



Filmmaker Conference 2025

Course Descriptions

Short Screenplay Competition – November 14 evening

The 3-5 finalists for the 2025 WIFV Short Screenplay Competition will have their scripts read by local actors. The top two scripts, chosen by a panel of media industry professionals, will receive cash awards. Join us for the table read and help us award an audience prize as well!

WIFV Silent Short Film Challenge Screening – November 14 evening

The "Show Don't Tell" challenge, should you choose to accept it, is to create a short film (5 minutes or less) that relies entirely on visual storytelling and non-verbal communication. Audience Favorite prizes will be awarded.

TWO-DAY MASTERCLASSES

Production Assistant Training (PAT) – November 14 evening; November 15 ALL Day

So, you want to work on film/TV productions, but don't know how or where to start? You're invited to a unique two-part workshop designed for those eager to master the role of a Production Assistant (PA). These sessions are a starting line for anyone interested in diving behind the scenes and becoming a part of the magic that brings stories to the big screen. PAT is led by Mike Rose.

PART 1: "Before I Get to Set, What Do I Need to Know?" Friday Evening

We'll demystify what it means to be a Production Assistant in the DMV area, show you how to find local gigs, secure your first job, and navigate the nuts and bolts of getting paid. You'll also learn how to step onto a film set for the first time with confidence, fully prepared.

PART 2: "I've Arrived On Set, Now What?" Saturday all day

Discover what it's like to collaborate with crew members as a Production Assistant. This is your chance to learn about the essential daily tasks that keep a set moving, the tools a PA needs, production etiquette, on-set safety, and much more. You'll spend the afternoon guided by industry experts through a simulated film set experience designed to prepare you for your first real gig.

Overall, the Production Assistant Workshop is an opportunity to gather insights and practical know-how to set you up for success in this dynamic field. Whether you're set on starting your career or simply curious about what a PA does, join us for this immersive experience and become an indispensable crew member of any production team! Limited to 10 participants.

The Business of Writing for Show Business – November 15-16

In two-day masterclass taught by Marilyn R. Atlas and Mark Ricche, equally suitable for fiction writers and screenwriters (film and TV), they will share their professional insights into:

- Understanding the Industry from a Writer's Perspective;
- Breaking In (film, tv, theatre);
- Building Your Brand;
- Writing Scripts that Sell;

Additionally, there will be

- Writing Session with Actors concentrating on dialogue;
- Q&A with other Industry Professionals;
- Pitch Sessions for your scripts with feedback.

ONE-DAY MASTERCLASSES

Directing Actors and Directing Through the Lens – November 15 All Day

Connie St. John and Monda Webb will lead you through how the director works with actors and how the director uses the camera to work with actors. The day will include on-set experiences with actors for both directing styles.

Greenlight Yourself – November 15 ALL Day

This full-day masterclass is your opportunity to go on a creative journey with Anna Campbell, the writer, director, producer, distributor for NORA. When she realized no one wanted to write for a woman of a certain age or experience, she wrote the script. When no one stepped up as director, she drew on her on-set experience as an actor to do it. When financiers didn't respond, she figured out how much risk she could take to produce it herself. Finally, when no distributor really knew how to promote it, she found a new streamer willing to work with her so that she could make some money and build audiences. Throw in directing the music videos it contains after convincing her neighbor to write the original songs that fit Nora's life, and this will be some journey! Bottom line, if Anna can do it (and have her co-star daughter still like her), you can do it!

Creative Producing – November 16 ALL Day

Join Katherine Beyda, Executive Vice President of Physical Production at New Line Cinema as she shares her extensive producing experience in a step-by-step format using her new book, *The Creative Producing Handbook – an Insider's Guide to Production*, during the class. There are forms, tables, illustrations, and lots of practical advice to make films of any size, scope or budget, a success.

Actors - Elevate Your Audition Self-Tapes – November 16 ALL Day

Bring your smartphones and laptops and spend the day learning how to make the most of your performance and editing skills to create your best audition.

Morning Session: Brenna McDonough and Katie Culligan will share performance strategies that you will tape using either your phone or camera.

Afternoon Session: Lisa Hodsoll and Katie Culligan will then help you edit those “tapes” on your phone or computer to create a polished audition.

Due to limited time, some participants may need to practice their skills with another actor’s self-tape.

INDIVIDUAL MASTERCLASSES

The ABC’s of Producing Documentary – November 15 morning

Using the newly-released *The Documentary Filmmaker’s Workbook*, this masterclass will explore the basics of producing non-fiction films. If you are either an emerging documentarian or a filmmaker with many credits, you will want to take this short course in the ever-changing landscape of budgeting, the impact of AI on non-fiction filmmaking, evolving issues in Fair Use, and many other topics.

Nina Gilden Seavey, Emmy Award-winning documentarian, author of *The Documentary Filmmaker’s Workbook*, and long-time educator, will walk you through the current highlights of non-fiction producing. Each participant in the course will receive a copy of Seavey’s workbook to take with you as you continue your own journey through producing/directing documentaries.

What to do Before You Type “Fade In” – November 15 afternoon

Ever wonder why you can start your screenplay and then your enthusiasm fizzles out before you can get through the 2nd act? New writers and seasoned writers who want to refresh their approach -- This course, taught by Lisa Scott, is for you.

A writer should focus on developing a compelling story idea, defining the core characters and their arcs, establishing the setting and overall tone, and outlining the major plot points and turning points. This groundwork ensures a strong foundation for the narrative BEFORE formalizing it with standard screenplay formatting. Concept, Theme, 3-Acts, 9 Beats, Treatment, Outline = Ready to type FADE IN

AI and Filmmaking – November 16 Morning

A hands-on, inspiring workshop presented by Burning Studio showing how AI can support and accelerate the filmmaking process. Through a mix of live demos, technical insights, and personal examples topics will include:

- Basic AI Tools – For script edits, idea generation, dialogue polishing, and creative feedback; Text/ image collaboration; Long-form analysis, backstory building, and grounded research.
- Research & Development – Upload scripts/notes/research and ask complex questions; Ask a complex research task, get back a sourced report.
- Brainstorming & Storyboarding – Turn prompts into cinematic concept art and storyboards; Plug-and-play visual effects and camera moves for pre-vis or sizzle reels; Generate high-quality, detailed frames from dialogue or scene descriptions; Consistent characters and world-building through image generation; Create short, animated scenes with audio from a prompt.
- Post-Production – Smart Tools for Smart Finishing

How to Write a Screenplay That Will Get You Noticed – November 16 Afternoon

Do you want to significantly improve your script's chances of getting made? Writing a compelling "contained" story will increase your chances.

A contained film script features a limited number of characters, locations, and production elements. The primary action unfolds in one, or a very small number of, locations, often implying a sense of physical constraint or trapping for the characters within the story.

“Contained” scripts typically translate into lower production costs, making them more attractive to independent filmmakers and producers who are working with smaller budgets. This session is taught by Lisa Scott.