

# School of Filmmaking

*Susan Ruskin, Dean*

## I. Overview of the Graduate Program

The School of Filmmaking offers a 2-year Master of Fine Arts degree in Filmmaking with concentrations in Creative Producing, Film Music Composition, and Screenwriting. Our faculty consists of film and television artists-in-residence as well as professional scholars committed to nurturing our students' creative potential by exposing them to an educational environment that mirrors the professional world's collaborative process. The MFA program is supported by the outstanding facilities currently in place for our BFA program, which is a comprehensive film production curriculum. Our backlot studio with four sound stages, a music recording stage, a highly valued technical operations department, as well as state-of-the-art post-production facilities and equipment, are unparalleled in the state of North Carolina.

Our MFA program in **Film Music Composition** offers a unique opportunity for the nascent film composer to work with student filmmakers during production and postproduction, while honing their musical and compositional creativity. Film Music Composition students take courses in digital recording; orchestration; conducting; scoring for short films, commercials, and new media; film music history and analysis; American and international film history and aesthetics; as well as a capstone course that focuses on the skills necessary to transition effectively into the industry. Students score a variety of formats (commercials, live-action and animated shorts, documentaries, and experimental works) of various lengths, ranging from 90-second main titles in various genres to 12-minute student productions. The depth and intensity of the training, along with the curricular diversity offered by a specialized faculty, prepare the student to function successfully within the extremely competitive world of film music composition.

Our newly expanded MFA in Filmmaking includes two more concentrations: **Creative Producing and Screenwriting**, strategically chosen due to the symbiotic relationship between these two professions. The Creative Producer is the person who generates and/or cultivates a project from conception to completion with an eye towards the project's commercial viability. The Screenwriter and the Creative Producer spend the majority of their collaborative time in what is called the development process: the period in advance of production during which the material is transformed from outline to final draft. The Creative Producer and Screenwriter also work together to seek the appropriate platform (e.g., long form motion picture, television series, or web series) as well as the market for the story.

We believe that the most successful filmmakers have command of entrepreneurial skills as well as storytelling expertise. Therefore, our MFA concentrations in Creative Producing and Screenwriting offer in-depth training in developing dynamic creative content: not just one film but a slate of projects to write, finance, produce, and distribute across a variety of media in our ever-changing technological age. Classes include script development, financing and distribution, screenwriting, and film history and aesthetics.

## II. Specific Admissions and Transfer Requirements

### A. Minimum Requirements for Admission to the MFA in Filmmaking

- All applicants must have completed an undergraduate degree;
- Qualified applicants applying directly out of undergraduate school must show a GPA of 3.0 or better;
- Preferred applicants to the Film Music Composition concentration should have an undergraduate degree in music or music composition;

- Preferred primary applicants for the Creative Producing or Screenwriting concentrations should have a minimum of 2 years of work experience.

## **B. Required Documents to Supplement Admissions Application**

For Applicants to the Creative Producing or Screenwriting Concentration:

- Letter of intent;
- Transcripts;
- Two letters of recommendation;
- One letter from an arts or academic instructor;
- If applicant is not currently enrolled in school, recommendation may be from employer, mentor, or artists with whom applicant has worked;
- Two writing samples in pdf format: one of creative fiction (screenplay, theatrical script, or short story) and one expository essay (of film analysis or film criticism).

For Applicants to the Film Music Composition Concentration:

- Letter of intent;
- Transcripts;
- Two letters of recommendation;
- One letter from an arts or academic instructor;
- If applicant is not currently enrolled in school, recommendation may be from employer, mentor, or artists with whom applicant has worked.

Portfolio of three to five original compositions, preferably demonstrating a proficiency in contrasting musical styles, to be submitted in the following formats: film clips with original score (mp4 or video DVD), live or MIDI audio recordings (mp3 or audio CD), and accompanying musical scores in pdf format. This portfolio may be submitted digitally via email or a file-sharing service such as DropBox to Christopher Heckman, Film Music Composition Department Chair, at [heckmanc@uncsa.edu](mailto:heckmanc@uncsa.edu).

## **C. Transfer Credit or Advanced Placement**

Transfer and/or advanced placement credits will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and may constitute no more than 49% of the credit hours required for the degree.

# **III. Standards of Achievement, Evaluation and Continuation**

### **A. Minimum Grade Point Average**

Graduate students in the MFA program must earn a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 (a B average) or higher each semester. A student who earns a GPA of less than a 3.0 in any one semester will be placed on Probation for the subsequent semester. If after the semester of Probation the student fails to meet or exceed the minimum GPA, he or she may be dismissed from the program.

Continuation from one academic year to the next in the School of Filmmaking is based on several factors in addition to course grades. Among these are: evidence of growth in artistic and/or technical abilities as applicable, faculty

assessment of professional potential, professional demeanor, and creative discipline. Evidence of a student's inability to interact appropriately and productively within UNCSC and School of Filmmaking policies, procedures and expectations will result in dismissal from the program.

**B. MFA Thesis Requirement**

As a terminal degree, the MFA requires a rigorous thesis. Each MFA concentration in the School of Filmmaking has thesis requirements and guidelines specific to the student's concentration. For further information, consult the Chair of your department.

**C. Time Limits for Completion**

The MFA degree must be successfully completed within five years of the graduate student's initial enrollment in the program.