

## JOSH KOURY

In 2013, Josh Koury, adjunct associate professor of Film and Media, shadowed legendary journalist Gay Talese as he embarked on a bizarre book project. As is often the case in journalistic pursuits, both in print and on screen, Talese's investigation led to a much more complex and interesting narrative. The resulting documentary, *Voyeur*, which premiered at the New York Film Festival in September and is now on Netflix, follows Talese as he grapples with the story of Gerald Foos.

The Denver-area businessman purchased a motel in the 1960s for the purpose of spying on guests through vents he installed in the ceilings. Foos chronicled his patrons' sexual activities in detailed notes, imagining himself a dispassionate, Kinsey-style researcher.

In 1980, Foos invited Talese to the motel for a possible story. Talese went, intrigued by the similarities between his observational journalism and voyeurism. But Foos didn't want to be identified in the piece, and Talese refused to write it without attribution. In 2013, Foos changed his mind, and plans for the book went forward.

Koury and his filmmaking partner, Myles Kane, began the project unsure if they would get access to Foos. "When we did, the story became more layered, and in the end it is about the complicated relationship between subject and author," Koury says.

The film crew trails Talese as he researches Foos's increasingly dubious story. Foos claimed to have witnessed a murder, but fact-checkers found no record of the crime; his notebooks began in 1966, but records showed he didn't buy the motel until 1969; documents revealed Foos didn't even own the property in the 1980s, and only reacquired it at the end of the decade before selling it in 1995. As the discrepancies pile up, Foos and Talese clash on screen, each vying to control the film's narrative. As tensions mount, the meaning of the film's title becomes clear. From Foos to Talese to the audience, Koury says, "we are all implicated in this chain of voyeurism; we are all kind of in this strange soup together."

— Julianna Rose Dow, Fashion and Textile Studies



The Denver-area motel where *Voyeur* was set.



Affleck played a janitor and handyman haunted by tragedy in *Manchester by the Sea*.

## KENNETH LONERGAN

Screenwriter, playwright, and film director Kenneth Lonergan considers himself primarily a writer, who went into directing as a way "to have the script survive the film-making process intact." He learned this the hard way, after writing the screenplay for *Analyze This*—the 1999 comedy starring Robert De Niro he wrote on spec to break into screenwriting. He said that 14 editors rewrote it so thoroughly he decided never to watch the film.

Lonergan, best known for his films *Manchester by the Sea* (2016), *Gangs of New York* (2002), and *You Can Count on Me* (2000), came to FIT on September 26 to discuss his work with Associate Professor of American History Daniel Levinson Wilk and to answer questions from students.

Much of Lonergan's work revolves around characters in the service industry; Casey Affleck's character in *Manchester by the Sea* is a residential janitor and handyman. Lonergan has worked as a backstage doorman for the Shubert Organization, a delivery manager for a liquor store, and a bartender on the Upper West Side. "These jobs are no fun, but it's always interesting to see a piece of the world, no matter what it is," he said.

One of the characters in Lonergan's 1996 play *This Is Our Youth* is an FIT student. He explained that he wanted her to be doing something unconventional for her peer group and not be sure she

was on the right path. For him, it was one of many details that enhanced the play's verisimilitude.

He talked at length about the necessity of great casting. For his 2011 film *Margaret*, he narrowed the lead role down to three actors who all had the right "front-foot" energy: Christina Ricci, Lindsay Lohan, and Anna Paquin. Ricci had played too many adults to be believable as a teenager, and he was afraid Lohan's burgeoning star power might attract the wrong kind of attention to the film (ultimately, she found another project and wasn't available). Paquin won the role.

Lonergan said his favorite part of the job is "when the work seems to be writing itself—like you're hearing people talking and are writing it down."

Then he added, "It's a beautiful feeling when people connect to what you did."

— Jonathan Vatner

The event was sponsored by the Department of Social Sciences.



Lonergan visited FIT last fall.