

**Film and Media Studies Advisory Committee Report**  
**Lafayette College**  
**May 22, 2009**

**FAMS Committee Members**

Bill Bissell, Mark Crain, Alessandro Giovannelli, Jeff Helm, Margarete-Lamb Faffelberger, Bob Mattison, John O’Keefe (co-chair), Mary Roth (ex-officio), Karina Skvirsky, Andy Smith (co-chair), Suzanne Westfall

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this document is to articulate a distinctive vision for establishing and supporting an interdisciplinary program in Film and Media Studies at Lafayette College. Building on the previous work completed by the FAMS committee, this report outlines that vision, identifies the next steps forward for the program, and offers a near-term plan of action to achieve the stated goals of the program and to begin integrating FAMS into the life of the college.

The FAMS committee researched comparable programs at several institutions, examined current course offerings, and began the process of constructing a FAMS curriculum matrix with attention to outcomes assessment. The committee established a website/blog for sharing information and for facilitating discussions regarding the curricular, programmatic, facility, staffing, and support needs of the developing program.

**I: FAMS OVERVIEW**

**Mission Statement**

Lafayette College’s interdisciplinary program in Film and Media Studies (FAMS) explores the moving image and digital media in art, culture, and society. FAMS emphasizes connections between visual media, electronic arts, social technologies, and cultural contexts. The FAMS program combines rigorous theoretical study with hands-on practice, all within a rich liberal arts context. Since we live in an increasingly media-driven world, it is essential that students be able to analyze diverse visual and textual forms while honing their skills as effective communicators across an array of media platforms. The FAMS program situates the moving image within broader historical and social landscapes, examining the production, circulation, and cultural impact of different media on a global scale. Students focus on the moving image as an art form as well as a social medium, investigating the complexities of its history and employing it as a creative force and research tool. Lafayette’s FAMS program works actively to nurture relationships with established film and media artists, integrating career and advanced-study opportunities for students within local, regional, national, and international centers of film and media activity—connecting what goes on in the classroom to the larger world.

## **Program Goals**

In pursuit of its mission, the Film and Media Studies program will actively seek to fulfill a range of pedagogic and programmatic goals, including to

- 1) build a culture of film and media activity that enriches and deepens the daily life of the college;
- 2) foster imaginative interdisciplinary approaches, providing an innovative model that other programs across campus can draw upon;
- 3) model and practice skills necessary for successful collaboration and team projects, bringing faculty and students together to think creatively about the visual arts, social issues, and the role of new technologies;
- 4) provide rigorous courses and activities that integrate theoretical study with hands-on creative practice/production;
- 5) create and sustain active relationships with local, regional, national and international centers of film and media activity;
- 6) produce students who are critically literate in visual culture and who actively participate as informed citizens in the larger culture.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

Film and Media Studies students will be trained in and acquire the ability to:

- Read, write, speak, and think analytically about film and media works, topics, and issues
- Demonstrate visual, aural, and technological literacy
- Collaborate effectively, actively thinking and working as responsible members of a team
- Demonstrate skills of self-reflexivity/meta-thinking, and to act upon/incorporate feedback
- Identify the scope of a project, anticipate complex needs or obstacles, and devise strategies for completing complex tasks
- Responsibly negotiate ethical challenges and diverse social contexts unique to film and media studies creation
- Synthesize complex and diverse information, perspectives, and methodologies as part of the critical and creative exploration of film and media studies
- Work on community-based or “real world” Film and Media projects and interact with professionals in media industries

## **Strategic Plan Implementation**

The creation of a new Film and Media Studies program will help fulfill one of the central goals of *The Plan for Lafayette* (2007): to strengthen the college’s programs in the creative arts. The FAMS program will enhance the college’s central educational mission: “to develop students’ skills of critical reasoning, verbal communication, and quantitative reasoning, and their capacity for creative

endeavor,” and also address the plan’s Objective 4: “to position the creative arts more centrally in the life of the College.” The program will build on promising developments in a range of departments across campus, bringing coordination and greater focus to efforts already underway. The program will allow Lafayette to capitalize on the college’s distinctive character; expand its academic offerings in promising new directions; enhance its capacity to recruit students in the liberal arts and engineering; open up new professional opportunities for our students; and respond creatively to on-going social, technological, and economic transformations. Moreover, it will deliver these benefits while helping the college chart new directions in interdisciplinary scholarship and pedagogy, enhancing our competitive advantages with regard to our peer institutions.

## II: THE PRESENT STATE OF FAMS AT LAFAYETTE

A useful projection of where we are going in Film and Media Studies must include an honest assessment of what has been accomplished to this point and where we find ourselves now. Since the success of FAMS will depend upon the thoughtful integration of existing students, faculty, staff, facilities and resources, it is important to understand the Film and Media efforts already underway at the college, and to see the additions of new staffing and support as joining and building upon a pre-history of the formal FAMS program.

Courses in Film and/or Media Studies are offered by a number of college faculty and in a number of distinct academic departments and programs. These offerings are not formally coordinated, but such courses are proliferating and students are responding. The English and Art departments offer the highest frequency and diversity of these courses and have been the longest and steadiest contributors. Additionally, several other departments and programs (American Studies, Anthropology & Sociology, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Philosophy, Policy Studies) periodically offer Film and/or Media Studies courses, and more are in the offing.

During 2008–09, 11 potentially FAMS-relevant courses were offered in 5 departments or programs. For students interested in a degree in Film and/or Media Studies, the current situation presents several imperfect options as a course of study. Students may opt for: 1) an English major with a concentration in Film; 2) a Film minor, administered through the English department, but incorporating courses from multiple disciplines; 3) an Art major or minor; 4) an American Studies major with an Arts concentration; 5) a Policy Studies major with an Arts concentration; 6) an INDS self-designed major. There is internal (department or program-specific) coordination to these degree options, but no sustained formal coordination between or across departments. Existing courses that support the FAMS program include:

AMS 362:	Photography in American Culture
A&S 255:	Contemporary Society and the Cinema
A&S 238:	Gender and Popular Culture
ART 150:	Video Art 1
ART 155:	Digital Photography 1
ART 255:	Digital Photography 2
ECON 373:	Election Broadcast
ENG 116:	Film & Literature
ENG 140:	Introduction to Film
ENG 240:	Film Theory & Practice

ENG 251:	Screenwriting
ENG 340:	Documentary Film
ENG 340:	Short Narrative Film
GER 431:	German Literature and Film
MUS 271:	Film Music
PHIL 345:	Philosophy of Film
THTR 123:	Plays in Performance—Stage and Film

While currently there are enough course offerings to implement a major in Film, creating a major course of study at the present time would depend upon overburdened technical support and facilities, as well as upon faculty who are not easily released by their home departments to teach “outside” their department. We currently do not have enough courses construed as Media Studies (other than film) to offer a major or a minor. Combining disparate individual as well as programmatic efforts in Film and Media Studies, as well as coordinating critical and studio-based courses, requires a degree of communication and cooperation not yet practiced.

Even so, it is important to note the innovative nature of several of these existing courses, particularly as regards integrating the theory and practice of the moving image and diverse digital media. Even without a formal program, Lafayette students have used recently taught courses in Film and Media Studies as a springboard to further work in the field. Several Lafayette alums have gone on to graduate school and even to careers in filmmaking and/or additional Film and Media study. In May 2009, three students will graduate from the college with minors in film.

Several recent college developments have significant potential to serve as catalysts for transforming FAMS from its current state into an exciting new program. First, the Provost’s May 2009 announcement that Film and Media Studies has been approved to hire a new tenure-track line beginning in 2010-11, demonstrates the degree to which FAMS enjoys the serious support of the administration and the faculty; second, the newly passed Policy on Interdisciplinary Appointment and Review promises to establish a climate where interdisciplinary teaching and learning are rewarded and nurtured; and third, the soon-to-be established Maggin Creative Arts Fellows Program will establish a tangible mechanism for attracting more talented arts-focused students to the college, and to FAMS. This alignment of developments suggests the college is in its strongest position yet to move forward with the process of establishing a new Film and Media Studies program.

### III: FAMS PROPOSED PROGRAM and CURRICULUM

FAMS is an interdisciplinary major that combines theory and practice in the study of film and media. While the scope of FAMS is broadly defined and will evolve with emerging technologies and with the creative interests of its faculty, the program embraces an investigation of the theory and practice of the moving image and diverse digital media. Although its scope is broad, the FAMS program adheres to the following principles:

- **Integration:** Lafayette’s Program in Film and Media Studies (FAMS) integrates rigorous historical and critical approaches with creative production components, giving students the opportunity to work in both the theory and practice of digital media, all within the framework of a liberal arts education.

- **Interdisciplinarity:** The program will naturally encourage connections between English and the Arts, or between Philosophy and Anthropology & Sociology. In addition, FAMS supports and models innovative and collaborative teaching efforts that build on Lafayette's existing strengths; for example, projects that bring together Computer Science and Theater, or Engineering and the Humanities.
- **Community:** The program encourages interaction between the college and the film and arts communities of the Lehigh Valley, the region, and beyond. FAMS connects students to internship opportunities in film and media in the Lehigh Valley and New York City, taking advantage of Lafayette's proximity to the largest media market in the country.

FAMS distinguishes between courses that treat film or media as the primary focus of study and those courses that incorporate media merely as a secondary component of their educational outcomes. The defining feature of a course utilizing a FAMS prefix is one that takes as its *primary* focus the form, history, theory, or practice of Film and/or Media Studies.

### The FAMS Major

A FAMS major groups courses broadly under the following categories:

- a) Courses in the **history** of Film and Media
- b) Courses in the **theory** of Film and Media
- c) Courses in the **practice** of Film and Media
- d) Courses that **integrate** theory and practice of Film and Media

A FAMS major will be comprised of a minimum of 10 approved courses, including:

- **One** foundational course in Film and Media Studies
- **One** foundational course in production of Film and/or Media
- At least **one** course in Film and/or Media History
- At least **one** course in Film and/or Media Theory
- At least **one** course in Film and/or Media Practice
- **A** capstone project

### The FAMS Minor

A FAMS minor will be comprised of a minimum of 5 approved courses, including:

- **One** foundational course in Film and/or Media Studies
- **One** foundational course in production
- **Three** additional approved courses

Existing faculty and recent faculty hires may also be interested in developing offerings that can further enrich FAMS. The formal establishment of a program and the appointment of a program chair (see below), will make it possible to actively cultivate and develop these potential resources, allowing FAMS to grow and flourish over the long term.

#### **IV: PROPOSED NEXT STEPS**

The FAMS committee views the May 2009 approval of a tenure-track line in Film & Media Studies as a significant step towards making an interdisciplinary FAMS program a viable reality. This commitment by the President, the Provost, the Faculty Academic Policy Committee, and the college as a whole signals an impressive determination to build upon our current offerings, to strengthen the creative arts, and to integrate technology/engineering with the humanities and social sciences. In our view, the approval of a new tenure-track interdisciplinary line in Film & Media Studies is a watershed moment—a crucial foundation that will help to firmly establish the program and enable us to build toward the future.

#### **Recommendations for FAMS in 2009–2010**

The FAMS Advisory Committee recommends the following actions:

1. that the Provost reappoint the FAMS committee for academic year 2009–2010. The first goal of the reconstituted FAMS committee will be to shepherd a revised version of this FAMS report—in the form of a proposed curriculum—through the CEP process in order to gain formal approval of the FAMS program and FAMS major for the start of Fall 2010. While the committee has agreed on a proposed curriculum for the major and minor, there was simply not enough time at the end of the year to bring the proposal to CEP, and this work will need to be completed in Fall 2010. Ideally, the FAMS committee should deliver its program and curriculum proposal to CEP by November 2009. The process leading to this proposal would benefit from a committee retreat dedicated to crafting specific course outcomes for both the 100-level foundational FAMS course and the FAMS capstone experience
2. that, if deemed appropriate by the Provost, the FAMS committee serve as a resource to the FAMS Search Committee charged with writing the position description, interviewing, and hiring for the new faculty position. The committee suggests that at least one serving member of the FAMS committee also serve on the FAMS Search Committee.
3. that the Provost appoint a Chair of the Film & Media Studies Program as soon as the program is approved by the faculty. The committee recommends the model practiced at Carleton College for administering the Carleton Cinema and Media Studies (CAMS) program, in which an in-house, tenured faculty member is appointed, on a 3-year rotating basis, to the position. We believe that this step will provide a means to build a strong foundation for the program while minimizing demands on resources in the short and medium term.
4. that the FAMS committee participate in and take advantage of the ongoing discussions that follow the newly adopted policies on Interdisciplinary Appointment and Review. The committee should seek to integrate these policies into the developing programmatic structure of the FAMS program, including M.O.U.s (Memorandum of Understanding) for both the new hire and for in-house faculty teaching in the program.

5. that the 2009–10 goals for the FAMS committee include the completion of a three-year course coverage plan that solicits and seeks to integrate and formalize teaching contributions from relevant departments and programs. The committee should also facilitate, where appropriate, discussions with Skillman Library and Instructional Technology to construct a strategy to meet the facilities and technological support needs of the program in the near and medium-term.
6. that once the FAMS program has been approved by the faculty and a FAMS chair has been appointed, the existing ad-hoc FAMS committee be morphed into the FAMS program Advisory Committee. The FAMS chair's responsibilities would include serving as chair of the FAMS Advisory Committee.

## **CONCLUSION**

The committee appreciates the chance to work on this important and exciting prospect for the college. We are grateful to the Provost and to the President for their leadership in moving the college closer to a culture of interdisciplinary teaching and learning, in general, and for their support of developing a Film and Media Studies program, in particular. As described above, we think FAMS is important and valuable in its own right, but it also offers an attractive and effective way to help enact some of the crucial components of the *Plan for Lafayette*. We look forward to your feedback and to continuing the work before us.