

Thursday, June 11, 2009

New major in cinema studies to debut in fall 2009

By **Katie Land**, news editor

Amid growing tax incentives and national interest in film production in Michigan, Oakland University has approved a new bachelor of arts major in cinema studies to begin fall 2009.

The 48-credit major includes three core courses, three film history courses, four critical studies in film courses, a film production course, a film capstone course and two interdisciplinary credits.

This particular program is fairly unique to Michigan, with only a few public and private universities supporting a similar degree program. The combination of coursework in film history, film theory, video production and screenwriting sets Oakland apart.

"There has been an obvious spike in interest in film in Michigan recently, as a result of the state's film initiatives," said Andrea Eis, chair of the Art and Art History Department and co-coordinator of the concentration in film aesthetics and history. "This program is not a direct result of those initiatives, but its development is certainly timely for students who are seeing increasing opportunities in the film industry and in the academic field of cinema studies."

Set in a field that is bringing new jobs to the state, the cinema studies major attacks the problem of losing educated students to jobs elsewhere. A major goal of the program is to attract the best students to the area and keep them here after graduation.

"The special events that will be offered regularly, such as film series and bringing nationally recognized filmmakers and film critics to the area, will enhance the campus culture for OU students, faculty, staff and members of the surrounding community," said Kyle Edwards, an assistant professor in the English department and director of the cinema studies program.

Students armed with a cinema studies degree will be prepared to begin a career in the field or move on to graduate coursework in cinema studies, higher education, curatorial, research and archival positions.

Possible career options include film criticism, education, production, film archiving, screenwriting, story editing, film-related public relations, advertising, marketing and legal representation. These graduates also would be suited to pursue professional degrees in law and business.

"We seek to attract students first with a passion for film and second with a willingness to devote themselves to the intensive study of this medium and to challenge themselves to become astute, sophisticated and creative film critics," Edwards continued.

The program is already working collaboratively with the Michigan Film Incentive and the Rochester Downtown Development Authority, and potential partnerships are being discussed with film production companies in Pontiac, Detroit, Allen Park and Ann Arbor.

Along with the development of the major, courses have been created in screenwriting, global cinema, film authorship, film genres and film theory, according to Edwards. Additional plans are in the works to develop courses in documentary film history, animated film history, independent and avant-garde cinema and advanced screenwriting.

"We hope that the cinema studies program contributes to the growing public visibility and recognition for the university and attracts even more outstanding students and top faculty to Oakland," Edwards said.

The project plans to welcome 12 students in its first year, 20 students in the second year two and 35 students per year in the third through fifth years. Developed out of a concentration in film created in 1989, the program will employ two Oakland faculty members already devoted to cinema studies courses and holding doctoral degrees.

"In five years, we hope that the major is thriving and that we have created an intensive film production track within the cinema studies major that cultivates students' creative abilities and offers valuable practical experiences, as well as regularly presenting exciting special events and dynamic speakers to the university community," Edwards said.

More information on the cinema studies major as it develops will be added to www2.oakland.edu/cinemastudies/. Students interested in declaring a cinema studies major should contact Edwards at edwards2@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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