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Department of Film and Media Studies

2017 Annual Student Recognition Ceremony and Tensie Awards

Thursday, May 4, 2017
(last day of classes)
All FMS students are invited and encouraged to attend.
Family members and friends welcome.
Watch your email for details.

The School of the Arts

Convocation Ceremony

Friday, May 12, 2017
6:30 p.m.
Crafton-Preyer Theatre, Murphy Hall
1530 Naismith Drive, Lawrence, KS 66045
Submit your RSVP or email sota@ku.edu
no later than May 8 at 5:00 p.m.

Every May, the School of the Arts holds a recognition ceremony for its graduating students. This ceremony is for undergraduate AND graduate students who are graduating from a SOTA department during the current academic year (2016-2017). This includes fall, summer and spring graduates. This is a small event where each student will be recognized and will cross the stage to shake hands with the Associate Dean of the School of the Arts and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. We hope that you can join us!

Please note: This ceremony is in addition to, not taking the place of, the University of Kansas Commencement Ceremony on May 14, 2017.

University of Kansas

145th Commencement

Sunday, May 14, 2017
Beginning at 10:30 a.m. (CDT)
Memorial Stadium
Commencement Ceremony Info:
http://commencement.ku.edu/
Recent Events

FMS 2017 Annual Student Recognition Ceremony and Tensie Awards

The FMS 2017 Annual Student Recognition Ceremony and Tensie Awards was held on May 4.

Scholarships and departmental awards were announced, graduating students were recognized, and Tensie Awards for the best student film in several categories were given out.

Check out more photos on FMS Twitter and watch for an expanded version of the newsletter with many photos from the event in the coming weeks.

FMS held a “Farewell to Oldfather Studios” reception and open house on May 5. Remarks were made by Michael Baskett, Henry Bial, Marilyn Heath, Ben Krout, Bruce Linton, John Tibbetts, and Jack Wright. The event was well attended with students, alums, current and former faculty and staff, and former Centron employees.
**Recognitions and Accomplishments**

We are delighted and proud to officially announce that two of our FMS colleagues have received promotions!

**Germaine Halegoua** is promoted with tenure to Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies starting in Fall 2017 and **Tamara Falicov** is promoted to Full Professor of Film and Media Studies also starting in the fall.

This is a milestone in both of their careers and we hope you'll join us in congratulating them for a job well done!

**Out & About**

On April 7, **Michael Baskett** was invited to speak at the Japan Forum at the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard University. The title of his presentation was “Missing Believed Lost: Japanese Film Exchange in Cold War Asia.”

Check out “Through the Hedges” created by **Travis Gomel**.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4u2fXklFeo,
Out & About

KU alum Barry St. John, the VFX Associate Producer on this year’s Academy Award winning film for Best Visual Effects, The Jungle Book! was on campus April 17 and 18 to speak to FMS students and show samples of his work. He attended several FMS classes where he spoke about his career path, his current work, and what current students should be doing to be competitive after graduation, among other topics.

FMS honored Barry St. John last year with the Alumni Honor Citation. This citation is awarded to a KU alum from the Department who has national and/or international prominence and has demonstrated continued significant contributions to his/her profession. The plaque was presented to him in Matt Jacobson’s FMS 275 Basic Video Class.

Barry St. John grew up in Wichita, KS and is a 2004 KU graduate with a Bachelor’s degree in Theatre and Film. A few of his film and TV credits include:

- Visual Effects Production Supervisor – Ready Player One (2018, film is currently in post-production)
- Show Lighting Director for 43 episodes – Fox Report (2005-2010)

And last, but not least, he was the associate producer of the visual effects team that just won the Oscar for The Jungle Book.

On April 13, Ron Wilson conducted an academic writing workshop in the English Room of the KU Union for twenty international graduate students in a variety of academic disciplines. The workshop was sponsored by International Student Services as part of their “Life in the U.S.” series.
Out & About

O’Connor Creates Documentary about Study Abroad Experience

Instead of collecting water beetles during the 2016 Suriname entomology field expedition, Gabriel O’Connor collected video footage. The film studies major chronicled the 10-day journey to the jungle of the northeastern South America country and turned his footage of the spring break program into a 20-minute documentary and a video for the Natural History Museum on the research accomplished during the trip.

O’Connor did not know where Suriname was until he was offered the opportunity to go on the trip. Professor Andrew Short was looking for a non-science major to enhance the group’s experience and had the funds to support his trip. Alumni Tom and Jann Rudkin of Los Gatos, Calif., have provided scholarships for students pursing degrees such as journalism, illustration, photography and textile arts to experience research expeditions alongside scientific staff and students who are pursing degrees in biology.

Associate Professor Andrew Short and his fellow travelers had no qualms about being filmed so O’Connor tried to “capture everything.” From setting up traps to night hikes and boat rides, O’Connor was part of all of the group’s activities.

His gear had to work in the humidity of a rain forest, so he took waterproof bags. For his “guerilla film making,” O’Connor shot with a Canon DSLR and used a GoPro, a monopod and a shotgun microphone.

When asked what he learned from this experience that he will take to his next project, O’Connor said he would plan more and do more research about the people and culture he is examining to help build the story.

Before this expedition O’Connor had not thought about being a documentarian, now he’s considering branching out into documentary film making. He is working on a grant proposal to document life on Japan’s Tashirojima (Cat Island) where stray cats outnumber humans.

Doctoral student Courtney Sanchez represented FMS at the KU Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS), Institute of Haitian Studies (IHS) and Latin American Graduate Organization (LAGO) graduate symposium showcasing innovative interdisciplinary research from Latin America and the Caribbean on April 3, 2017. Ms. Sanchez participated in a panel discussion on Cultural Production and the Arts. Her presentation was titled: “Silent Divas: Early Mexican Film Starts and Post-Revolutionary Femininity.”

Graduate students from programs as diverse as Psychology, Architecture, Linguistics, Psychology, Film & Media Studies, Theatre, Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, Geography and Atmospheric Science, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies presented their research in short, slide-based talks that explored themes of culture, identity, art, economy, environment, politics, international aid, and more.

Read more here: [https://news.ku.edu/ku-clacs-host-graduate-symposium-interdisciplinary-research-latin-america-and-caribbean](https://news.ku.edu/ku-clacs-host-graduate-symposium-interdisciplinary-research-latin-america-and-caribbean)
Out & About

KU Filmworks celebrated its final meeting of the 2016-2017 year on Sunday, May 7, at Oldfather Studios. This was also the final meeting for KU Filmworks meeting for graduating Filmworks President Savannah Rodgers. KU alumnus Hoite Caston was also in attendance. KU Filmworks will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in the fall of 2017.

Master’s student Adrienne Frank attended the Nashville Film Festival, where her short screenplay Looking for Death was a finalist in the Nashville Film Festival Screenwriting Competition.

A total of 43 entries were received for the BisonBison Film Festival. FMS student Savannah Rodgers’ film, Sketches, won an Award of Excellence at the festival in Oklahoma.

Jacob Hood’s film Flying has officially been selected to screen at TERMINUS, a student festival in Atlanta, GA in June.
Out & About

Art in Focus: 'The Listeners' looks inside the high-pressure world of crisis center volunteers

When University film professor Robert Hurst began looking into ideas for his next documentary, he didn’t think he would end up looking into the world of suicide hotlines. But, when work on his then current documentary led him to the Headquarters Counseling Center in Lawrence, he decided to embark on a two-and-a-half-year journey to tell the story of volunteers that take calls for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at Headquarters.

“I’m interested in films that have some sort of social component to them,” Hurst said. “I got interested in the idea of suicide hotlines because I had been working on another project about veterans, mental health, and PTSD. So, it sort of naturally segued into this project.”

Although Hurst wasn’t particularly interested in films about mental health, he said that this story had enough of that social component to really be worth taking the time to tell.

His now-released documentary, entitled “The Listeners,” takes a look at young adult volunteers going into the suicide hotline program and the rigorous training required to be an official volunteer.

Andy Brown, Headquarters’ executive director, found Hurst’s involvement with the specific trainees to be the most noticeable aspect of the whole film process.

“[Hurst] basically came in and followed a training staff of volunteers from the start all the way to the finish,” Brown said. “He then checked up with them about a year later to see where they were.”

These students go through extensive training. Scenarios include having to answer situational phone calls from people with guns to their heads, in order to truly test their ability to withstand pressure and keep their composure in such serious situations.

Hurst said that witnessing this aspect of the training was tough to take in at times. After participating in part of the training himself, he said it really brought weight to all that was going on.

“It’s pretty challenging when you’re doing role plays and pretending and the phone rings and someone says ‘Well, I’ve got this gun here and I want to blow my own head off.’ That’s pretty scary, even when it’s not the real thing.”

Despite the challenges, Hurst found the volunteers' care for others and desire to do good as something worth capturing.

“It’s interesting in the sense that, at every age, there are people who care deeply about one thing or another, and are really taking action,” Hurst said. “All of the people in the documentary were really interested in helping other people. They’re all interested in being in the helping professions. So that was really cool to see. They’re all very mature people.”

Hurst also said that the students he documented had to deal with some problems themselves from answering the calls. However, he didn’t see this as a problem, necessarily, so much as an asset to their job.

“They’ve been through some stuff, which is actually positive when it comes to volunteering and relating to people who are in crisis,” Hurst said. “A lot of people have learned to deal with it, and the result of that is they didn’t shut down, they want to help other people.”

Watch the trailer here: http://listenersmovie.com/
Copied from the University Daily Kansan.

Alumni News

Josh Doke (FMS BGS 2012) writes that his feature debut as a writer/director, “Goodland,” had its world premiere at the Kansas City FilmFest on April 8th. According to Josh, “A ton of Jayhawks worked on this project, including Iain Trimble (FMS BGS 2012) as the director of photography, Edward Schroer (FMS BGS 2012) as the editor, Derek Sellens (TH&F BGS 2010) as an associate producer, and Jake Schultz (FMS BA 2012) as the First AC.”

Watch the trailer here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0bSVUF5KkI
For more information: http://kcfilmfest.org/goodland/

Rodney F. Hill (Ph.D. 2006) is featured in the “bonus” materials on the upcoming DVD / Blu-ray release of Francis Coppola’s Rumble Fish, available April 25 from the Criterion Collection (https://www.criterion.com/films/28993-rumble-fish). Hill discusses the film’s existentialist elements, as well as its relationship to Coppola’s other work.

Dr. Hill teaches film studies in the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University.
Art in Focus: Filmmaker and University alum takes trip to Philippines to tackle environmental issues

Lauren Fitzgerald knew the jungle of the Philippines was a far cry from the hills of Lawrence. But in the summer of 2015, the filmmaker and University alum from Topeka found herself a world away in that jungle.

It was at KU that she studied film and media studies and creative writing, with a minor in psychology. Combining those elements and her interest in science, she embarked on a journey to the Philippines.

While a portion of the trip was funded by the Undergraduate Research Award (http://ugresearch.ku.edu/student/fund/research-awards), a majority of the funding was from the Biodiversity Institute.

“The Biodiversity Institute has a fund set up by private donors that is designed to fund undergraduate research programs internationally,” said Meg Jamieson, an assistant professor of film and media studies and Fitzgerald’s mentor. “She had this idea and had always been very interested in conservation and she took it and ran with it.”

Fitzgerald said she became interested in animals, their habitats and where they came from while in school, when she worked at the Pet World in town.

“I was interested in seeing how to write stories that makes people aware about the environment,” she said. “So I decided to apply for the UGRA, and I got it.”

The herpetologist, who studies local reptiles and amphibians of a particular region, was Arvin Diesmos, who works closely with University professor Rafe Brown. Diesmos, along with Fitzgerald and some other graduate students that were there, went “herping” to collect amphibians and reptiles in the rainforest. Since most of the creatures are awake at night, the group usually went out around 2 a.m.

Fitzgerald documented her experience on film.

“I think what I learned the most is that to be an environmentalist, you have to know what’s going on politically,” she said. “For instances, [the Philippines] has a huge deforestation problem, but they also have a huge overpopulation problem. People keep moving and imped on the rainforest, but you can’t have them stop because of the overpopulation problem.”

After the experience, Fitzgerald said she was able to see just how complex issues in our environment really are and what needs to be done to tackle them.

“There are a lot of dynamics that go into it, and you just have to look at the bigger picture,” she said. "It made me realize how complicated and complex it can be."

Fitzgerald graduated in 2016 and is now residing in Los Angeles where she is interning at a talent management company.

Watch her film here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DXytdFbvr0

Copied from the University Daily Kansan: http://www.kansan.com/arts_and_culture/art-in-focus-filmmaker-and-university-alum-takes-trip-to/article_30e69514-09de-11e7-ab41-2f612984246e.html
Alumni News

After working on '22 Jump Street' and 'Game of Thrones,' a KU alumnus is coming back to Lawrence

He remembers his first freelance job as a cinematographer right out of college, what he describes as a whirlwind of unexpected events. He accepted a gig in Los Angeles to set up the lighting and camera for a televised celebrity interview. Grant Babbitt remembers the crew saying, “Tom will be up soon.”

Little did he know, that would be Tom Cruise.

Babbitt, a University alum, jumped straight out of the film and media studies program and into Los Angeles as a successful freelance cinematographer after graduating in 2011. Babbitt finished his last final exam at the University and then, immediately drove straight to the big city.

His transition from Lawrence to a big city — working with celebrities and other prominent figures on the film set — was unbelievable, Babbitt said.

"I started doing a bunch of interviews with actors, working with all of these A-list people, being only out there for a year or two," Babbitt said. "I was working with some of the top talent, kind of being thrust into that world, was very interesting. It’s kind of evolved from there.”

Babbitt has worked on several notable movies and TV shows, such as “Game of Thrones,” “Dexter,” “The Lego Movie,” “The Amazing Spider-Man 2,” “22 Jump Street,” “Guardians of the Galaxy,” and the list goes on.

Because of Babbitt’s extensive experience in the field, he plans to come to the University next fall to talk to the current film students about his experiences and moves that have helped him become a successful freelance cinematographer.

“I know [film students] probably feel like they’re just kids from Kansas, and even though you love to make movies, [they think] would you go to L.A. and try to make it?” Babbitt said.

Film students can often be intimidated by bigger cities like Los Angeles, Babbitt said, but by coming to the University, he plans to illustrate the reality of the industry.

Babbitt said that his immediate success in the industry was mostly due to his constant efforts and work during his time at the University.

Babbitt and his friends created a total of 26 films while at the University, and in addition to his films, Babbitt also worked at Kansas Athletics as the camera operator for the entire first season of “The Gridiron,” which won a Mid America Emmy award. He also worked at Jayhawkers, LLC, as the associate producer/kickstarter campaign producer on the feature film “Jayhawkers.”

Another major start to Babbitt’s career involved his trip to Los Angeles before graduation with a group sponsored by the University called the “Hollywood Hawks,” that go to the city to scope out the industry — the Los Angeles life — and meet other people in Kansas working in the industry. That helped Babbitt make valuable connections.

"One of the things that helped at KU is like the ability and freedom to just try different things and try stuff and fail,” Babbitt said. “We basically lived at Oldfather Studios. We really were there nonstop. That’s one of the things that helped me. Immersing myself in that filmmaker’s mindset, in that creative mindset.”

For now, Babbitt is enjoying his freelance work, but plans to work as a cinematographer for a major film or TV show, and eventually wants to produce his own show.

Film and media studies professor Matthew Jacobson worked closely with Babbitt during his time in the program, and said Babbitt’s success in the industry is due to his hard work and involvement in the film program at the University.

“He was definitely one of the most involved students we had in production here at that time,” Jacobson said. “He and his friends really stood out from a lot of the other students just in the way that they were always working and always making movies. The best students are always the ones that jump at the chance to make their own movies and to work on movies for other people, and that was always Grant.”

**Academic Calendar**

Thursday, May 4 — Last day of classes  
Monday, May 5 — Stop Day  
Monday, May 8 — First day of Finals  
Friday, May 12 — Last day of Finals  
http://www.registrar.ku.edu/calendar/

**Equipment Check-in:** 10:00 a.m. — 12:00 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday  
**Equipment Check-out:** 1:00 p.m. — 3:00 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday  
Sign-up to check-out equipment in the binder on the table near the equipment room.  
Sign-up for **editing rooms** by signing the edit room schedule posted on the editing room doors.  
The **computer lab** is available for use during the following times:
  - Monday: 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.  
  - Tuesday: 9:00 – 4:00 p.m.  
  - Wednesday: 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.  
  - Thursdays: 9:00 – 5:00 p.m.  
  - Friday: 9:00 – 5:00 p.m.  
Check with your instructor or John McCluskey, Assistant Technical Director, for more information.

**Check out the College Blog:**  
http://blog.college.ku.edu/

**Follow us**

Twitter: @KUFMS, @KUSchoolofArts, @KUCollege

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**Sydney Stone**  
**Advising Specialist**

**Office Hours in FMS:**  
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Are you a Film & Media Studies (or Theatre & Film) alum? We'd love to hear from you. Click https://film.ku.edu/alumni-submissions to update your information with us, so we can add you to the impressive ranks of our alumni.