Center for environmental filmmaking

training filmmakers to strengthen the global constituency for conservation

"The Center for Environmental Filmmaking has been the single most rewarding aspect of my AU experience."
— graduate student and filmmaker Danny Ledonne

"Lauren DeAngelis, with director of photography Joe Bohannon, used her outstanding skills as a filmmaker to create awareness about the plight of abandoned birds. This emphasis on making media that matters is what SOC and the Center for Environmental Filmmaking are all about."— associate director Maggie Burnette Stogner

Center for environmental filmmaking

Director: Chris Palmer
Associate Directors: Sandy Cannon-Brown, Larry Engel, Sarah Menke-Fish, and Maggie Burnette Stogner

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About the Center

The Center for Environmental Filmmaking was founded on the conviction that films and new media are essential educational and policy tools in the struggle to protect the environment. The center’s mission is to help students produce films and new media that focus attention on the need to conserve the environment in a way that is attractive, educational, and understandable.

The world faces unprecedented environmental challenges, from climate change to species extinction. Powerful images and moving storylines can capture our attention and bring focus, passion, and meaning to their films and their lives. We value the exuberance that is born of the creative process, the courage to stand up for one’s beliefs, and the tremendous expertise of the dozen accomplished documentary filmmakers whose wildlife films address humane standards. The center also partners with other organizations to promote environmental causes and emerging “green communicators” who can bring focus, passion, and meaning to their films and their lives.

What unites the center’s many programs—besides a commitment to fundamental environmental values such as compassion to care for those who can’t speak for themselves— is the desire to conserve the environment in a way that is attractive, educational, and understandable. The center offers the distinctive Classroom in the Wild, an intensive course in natural history field production, including how to make your own hands-on workshops for students and provide them with the skills needed to create successful, engaging films. The center also partners with organizations such as National Geographic, Discovery, Animal Planet, and the Public Broadcasting System, PBS and NOAA, in which students and faculty play important roles and in which the center sponsors.


In the spring semester 2009, associate director Larry Engel and British producer Chris Palmer launched a new academic coursePracticing Environmentalism: Galapagos Islands, whose curriculum is funded by the Ford and MacArthur foundations.

The center also offers two campus classes: Producing Environmental and Wildlife Films, which teaches students about the business of filmmaking and new media, and Environmental and Wildlife Production, which gives students the skills needed to produce high-quality digital video films for natures web sites. Each documentary is evaluated by the MacGillivray Freeman Films and ABC’s Nature, which provides the students with an opportunity to produce high-quality films for Nature and the Disney Channel.

Chris Palm is an environmental and wildlife film producer who has won five National Film Festival awards, including two Emmys, an Oscar nomination, and the 2009 Student Academy Award for best documentary. He also has received numerous honors and awards including the Lifetime Achievement Award for Media at the International Wildlife Film Festival, Palmer’s 1st place win in the photo essay contest at Visions Festival, and to winners of other annual events the center sponsors.

The center also sponsors the Student Short Film Festival, which gives students the opportunity to produce films for prime-time television and the giant screen film industry. His films have been broadcast on the Disney Channel, TGS Superstation, Animal Planet, and the Public Broadcasting System, PBS and NOAA, in which students and faculty play important roles and in which the center sponsors.


In 2008 the center launched the Eco-Carely Video Competition in cooperation with Friends of the Earth and the Environmental Protection Agency. Friends of the Earth and the center offered a $20,000 cash prize annually to encourage the use of humor in environmental education. This program has been sponsored by PBS and NOAA, in which students and faculty play important roles and in which the center sponsors.

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