

M.F.A. in Science and Natural History Filmmaking

The Master of Fine Arts Program in Science and Natural History Filmmaking at Montana State University is considered one of the best programs in the world dedicated to this unique and rewarding field of filmmaking. Our mission is to provide filmmaking knowledge to students with formal education and experience in science, engineering, and technology so they may create accurate, innovative, and exciting programs that advance the public understanding of science. The pandemic, concern for the climate, and other policy issues relying on science have made this goal even more central to the way we all live.

Graduates have pursued successful careers as award-winning independent filmmakers, staff creators at major agencies and organizations, and production leaders at major channels and streaming platforms. They have contributed to the stellar reputations of National Geographic, PBS, Netflix, and the BBC among many others. Other alumni are communications executives with foundations, NGOs and government agencies. Several hold tenure-track and tenured professorial appointments at major universities.

While still completing their degrees, our students have produced films for the National Park Service, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Agriculture, NOAA, NASA, Discovery, and such non-profit organizations as the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, and the Field Museum and the Boston Museum of Science. Students and alumni have received several student Emmys and multiple National 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 complete 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.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The curriculum consists of a minimum of sixty semester credit hours of study, written thesis, and thesis film taken over a minimum of three years. To graduate, a student should complete the course of study in good academic standing and produce and defend a written thesis and thesis film.

FILM 504	Film and Documentary Theory	3
FILM 505	Crit Apprch Nat Hst Filmmaking	3
FILM 510	Fundamentals of Filmmaking	3
FILM 513	Advanced Cinematography	3
FILM 515	Science and Natural History Film Prod.	3
FILM 517	Production Management	3
FILM 518	Writing for Documentary and Non-Fiction Film	3
FILM 519	Post Production Workflow	3
FILM 523	Second Year Film Prep	2
FILM 525	Second Year Film Prod	3
FILM 526	Alternative Nonfiction	3

FILM 560	Advanced Post Production: Info Design	3
FILM 581	Special Professional Proj	1-3, max 12 credits, may be repeated
FILM 590	Master's Thesis	1-15, max 15 credits, may be repeated
FILM 591	Special Topics	1-3, max 12 credits, may be repeated
FILM 592	Independent Study	1-3, max 3 credits, may be repeated
FILM 598	Professional Internship	1-6, max 6 credits, may be repeated