



Stony Brook
University

Manhattan Center for **Creative Writing & Film**

Zoom: 6 PM EST - November 4th Film
MFA & TV Writing MFA Zoom Info Session

A chance for applicants to hear about our
Film & TV Writing MFAs firsthand. [RVSP](#) for
details

November 4th TV Writing MFA Meet & Greet
IN PERSON

Meet three successful MFA in TV Writing alums —

Sam Nosratan, Mallory Baysek, and Emma Gutt

— on **November 4th** at the *Manhattan Center*.

They will discuss how they built their careers after
graduation and offer advice. Bring your questions
and learn about their work on TV series in NYC, as
well as how SBU prepared them for the industry.

8Pm

[RSVP Here](#)

Our Groundbreaking TV Pilot Incubator Launched!



INCUBATOR

The first of its kind at any university, this exciting new initiative is designed to nurture, inspire, and develop four original TV series so they can advance toward production.

The incubator will equip participants with the tools and industry insights to help bring their creative visions to life. A select group of television heavyweights will act as project mentors, including:

- **Bryan Goluboff** – Executive Producer of *Elsbeth* and *Law and Order: Organized Crime* and *George and Tammy*
- **Michael Rauch** – Showrunner on *Instinct* and *Royal Pains*
- **Jacquelyn Reingold** – Executive Producer of *The Good Fight* and Writer on *Grace and Frankie*
- **Steve Basilone** – Writer on *Community* and *The Goldbergs*

The program will be led by faculty member **Kris Lefcoe** and MFA in TV Writing Director **Alan Kingsberg**. Notable guests, including **John Coles**, **Tom Sellitti**, **Dan Perlman**, **L.E. Correia**, **Mary Rohlich**, and **Stephen Gates**, will lead workshops on verbal pitches, look books, pitch decks, budgeting, packaging and marketing opportunities.

Participation is exclusive to Stony Brook MFA in TV Writing graduates, and this year's group includes Walter Stafford '22, Jeff Bernier '22, Nelson Downend '22, Tristan Rodriguez '23, and Greg Abbey '23.

The lab will culminate in a pitch competition scheduled for January, where participants will present their concepts to a jury of industry buyers, producers, agents, and showrunners. Phase Two will launch in fall of 2025, with the goal of producing one of the four pilots.

Students and Alumni Are Making Waves in Industry Competitions



Huge congrats to [Andy Rose Fidoten](#), whose 2nd year film, "Some Kind Of Bug" won the jury award for best student short at the 26th [Woodstock Film Fest](#). Follow them on [IG!](#)

AWARDS

Whether with work written during the program or using the skills they honed, these SBU TV writers and filmmakers continue to earn high accolades.

We are thrilled to announce that TV Writing alum **Nelson Downend** is the Grand Prize Winner of the Table Read My Screenplay competition. In Los Angeles, **Regina Ainsworth** (*Eva Lasting* on Netflix) directed a table read of **Downend's** screenplay, *Rock Bottom*, which is also a Finalist at the [Austin Film Festival](#).

Rock Bottom: Following a chance encounter while throwing up in the same public bathroom, a fifty-five-year-old alcoholic and a twenty-four-year-old bulimic form an unlikely bond as they attempt to address their unresolved trauma, mend fences with estranged family, and slowly head down the path toward recovery.

Downend also co-wrote a screenplay with fellow SBU TV Writing alum **Lisa Davey** titled *Fishtown Dicks*, which is a finalist in The [PAGE International Screenwriting Awards](#). Additionally, **Sri Ram Burgula's** short film *Tabassum* is a finalist for the [Tasveer Film Fund](#), supported by **NETFLIX**, where nine U.S. narrative shorts finalists are competing for a \$25,000 grant.

At the [Austin Film Festival](#), TV Writing student **Jon Baskin's** comedic pilot *My Marshall* is a Finalist. Over at [ScreenCraft Animation & Family](#), **Gabriel Brosius's** Comedic Pilot *HomeBody* is a Quarter Finalist.

Lastly, TV Writing alum **Greg Abbey's** thesis pilot script *Shark* is a finalist in The [PAGE Awards](#) and the [ScreenCraft TV Pilot Script Competition](#). *Shark* won at The [Northfork TV Fest](#) and the [TrackingB TV Script Contest 2024](#).

See What Our Talented Alums Are Up To

TV Writing MFA grad **Emma Gutt** has been promoted to Writers Assistant for **NETFLIX's** *The Diplomat*.

TV Writing MFA grad **Vivien Jastrzebski** was hired as showrunner's assistant for the creators of the Disney-produced animated series *Kiff*.

Film MFA **Yasmine Gomez's** thesis film *Party Favor* has screened at 24 festivals, including the Soho International Film Festival. It won Best Short Film at the Lady Filmmakers Festival, in addition to Best Actress and Best Up And Coming Actress nominations for her cast.

Film MFA alum **Yi Chiang Lin's** film was picked up by a producer from a Taiwanese production company and is in post-production.

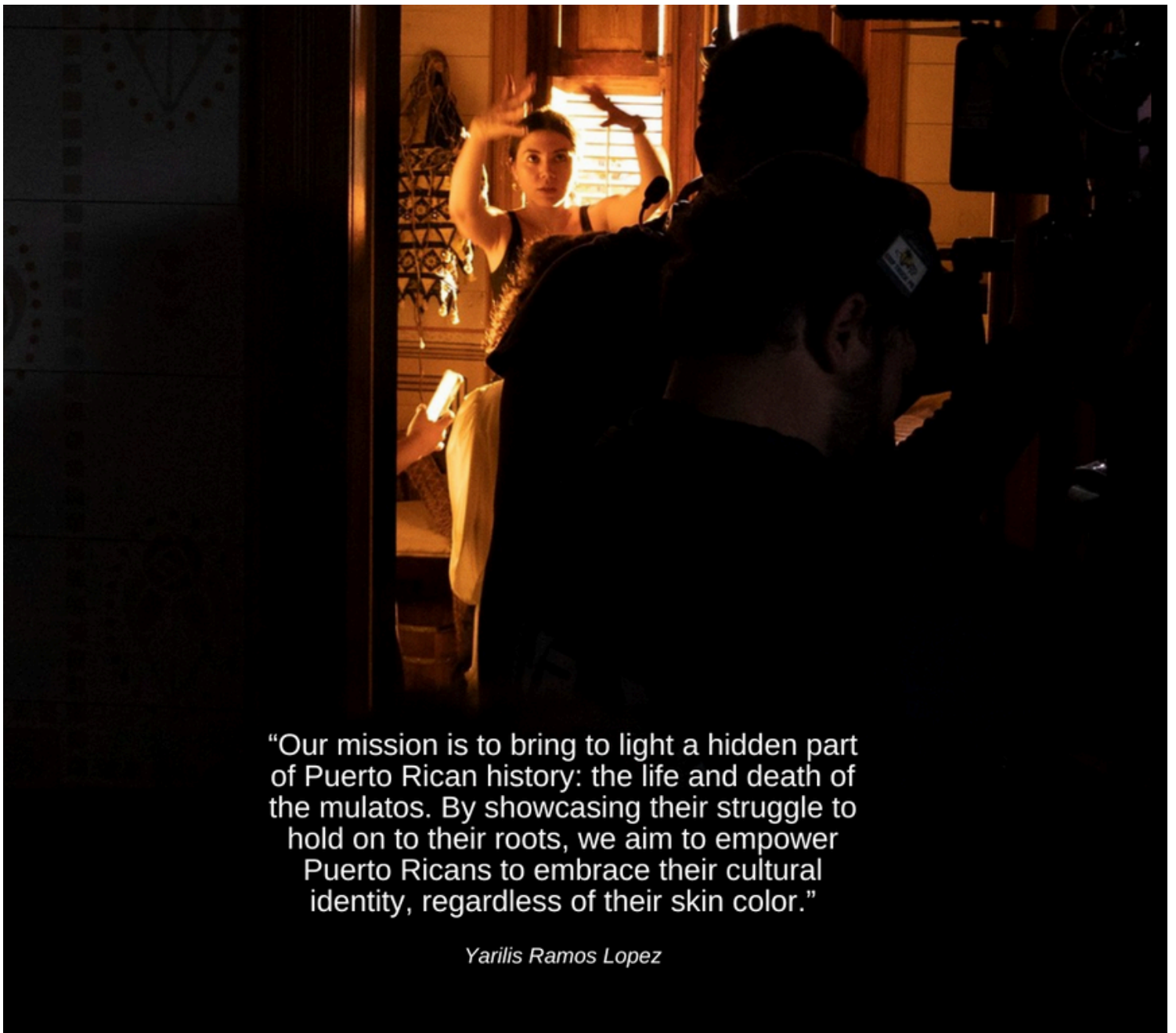
Film Directing MFA grad **Grant Herson** wrote and directed *Caterkillar*, his thesis feature film, which was produced by Troma Entertainment.

YARILIS RAMOS THESIS PRODUCED IN PUERTO RICO



History is made! *Mulata*, directed by **Yarilis Ramos** and produced by **Nnamdi Nwosa**, is our program's first student thesis filmed on the island of Puerto Rico. This groundbreaking project also marks the first full-Spanish period piece for our program. The film tells the story of one of the first mixed-race children—a young girl torn between her Spanish upbringing and African roots—whose discovery of La Bomba dance forever changes her life.

[@mulata.film.pr](https://www.instagram.com/mulata.film.pr)



“Our mission is to bring to light a hidden part of Puerto Rican history: the life and death of the mulatos. By showcasing their struggle to hold on to their roots, we aim to empower Puerto Ricans to embrace their cultural identity, regardless of their skin color.”

Yarilis Ramos Lopez

GAINING INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE BETWEEN SEMESTERS

Second-year TV Writing students **Carolyn Bergier** and **Mikayla Savuto** interned at *Killer Films* this summer, providing script coverage and observing the independent development process.

“I sharpened my script analysis skills and got a rare, behind-the-curtain look at the inner workings of a revered independent film production company,” said **Savuto**.

“There’s a lot of value in knowing what kinds of scripts move forward, and why most don’t make the cut,” said **Bergier**.

SBU Film Professor and Associate Program Director Jennie Allen Is on Set in Nova Scotia and Zurich.



Mexican-Swiss filmmaker **Maro Mueller** collaborated with Stony Brook MFA faculty member **Jennie Allen** to co-write *111*

111, a film about the 1998 Swissair plane crash. Filming began in September, and you can read more about this exciting project in [Variety](#).



Stony Brook's Simone Pero Premieres Two Feature Films

Producing faculty member, **Simone Pero** is headed to the festivals! *LILLY*, which **Pero** produced, premiered at the [Hamptons International Film Festival](#) in October 2024. This narrative film focuses on the real-life story of fair pay activist **Lilly Ledbetter**, starring **Patricia Clarkson**.

Another one of her films, *VIVA VERDI!!* premiered at the 25th [Woodstock Film Festival](#) this October. The heartfelt documentary follows a group of retired opera singers living in a home built by composer **Giuseppe Verdi** as they mentor young musicians.

Pero shares her experience in both narrative and documentary films with students in her producing courses. Her social impact films address topics like the American healthcare system, abuse, and gender inequality.



Visiting Artist Stewart Thorndike Has Joined the Faculty for the Fall Semester



Photo by Lida Suchy

Stewart Thorndike is an award-winning writer and director known for her feminist genre films.

Her second feature, *Bad Things*, premiered in competition at the 2023 [Tribeca Film Festival](#), starring **Gayle Rankin**, **Hari Nef**, and **Molly Ringwald**.

Her debut feature, *Lyle*, a queer horror film, premiered at [Outfest](#) in 2014, with **Gaby Hoffmann** winning the Best Actress award.

In 2023, *Indiewire* named **Stewart** one of the top ten LGBTQ creators on the rise. She holds an MFA from NYU and is a recipient of the [San Francisco Film Society's Women Filmmaker Fellowship](#), awarded to women in genre filmmaking.

We are thrilled to have her teaching the following courses:

- Writing the Short
- Directing I
- Microbudget Filmmaking

Learning from Industry Greats

In September, **Nick Bakay**, Executive Producer and creator of Max's *The Bookie*, was interviewed by TV Writing MFA Program Director **Alan Kingsberg** for the popular TV *Writing Guest Series*.

We look forward to welcoming **James Ponsoldt**, Executive Producer and Director of Apple TV's *Shrinking*, on October 21st, and **Laura Eason**, Executive Producer of *Three Women*, on November 18.

If you are interested in joining our TV Writing MFA program, [reach out to attend](#) either of these upcoming masterclasses.

MASTERCLASS CASE STUDY

First-year Film and TV students had the opportunity to meet **Aaron Shimberg**, director of *A Different Man*, during **Christine Vachon's Production Masterclass**, where they discussed the film, the production process, and how one turns their writing into a story on the big screen.

In the following weeks, **Vachon** brought in A24, the film's distributor, and **Shimberg's** manager as guests.

"It's amazing to see the process from production to festival screenings, to now it's out in theaters. I felt like I really got a sense of what it means to release a film into the world," said first-year Film MFA student **Da Xu**.

Directing student **Risako Ishigaki** added, "We're not only making films every week, but we're learning firsthand from people who are working successfully in the industry."



MFA IN FILM & IN TV

IN ASSOCIATION WITH KILLER FILMS 

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