

Course outline: Film Studies, Programming and Curation

The MA in Film Studies, Programming and Curation is a specialisation within the broader **MA in Film and Television**.

Students on this course gain a thorough understanding of the process by which a film moves from a creative idea to an audience experience. The course provides theoretical and practical support for students developing their professional practice. They will explore the history, theory and critical contexts of the production and reception of film and the moving image, and will apply this knowledge in project research and delivery. In addition, they will look at a wide variety of critical writing on film, to help them to develop their own critical awareness and forms of expression.

Their learning will be enhanced by regular screenings of a broad range of historical and contemporary cinema.

Alongside lectures, seminars and tutorials, the course offers in-depth workshops and a professional work experience opportunity to allow a more specialised focus on industry practices in programming, curating, archives and film criticism.

UNIT 1 (80 Credits)**Part A: Conceptualising Film: Idea, Form and Style (80 Credits)**

(Year 1 - January to April)

The unit provides an introduction to key ways of conceptualising film that underpin approaches to critical, theoretical and creative practice. The main topics include:

1. The evolution of the moving image: from scientific experiment to mass entertainment and beyond
2. Ways of seeing: approaches to studying film
3. The development of an industry and its audience: Film and Commerce
4. Film and Realism: Cinema as a Mirror of Society?
5. The Subconscious Art: dream cinema and the language of film
6. Historical movements in Cinema: influential developments, including the early avant-garde, Italian neo-realism, the Nouvelle Vague, Third Cinema
7. Contemporary British and World Cinema: approaches, developments and trends
8. Film Forum: the evolution of film criticism and comment
9. Film and Digital Media (technology and the impact on form and style)
10. Expanded cinema: film as a gallery experience, film as live event.

The unit draws on a wide range of illustrative film examples, and explores each concept with in-depth analysis of one or more key films. Each topic will be introduced by a film and media practitioner and/or an academic.

Students will write a 3000-word essay in order to explore one of the topics, to be submitted in April (assessed).

Students will keep a learning journal to respond to key subjects and texts; this will form part of their Year One portfolio.

Part B: Identifying the Audience: The Practice of Cinema from Idea to Exhibition

(Year 1 - April to July)

This unit looks at the changing sites and forms of film viewing, providing a detailed exploration of the cultural, economic and technological contexts that structure the processes and pathways by which films reach an audience. Whilst primary examples will largely be drawn from Europe and the USA, these will be considered in a global context.

1. Audiences: bringing people together to watch films: who, why and how, from fairground attraction to movie palace to pop-up and online.
2. The relationship between production and audiences: creativity, development journeys, film finance and funding.
3. Contemporary patterns of distribution: buying and selling films in a multi-platform world; from conglomeration and globalisation to independence and self-distribution
4. The business of contemporary exhibition: the 'majors' and the alternatives; the digital revolution
5. Cultural cinema in the UK and Europe; the status of 'specialised cinema', including repertory and archive film
6. Film Festivals and markets: cultural and economic impact; models of programming;
7. Programming for diverse audiences
8. Programming beyond the single screen: event cinema, alternative content, installation and on-line platforms
9. Marketing and promotion: identifying, reaching and developing audiences
10. Critics and criticism in the age of the internet and social media: continuity and change
11. Reception: case studies

In addition to regular lectures and seminars by NFTS tutors, the teaching programme includes a wide range of talks by professionals working across a range of platforms, including cinemas, festivals and online; industry executives working in exhibition, distribution, sales and marketing; venue and event managers; filmmakers and critics.

Students will prepare and present a case study one of the subject areas (assessed). Students will write reviews of four films/programmes/cultural events that they have attended during the term, to form part of their Year One portfolio.

Students will submit their dissertation proposal (500 words).

Part C: Programming Film & Cultural Events and Film Preservation and Restoration (*Year 1 - September to December; Year 2 January to April*)

This unit is broken into two strands with students participating in both:

1. **Film preservation and restoration** (*Year 1, September to December*): this strand will cover understanding film materials, the impact of digitization on film preservation, and its limits; sessions will also explore issues of curatorial practice with regard both to collecting and exhibiting work and will consider the presentation and reception of archive material across a range of exhibition platforms. Students will also have the opportunity to visit archives, a specialised film collection, film laboratory or digital media centre.
2. **Programming Film and Cultural Events** (*Year 2, January to April*): informed by the study in Parts A and B, there will be seminars and in-depth workshops on programming, including researching programme and event ideas, developing themes, selecting work to meet cultural and commercial imperatives, copywriting and devising marketing strategies. Practical issues regarding rights and availability, projection and technical presentation, producing publicity materials and on-stage introductions and Q&A hosting will all be covered.

Work experience preparation

During this term, students will discuss with tutors their preferred specialism for their BFI work experience opportunity; this may be informed by the area that they intend to specialise in for their Graduation Project. Students will be invited to discuss their intended specialism with NFTS tutors.

During this part of the course students will attend the BFI London Film Festival
Students are required to write a festival report based on their attendance.

Students will submit the detailed plan for their dissertation, together with one chapter (2000 words)

UNIT 2 (40 Credits)

Dissertation

As part of the work necessary to qualify for an MA, each student is required to produce an independent research project. Detailed guidelines for this can be found in Section One.

The aim should be to undertake research of an investigative nature that extends the boundaries of specialist knowledge of a particular area of Film Studies, Programming and Curation.

The Film Studies, Programming and Curation student's dissertation may encompass any aspect of film or any other subject which relates to their work or area of interest, subject to the approval of tutors. The dissertation may take the form of an extended piece of film criticism or an original exploration of aspects of film culture, genre or form, or cinema history.

For example, more specific areas might include:

- an examination of the work of a particular filmmaker
- the study of an aspect of audience behaviour
- an analysis of a specific historical development in the field of film exhibition
- an exploration of a particular theme in a body of work

As part of the dissertation module a number of tutorials will be arranged with departmental tutors, and with external specialist tutors if necessary.

The length of the dissertation will be between 7,000 and 10,000 words.

A 500-word proposal will be submitted in June of Year One.

A detailed plan and a specimen chapter (2000 words) will be submitted in November of Year One. Students must complete their 2000 words in order to progress to the second year.

A draft Dissertation will be submitted in September 2023 (date to be confirmed), with the final submission to be in October 2023 (date to be confirmed)

UNIT 3 (120 Credits)

In Year Two, students are supported in developing their independent guided research and professional practice. In addition to screenings, lectures and seminars, the course provides hands-on approaches to teaching and learning through workshops, group projects, field trips and personal research. For example, students work in small groups to develop portfolio (e.g. creating a promotional strategy for a film or thematic programme) and workshops (e.g. peer review in film criticism). All students will complete a video essay as part of their learning around film criticism. Students are encouraged and supported to find professional work experience opportunities in relevant areas, such as cinemas, festivals, online platforms.

This work is supported by regular tutorials with the Head of Department, Senior Tutor and visiting tutors as appropriate.

Graduation Project (*Year 2 – January to December*)

The Graduation Project will be both a theoretical and practical exploration of their chosen subject and specialist area. It will develop work begun in the third term of the first year, and may relate to the professional work experience opportunity. For example, if a student wishes to explore sites and forms of cinema they will research, curate and deliver an original site-specific programme/pop up cinema project and deliver a written or video essay that explores the conceptual framework for the project, as well its aims, themes and intended audience. Examples of possible projects could include an original and substantial film season, thematic programme or retrospective; a curatorial project designed to develop new audiences or to extend the range of work available to an existing audience; a project developing innovative forms of film criticism; or a project which focuses on presenting or re-presenting archive work in an innovative context.

In the first term of Year Two, projects will be presented to a Greenlight panel for approval. The panel will comprise NFTS tutors and external advisors, and projects will be assessed both for creative application of knowledge, robustness of the idea,

understanding of technical and other practical requirements, and the student's likely ability to realise the project.

Graduation Projects are supported by the Year Two seminar, lecture and workshop programme and also by regular tutorials with internal and external tutors.

Part of the Graduation Project will be its successful documentation and dissemination, and on completion, an event will be held where projects will be presented to a peer and invited industry audience.

Professional Work Experience

During Term One of Year Two, each student will undertake a 4-week professional work experience engagement at the BFI or an associated organisation, and this may form part of the process of developing the Graduation Project. Students are also encouraged to find second work experience opportunities aligned with their own interests, with the support of the Head of Department.

Meet the Industry

Building on work in Year One, further visits to venues and projects with a variety of curatorial and critical approaches may take place in Year Two, to help provide students with a further sense of possible career options.