

Postgraduate
MA [full-time and part-time]

Bath Spa University Scriptwriting





The MA in Scriptwriting is a professional training course for working writers. Most scriptwriters work across several media, and the course reflects this. All our tutors are working writers. We aim to turn out writers who understand the structure and craft of drama, have a finished script they can use as a calling card, know the industry in all its variety, and can pitch and sell their work.

The MA is taught in seventeen weekends of intensive workshops. It is not, however, 'low residency'. There are as many hours of teaching as on Bath Spa University's established MA in Creative Writing. The course is taught at our beautiful Corsham Court campus where we are developing performance, capture and editing facilities.

We also work closely with the School of Music and Performing Arts, and their students will have the opportunity to help act in and produce our work.

Although this is an intellectually challenging postgraduate course, there is no 'academic' side detached from the working side. Everything theoretical is geared to help the students as writers.

Snapshot



Awards

MA Scriptwriting.

Course length

- one year full-time from October to September.
- some students may be accepted to do the course part-time over two years.

Course location

Corsham Court campus.

Key features

- we expect the atmosphere on the course to be relaxed, playful, supportive and intellectually serious.
- the course is taught at our beautiful Corsham Court campus where we are developing performance, capture and editing facilities.

Applications

Application forms are available on the website and for any admissions enquiries please contact:

T: +44 (0)1225 875609

E: admissions@bathspa.ac.uk

Enquiries

For all enquiries about the course, please contact: Ursula Rani Sarma, Course Director.

T: +44 (0)1225 876358

E: u.sarma@bathspa.ac.uk



The Course

Course structure and content

The course is full-time from October to September, or part-time over two years, and is taught in modules. The first trimester runs from October to January and there are two modules, each delivered in three intensive weekends.

One is the module on Dramatic Structure. This aims to give you an understanding of the full range of ways that plays and scripts can work. You are introduced to dialogue, character, genre, and the different media. But the emphasis is on how to tell a story - a well made plot. Students will read and view widely, but the academic side is not separate from the working side. This module is to help you write.

The other module in the first trimester is a workshop in Writing Theatre and Radio. This is delivered in three intensive weekends. All of the time is devoted to the students' own work, and much of the time we work on our feet. At the end of the trimester each student finishes a 45 to 60 minute play or radio script, and a 3,000 word essay that explains the structure of that script.

The second trimester, from February to June, also has two modules. One is Professional Skills, again over three intensive weekends. All our experience is that the ability to write alone is not enough to make your way in the various industries of theatre, television, film and radio. You also need to be able to pitch, and

to talk intelligently and flexibly about your own work and others'. One of our tutors facilitates this module, and various industry professionals come in for a day each to inform, rehearse and challenge you.

The other module this trimester is Workshop in Screenwriting, also over three weekends. Here you write a script for film or television. We pay particular attention to genre, to the visual and time requirements of the screen, and to writing for particular markets. At the end of this trimester each student finishes 50 to 60 minutes of TV, or a short film script, or a treatment for a full-length film plus at least 45 minutes of polished script.

The third trimester runs from June to the end of September. Here there is only one double module, the Final Script Workshop. The workshops meet over five intensive Saturdays.

In this module each student writes a full length play, a full length film script, or the equivalent in television or radio. This script can be a development and reworking of earlier pieces, but will often be completely new work. At the end of September students submit this script.

The final assessment is based on three things. The most important is this script. The second is a 3,000 word essay explaining exactly where in the market it is aimed and how it is shaped to fit that niche. The third is a cold pitch for this script. When we speak of the market, we are thinking quite

broadly. Some students will want to write for Hollywood, British independent films, soap operas, or theatre. Others will want to write radio plays, documentaries, puppet shows, theatre in education, training videos or school plays. The emphasis is, however, always on getting your work to a produceable form.

Teaching methods and resources

All courses will be taught by intensive workshops. Over the years we have found this is far and away the most productive way of teaching writing. It is particularly suited to scriptwriting, which is very much a social and collective art.

Student Profiles



Gemma Middleton **MA Scriptwriting**

I chose the course because of my passion for writing scripts, the calibre of teaching at Bath Spa and to enhance my career prospects. I would say that one of the best things about it was meeting professional industry workers because this has enabled me to start networking. I have also enjoyed the opportunity to produce completed pieces of work that I can use as a calling card once I leave Bath Spa. I also studied my undergraduate degree at Bath Spa, achieving a 2:1 in Creative Writing and Drama Studies. I became impressed with my development as a writer over the three years. The teaching environment and the way that students are encouraged as writers by the lecturers to get their work out into the real world is fantastic. Since finishing the course I have self published a book and now work as a freelance copywriter and English tutor. The MA has given me the ability and confidence to believe in my own work. The contacts I have made are invaluable as is the understanding and knowledge I now have of working in the film, theatre and television industry. I would encourage anyone who has a passion for creative writing to come to Bath Spa, regardless of age.

Brittany McComas **MA Scriptwriting**

Before coming to Bath Spa I was a professional actor and singer. I recorded in Nashville TN, and I even worked for Disney. I have a BFA in Theatre from West Virginia University. After an independent study in the U.S. with playwright Frank Gagliano, I thought Bath Spa to be the perfect place to further my education in scriptwriting.

Bath Spa is one of the most beautiful places on earth. The faculty and administration made me feel at home here, and I knew I would receive a well rounded education in Scriptwriting. The tutors are amazing, and they don't spoon feed you. In the industry of writing, you can't expect jobs to fall in your lap. The course has taught me to make contacts and to go out and find everything I am looking for. Thus far it has already helped my career in ways that I never thought possible.

Bath Spa offers an immense selection of things to do when you are not studying; from donating a day on the weekend to charity; participating in the Bath festivals; to sports; the Student's Union nights; or filming a television series with industry professionals. I loved every minute I spent at Bath Spa.



Tutors

All of our tutors are writers working in the industry. Among those working on the course will be:

Ursula Rani Sarma (Course Director) writer for theatre and screen

Steve May who writes radio and novels

Robin Mukherjee who writes theatre, television and film

Hattie Naylor who writes film, theatre, radio and opera libretti

Jonathan Neale who writes theatre, radio and novels

In the second semester we have visits from several professionals in the industry. Each conducts a one-day workshop with students, outlining the industry and giving them rigorous practice in pitching their work. Typically, we will have an agent, a TV producer, a radio producer, a theatre director or literary manager, and a film script editor.

Assessment methods

Assessment is by coursework only. In the first two trimesters work will be assessed as work in progress. The final submission will be examined on the script (60%), and the essay on the market and the pitch (40%).

Entry requirements

Most students accepted onto the course will have either a first degree or a thorough professional training in acting, theatre, television, or film. Some students, however, will be accepted on the basis of equivalent life experience. Applicants are asked to submit one or two pieces of creative writing with their application form, about twenty pages in all. This can be part of a novel, short stories, poems, or script. Do not assume it has to be drama. Submit your best work rather than your best script.

Fees

The following fees are provisional for 2011/12 and may be subject to change. Fees are revised each year and the latest fee information can be found at www.bathspa.ac.uk/services/finance/students/

UK/EU students

£4,410 for the full-time MA or £735 per module plus £1,470 for the dissertation.

Overseas students

£9,690 for the full-time MA.

Channel Island and Isle of Man students

As UK/EU students plus a one-off registration fee of £625 paid at the start of the course.

Fees are paid in total at the beginning of each academic year, or in instalments by standing order throughout the duration of the course. Please note that students contract to pay the fees for their full course when they register, and fees are not normally refundable. Students failing to complete their course must continue to honour any instalment plan, even in the event of a subsequent withdrawal.



Frequently asked questions

Q. How much time can I spend each week on other work?

A. The full-time course takes about 35 hours a week of work, including workshop time. You can do a lot of this early mornings, evenings, and weekends, but you do need to find the time.

Q. A lot of the course seems to be about writing for the market. What about personal and literary integrity?

A. There are two answers to that. One is that Shakespeare wrote for the market, with a constant eye over his shoulder for a very dangerous censor. The other is that all your tutors wrestle with the tension between what they want to do and what can be done in drama, which is always collective production.

Q. I'm shy. How can I pitch my work?

A. We teach you to fake confidence.

Q. What age will the other students be?

A. They are likely to range from 21 to 70.

Notes

We advise you to obtain a copy of our postgraduate prospectus for full details of Bath Spa University and its programmes of study.

The contents of this leaflet are correct at the time of going to press. We will try to publicise any changes to it.

Please check the continued availability of the course and its modules before you apply by telephoning Student Services on +44 (0)1225 875875.

The operation of each course or module depends upon recruiting viable numbers. We may not be able to provide a course or module if insufficient numbers enrol. Our offer to you and your acceptance of a place here will be subject to this express condition.

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