

MFA Portfolio Project Guidelines

For FTV Students in the MFA Script and Screenwriting Major

3 Semester Timeline

The MFA Portfolio is an intensive **3 semester process**. Students must work 2 consecutive semesters plus a start-up semester to complete the project from proposal through library submission:

Pre-Registration:

- Request a chair and committee member
- Discuss ideas & timeline

Portfolio Semester 1

- Write & defend proposal by week 10
- Begin project

Portfolio Semester 2

- Finish project
- Write final document
- Defend whole project by week 10

- Proposing, completing and defending an entire Portfolio project in the same semester is not allowed.
- Summer scheduling must have full committee approval before the start of the preceding spring semester.
- Portfolio **proposals** must be successfully defended by week 10 of Portfolio Semester 1.
- An unsuccessful proposal defense will result in a “No Pass” grade, and the 3-credit Portfolio course must be repeated.
- Portfolio registrations covers two semesters.
- All document draft deadlines (as prescribed by the committee chair) must be met.
- To graduate in a given semester, final document and project must be successfully defended by that semester’s deadline (listed on the [SCA website](#)).

Proposal drafts may be submitted prior to registering for portfolio credit. This often helps expedite the approval process once the student registers for the credits.

Use this checklist to complete each step of the Portfolio project process.

The proposal document may go through 2-3 drafts before it is defensible. Make sure you allow plenty of time for your chair to review and send the document back with changes. Remember, this is a process you go through under the guidance of your Chairperson.

1. ___ **Apply** for your committee—it must consist of a chairperson and a member. If you have preferences, request them by name and include your reason for requesting that specific professor.
2. ___ **Discuss** your Portfolio ideas with your chair. Discussions may begin before your committee is in place; be advised that the individual in your early discussions may not be assigned as your chair.
3. ___ **Submit** a short synopsis (1 to 1 ½ pages) of your story idea to your chair for approval. Your chair must approve your story idea before you can begin work on your Portfolio Proposal. Ideally the idea will be approved a full semester before your proposal defense semester.
4. ___ **Register** for three (3) Portfolio Project credits by reaching out to your Academic Advisor prior to beginning formal work with the committee. Portfolio registrations covers two semesters.
5. ___ **Begin** writing the proposal document—see appendices for document requirements and examples. Your chair should review the rough stages of your chapters before submitting the proposal document for defense. It is highly recommended that you request example portfolios from your chair to understand the finished product.
6. ___ **Schedule** proposal defense—to be determined by the chair. Deadline for defense is listed on the [SCA website](#).
7. ___ **Submit copies** of proposal to committee at least one week before proposal defense.
8. ___ **Successfully defend** proposal, and have committee chair submit the *PORTFOLIO/PORTFOLIO PROPOSAL DEFENSE FORM* to the Dean's Office.
9. ___ **Write** the project script.
10. ___ **Submit** first draft of script to your chair for notes.
11. ___ **Send** your draft to an outside reader for notes. Send ONLY the script; do not ask an outside

reader to approve your chapters. PLEASE NOTE: Student is responsible for all costs in engaging an outside reader. FOR PLAYS: Rather than have an outside reader, student must cast and schedule a reading of the play. Please speak with your chair for details.

12. ___ **Prepare** the final Portfolio written document—see appendices for document requirements.
13. ___ **Schedule** final defense before posted deadline (defense date determined by the chair)—final defense can only happen after chair has cleared written document and project.
14. ___ **Submit** the finished written document and project to your committee—see appendices for document requirements. Final Portfolio must be submitted at least one week prior to the defense.
15. ___ **Successfully** defend your Portfolio project (by school deadline to graduate that semester), and your chair will submit the *PORTFOLIO/PORTFOLIO FINAL DEFENSE FORM* to the Dean’s Office.
16. ___ **Proofread**. Make any revisions to your work as per your committee, and submit a clean copy to a University-approved proofreader. The proofreader must submit confirmation of proofreading to the school representative before further processing can occur. A list of University-approved proofreaders is listed on the [SCA website](#).

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE STUDENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL PROOFREADING COSTS.

17. ___ **Submit** Portfolio to ProQuest. Instructions on how to do so are listed on the [SCA website](#).

This is critical in order to “clear” students for graduation—the degree will not be posted, transcripts will not be issued nor diplomas ordered **UNTIL THE ENTIRE PROCESS IS COMPLETE**.

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS

Portfolio Proposal includes three chapters, plus a bibliography after the last chapter:

- Introduction Chapter (Problem Chapter)
- Research Chapter
- Methodology Chapter (including story outline)
- Bibliography

1) A first chapter that introduces the topic. Tell us why you are drawn to this subject. For example, you could comment on the following.

- a. How as a faith based writer do you feel that this subject/genre reflects your worldview. You can also provide background or biographical information that would bring the reader up to date in better understanding your passion and interest in the subject that you are writing on. For example: one author explained how his being a teacher of high school students influenced his choice of subject matter.
- b. Why you feel that this script should be written in and for today's culture.
- c. What particular 'problems' you anticipate facing in the writing of this script. Your objective here is to note the various problems that you will be addressing more fully in the Literature Review Chapter. Examples of Problems you can face:

RESEARCH: You are writing a movie that is concerned with Bullying. Here you must define the problem as you see it, and support your argument with some documentation. You might cite an article that comments on the increase in Bullying in the last few years. Or, you are writing a TV series which features a 'Large' protagonist. You can note the 'problem' of obesity in the US, as well as comment on sit coms or other films that have featured overweight characters/actors.

Remember, Chapter One is not where you fully develop the research you might be doing, but it is the place where you tell the reader what the problem is, establish the problem, and comment on why you are writing about this. CHAPTER TWO is where you will pull together the various research you have done on obesity and establish your argument more fully.

Another problem could be that you are writing a Romantic Comedy. You will note why you have chosen this genre, what is the challenge, why it fits your material,

and then tell the reader that in CHAPTER TWO, Research and Literature Review, you will more fully develop your argument supporting this choice. In CHAPTER ONE you might tell us that SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE was a formative romantic comedy that influenced your work, and that you will be using this and other examples in CHAPTER TWO to show just how this film shaped your work.

Or, let's say that you are writing an alternative or experimental film. It's a take off on a Murder Mystery. In CHAPTER ONE you will indicate this and also tell the reader that in CHAPTER TWO you will be offering more information on the genre and your take off on it. Perhaps it was the work of Godard and other existential European writers that influenced your work. You will mention this in Chapter One, establish the context, and then develop the research in Chapter Two showing how BREATHLESS or WEEKEND influenced your work.

You might be writing a sit com. You will tell the reader in CHAPTER ONE how many episodes you will include; what the style is and formative influences; and what they can find in the Methodology. Let's say that you are writing a sit -com about two brothers in Hollywood who are very different and who are living together. You will tell the reader that one of the most influential sit -coms was THE ODD COUPLE, and that in Chapter Two you will be providing a more detailed treatment on how this and other sit coms influenced your creative work.

- d. Define 'redemptive' and note how your film reflects or realizes your understanding of this concept.
 - e. This Chapter should also include a two to three page summation of the story of your creative work so the reader has some context to go by. This is a synopsis. See your advisor if you have any questions as to what should be included in a well written synopsis.
- 2) The second chapter deals with RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW. You should begin this chapter with an overall assessment of the research requirements for your screenplay or dramatic play. Example: "since this screenplay takes place in a Mon Valley ex-steel town, research includes gathering information on these towns—employment, demographics, and an understanding of what the closing of the mills did to once thriving steel hamlets. Interviews have and will be conducted with local personalities. An overview of fiction and documentary films, and books and articles on related subjects are included." Following this paragraph you will then include a description of your research materials, and of their pertinence to your project. You will also include appropriate MLA referencing as footnotes. At the end of the chapter you will provide a bibliography of your research references up to this point.

This is the chapter in which you develop your research in essay form, and you must make sure that the references you use are properly referenced in accordance with MLA Style formatting. In Chapter One you told us that various films influenced both your approach to the subject matter and to the style of the comedy you are writing. Here you will develop that argument cogently. Just listing films that have influenced your creative work is NOT ENOUGH. You need to explain how and why.

So, let's say that you are writing a feature film on the Carlisle School that trained Indians in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Since your film deals thematically with the idea that this school was designed to "kill the Indian, thus saving the man" in its educational philosophy, you will note in your research what you have found out about the reservation system, the school curriculums, the effectiveness of this training. You will include articles about the school THAT ARE RELEVANT TO YOUR STORY. You would include information about Col. Pratt, the Headmaster, and other authentic characters. Additional research elements could include background on the Indian tribes that are represented through your characters; Wild Bill Cody's Wild West Show; Wounded Knee massacre; March of tears; and a good deal about early University football and how and why the Indians, under Coach Pop Warner, triumphed against the best teams in the nation. You will note other Indian films that influenced you, and documentary films on the subject, as well as books and articles. IF you travel to the Indian reservations, or have personal interviews, or go to Carlisle School in Pennsylvania you will include references to this in this chapter, noting times, dates, people interviewed, etc.

This Chapter will EXPLAIN and put in CONTEXT the bulk of your research; your understanding of the genre you are working in; and other artistic and research problems that you encounter. It is written in essay form, not in lists. Remember, the emphasis is ALWAYS on you informing the reader as to how the researched material effected your work. Certainly you can also take issue with selected material and note that.

It's important that as soon as you begin your research that you keep notes on where you got the material so that it can be correctly put into your Bibliography.

Chapter Two MUST include how the research effects your script.

PLEASE NOTE: In your proposal, some of Chapter Two may be in future tense, listing additional sources that you will be taking under advisement. By the time you submit your final portfolio, all of Chapter Two should be in past tense – this is research you completed.

- 3) Chapter Three will outline your project METHODOLOGY . Here you will include a timetable of dates you expect to meet in the actual writing of the piece. You will include your step outline and character breakdown material. Since each project will differ from the

standpoint of the research and the problems encountered, be sure to work out with your advisor what he/she expects from you in this and other chapters.

In addition, if your script includes any alternative structural elements, such as time anomalies (MEMENTO, BETRAYAL), a musical, special use of a narrator (AMERICAN BEAUTY, SUNSET BOULEVARD) you should explain their usage adequately in this chapter.

For Television or Web Series projects, you will include any appropriate show bible material in this chapter.

PLEASE SEE your chair for additional materials for Methodology, including Character Work and examples of the Step Outline.

- 4) Bibliography: please see chair for examples.

Final Portfolio

- 1) This will be due before your final defense, and you will defend this before your committee. It is essentially a completion of your Portfolio Proposal. This will include:
 - a. Any revisions of Chapter One in terms of a description and vision for your writing project.
 - b. Additions to Chapter Two, Research and Literature will be included and properly referenced.
 - c. You will update your Bibliography.
 - d. Your Methodology Chapter will be brought up to date.
 - e. You will add Chapter Four, which will include a critique of your screenplay. You will provide your own evaluation of what you feel the script needs in terms of re-writes. You will also include critique statements from your faculty committee and outside reader.

Always be sure to keep notes on feedback from your advisor and your committee and from outside readers and such so that a history of the criticism of your piece and your adjustments can be noted. This should include notes on drafts, the Proposal defense, etc.

Please note: you will be required to have an outside reader evaluate your screenplay/TV drama/Play. This will be included in your final Chapter IV, you don't

need this for the Proposal Defense. (We recommend that you pay the reader \$150.00. We are able to suggest qualified personnel to do this for you.)

- f. Appendices will include your finished script and any other tangential material. Your finished script should be between 90-120 pages in proper screenplay format.

FOR MEDIA OTHER THAN FEATURE FILM:

1. For Television One-hour project, there needs to be TWO original episodes, including the pilot, in proper teleplay format (running time of each episode to be 44 minutes for ad-driven network material; up to an hour for non-ad driven network material).
2. For Television Half-hour project, there needs to be FOUR original episodes, including the pilot, in proper teleplay format (running time of each episode to be 22 minutes for ad-driven network material; up to a half-hour for non-ad driven network material).
3. For Web series, there needs to be a minimum of one hundred pages of script in proper screenplay format (the number of webisodes may vary according to webisode length); each webisode to be consistent with the series. Pilot must be included.

Formatting Guidelines for Portfolio Film/Prospectus

Portfolios should be prepared as carefully as a manuscript for publication, and must observe these formatting guidelines:

1. Choose a title that provides a meaningful description of the contents. Retrieval systems use words in the title as keys to locate the document.
2. Use the title page format attached at the end of this document. Documents will be returned if the title page does not comply with the approved format.
3. Abstracts for portfolio projects should be a maximum length of 150 words. Abstracts prepared for a master's level document will appear in Master's Abstracts International.
4. Use lower case Roman numerals centered at the bottom for the preliminary pages. Use Arabic numerals centered at the bottom beginning with the body of the paper text through to the end, including the appendices.
5. Use the following order for document sections:
 - Title Page (page i, number does not appear on page)
 - Copyright Notice (optional)
 - Abstract
 - Dedication (optional)
 - Acknowledgements (optional)
 - Table of contents
 - List of Tables/Figures
 - Body of Paper (page 1)
 - References
 - Appendices
6. Use Times New Roman, 12-point font.
7. Make the margin 1" on all sides.
8. Double-space the entire document and single-space all blocked quotations, footnotes and references.
 - *References should be single-spaced with a double space between references.

The library is extremely particular about numbering and will refuse to accept a document that is not correct.

The Title of Your Thesis/Portfolio/Dissertation Goes Here

Presented to the Faculty

Regent University

School of Communication and the Arts

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the

Master of Arts

In Theatre

by

Model Student

Approved By:

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