

School of Film and Photography

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

The Master of Fine Arts Program in Science and Natural History Filmmaking at Montana State University is the largest and best known of only two programs in the world dedicated to this unique and rewarding field of filmmaking. Our mission 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.

Graduates have pursued successful careers as award-winning independent filmmakers, staff creators at major agencies and organizations, production leaders at major channels and streaming platforms, and channels including National Geographic, PBS, and the BBC, communications executives with foundations, NGOS, government agencies, and tenure-track and tenured professors at major universities.

Students have produced films for the National Park Service, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Agriculture, NOAA, NASA, National Geographic, Discovery, and such non-profit organizations as the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, the Field Museum and the Boston Museum of Science. Students' work has also been featured in numerous festivals internationally. Students and alumni have received several student Emmys and multiple Primetime Emmy Awards along with numerous honors at festivals and juried competitions.

Our students have also been awarded Fulbright scholarships, a Fred Rogers Scholarship from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Webby awards, and many other honors. They have documented the work of explorers and scientists in almost every field from astrophysics to zoology and on every continent in the world including Antarctica.

Candidates for the MFA take courses that include film and video production, the history and theory of science and natural history communication, cinematography, sound, production management, editing and writing. All students must also work at one or more production internships during their time as MFA students. Our students are in great demand, even before graduation, and most leave the program with their first professional credits as well as their MFA degree.

Admission

We seek candidates with at least an undergraduate degree in biological or physical sciences, engineering, technology, or the social sciences, and preferably with some research experience. Candidates are not expected to have any formal education or experience in filmmaking. Candidates with filmmaking degrees or degrees in other fields must have a minor in a scientific field or equivalent work experience.

Financial Assistance

Depending on the availability of funds, a limited number of teaching assistantships and research fellowships are available each year.

Contact Information

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Degrees conferred

- M.F.A. in Science and Natural History Filmmaking (<http://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/arts-architecture/film-photography/mfa-science-natural-history-filmmaking/>)