WRITING FOR THE SCREEN AND STAGE

Degree Types: MFA

The MFA Program in Writing for the Screen and Stage (https://write.northwestern.edu/) trains leaders in the fields of screen/television and playwriting who will help form the entertainment industry of the future. Graduates leave with a deep understanding of media writing, familiarity with production concepts, equipment, and techniques; and an understanding of the universals that connect all media narratives.

The program focuses on writing and storytelling, and also includes a production component. It provides opportunities for students to produce their own work, both at Northwestern and through arrangements with theatrical and film companies in the greater Chicago area. Students also participate in internships and classes in Hollywood, New York, and Chicago.

By graduation, students will have created a short screenplay, a full-length play, a television pilot, and a full-length project of their choosing.

Additional resources:
- Department website (https://write.northwestern.edu/)
- Program handbook(s)

Degree Offered
- Writing for the Screen and Stage MFA (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/writing-screen-stage/writing-screen-stage-mfa/)

Learning objective(s)/Students should be able to...
- Write a 10-page/20 screenplay and understand basic screenwriting concepts.
- Write a play and demonstrate understanding of basic concepts of theatre.
- Write a TV pilot and understand basic concepts of TV.
- Create and revise a full-length work.
- Display understanding of at least one but hopefully several genres of media.
- Exhibit understanding of film production.
- Display an understanding of an aspect of the history and theory of media (Screen Cultures, Theatre, Performance Studies, or other by permission).
- Exhibit an understanding of working in a professional context.
- Pitch and understand how to “take a meeting”.
- Write an artist’s statement.
- Have a sense of a career trajectory that the candidate would like to pursue based on their development as a writer at Northwestern.
- Work in a group setting.
- Have an understanding of how to teach screenwriting.

Writing for the Screen and Stage Courses

RTVF 310-0 Television History (1 Unit)
Political, cultural, social, and industrial history of television, from the classic network era to the post-network contemporary period of media convergence. Exploration of programs as well as major events and shifts in television history.

RTVF 312-1 History of Film I (1 Unit)
International survey of motion pictures as a distinctive medium of expression from its prehistory to the present.

RTVF 312-2 History of Film II (1 Unit)
International survey of motion pictures as a distinctive medium of expression from its prehistory to the present.

RTVF 313-1 Doc Film History & Criticism (1 Unit)
Survey of the schools, styles, and purposes of documentary film as a unique form of artistic expression and sociopolitical persuasion.

RTVF 314-0 History of the Recording Industry (1 Unit)
Exploration of the history of the recording industry from the invention of the phonograph in 1877 to recent developments in digital audio.

RTVF 315-0 Audio Drama (1 Unit)
Introduction to masterpieces of audio and radio drama in three historical periods: classic American (1937-54); mid-century British (1954-1974) and contemporary global traditions.

RTVF 316-0 Media and Cultural Theory (1 Unit)
Introduction to the critical analysis of film, television, and other popular media by surveying influential theories of media, culture, and power.

RTVF 321-0 Radio/Tv/Film Authorship (1 Unit)
Idea of authorship in the media and an examination of different uses of author theory related to the work of particular artists.

RTVF 322-0 Radio/Television/Film Genre (1 Unit)
Concept of genre in the media, with reference to popular American forms.

RTVF 325-0 Film, Media & Gender (1 Unit)
Explores issues of gender in film and media. Introduces students to major debates and theories regarding gender and sexuality in the media.

RTVF 326-0 Film & TV Criticism (1 Unit)
Contemporary critical methods applied to film and/or television. Students read literature on critical methods and analysis and write critical analyses of films and television programs.

RTVF 330-0 Culture Industries (1 Unit)
Overview of business and social organization of film and television industry. Introduction to how media industries produce cultural products for local, national, and transnational audiences.

RTVF 341-0 Technological Innovations (1 Unit)
How technology develops and is assimilated into mass media.

RTVF 345-0 History of Hollywood Cinema (1 Unit)
Overview of the development of the classical Hollywood cinema, with particular emphasis on the 1920s through the early 1960s. Explores the relationship between industry practices and aesthetic features of classical narrative film genres.

RTVF 351-0 National Cinema (1 Unit)
Historical aspects of cinema in a culture outside the United States or a social/cultural/intellectual movement within cinema's general evolution.

RTVF 353-0 Film, Media, and Globalization (1 Unit)
Explores theories of media's role in the globalization of cultures. Examines transnational production, marketing, and reception of film, television, and/or digital media.

RTVF 358-0 Topics in Improv (1 Unit)
In-depth study and practice of improv techniques and aesthetics. Sample topics include Intro to Improv, Improvising Characters, Writing and Performing Stand-up, Writing with Improv, Improvising the Text-based Collaborative Show, Improvised Comedy Web Series.

RTVF 360-0 Topics in Media Writing (1 Unit)
Various approaches to screenwriting, emphasizing different modes and genres, such as the short film, the feature film, screenplays based on preexisting material, the teen film, interactive computer scenarios. May be repeated for credit, depending on the change in topic.
Prerequisite: RTVF 260-0.

RTVF 363-0 Writing the TV Pilot (1 Unit)
Students will learn the craft of writing a television pilot in this small, workshop-based course.
Prerequisite: RTVF 260-0.

RTVF 364-0 Writing the Feature (1 Unit)
Students will learn the craft of writing a feature film in this small, workshop-based course.
Prerequisite: RTVF 260-0.

RTVF 365-0 Writing the Adaptation (1 Unit)
Students will learn the craft of writing an adaptation in this small, workshop-based course.
Prerequisite: RTVF 260-0.

RTVF 370-0 Topics in Pre-Production (1 Unit)
In-depth study of preproduction film, video, and media techniques and aesthetics. Sample topics include storyboarding, producing, and motion graphics.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 372-0 Editing (1 Unit)
The technique and art of editing for film. Topics include editing for continuity, controlling pace and rhythm, and editing nonlinear narratives.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 373-0 Topics in Sound (1 Unit)
In-depth study of sound techniques and aesthetics.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 374-0 Topics in Cinematography (1 Unit)
In-depth study of cinematography techniques and aesthetics. Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 376-0 Topics in Interactive Media (1 Unit)
Exploration of the techniques and aesthetics of interactivity using various media. Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0, second-year standing (not through AP credits), and consent of instructor.

RTVF 377-0 Topics in Non-fiction Media (1 Unit)
In-depth study of nonfiction media techniques and aesthetics. Prerequisites: 190 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 378-0 Topics in Post-Production (1 Unit)
In-depth study of postproduction film, video, and media techniques and aesthetics. Sample topics include color correction, special-effects cinematography, and finishing.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 379-0 Topics in Film/Video/Audio Production (1 Unit)
In-depth study and practice of one area of film, video, or television. May be taken more than once for credit, depending on changes in topic.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 380-0 Cinematography - Film (1 Unit)
Techniques, aesthetics, and technologies of lighting for cinema using film and film cameras.

RTVF 381-0 Cinematography - Digital (1 Unit)
Techniques, aesthetics, and technologies of lighting and digital camera skills.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 383-0 Introduction to Sound Production (1 Unit)
Introduction to the theories and principles of basic sound production. Demos, lectures, readings, screenings, and exercises cover all basics of sound recording technology.
Prerequisite: RTVF 190-0.

RTVF 384-0 Introduction to Sound Postproduction (1 Unit)
Introduction to the theories and principles of basic sound production. Demos, lectures, readings, screenings, and exercises cover all basics of sound recording technology.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 390-0 Topics in Directing (1 Unit)
Single-camera dramatic directing, including visualization and breakdown of scripts, camera blocking, and working with actors.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 392-0 Documentary Production (1 Unit)
Students examine documentary practices and produce their own shorts.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 393-0 2D Computer Animation (1 Unit)
Animation techniques in the 2-D sphere and incorporation of visual design principles.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 394-0 Experimental Media Production (1 Unit)
Creation of an experimental work as a linear film or video, an interactive website, an installation, a game, or a multidisciplinary performance.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 395-0 Computer Animation: 3D (1 Unit)
The fundamental concepts and techniques of 3-D computer modeling and animation. Use of concepts acquired in camera-based production techniques to create a rendered animation.
Prerequisites: RTVF 190-0 and second-year standing (not through AP credits).

RTVF 398-0 Symposium: Issues in RTVF (1 Unit)
Special issues and topics in the analysis of radio, television, film, and popular culture.
RTVF 402-0 Television and Media Theory (1 Unit)
Seminar in the key historical and contemporary debates shaping the
study of television and emerging electronic media.

RTVF 403-0 Media and Cultural Theory (1 Unit)
Seminar in cultural theory with emphasis on issues of cultural production
in film, television, and digital media. Course is not repeatable with
multiple topics.

RTVF 410-0 Media Historiography (1 Unit)
Introduction to historiography with emphasis on the research and writing
of history in film, television, and digital media.

RTVF 411-0 Cultural History of Television (1 Unit)
This course is a critical investigation of the history of U.S. television
focusing on the classic 3-network era. This course will provide a
background into the events surrounding the emergence of TV as a
technology, industry and cultural form.

RTVF 412-0 Cultural History of Film (1 Unit)
This course offers an introductory survey of world film history from the
1890s to the outbreak of World War II. We will examine a wide range of
films, feature-length narratives as well as animated, experimental, and
early shorts, and place them in their historical and cultural context.

RTVF 413-0 Cultural History of New Media (1 Unit)
This class introduces students to key debates surrounding the history of
new media and digital media cultures. Taking a media studies approach,
we will investigate issues of technological innovation from the 19th
century to the new digital media of the present.

RTVF 420-0 Film Theory & Criticism (1 Unit)

RTVF 422-0 Textual Analysis (1 Unit)
Seminar in the textual analysis of film, television, and digital media.

RTVF 426-0 Global Media (1 Unit)
Seminar in historical and contemporary issues related to media and
globalization.

RTVF 443-0 Advanced Seminar in Film & Video (1 Unit)

RTVF 464-0 Advanced Media Writing (1 Unit)
An advanced writing course primarily emphasizing dramatic writing for
feature film and television. At the discretion of the instructor, the course
emphasizes one of several types of writing such as episodic television,
television movies, playwriting, genre films, comedies, action/adventures,
and adaptation. Offered yearly.
Prerequisites: RTVF 260-0 and admission by permission of instructor.

RTVF 472-0 Advanced Editing (1 Unit)
The technique and art of editing for film. Topics include editing for
continuity, controlling pace and rhythm, and editing nonlinear narratives.
Prerequisites: RTVF 380-0 and second-year standing (not through AP
credits).

RTVF 475-0 Grad Prod Wkshop (1 Unit)
Intensive introduction to media production and aesthetics that includes
still photography, computer simulations of production problems, and
extensive small-format video production and editing.
Prerequisite: Permission of instructor.

RTVF 476-0 Advanced Cinematography (1 Unit)
Continuation of work started in RTVF 380 Lighting and Cinematography;
greater emphasis on developing advanced lighting skills. Work on
industry standard 16mm film cameras and High Definition video cameras.
Detailed scene studies focusing on color, composition, and camera
movement.
Prerequisite: RTVF 380-0, or permission of instructor.

RTVF 478-0 Film & Video Post Production (1 Unit)
An advanced study of film editing and finishing practices and procedures,
videotape off-line and on-line editing, and ways in which film and
videotape interface in postproduction.
Prerequisite: RTVF 380-0.

RTVF 479-0 Seminar: Studies in Film and Video Prod (1 Unit)
An advanced study and practice of one aspect of film and video making,
such as scriptwriting, lighting, cinematography, directing, sound
recording, or editing. May be repeated for credit no more than twice.
Prerequisite: RTVF 380-0.

RTVF 490-1 Professional Experience Practicum (0 Unit)
Provides a framework for optimizing MFA students' professional
experiences during summer. Students can secure an externally hosted
experience (internship, apprenticeship, fellowship, assistantship, or
project-based professional experience related to student's career
interests) or propose an individual career development project that will
advance the student's specific goals. Followed by RTVF 490-2 in fall.
Prerequisites: 1. Completion of year 1 of their MFA. 2. Accepted for
an internship in the summer quarter of their first year that has been
approved by EPICS and program faculty. Students will be automatically
enrolled in the Fall Internship Capstone (RTVF 490-2) for fall quarter,
which is a companion class to this course.

RTVF 490-2 Professional Experience Capstone (1 Unit)
A continuation of the Professional Experience Practicum (RTVF 490-1),
where students will pull insights from and integrate their summer
experience to develop a personalized career strategy, action plan, and
polish key assets that will help them advance their goals prior to and
following graduation.

RTVF 491-0 Fall Internship Seminar (1 Unit)
This course occurs concurrently during a student's fall internship in order
to provide a structured approach to their internship experience. Through
weekly readings and assignments students will assess their own skills,
experiences, and interests to develop a personal plan on how to best
approach their internships in order to further their career goals. A special
emphasis will be placed on developing professional practices that will
prepare students for finding work in the entertainment industry after
graduation. At the end of the course, students will complete a capstone
project that will focus on different methods and strategies for applying to
professionally relevant opportunities in their respective fields.

RTVF 499-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)
Permission of instructor and department required. May be repeated for
credit.

RTVF 501-0 Foundations of Screen Cultures (1 Unit)
Introduction of key concepts and methods in Screen Cultures, with
particular emphasis on the ways in which these ideas cut across media.

RTVF 502-0 Writing Practicum (1 Unit)

RTVF 551-0 Documentary Techniques (1 Unit)
Intro to basic camera and sound recording for traditional small-crew
documentary filmmaking; interviewing; ethics; successful story structure
that engages and innovates. Product: 6-8 minute documentary film.

RTVF 552-0 Narrative Techniques (1 Unit)
Intro to small-crew narrative sync-sound filmmaking; hybridization:
narratives that use doc techniques, docs that use narrative techniques;
additional documentary equipment. Product: 6-8 minute narrative film.

RTVF 553-0 Pre-Thesis (1 Unit)
In this seminar, first year MFA in Documentary Media students develop
their thesis project, which they will complete during their second year
of study. Discussion of research techniques, creative approaches and
grant proposals. Students explore their artistic vision, pitch their project
to peers for feedback, and situate their work within the documentary art field.

**RTVF 554-0 Thesis 1 (1 Unit)**
Development and major period of field production of documentary media thesis project. Product: concept, treatment, assembly/selects or completed plan for interactive prototype.

**RTVF 555-0 Thesis 2 (1 Unit)**
Post-production of thesis with emphasis on transitioning from fieldwork to assemblage. Product: Rough-cut or working interactive prototype.

**RTVF 556-0 Thesis 3 (1 Unit)**
Finish thesis project; organize final public screening and exhibitions; intro to the business of documentary media production/distribution. Product: Thesis project, artist statement, PR/marketing materials, career plan.

**RTVF 561-0 Screenwriting Workshop (1 Unit)**

**RTVF 562-0 Television Writing Workshop (1 Unit)**

**RTVF 563-0 Playwriting Workshop (1 Unit)**

**RTVF 564-0 Full Length Project (1 Unit)**

**RTVF 565-0 Full-length Project II (1 Unit)**

**RTVF 566-0 Full-length Project III (1 Unit)**

**RTVF 584-0 Research Seminar (1 Unit)**
Topics vary.

**RTVF 590-0 Research (1-3 Units)**
Independent investigation of selected problems pertaining to thesis or dissertation. May be repeated for credit.