

### **Course outline: Film Studies, Programming and Curation**

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

The course provides theoretical and practical support for students developing their professional practice in film curation and related fields. Students on this course gain a thorough understanding of the process by which a film moves from a creative idea to an audience experience. 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. Students also have the opportunity to curate or contribute to festivals, seasons, pop up screenings and other events.

#### **Year One**

Year one offers a combination of theoretical and practical work, organised into three key modules, outlined below:

#### **Module 1: Conceptualising Film: Idea, Form and Style**

The module provides an introduction to key ways of conceptualising film, exploring a range of historical and contemporary approaches that underpin critical, theoretical and creative practice. The purpose of the module is to develop your understanding of the history and development of film as an art form, an industry and as a subject of scholarship and criticism. 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
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 module 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 also present two pieces of independent research, which will form part of their Year One portfolio. They will also keep a weekly learning journal in which they will reflect on their own learning.

## **Module 2: Identifying the Audience: The Practice of Cinema from Idea to Exhibition**

This module 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. It includes a consideration of all parts of the film ecology, from the inception of an idea to the production, circulation and reception of films. Whilst primary examples will largely be drawn from Europe and the USA, these will be considered in a global context. The areas covered include:

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 and beyond.
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 online platforms
8. Programming beyond the single screen: live cinema, event cinema and alternative content
9. Programming for diverse audiences
10. Marketing and promotion: identifying, reaching and developing audiences
11. Critics and criticism in the age of the internet and social media: continuity and change

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 write reviews of four films, to form part of their Year One portfolio. These will be directed to a range of audiences, and briefs will be provided.

### **Module 3: Programming Film & Cultural Events and Film Preservation and Restoration**

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

1. **Film preservation and restoration:** this strand will cover history of archival practice and the nature curatorial decision making with regard both to collecting and exhibiting work. It will include consideration of technology on film preservation and restoration, such as the impact and limits of digitisation on film preservation. Sessions will also explore the politics of preservation and restoration, 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:** informed by the study in Modules One and Two, 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. This work is supported by a range of film studies classes on contemporary cinema.

### **Other Activities**

In each year of the course, students will have the opportunity to attend the BFI London Film Festival

In year one students are required to write a festival report based on their attendance, and this is an assessed piece of work.

### **Year Two**

In Year Two, whilst students continue to receive tuition in film studies, contemporary curation and criticism, the emphasis is increasingly upon applying knowledge in the development and delivery of practical work, and the preparation for professional life. 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.

### **Module 4: BFI Placement**

The module is a six week placement with our course partner in which you will be placed within a relevant BFI team. This module is designed to give you experience of working in a professional film environment relevant to the course syllabus. Students will keep a placement diary, to be submitted to the HoD.

## **Module 5: The Graduation Project**

The Graduation Project is an opportunity to combine theoretical and practical knowledge in the exploration of a chosen subject or specialist area. It will build on work begun in the first year, and may relate to the professional placement. Students are provided with a fixed budget, and are responsible for all stages of their project, from inception to delivery and evaluation. Examples of possible projects could include an original 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. Part of the Graduation Project will be its successful documentation and dissemination, and reflective evaluation. On completion, an event will be held where projects will be presented to a peer and invited industry audience.

### **Dissertation**

During the year the students also complete their Dissertation module.

As part of the work necessary to qualify for an MFA, each student is required to produce an independent written dissertation or video essay, This runs from the start of the first year to October in Year Two. Following discussions with the Curating Department Dissertation Tutor, and Screen Arts tutors in the first half of the 1st year, students deliver a 500-word outline proposal by June of the first year.

For those producing a written dissertation, this is followed by a 2000-word chapter and detailed structure by November of 1st Year (students may not progress into 2nd year if they fail to deliver this and meet a satisfactory level). Full draft dissertation of 7,000-10,000 words (including sources and bibliography) must be delivered by September of Year Two, and following discussion with tutors, the final version of dissertation will be submitted in October.

An alternative option of a 15 – 20 minute video essay is also available to MFA students. In this case the November submission of Year One will comprise five minutes of edited material with a detailed outline. Final submission dates are the same as for written work.

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.

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

**Other Activities**

All students will complete a video essay as part of their learning around film criticism. Students are encouraged and supported to find further professional work experience opportunities in relevant areas, such as cinemas, festivals, online platforms, in addition to the BFI placement.

Students will attend the BFI London Film Festival; all students also receive a small bursary to attend an additional festival or conference relevant to their own area of interest of specialism.