

Lauren Goodman

Independent Study & Mentorship

Mr. Speice 4A

19 October 2017

Interview Assessment #2

Name of Professional: Frances Perkins

Profession: Senior Lecturer for Screenwriting, Digital Media Content Development

Company: University of North Texas

Date of Interview: 10/19/17

My second interview was with Frances Perkins, a senior lecturer at the University of North Texas for digital media content development and screenwriting. It was fascinating to get to hear about her 20 years of experience in media and where life has taken her. Overall, my interview was very beneficial because not only did I receive much needed guidance as I take future steps in this industry, it also was a reality check getting to listen to a unique perspective from this field.

One of the most intriguing parts of the interview was actually hearing about how she ended up becoming a senior lecturer at University of North Texas. She started her career in New York City going to one of the most prestigious universities for film and television production, NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. After graduating, she continued to work in New York creating commercial and promotional content until she moved with her husband to Wisconsin to start a family. Despite the lack of media presence, she found work and taught at University of Wisconsin. Eventually after many years in Wisconsin, Perkins and her family moved to Texas

where she teaches at UNT, her husband teaches at SMU, and they both work together to create short films of their own. I found her life story very constructive for multiple reasons. One thing she pointed out was that even though she had a fancy education at a premier film school, she had a hard time finding work. The industry is competitive enough as it is, but if you need to have a job in order to make you take what you can get. A piece of advice she gave me is that while going to a pricey university is nice, what really counts is the graduate degree. This was very surprising to me because I had never really thought of the industry that way. I had always seen myself going to a top television and film school as an undergrad, so her input sent me a little for a tail-spin. Another lesson I learned was that if you want to be in the industry you either have to go where the work is or go where the job is. She spoke about how moving to Wisconsin limited her a little because it wasn't a top media market. Moving to Texas was a little bit better for her in that the industry is much more accessible in the area. However, if you want to pursue television or feature film, Los Angeles is the place to be. This is a huge gamble to take though because you are competing against so many others in LA for the same spots that only a handful of people get. Going where the job is is a bit of different process. By following where work is there could be both pros and cons. Pros include making money, working someone in media, and building a resume. On the other hand, some cons could be that one could end up in a location with little access to the industry, it might not be an ideal job, and it could make it harder if you choose you aspire to be more. This tidbit of information was valuable because it broke down the risks and rewards of this career field. All in all, it showed me that it is hard to find a top and secure position in this field and one has a lot of personal stakes on the line in order to make it happen.

Another area of the interview I loved was how she explained the differences between film and television. The most challenging part of both film and television is finding funding.

Especially regarding film, budgets are extremely pricey being that a \$1 million film is considered low-budget. As a result, it usually takes years to find the money and someone to produce it, and even then the idea might never come to fruition. Television is a little easier because although sometimes the pilot episode of a series might come out of pocket, if there is a good return on ratings, more episodes will be ordered and the budget will be increased. In general because of how expensive it is to produce content, it is hard to break into the industry with no money and going up against seasoned veteran showrunners. Perkins also told me what exactly she teaches her students in her classes. She teaches the concept of making both yourself and your ideas marketable to studios by keeping the audience and objective in mind when creating. This is very similar to my interview with Rick Hawkins when he spoke about creating “toy-istic moments” in your work to appeal to networks and be able to franchise your work.

All in all, the biggest moment I took away is when Perkins told me to not “limit yourself”. Even if you may want to be a television showrunner, often you’ll see yourself working in an entirely different area of media. But it’s okay because you still get to create stories, just in a different facet. I’ve known for a long time how depressing this industry could be, but I realize that you should never confine yourself to a second-choice job because you are afraid. We all only have one life to live and we should be putting our necks on the line in order to achieve our dreams and make life worthwhile.