
Senior Projects Spring 2014

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

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STUDENTS: Extended Episode

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Artist Statement:

A continuation of the web series installment, STUDENTS seeks to provide a realistic take on a liberal arts college experience. Formatted as an hour-long finale to the series, we follow the main character, Annie as she suffers a significant event at school. She must overcome a great change in her life, all while negotiating a rigorous course load with an inadequate social life. Through her eyes, we witness the other side of common college portrayals that often highlight a prominent Greek life, school spirit for athletic teams, and a general glorification of party life. Based on my own experience adjusting to Bard's campus from my hometown, Atlanta, the series is set in an isolated community with only 3,000 students attending Bert College.

In the show, Annie meets uncomfortable situations constantly, leaving her feeling out of place in her environment. Questioning her role on-campus, she must ultimately decide how she will proceed with her future sans the influence of her parents, advisors, or her friends. The pilot of the series dealt with the question: "what defines a student?" Is a student defined by the environment in which he/she learns or by the content of what he/she learns? To be a student does one need an authority figure – a professor? Is a student's work strictly confined to academic studies or do everyday life lessons count? If they do, who's to say everyone isn't a student? This episode challenges these questions through portrayal of internal struggle. Annie finds this stage in her life more difficult than she imagined, longing to be where she feels she belongs. This inspired the project's following tagline: "sometimes to get where you belong, you must embrace where you are."

Before this project, I never considered producing the stories I'd written and never referred to myself as an artist, despite my passions for film and television. I still do not call myself an "artist;" however, the difference now is that I have taken a significant step towards

earning that title for myself. I went through four completely different screenplay drafts, replaced five actors mid-production, found a way to be resourceful when equipment failed, made plan after plan when the previous one fell through, learned to look at the world through a lens, and spent hours learning to edit – something I have absolutely no passion for. Whatever criticisms may come, this is a product of considerable thought and hard work that spanned eleven months.

Finally, STUDENTS reflects coming of age in unexpected ways, discovering who you are in an environment that relentlessly challenges preconceived notions of happiness and development. Through these four years of college, I have certainly struggled. I believe this process of completing Senior Project serves as a perfect representation of that experience. Its fruition is a testament to what perseverance truly looks like - that making it to the other side isn't necessarily about having everything you desire or achieving something "out-of-this-world". It's about getting through and learning to be content with the process of growth. That feeling of finishing a tough shoot or witnessing an actor finally break through to understanding the words you've written - those small moments are "out-of-this-world". I know that now. Carrying that knowledge from Bard's courses, internships, and Senior Project, I can go forward into the work place without fear because I know how to be resourceful. I know how to communicate effectively. I know how to lead a group of people. I know how to *make* my place wherever I go because I know how to *learn*.

Once a student – always a student.

With honesty,

Keila J. Brown