

# Two-Year Accelerated MASTER OF FINE ARTS *in* SCREENWRITING



*In the MFA program, staged readings of our students' scripts are performed for an audience of guests and industry professionals.*



EXIT

# LEARN SCREENWRITING *in Los Angeles*

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## LOCATION

**LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

*Location is subject to change.  
For start dates and tuition, please visit [nyfa.edu](http://nyfa.edu)*

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## OVERVIEW

The New York Film Academy recognizes the critical role writers play in the creation of every film and television show. Yet, writing talent alone is not enough to create successful work in these mediums. Screenwriting is a learned craft, and a writer must write every day to train for the demands of this field, and to truly understand the elements that make a screenplay or teleplay functional, as well as engaging.

In addition to learning the conventions of the writing craft, students are given the support and structure to write and meet deadlines. Students write intensively throughout the course and complete several projects with the assistance of constructive critique from instructors, as well as peers.

“

A good film script should be able to do completely without dialogue. ”

- David Mamet

Divided over the course of four semesters, students undertake a project-based curriculum in which they are constantly writing, gaining invaluable experience writing in a wide variety of styles and genres, as well as writing for different platforms that include writing spec and pilot scripts for television. In addition, students follow a Transmedia track of courses that involves writing for web-based productions, comic books, and video games.

The MFA in Screenwriting program is offered at our Los Angeles Campus. **QUALIFIED STUDENTS HAVE THE OPTION OF COMPLETING COURSE WORK AT THE NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY IN NEW YORK CITY IN A ONE-YEAR NON-DEGREE PROGRAM AND THEN APPLYING THEIR COURSE WORK TO BE ACCEPTED FOR ADVANCED STANDING IN THE MFA SCREENWRITING DEGREE PROGRAM.**

*Please Note: curriculum and projects are subject to change and may vary depending on location. Students should consult the most recently published campus catalog for the most up to date course information.*



## WHAT MAKES OUR SCREENWRITING PROGRAM UNIQUE?

Over the first year, each student writes two-feature length screenplays, plus two televisions specs, an original TV pilot script, along with a number of treatments. As part of a fully integrated program, students explore related areas of filmmaking that help to improve their screenplays and put them into a real-world context. Thus, in addition to writing classes, students study film craft, acting, pitching, and cinema studies, as they apply to screenwriting. Students also write, direct and edit a digital film of a short scene.

During the second year, in their third and fourth semesters, students will focus on a thesis feature-length screenplay or a TV pilot and series bible. In addition, students will study emerging media such as comic books, web-series and video games and build a Transmedia Franchise. Upon completion of the program, students not only understand story structure, character, conflict and dialogue, but also leave the Academy with finished products that they can pitch, produce, and market.

In the MFA Screenwriting Program, students are taught the art of screenwriting through courses in both film studies and screenplay/script analysis.

Students are assigned several writing projects. These projects are subject to critique from instructors and peers during in-class workshops.

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## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

Upon finishing the MFA Screenwriting program at New York Film Academy, students are expected to possess and demonstrate the following skills and know-how:

- Cinematic storytelling principles.
- Tools and techniques for plotting and writing feature films.
- Creating vivid characters with clear goals.
- Creating a portfolio of material that reflects their unique writing voice.
- Writing episodes for existing half-hour and one-hour television series.
- Creating an original television series idea.
- Creating a story world for a transmedia franchise.
- Writing for comic books, graphic novels, or English language manga.
- Creating a proposal for a game that expands an original story world.
- Writing, directing and editing a webseries pilot.
- A writing methodology for meeting deadlines and handling revisions.
- Story analysis and the art of constructive feedback.
- Collaboration with directors, actors and editors and the basics of their roles.
- The trends and expectations of genre and storytelling.
- Writing professional script coverage.
- Finding and securing an internship.
- Personal branding and networking skills.

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## WHAT YOU WILL ACHIEVE

### SEMESTER ONE

At the end of Semester One, students will have produced:

- A feature length film screenplay.
- A one-hour television drama spec script.
- A half-hour television comedy spec script.

### SEMESTER TWO

At the end of Semester Two, students will have produced:

- Story and character ideas for future screenplay, television series and transmedia ideas.
- A treatment for a feature length film.
- A rewrite of OR revision blueprint for their Semester One feature screenplay.
- A second original screenplay OR a beat breakdown for that idea.
- A digital film of a short scene.
- A pilot script and a series proposal/bible for an original television series.

### SEMESTER THREE

At the end of Semester Three, students will have produced:

- An outline and first draft of thesis feature OR a proposal for an original TV series and the script for the pilot.
- A concept for an original transmedia franchise.
- A first draft of a pilot episode for original web series.
- A proposal for an original comic book, graphic novel or manga.
- A script for the first issue or chapter of a comic book, graphic novel or manga.
- A treatment for an original adaptation based on non-cinematic source material.

### SEMESTER FOUR

At the end of Semester Four, students will have produced:

- A revision and rewrite of their thesis feature or TV pilot.
- A Game Proposal for a board, video, roleplaying, card or other game.
- A fully produced webseries pilot.
- A Transmedia Bible that includes their game proposal, comic proposal and webseries bible.

## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

### YEAR ONE OVERVIEW

*In their first year in the Academy's MFA Screenwriting Program, students will be introduced to the tools and skills necessary for writing successful screenplays for both film and television while being challenged to develop their craft artistically and technically.*

### SEMESTER ONE

#### ELEMENTS OF SCREENWRITING

Utilizing lectures, in-class exercises, outside readings, classroom discussions, and film viewings, this course introduces students to the craft of screenwriting. Screenplay formatting will be a major focus, and students will learn how to write scene descriptions, describe characters and locations, and develop action sequences.

#### WRITING FOR TELEVISION I: SPECS

This television workshop is a fast-paced, intensive workshop program that introduces students to the fundamentals of the TV world and TV writing. The class work consists of individual writing, reading aloud of student work in class, and workshop discussions. By the end of the course, each student will have written a draft of both a one-hour television spec script and a half-hour spec script, each for an existing show. Workshop sessions will simulate a TV writers' room, and will be an environment in which students evaluate their own and their classmates' work.



Scriptwriting is the toughest part of the whole racket. ”

- Frank Capra

#### WRITING THE FEATURE FILM SCREENPLAY I

Writing the Feature Film Screenplay I is a fast-paced, intensive workshop that introduces students to the fundamentals of screenwriting. The classes consist of in-class writing exercises, individual writing, reading aloud of student work in class, and workshop discussions. Students will apply knowledge gained from Elements of Screenwriting and apply it to the creation of their own feature-length scripts. By the end of the course, students will develop and write a first draft of a feature-length screenplay.

#### GENRE STUDIES

Genre Studies is a critical studies course focused on exploring different genres of film. Through out-of-class screenings, lectures, and in-class scene breakdowns, students will begin to identify the models and audience expectations of different genres, starting from broad categories like comedy and drama, and then moving into more specific genres like adventure, horror and romantic comedies.

#### THE GREAT SCREENPLAYS

The Great Screenplays is a critical studies course focused on exploring Academy Award-winning American and foreign movies from the past ten decades. Through in-class screenings, readings of screenplays, lectures, and discussions, students will gain a deeper understanding of how the art of screenwriting has evolved since the 1920s.

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## **SEMESTER TWO**

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### **WRITING THE FEATURE FILM SCREENPLAY II**

This course is divided into two components: in the first half, students will build a detailed breakdown of a new story idea—learning the value of plotting in detail before writing. They will also build a blueprint to revise their semester one feature screenplay, learning the key tools of revision and rewriting. In the second half, the students will take either the new breakdown or the revision blueprint and write a draft of that script or rewrite.

### **THE BUSINESS OF SCREENWRITING I**

This class introduces students to the practices and players of the entertainment industry from a historical perspective. Students learn about the birth of film as a dramatic medium and how the major studios—the juggernaut of a new industry—grew out of this development. By studying the roots of the film industry, students will also learn how the business works today. Also addressed is the role of the screenwriter in the process and business of filmmaking. In-class lectures and primary-source research projects are supplemented with guest lectures from prominent figures in the entertainment industry. Students also explore internships and the tools and techniques to get one at a film or television production company, film or television studio, management company, or talent agency. In anticipation of Business II & III, where they will have the opportunity to participate in internships, students will develop a plan for finding an internship in those later semesters that fits their career strategy.

### **WRITING FOR TELEVISION II: PILOT**

In this advanced television workshop, students will create an original episodic television series, including completing a series proposal and the script for the pilot episode. Topics will include: introducing your central character and core cast, creating a series “template,” creative solutions to providing back story, and building the show’s world and tone. The workshop portion of the class will be constructed to simulate a TV writers’ room, with students reading, evaluating, and assisting each other. The primary goal of the class will be for students to leave with a series proposal and a full draft of a television pilot script for an original show, either one-hour or half-hour.

### **SCRIPT TO SCREEN**

Script to Screen is designed to help writing students see what happens to their words when they go into production. The class is divided into two components: Acting for Writers and a fifteen-week Filmmaking Seminar. Acting for Writers introduces students to the theory and practice of the acting craft. Through in-class acting exercises and writing, as well as filmed exercises, students will learn what truly makes for great dialogue, characters and action writing. The Filmmaking Seminar trains students in the fundamentals of film directing, which in turn facilitates an understanding of the filmmaking process as it relates to screenwriting.

### **STORY GENERATION**

Story Generation is designed to help writers become what the film industry needs most: prolific sources of story ideas. Through in-class exercises and out-of-class projects, students will develop skills for generating viable stories for various genres and media, from film to television to emerging media like web series. They will workshop ideas in class in order to come up with the best possible version of their stories. The idea is to become versatile, adaptable, and creative, providing the best “product” to the industry when called upon to generate new ideas to fill various needs. In the second half of the course, students will commit to one of their story ideas and develop it into a treatment.

## YEAR TWO OVERVIEW

*During Year Two, MFA candidates begin working on their thesis, which takes the form of either a feature-length screenplay or the pilot for an original episodic television series. Coursework in Year Two will focus on refining writing techniques and clarifying each student's artistic voice, as well as pitching, and preparing students for a professional life.*

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## SEMESTER THREE

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### TRANSMEDIA I: FRANCHISES

Transmedia is an intensive two-semester course that introduces students to the process of Transmedia development. In this introductory course, students will be given an overview of the concept and current state of Transmedia, as well as the concept of Franchises or Story Worlds. Topics will include the concept of the "Immersive World," the history of Transmedia, Branded Content, and Brand Integration. Guest speakers will help students gain a deeper understanding of the current state of the Transmedia Industry and where it is heading. Students will begin to build their own Story World, creating their own original Transmedia concept or franchise, which will be further developed.

### THE BUSINESS OF SCREENWRITING II: PITCHING

The core of this class is mastering the "Art of the Pitch" in preparation for a major industry Pitch Fest with agents, managers, and producers. A heavy emphasis on guest speakers will illuminate every corner of the industry.

### ADVANCED WRITING SEMINAR I: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

This course will focus on teaching students to write compelling characters and relationships that help to create more effective screenplays and teleplays. Combining lecture, analysis of movies and television episodes, and a series of character exercises designed to work in tandem with the development of the thesis project, this class aims to allow students to access story at a deeper level, via true engagement with protagonists, antagonists and other secondary characters.

### ADAPTATION WORKSHOP

In this course, we will identify the challenges that surround translating a non-cinematic art form into a cinematic story by studying existing adaptations. Students will also select a work to adapt or update and generate a 10-15-page treatment for the material.

### TRANSMEDIA II: SEQUENTIAL ART

For generations, sequential storytelling in America was the domain of the costumed superhero, but with the expanding field of Japanese manga and a wide array of publishers selling graphic novels of all genres, the field is now wide open. This study provides a complete introduction to the medium and to the craft of writing stories for comics in all their many forms. Students will learn the various styles of formatting and story structure as well as how to tell a story visually and pace it.

### MASTER'S THESIS WORKSHOP I

Students will choose an idea for a Feature Film or Television Series from their work in Story Generation and Writing For Television II that they will write over the course of their final year, and take that idea through a first draft, and in the following semester, through a rewrite, and a polish or blueprint for future revisions. As a whole, the course will mirror the majority of the writing deals being given in Hollywood today. Each student starts by working up a detailed Feature Treatment or Series Proposal for his or her idea. From there students take it to a First Draft of either the Feature or the Series pilot. In the following semester they will do a Rewrite of that draft and a Polish.



## SEMESTER FOUR

### **TRANSMEDIA III: INTERACTIVE NARRATIVE**

The video game industry creates a billion dollar product and in modern Hollywood, games are even created and sold as part of studio pitches. The primary objective of this course is to explore key aspects of gaming and game development and design.

### **THE BUSINESS OF SCREENWRITING III**

Students develop and perfect a five-minute pitch. They will bring their industry ready pitches of the scripts they completed in thesis workshop to NYFA's Pitch Fest at the end of the semester.

### **TRANSMEDIA IV: WEB SERIES**

As the final part of their year-long Transmedia course, students will learn about the process of integration to ensure their videos can connect with and enhance their Transmedia concept. Students will shoot their web-series pilot (the third and final platform of their Transmedia concept). Their pilots will then be presented in-class and critiqued by the panel of Transmedia instructors as well as the rest of the class.

### **ADVANCED WRITING SEMINAR II: SCENE STUDY**

Using short excerpts (3-5 pages) from screenplays they have already written—preferably from their thesis scripts—students will focus on emotional progression, dialogue, action, character logic and motivation, scene beats, tone and tonal shifts, writing style, subtext, events, and transitions, in order to revise their material.

### **ADVANCED WRITING SEMINAR III: ACTOR/WRITER WORKSHOP**

Continuing with the lessons from Advanced Writing Seminar II, this course focuses on the revision process that comes with seeing one's material performed. Actors will be brought in to do cold readings of scenes and to provide their unique perspective on the character development, motivation, and beats.

### **MASTER'S THESIS WORKSHOP II**

This course will focus entirely on the rewriting process and identifying and fixing structural problems as well as problems on the scene level. By the end of the final semester, each student will have a final, polished draft of their feature screenplay or pilot.

