

Experiencing the Champs-Élysées Film Festival

Over winter break, I explored the art of theatrical adaptations with my research culminating in my own original adaptation of Nella Larsen's novella *Passing*. Doing so momentarily satiated my curiosity for composing for the stage. However, in this coming summer, I want to explore a different form of composing: screenwriting. I see a clear connection between screenwriting and playwriting, even noticing a few elements of the former that I preferred, such as the rapid scene changes. My newfound interest in screenwriting stems from a growing involvement in independently produced student films and LabShorts. In January and February, I acted in two student short films and helped workshop a fellow student's screenplays. Currently, I am working with LabShorts to direct a film I wrote about homophobia in the African-American community. As a young African-American woman, I see a need for representation of minority experiences on the screen and feel as though I can make a contribution at the university level via student film. With the likes of *Get Out* and *Black Panther* successfully altering the landscape of Hollywood, I feel attracted to film now more than ever and want to explore this medium. This shift towards filmmaking seems like a natural next step for me, someone who has always enjoyed analyzing films.

As I explore this newfound interest, I believe attending the sixth annual Champs-Élysées Film Festival would better expose me to the art of filmmaking and prime me to create my own screenplay about my experience traveling abroad. My goals for this project are to immerse myself in independent filmmaking for an entire week, to keep a journal about my travel abroad experiences, and to pen a resulting screenplay (or screenplays) about my summer abroad.

My time in France for the film festival would mark the beginning of my summer abroad. Since I plan on attending the UVA in Oxford program during July, I want to visit France and Ireland beforehand in June to supplement that program. Unlike the cities in Ireland I plan to visit, Paris offers the additional boon of artistic immersion with the Champs-Élysée Film Festival. All in all, I would feel remiss if I did not incorporate an artistic endeavor into my study abroad experience. The Champs-Élysées Film Festival particularly interests me because it includes both American short films and independent French films (with English subtitles). Furthermore, like the Virginia Film Festival, the Champs-Élysées Film Festival includes both feature-length and short films for me to compare and contrast critically. I believe it will frame the rest of my study abroad explorations as I consider which experiences I want to highlight in a screenplay.

Students often characterize study abroad programs as life-changing experiences, and as I confront the conflicting narratives of my African-American identity and historical Europe, I want to employ this artistic scope to guide my self-reflection. While in France, I plan to visit sites such as Maison de Victor Hugo and La Conciergerie, landmarks of revolution and social justice in Paris. Rather than passively view these monuments, I wish to intellectually engage with their history as I consider the role of social justice and protest here in the United States. Having these explorations culminate into a creative response would enable me to better chronicle and share my

findings. Naturally, witnessing film techniques in the Champs--Elysées would equip me to translate my thoughts into artistic expression.

Most of all, I see the experiential value in attending the Champs-Elysées Film Festival. It is not often that one has the opportunity to view quality films in the capital of a foreign country. Furthermore, I believe there is no better way to learn about a craft than to watch high forms of it. Currently, every time I see a film, I notice a different filmic technique or line phrasing, which engrains in me better principles for this form of artistic expression. Thus, in keeping with the nature of this project, I would be primarily focused on fully appreciating and reflecting upon the films I see. As for necessary equipment, all I would need for this adventure would be a thick journal to catalogue my experiences at the Film Festival.

The main outcome of this project would be my final screenplay or set of short screenplays addressing different topics. Between the end of my summer abroad and the presentations in April, I would continue exploring film by collaborating with both Virginia Players' LabShorts and with the Filmmakers' Society in varying capacities. As for the final presentation, since the setting of the work(s) will be Europe, I doubt that I will be able to present an actual film for the Center for Undergraduate Excellence. Nevertheless, I believe that a final portfolio consisting of a screenplay, photo journal, and summarizing report would convey the full extent of my project.

Without a doubt, experiencing the Champs-Elysées Film Festival would build upon my growing interest in filmmaking and help me develop more as an artist in this field. The Miller Arts Scholars community has ignited a fiery passion in me for exploring different forms of artistic expression, and I would wholeheartedly appreciate further support as I delve into a new medium.

Timeline

Summer:

- Before the festival:
 - Decide which films to see
 - Research background on directors and screenwriters of these films
- During the festival:
 - Keep a comprehensive journal about each film experience
 - Take photos of each theater (outside and inside) for later reference
- After festival:
 - Keep a daily journal about study abroad experiences
 - Take copious amounts of pictures to reference when screenwriting
 - Start draft of screenplay(s)

Fall:

- Complete draft of screenplay(s) and attend screenwriting workshops with the University's Filmmakers' Society
- Collaborate on other film projects in different capacities (actor, director, screenwriter, etc.)

Spring:

- Finalize screenplay(s)
- Create portfolio with screenplay(s), photo journal, and outcome statement for presentation

Budget Proposal

| Item | Cost | More Information |
|---|----------------|---|
| Unlimited Accreditation for Film Festival | \$43 | http://www.digitick.com/ext/billetterie5/index.php?site=cefilmfestival&p=1 |
| Opening Ceremony | \$25 | |
| Closing Ceremony | \$25 | |
| Lodging (for 7 nights) | \$1,600 | Preferably in walking distance of cinemas |
| Meals | \$210 | \$30 per day |
| TOTAL: | \$1,903 | |

Since my budget proposal exceeds the amount available for the rising third year Art Scholar awards, I am requesting the maximum amount of \$1,500 to help cover the cost of lodging. Due to my personal investment in this experience, I intend to cover all expenses exceeding the award limit or not mentioned in this proposal (i.e. airfare) by way of personal earnings.