exception of one elective and/or the onsite residency (by Academic Program Director approval only)</i>
SCR 690A	Advanced Rewriting <i>Prerequisite: SCR 690</i>
SCR 691	Thesis Qualification & Review <i>Prerequisite: SCR 690</i>