

SEPTEMBER 2024 | FILM AND MEDIA CULTURE | MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE



Welcome back from the Middlebury Department of Film and Media Culture!

This fall, we kicked things off with sunshine, pizza, and plenty of laughs in the Axinn Center's backyard, where friends and faculty reunited and swapped movie recommendations. Our FMMC Gatherings are more than just a tradition—they're a celebration of the creativity, collaboration, and community that define our department. We're especially excited about our seniors' upcoming thesis projects, which will showcase a wide range of media from narrative films and documentaries to screenplays and research papers. And to our new majors and minors: welcome! We're thrilled to have you join us on this exciting journey into the world of film and media.



Only the River Flows October 17 Dana Auditorium

SHOT ENTIRELY ON FILM, *Only the River Flows* by Wei Shujun tells a story of a chief police officer who investigates a series of murders in a riverside town in rural China in the 1990s. An arrest is made quickly, but the clues push the policeman to dive deeper into the hidden behaviour of the locals.

Not only will there be pizza and popcorn, but we'll also be holding a **raffle with \$100** in declining balance prizes to be split between four lucky winners. You definitely won't want to miss it!

go/hirschfield/

A Lively Kickoff: September's Hirschfield Screening Sparks Discussion



We launched the first Hirschfield screening of the year with a bang! Over 150 attendees packed Dana Auditorium to enjoy a collection of short films straight from the Sundance Film Festival. The energy in the room was electric, with the conversation spilling over from the auditorium into our new Media Curation and Exhibition class, taught by Professor Ioana Uricaru. In this course, students are diving into the fascinating world of film festivals, distribution, and behind-the-scenes operations—experiencing first-hand what it takes to bring films from screen to audience.

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One of the most talked-about films from the screening was *Bug Diner*, a stop-motion animated short by Phoebe Jane Hart. The film, which depicts bugs in a diner experiencing intense emotions and sexual encounters, stirred a polarized response from the audience. Some felt the film leaned too heavily on shock value, while others appreciated the deeper themes at play.



First Hirschfield Screening of the Fall 2024,
Dana Auditorium

In a follow-up discussion, Graydon Hanson '25 offered some insight into this divide:

"Although I enjoyed the film throughout, people initially thought Bug Diner focused more on its shock factor than any deeper message. In our class, I learned that the filmmaker was channeling her feelings of sexual frustration and isolation while living in a lonely part of the US. Knowing that context added a whole new layer to the film for me, and I found myself appreciating it even more."

Graydon also shared his thoughts on *The Masterpiece*, a Spanish short film by Alex Lora:

"It felt like it was trying a little too hard to be Parasite, and I didn't enjoy that aspect. But many people in the audience loved it because of its commentary on material culture, imperialism, and colonialism. The way the characters existed in their own worlds until they collided was something a lot of people found really impactful."

From Screen to Classroom: Exciting New Courses This Fall!

Following the lively discussions from our Hirschfield screenings, you can now take your passion for film to the next level with these dynamic new courses in the Film and Media Culture Department. Whether you want to explore the inner workings of international film festivals or dive deep into the art of cinematography, we've got something for everyone this semester!

Get Behind the Scenes of the Film Industry

Ever wondered what it's really like behind the scenes at Tribeca, Cannes, or Sundance? Want to help shape the Hirschfield Film Series lineup and watch the newest independent films before anyone else? Look no further than **Media Curation and Exhibition**, an exciting hands-on course offered for the first time this fall by Professor **Ioana Uricaru**. In this course, students engage with everything from festival crowd management to liaising with distributors—even down to operating the popcorn machine. You'll gain a holistic understanding of how to curate films, while watching and selecting unreleased international titles to be featured in our Hirschfield series. As Ioana says, we find films that "meet the audience where they are and then teach them something new".



In Media Curation and Exhibition class,
September 2024

Master the Art of Cinematography

If you're ready to elevate your technical and artistic skills, **Cinematography with Ethan Murphy** is a rare opportunity you don't want to miss. This advanced video production course focuses on the essentials of narrative film lighting, composition, and camera movement. With weekly video assignments, students get hands-on experience, learning complex lighting setups and camera techniques in a collaborative environment. It's a chance to truly understand the craft that brings a story to life on screen.



Setting up a crane in Cinematography Lab

Explore the World of Mockumentaries

From *The Blair Witch Project* to *The Office* and *Borat*, mockumentaries have redefined the boundaries between truth and fiction. In **Faking Reality** with **Jason Mittell**, you'll dive deep into the theory and techniques behind hoax media and mockumentaries. This course examines the history, ethics, and cultural impact of media that blur the lines between reality and fiction. For the final project, students can choose to write a critical essay or create their own mockumentary-style piece.

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What's Next in FMMC?***Seeing is Believing:
Black Voices, New Stories*****Tuesday, October 8 - 4:30 PM***Dana Auditorium*

In this moment of environmental, political, and social change, what are the stories of now? And who is telling them? Join us for a powerful conversation hosted by Dr. Carolyn Finney, artist-in-residence at the Franklin Environmental Center at Hillcrest. She'll be joined by award-winning Black filmmakers Andre Lambertson (Charm City) and Zaire Love (Slice), as they explore the art of documenting the human experience. Together, they'll discuss the importance of making visible what has been unseen, dismissed, or discarded—and what it truly takes to capture the rhythm of Black life, past and present.

***Hirschfield Series presents:
Only the River Flows* by Wei Shujun****Thursday, October 17 - 7 PM
(6:30 PM - Reception with Pizza
and Popcorn)***Dana Auditorium*

Make sure to participate in the raffle!

**Stay Tuned: Guess the Movie!**

Think you're a movie buff? Put your film knowledge to the test with our upcoming **Guess the Movie quiz!** We'll drop a famous movie line in the next newsletter, and if you can guess the movie it's from, you could win a fun prize!

Ready for a sneak peek? Here's your first line:*You're gonna need a bigger boat.*

Got it? Hold onto your answer and watch out for our next edition, where you can submit your guess for a chance to win.