BFA Thesis Project
(May 6, 2014)

Students completing the BFA degree must complete a thesis project in the final two semesters in the program. Working with a faculty mentor, students submit a thesis project proposal in the final semester of their junior year. Student should select a mentor with expertise that is consistent with the nature of the proposed thesis project. All full-time faculty who teach television and cinema courses are eligible to serve as a mentor. Proposal forms are available from faculty mentors, the School of Communications office and online at:

http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/academics/communications/coursecurric/BFAThesisForm.pdf

The proposal describes in general terms the goals, methods, feasibility, final product, an initial bibliography of selected works, and projected deadlines for completion of elements of the thesis project. The proposal must be approved and signed by the student, faculty mentor and department chair before a student engages in the project.

Following approval of the BFA Thesis Project Proposal, students enroll in COM 496 for two-semester hours credit in each of their final two semesters with the same faculty mentor. Students meet once a week with the faculty mentor for supervision of this intensive culminating experience. Other faculty members and BFA students may also meet in groups during this year-long independent study. A description of the course and student learning outcomes are included in the syllabus provided by the mentor.

The BFA thesis project consist of two related but distinct requirements. The first is a fully developed written paper. The second is a substantial television or cinematic work appropriate for competitive review, the length and scope of which may vary depending on the nature of the project agreed upon with a faculty mentor.

A three-member thesis committee will evaluate the final project and paper. The thesis committee will be comprised of the thesis mentor and at least one School of Communications full-time faculty member or a television/cinema production staff member. The committee may include one full-time faculty member outside the School of Communications as approved by the faculty mentor. An approval document signed by the entire thesis committee is required for completion of the BFA.

A description of each of these requirements follows.
BFA Written Thesis

All television and cinematic works exist within the context of previous works, disciplinary thought and professional practice. The paper should be a scholarly exploration of relevant topics, conventions, and techniques that support the creation of the selected project. Because it is intended to inform the creation of the project, the paper must be completed as a graded assignment during the first semester of COM 496, BFA Thesis Project.

The orientation and development of the paper should be determined in consultation with the faculty mentor. The paper may be framed as a discussion, review, critical analysis, or primary level research, depending on the approach that most benefits the project. The paper should be grounded in a literature review and discussion of influential works using a minimum of 8-10 sources. Appendices should be included for supporting materials, as appropriate. This work should not be confused with a production notebook, journal or reflection paper, which also may be required as part of the project, as described below.

The BFA thesis is a 10-15 page written paper that informs the content, creation and production of the project. The paper must conform to the requirements and specifications of all academic work. It should be word-processed on standard letter-size paper, double-spaced, 12-point type, margins of 1.5 inches left and 1 inch for all others sides, and using APA or MLA Style. The paper should be proofread carefully for mechanical, spelling and punctuation errors.

BFA Project

The BFA project is a culminating produced work where substance, creativity and craft converge to demonstrate mastery of television and cinematic techniques. The completed project must conform to established and accepted practices in television and cinema, and demonstrate fulfillment of the project at a high-level. A calendar for completion of the various elements of this year-long experience should be established in consultation with the faculty mentor.

The BFA project must be an ORIGINAL television, cinema or electronic media production that is determined in consultation with the mentor and as described in the thesis project proposal. The project must be realistic and consistent in design, quality and quantity with similar professional works. Examples include but are not limited to: short narrative film (10-15 minutes), documentary (10-15 minutes), animation (2-4 minutes), television program (20-30 minutes), written screenplay (minimum 30 pages), music video, commercial/public service/promotional campaign (at least 10 minutes in length, or multiple productions equivalent in length), or similar project developed in an electronic media environment.
The BFA thesis project also will require supporting materials. These may include:

- production notebook
- treatment
- screenplay/script/transcripts
- audience demographics
- production stills
- shooting schedule
- budget
- equipment list
- cast and crew bios
- release forms
- storyboards
- journal/blog
- promotional materials
- reflection paper
- other associated documents

In addition, the project must be presented publicly, and be approved by a jury of selected faculty members, at the end of the second semester of enrollment in the BFA Thesis Project course.

Because the project is a requirement for academic credit for the BFA in television and cinema, the School of Communications reserves the right to define the guidelines for this assignment, as follows:

1. conform to all local, state, Federal and international laws, as appropriate,
2. conform to laws regarding libel, privacy, copyright, trademark and other legal requirements that are pertinent to the production,
3. complete permits and participant release forms, as appropriate,
4. follow the Elon University Honor Code and conform to university standards that demonstrate respect for persons in an inclusive community, as described by the various elements of Elon’s “Core Values” at:

   http://www.elon.edu/e-web/administration/president/strategicplan2020/diversity/default.xhtml

5. refrain from gratuitous or unmotivated expressions of violence, profanity, or explicit sexual content
6. avoid actions that may endanger students and others, or damage property, equipment or facilities.

The paper is a graded assignment in the first semester of COM496 and the creative project, including supporting materials, is a graded assignment in the second semester of COM 496. Because the School of Communications will archive all BFA thesis projects, a FINAL version of the paper, creative work, and all appendices must be submitted in a prescribed technical format for electronic preservation. After the
project is completed and approved the student will own the copyright to the creative work; however, the School of Communications retains the right to use the project for promotional and archival purposes.

The final project and revised paper are to be given to each member of the thesis committee at least four weeks before the last day of class. The committee will convene and make one of two decisions: approval or revise and resubmit. If it is a revise and resubmit decision, the student will have two weeks to make changes and resubmit. The committee will then approve or reject the project. The approved creative work must be presented publicly to complete the course.