Faculty

Ozge Samanci is an accomplished comics artist with an extensive background in media arts. Her interactive digital media installations and other collaborative works have been exhibited in numerous venues internationally including SIGGRAPH, ISEA, Advances in Computer Entertainment (ACE), Tangible and Embedded Interaction (TEI), Tech Museum at San Jose, WRO Media Art Biennial, Athens International Festival of Digital Arts and New Media, Eyedrum Gallery, and Evanston Art Center. Her analog installations and images have been exhibited at University of California Botanical Gardens, Art House Coop, Sycamore Place Gallery, Gallery KG52 in Stockholm, Armory Center for Arts, Worth Ryder Art Gallery and Arcade Gallery. Her areas of interest include interactive art, interactive narrative, interaction design, full-body interaction, comics and graphic novels, digital-interactive media theory, and location-based art. She authored the book Animasyonun Onlenemez Yukselisi (The Irresistible Rise of Animation), published by Istanbul Bilgi University Publications.

Her autobiographical graphic novel, Dare to Disappoint, is an Amazon bestseller, and received high praise from The New York Times: “Through it all, the story seems to waft across the pages,” it reads, “a reminder that among her talents is knowing how to make even a harsh story take flight.”; The New Republic: “Here in Turkey, where her book is topping bestseller lists, Samancı has become the year’s most inspiring figure among comic artists, and a subject of intrigue for Turkish magazines, newspapers, and budding artists.”; WTTW Chicago Tonight; The Sun-Sentinel: “With loose, funny, expressive art that captures the main character’s many moods and enthusiastic outlook, this autobiographical coming-of-age story has lots of heart and plenty of universal appeal”; and Slate: “She’s a gifted cartoonist with an innate sense of pacing and a seemingly inexhaustible well of ideas for presenting information—the book bursts with maps, diagrams, pasted-in leaves, doodles, and ink stamps.”

In addition to Dare to Disappointment, Samanci designed a rotating logo for the January 2016 Slate Book Review and created eight illustrations for various reviews:

The Last Rotation, review by Anna Reisman
Shakespeare’s World, review by Isaac Butler
China Miéville Spreads Possibilities, review by Jacob Brogan
Headlong, review by Jonathan Farmer
The End of The Story, review by Laura Miller
The Half-Mask, review by Amanda Hess
Someday Never Comes, review by Laura Miller
Let Loose the Laws of War, review by Jack Goldsmith

Screen Cultures PhD

Laura La Placa is a fifth-year Screen Cultures PhD candidate interested in the history of American radio and television broadcasting. She is also a trained archivist of moving image and recorded sound collections. Laura recently participated in the rediscovery of 7,000 NBC radio transcription discs on the Northwestern campus. The collection has been stagnant for over 50 years and is significant for its size, scope, and rare contents. With the support of RTF professor Jake Smith and RTF undergrad research assistant Camille Michelotti, Laura is assessing and stabilizing the discs. In February, she will travel to Washington, D.C., with RTF visiting assistant professor Neil Verma to
introduce NURAP (the Northwestern University Radio Archive Project) at the inaugural meeting of the Radio Preservation Task Force at the Library of Congress.

This winter Laura was awarded an NU Graduate Research Grant to fund an archival research residency at the Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz Museum and Center for Comedy in New York, where she will be the first scholar granted access to the center’s production archives for *I Love Lucy*. She looks forward to enhancing her dissertation, *Show Rooms: Domestic Sitcom Architecture 1929–1959*, with these materials. She is also a 2016 recipient of the American Heritage Center Research Grant and the Marshall Fishwick Travel Grant, which she will use to access production documents from the radio and TV runs of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* and *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*. Laura will present selections from this research at the Society for Cinema & Media Studies conference, the American Culture Association conference, and at the CUNY Film School’s “Mediating the Archive” symposium this spring.

**MFA in Documentary Media**

**Jesseca Simmons** is in her second year as a Documentary Media MFA candidate. From the surrealism of Chicago’s magical stained glass windows to the story of a man trying to save a creek from a shopping center’s devastating pollution, Jesseca’s documentary work reflects a wide range of interests and she feels truly blessed to recently have her work screened both nationally and internationally. This past summer, Jesseca was a Southern Exposure Film Fellow for the Southern Environmental Law Center. Her film produced in Birmingham, AL is currently being used by universities and nonprofits to help raise awareness about Alabama’s natural resources and environmental issues. *The Storm Downstream* was an official selection for the 2016 Wild and Scenic Film Festival and has been chosen to be apart of their traveling film tour. Currently, Jesseca is working on a docufantasy about the contemporary American poet Diane Wakoski, which utilizes and emphasizes fictive elements of Diane’s life created throughout her poetry. As she continues to grow as a filmmaker, Jesseca’s feelings on film are ever changing, but today she has chosen to evoke the words of Georges Bataille, “There are explosives everywhere that perhaps will soon blind me. I laugh when I think that my eyes persist in demanding objects that do not destroy them.”

**MFA in Writing for Screen + Stage**

**Roger Q. Mason** is a playwright whose work mines the intersection of history, memory, and identity. A haunting refrain in his plays is the exploration of masculine vulnerability. His projects include *Orange Woman: A Ballad for a Moor*, *Onion Creek*, and *The Duat*. Mason’s works have been seen at such venues as McCarter Theatre Center, Ensemble Studio Theatre/LA, Son of Semele Theatre, Teatro Vista at Victory Gardens, and the Center on Halsted. His short play *Hard Palate* recently debuted in Season Seven of the Obie-winning Fire This Time Festival in New York. Mason was a finalist of the inaugural Activate: Midwest New Play Festival and the winner of an Encore Producer’s Award at the 2014 Hollywood Fringe Festival. Originally from Los Angeles, California, he holds an BA in English and Theatre from Princeton University and an MA in English from Middlebury College.

Currently, Mason is working on a commission for Steep Theatre in Chicago: inspired by true familial events, *Blackjack* imagines the unlikely bond between a grandmother and grandson who share an overzealous devotion to the card game 21. He is also in pre-production for an immersive, devised theatre experience based upon the sex scandal that consumed Mae West after she opened her drag play *The Pleasure Man* on Broadway in 1928. With a few film and musical theatre projects (as well as a documentary helmed by MFA Documentary Media student Joao Queiroga) also in the works, Mason enjoys the interdisciplinary, multivalent life that the storytelling business affords him.

In addition to his own creative pursuits, Mason dedicates himself to developing the works of his peers by working as a producer of Master Clash, Northwestern’s graduate writer/director collective. The Fall Edition of Master Clash presented readings of five fresh, new 10-minute plays to a full house in Fisk Hall. He looks forward to two more quarters of inspired collaboration this winter and spring. For more on Roger Q. Mason, visit [www.rogerqmason.com](http://www.rogerqmason.com).
RTVF Undergraduate

Samuel Freedman (Class of ’16) is a Radio/TV/Film Senior. He is currently enrolled in the Directing for the Screen and Creative Writing for the Media modules. Beyond his pursuits in RTVF, Sam is completing a second major in Creative Nonfiction and a minor in African Studies. He is also a Kaplan Humanities Scholar. Presently, Sam is in post-production on his short film CARE FOR ME and his miniseries GHOULS (co-created by Summer Benowitz). He is producing Benowitz’s MAG short film VIGNETTE.

He is the treasurer of the Directing for the Screen module, a senior representative for the Undergraduate RTVF Student Association (URSA), a 3-year Wildcat Welcome Peer Adviser and a member of the Delta Chi Fraternity. Previously, he served as Public Relations Co-Chair on the Studio 22 executive board and Director of Development for the Dolphin Show. He additionally served as DIRECTV’s Original Content and Production Intern last summer, and looks forward to returning to Los Angeles after graduation to pursue a career in screenwriting and production.

MA in Sound Arts & Industries

The MA in Sound Arts and Industries, Northwestern University School of Communication’s newest master’s program offers a flexible architecture for artists, theorists, designers, programmers, storytellers and others who–wherever they work–place sound and sonic expression at the center of their practice.

The MA in Sound Arts and Industries offers a unique opportunity to become that kind of well-rounded sound professional through an innovative approach to interdisciplinary teaching, learning, research and development. The program draws upon Northwestern’s world-class faculty and stimulating creative environment.

Students take courses in sound creation and design, sound studies, the science of sound and many other topics with faculty in departments such as Radio-TV-Film, Performance Studies, Music Theory and Cognition, Communication Sciences and Disorders, African-American Studies, Linguistics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. Our students thus sit in a sonic sweet spot that integrates the arts, humanities and sciences. They become members of an intimate community of sound storytellers, scholars, designers and innovators.

MA in Sound Arts and Industries also features an audio newsletter recorded and edited by Bradley West, program assistant for MASA&I:

The first episode is titled "A Sonic Boom." It features interviews with Northwestern professors Nina Kraus, Bryan Pardo, Jacob Smith, David Tolchinsky, and Neil Verma. Original music is by Brendan Baker, who runs the "Love + Radio" podcast.

The second episode is titled "Gary Rydstrom: Secrets of Star Wars Sound Design." It features seven-time Academy Award winning sound designer Gary Rydstrom on his career, his recent work on Star Wars: The Force Awakens and Strange Magic, and his enthusiasm for the master's program in sound at Northwestern.

To learn more about the program, visit www.communication.northwestern.edu/programs/ma_sound

Applications are open and the deadline is February 15.
Thomas Bradshaw was mentioned in Charles McNulty’s LA Times article “A New, Fearless Generation Makes This a Revolutionary Moment in American Playwriting” regarding the rise of adventurous, unorthodox plays challenging traditional theatre houses and established producing models.

Stephen Cone’s film Henry Gamble’s Birthday Party opened Friday, January 8th at the Made in NY Media Center at IFP Screen Forward. He was also interviewed by Mekado Murphy for the New York Times, and indieWire interviewed lead actor Cole Doman who plays Henry Gamble.

Zayd Dohrn’s play Rebornign was recently named the top production of 2015 by the Huffington Post for its LA production, and nominated for LA’s Robby Awards for Best Production and Best Playwright. It also has new productions upcoming in Florida, Panama, and later this year Brazil. As a result of the publicity and the review in the LA Times last year, the film rights were optioned by Sobini Films, and negotiations have been made for Dohrn to write the screenplay.

Brett Neveu was interviewed for the feature article in Clef Notes Journal regarding his hit play Pilgrims Progress. The Chicago Tribune listed Michael Shannon as one of the year’s top performances: “Shannon was simply enormous fun to watch at the center of Brett Neveu’s dark comedy about a college professor you really would not want as your dad.”

Spencer Parsons’ film Bite Radius, a modern neo-noir, made the list of top short films in New City Film.

J.P. Sniadecki’s film THE IRON MINISTRY just won the top Feature Film Award as well as a Special Mention for the Critics Award at L’Alternativa (Barcelona Independent Film Festival). His interview with filmmaker Jem Cohen was featured in Bomb Magazine.

Freda Love Smith was interviewed by Impose Magazine for her book Red Velvet Underground, which also received a glowing review from The Boston Globe.

Dave Tolchinsky’s play Where’s the Rest of Me? was published in the volume of Best Plays From The Strawberry One-Act Festival Volume Eight: Compiled by Van Dirk Fisher. His short screenplay, Cassandra, was a finalist in the Night of Horror Film Festival.

Neil Verma has been selected to be a faculty judge and head of a faculty-graduate student nominating committee in the radio category for the George Foster Peabody Awards, the oldest and most prestigious award for excellence in electronic media.
PHD IN SCREEN CULTURES

Stephen Babish successfully defended his dissertation, “Concrete Futures,” which looks at dystopian 1970s Science Fiction films in the context of location shooting and Mid-Century modern architecture. Congratulations to Dr. Babish!

Molly Schneider’s article titled “Television’s Tortured Misfits: Authenticity, Method Acting, and Americanness in the Midcentury ‘Slice of Life’ Anthology Drama” will appear in the Fall/Winter 2016 issue of Journal of Film and Video. Schneider will present a paper titled “Rod Serling and Emmett Till: The American South as TV Bogeyman” at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference in Atlanta this spring.

Meredith Ward, Screen Cultures Class of 2015, won the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Dissertation Award for her dissertation, “Chatter, Reverberation, and the Static in the System: Noise in American Cinema Culture.” Jake Smith, Lynn Spigel, and Jeff Sconce served as committee members. She will be awarded the prize at the SCMS conference in Atlanta this March.

MFA IN DOCUMENTARY MEDIA

Iyabo Kwayana (Class of ’17), was accepted into the Pan African Film Festival 2016 in Los Angeles for her film Macarrão.

Tim Fryett (Class of ’17) was accepted into the Ethnografilm in Paris for his film Of A Few Days.

Ashley Brandon (Class of ’17) landed an internship with documentary filmmaker Cynthia Wade. Wade has been nominated for two Academy Awards (Mondays at Racine, Freeheld), and won the Oscar for Best Documentary Short (Freeheld). Ashley Brandon will have the opportunity to work with Wade on a number of projects she’s developing for HBO and Al Jazeera, including Mudflow (Chicken & Egg) which will take their team to East Java, Indonesia this summer. Ashley also had the opportunity to do a “test internship” with Cynthia and her team over winter break which has developed into this forthcoming opportunity. Currently, Wade’s production team is located in the beautiful Berkshires of western Massachusetts.

The MFA in Documentary Media co-curated a Fall 2015 documentary series at Northwestern’s Block Cinema. In October, filmmaker Lyric Cabral screened her doc (T)error and hosted a masterclass for the MFA in Documentary Media students. As part of the series, Professor JP Sniadecki presented his acclaimed documentary The Iron Ministry. The screening was also an opportunity to welcome Sniadecki to the Northwestern program.

In November, Oscar nominated filmmaker Joshua Oppenheimer hosted a masterclass for the MFA Doc students. Following the masterclass, Oppenheimer screened his documentary The Look of Silence for hundreds of Northwestern University students. By year’s end, The Look of Silence was the most acclaimed documentary of 2015 and nominated for the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

In December, Professor Ines Sommer presented a work-in-progress screening of her documentary Count Me In. The screening was a look behind the scenes of the filmmaking process as Sommer shared excerpts from her soon-to-be released film.

On January 25th, the MFA in Documentary Media First Year students screened their Fall Quarter films in the Peggy Dow Helmerich Auditorium. The following evening, a number of the First Year MFA students took part in the Kurdish-American Short Film Screening at the Chicago Kurdish Cultural Center.

MFA IN WRITING FOR SCREEN + STAGE

Kate Tucker Fahlsing’s (Class of ’16) full-length play, Across the Park had its first reading February 1st at Stage 773 in Chicago. Across the Park is a dark comedy that sheds light on the medication of our feelings and the stigma of invisible illness.

RTVF UNDERGRADUATES

Crystal Jin Kim’s (Class of ’16) film JinJu was featured at Asians on Film Festival, CAAMFest, Atlanta Independent Film Festival, Atlanta Asian Film Festival, KAFFNY Festival, and DC Asian Pacific American Film Festival.
MFA In Writing For Screen + Stage Alumni

**Will Arbery** (2015) was accepted into the Clubbed Thumb Early Career Writers Group.

**Elizabeth Archer** (2015) was named a semi-finalist for the 2016 P73 Playwriting Fellowship.

**Alumn Farhan Arshad** (2010) has been accepted into the Disney Storytellers program which is a 20 week writer incubator lab geared toward developing a pilot. Additionally, he'll be writing an episode of ABC's *Dr. Ken*.

**Carrie Barrett** (2009) appeared in Nickelodeon's TV series *Henry Danger* as news reporter Mary Gaperman.

**Sarah Gubbins** (2008) had the world premiere of her play *Cocked* at Victory Gardens Theatre February 12th.

**Ethan Kass** (2012) is now a staff writer for TNT's series *Murder in the First*.

**Mike Kastelein** (2014) will be the writers' assistant on Season 2 of *Hand of God*, an Amazon Original drama. His play *Good Southern Girl* is a semi-finalist for the Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference for 2015.

**Jenni Lamb** (2012) has been named as a member of the 2016 Goodman Playwrights' Unit. Her world-premiere play *Quiver* will premiere at Route 66 Theatre Company in the spring, after winning their national New Play Development Workshop competition in 2015.

**Living Room Playmakers**, a collective formed by graduates of the MFA program, just finished their third season. It included *Under the Table*, a multimedia play about tabletop gaming in collaboration with Northwestern graduate Olivia Curry, and *Artifacts*, an audio tour intersecting with live scenes in the labyrinthine space of Salvage One.

**Shannon Pritchard** (2014) will be seen writing in a storefront window on February 20th for the Playwright at Water Works Project, part of Chicago Theatre Week.

**Alvaro Saar Rios** (2010)'s play *Luchadora!* has been published by Dramatic Publishing.

**Jen Spyra** (2012) shares in a nomination with the writing staff for *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* for a WGA Award.

**Jessy Lauren Smith** (2012) has received a special commission to write a site-specific play that’s going up at Adventure Stage in Fall 2016.

**RTVF Undergraduate Alumni**

**Jessica Bickel-Barlow** (RTVF/Creative Writing 2015) was selected for the prestigious Marshall Scholarship. Bickel-Barlow, who graduated with a double major in English Literature and RTVF at Northwestern, will study how collaboration shaped Renaissance drama and how those early modern theatrical practices might be used in today’s world.

**Laura McGehee**'s (RTVF 2015) film *Mothers of God* was featured at REELING LGBTQ+ Film Festival.
THE DEPARTMENT OF RADIO/TELEVISION/FILM
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William Bleich: RTVF Associate Chairperson, Associate Director of MFA in Writing for the Screen and Stage
Roberta Stack: Director of Undergraduate Programs
Lynn Spigel: Director of the Screen Cultures Center
Debra Tolchinsky: Director of MFA in Documentary Media
Ines Sommer: Associate Director of MFA in Documentary Media
Jacob Smith: Director of MA in Sound Arts and Industries, Director of Graduate Studies in Screen Cultures Program

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