



2019 Academy Nicholl Fellowships Top 50 Screenplays

Out of the 7,302 submissions received from 70 countries, these 50 scripts represent the best work from emerging writers in 2019.

The Academy Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting is an annual competition at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In awarding up to five \$35,000 Fellowships each year, the Academy Nicholl competition strives to identify and encourage talented screenwriters at the beginning of their careers. For more information about the Academy Nicholl Fellowships, visit www.oscars.org/nicholl or email nicholl@oscars.org.

Each grouping of scripts below is listed in alphabetical order by last name.

2019 Academy Nicholl Fellows

Aaron Chung

Princess Vietnam

Drama, Coming of Age, LGBT, Romantic

In 1980, a lonely Vietnamese girl befriends and falls in love with an imaginative Irish girl as they confront racial prejudice in their small town.

Sean Malcolm

Mother

Drama, Action, War

A Syrian mother trapped in Aleppo becomes a sniper to defend her family.

Karen McDermott

Lullabies of la Jaula

Drama, Coming of Age, Based on Current Events

Separated from her family during a desperate border crossing and held in a cage for migrant children, 14-year-old Dahlia Ramirez draws strength from the wisdom of her ancestors and the poetry of a Spanish revolutionary as she struggles to survive.

Walker McKnight

Street Rat Allie Punches Her Ticket

Science Fiction, Action/Adventure

When the leader of a gang of homeless girls makes a deal with an underworld boss to earn a ticket out of her dome-sealed city, she and her street-urchin family become targets of every criminal in the place—human and otherwise.

Renee Pillai

Boy With Kite

Drama, Comedy, Romantic

A surly loner inherits an odd little boy, and must overcome her loathing of him, to uncover the truth about the one person they both loved.

2019 Academy Nicholl Finalists

Paul Ashton

Slater Berricks is a Dead Man

Comedy, Action, Dark, Drama, LGBT

In a last ditch attempt to pay for his mother's nursing home bills, a man gets trolled into auctioning off his suicide. When the post goes viral and an anonymous bidder pledges a million bucks, he's faced with the prospect that the first useful thing he might do with his life, will require ending it.

Matthew Fantaci

Scandalous!

Drama, Historical/Period, True Story, Biopic

In 1957, a black man and a white woman were not allowed to be together... even if that man and woman were Sammy Davis, Jr and Kim Novak.

Lynn Esta Goldman

On The Wing

Drama, African-American protagonist

After a miraculous recovery from a terminal illness, a young African-American woman sets out to confront the mother who abandoned her – but first she must contend with an eleven-year old boy from a chaotic foster home who insists on coming along.

Gary Patent

Cosmonaut

Drama, Historical/Period, True Story

The incredible story of Yuri Gagarin, the first human in history to reach the stars. An unlikely hero—a peasant boy who survived tragedy and extraordinary odds to realize his dreams of flight—Yuri achieved the impossible and became a symbol of human triumph around the world—only to lose it all.

Joel Sinensky

The Lie Factory

Drama, Historical/Period, Romantic, True Story

The incredible true story of Campaigns, Inc., the tiny California advertising agency that invented the field of political consulting, pioneering a new dark art and transforming American politics forever.

Toy Styles

Concrete Beach

Thriller, Crime/Noir, Dark, Violent

When an anomalous teenager is asked by her mother, suffering from severe heroin withdrawals, to secure drugs on the gritty streets of Baltimore, she reluctantly accepts, despite having never left the house.

Jack Zafran

Justice, Justice

Drama, Historical/Period

A shattered, guilt-ridden Holocaust survivor realizes that a pediatric nurse is the concentration camp officer who sent his wife and children to their deaths, but unable to spur government action, he devises a cunning revenge that has unexpectedly stunning consequences for them both.

2019 Top 40 Academy Nicholl Semifinalists

(in alphabetical order)

Hunter Adams

Death Don't Have No Mercy

Thriller, Coming of Age, Crime/Noir, Drama, Sexual/Erotic

For 17-year-old Otis Youngblood, 1986 was supposed to be the summer of love, spent hanging out with the girl of his dreams. But a job working at a bbq joint for two ex-cons initiates him into a sensual and dangerous world that spins his life out of control.

Gemma Addy

Sparrow Farm

Western, Drama

In rural 19th century America, a lonely and forgotten woman must learn to fight for the things she loves.

Brian T. Arnold

Friend of the Show

Thriller, Comedy, Dark, Drama, Satire, Political Thriller

When a pompous, conspiracy-peddling cable news pundit is kidnapped by a deranged fan, an idealistic young reporter uncovers a domestic terror group's conspiracy to assassinate a country-unifying presidential candidate.

Ben Bigelow

The Desert

Horror, Coming of Age, Drama, Historical/Period, Science Fiction

In Palm Springs in 1957, a boy undergoes an experimental psychiatric treatment that unwittingly unleashes supernatural hauntings from THE DESERT.

David Blake Boyd

Aaron's Law

Drama, True Story

The tragic prosecution of Reddit co-founder and internet folk hero, Aaron Swartz.

Xavier Burgin

On Time

Drama, Comedy, Family/Kids, True Story, Black Women, Inspired By True Events

Renee Johnson, a mother living in South Central LA, must make a difficult decision when she's late for her job interview.

David Burton

The Misery Index

Drama, Comedy, Musical

A terminally ill, improvident father spends the last day of his life touring NYC with his estranged daughter, and has only a few hours to right a lifetime of wrongs...and make 1.2 million dollars.

Zoe Cheng

Birdie

Drama, Coming of Age, Romantic

After an affair with her English teacher ends in disaster, 17-year-old Pauline is left friendless and homeless. Her grades plummeting, she is assigned a student tutor in a loner named Kevin. As the two grow closer, Pauline must redefine what it means to be loved, by someone else and by yourself.

Shannon L. Clair

Lost to Me

Drama, Dark, Thriller, Psychological

To get her estranged little sister out of a bad situation, a troubled young woman upsets the balance of her new life in working class Pittsburgh and finally confronts the trauma she thought she could leave behind in the Allegheny town where she grew up.

Katie Crone

Grrrls Drool

Comedy, Coming of Age, Sexual/Erotic

A sexually repressed Catholic girl who secretly writes erotica meets a riot grrrl hell-bent on getting her voice heard in the punk scene; they join forces to create zines and kill shame.

Sebastian Davis

May December

Drama, Romantic, Science Fiction

An elderly woman attempts to save her flat-lined marriage with a controversial medical procedure, rejuvenating her to her twenties. But when her freshly-created "May December" marriage is besieged with all new problems, she questions whether you can ever truly rewind the clock.

Sean Devine and Ryan Patterson

The Carrier

Adventure, Drama, Historical/Period, True Story

The true story of Ed Daly, a playboy airline owner who risked his life and empire to save the lives of thousands of orphans in the dying days of the Vietnam War.

Joi Elaine

The Devils and The Deep Blue Sea

Drama

A young musician fights for a place in the Louisiana blues scene while torn between her controlling father and lovesick girlfriend.

Adrian Ferrara

Flittermouse

Animation, Adventure, Family/Kids

An orphaned, naive mouse teams up with a rebellious bat on a quest to reach the moon with nothing but a pair of mechanical wings and a desire to find his parents.

Jeffrey Field

Don't Go There

Thriller

On the coldest night of the year, a violent man who has just murdered four people seeks refuge in what appears to be an empty home, only to discover that the elderly woman living within may be far more dangerous than anything waiting for him outside.

Anne Flanagan

Book Club Wars

Comedy

Lonely Francis forms a rag tag book club to vie for a coveted award. To win, she must conquer her crippling shyness, fight an evil trophy wife, charm a reclusive author, disarm a bitchy movie star, beat felony kidnapping charges and survive the wrath of a ruthless Hong Kong crime syndicate.

Erik Gernand

The Beautiful Dark

Drama, Dark

A woman suspects that her teenage son may be planning an act of violence.

Matthew Gomez

Miss Me When I'm Gone

Drama, True Story, Family Drama

A mother and her younger son struggle to reconnect while searching for answers to her older son's suicide.

Christina Hulen

A Gentleman of Good Hope

Drama, Historical/Period, LGBT

At the turn of the 19th Century, an idealistic military surgeon armed with controversial ideas, fights ignorance and prejudice while striving to revolutionize medical treatments. This insurmountable task is made more impossible by the career-ending secret he holds. He is a woman.

Brendan O. Kelly

High Medium

Comedy, Coming of Age, Mystery

A high school sophomore works as a private psychic to her affluent peers, but she gets in over her head when she claims a deceased student- ruled to have died accidentally- "told" her he was actually murdered.

Russell Koos

Action Figures

Drama, Coming of Age, Family/Kids, Romantic, 1990s

A sheltered man with severe anxiety bonds with a chronically ill boy, over their common love of action figures.

Samuel P Laskey

Copper Boys

Drama, Coming of Age, LGBT, Romantic

Two teenage boys -- a shy misfit and a homeless petty criminal -- strike an unlikely forbidden romance as they steal scrap metal from abandoned houses in their dying West Virginia town.

Carlos Alejandro Marulanda and Carlos Gutierrez

Cancuncito

Drama

Using gambling to escape from her social isolation, Valeria, a disabled woman with limited use of her hands, recruits a poor Afro-Mexican worker to help her play the casinos. When her religious mother threatens to crush their growing love affair Valeria must move beyond the limits of her disability.

Caitlin McCarthy

Wonder Drug

Drama, Scientific

WONDER DRUG chronicles the story of DES (diethylstilbestrol), a supposedly groundbreaking form of synthetic estrogen that instead became one of the most devastating medical disasters in history.

Lauren Minnerath

Clare

Drama, Comedy, Coming of Age

After the untimely death of her brother, a high school senior grapples with her grief, college applications, and a perilous new friendship with her high school French teacher.

Michael Nash

Life and Death

Thriller, Action, Drama, Religious/Faith

Assimilation into America greatly shifts for a legal Syrian refugee when a terrorist cell forces him against his will to become the next suicide bomber or risk losing his family.

Lisa Otto

Run to Me

Drama, Historical/Period, Romantic

In 1962, where laws prohibit divorce, an abused woman flees Dublin to build a secret life in a rural town. When she finds unexpected love, she must confront her past, her faith, and a violent husband out to get her.

Sasha Pasternak

Vicious

Drama, Dark, Historical/Period, True Story

Two couples, one vicious secret, and an infamous night in New York's Chelsea Hotel that none of them will ever forget.

Ben Samuels and Oliver Samuels

Row Your Boat

Drama, Dark

In a dying river town outside Philly, one couple fights back against lost jobs, the indignities of poverty and humiliating abuse, pushing them to do unimaginable things for the daughters they love.

April M. Sanchez

Daughters Lost to the Desert

Drama, Crime/Noir, Thriller, Magical Realism

A temperamental mother seeks justice for her youngest daughter's murder amidst systemic corruption and accusations of being a murderous vigilante herself, which causes tension in the relationship with her surviving daughter.

Michael Schatz

Magnolia Skies

Drama, Coming of Age, Thriller

A pregnant 16 year-old flees from Mississippi to New York seeking an abortion, while being pursued by her unhinged legal guardian.

Rebecca Benzell

The Girl and The Ghost

Drama, Ghost/Vampire/Zombie, Romantic, Supernatural, Gothic

When a newly-blind painter finds a haunted cabin near her aunt's New England beach home, she's offered a Faustian bargain: the ghost within can restore her sight -- as long as she's willing to allow the ghost to possess her.

Amanda Torigiani

Digging Up David

Drama, Comedy, Dark

Noel, a loner, forms an unexpected friendship with a teenager dying of cancer, and vows to help him fulfill his last wishes for a memorial, even if it means defying his religious family and exhuming his body to do so.

Daren Wagar

Voodoo Macbeth

Drama, Historical/Period, True Story

A young Orson Welles contends with racial tensions, a drunk lead actor and his own ego as he tries to stage 'Macbeth' with an all black cast in 1930s Harlem.

Laurie Whitaker

Warrior Girl

Drama, Coming of Age, Family/Kids, Sports

After a horrific car accident kills her father and ends her Olympic gymnastics dreams, fifteen year old Amy is forced to rebuild her life on an Indian Reservation with an emotionally wounded stranger, her Native American grandfather, who as it turns out, is a healer...

Katie White

The Day The Alien Arrived

Drama, Coming of Age

After his mother's schizophrenic break, a man attempts to navigate life and find his purpose while haunted by her memory, the promises he made her, and the fear of becoming her.

Samuel Brett Williams

Trashed

Drama, Comedy

Molly, mother to a ten year old boy, works as a receptionist for an auto mechanic while pursuing her demolition derby dreams on the weekends.

Dyana Winkler and Darcy Brislin

Bell

Drama, Historical/Period, True Story

From the controversy surrounding his invention of the telephone, to his lesser known work with eugenics, this is the untold story of famed inventor Alexander Graham Bell, whose love for his Deaf wife changed the course of history, for better and for much worse.