

Jay Craven Bio

Jay Craven is an award-winning filmmaker, impresario, and community arts activist. He leads the Semester Cinema experiential arts learning semester; co-directs Kingdom County Productions; and curates the KCP Presents performing arts series and the Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival. He also teaches cinema studies, screenwriting and film directing, most recently at Sarah Lawrence College (2017-present) and Marlboro College (1998-2017) from which he holds the title of Emeritus Professor of Cinema Studies. His work includes:

* *Artistic Director and Producer, Kingdom County Productions (1991-present)*

At Kingdom County Productions (KCP) Craven has written, directed, and produced award-winning narrative motion pictures include ***High Water*** (1989 w/ Greg Germann, Jane MacFie, Dennis Mientka); ***Where the Rivers Flow North*** (1993, w/ Rip Torn, Tantoo Cardinal, Michael J. Fox, Treat Williams); ***A Stranger in the Kingdom*** (1997, w/ Ernie Hudson, David Lansbury, Martin Sheen); ***In Jest*** (1999 w/ Bill Raymond, Rusty DeWees, Tantoo Cardinal); ***Disappearances*** (2006 w/ Kris Kristofferson, Genevieve Bujold, Gary Farmer, Charlie McDermott, Lothaire Bluteau), ***Northern Borders*** (2012 with Bruce Dern, Genevieve Bujold, Seamus Davey-Fitzpatrick, Jessica Hecht), ***Peter and John*** (2105 with Jacqueline Bisset, Christian Coulson, Gordon Clapp, Shane Patrick Kearns), ***Wetware*** (2018) with Jerry O'Connell, Morgan Wolk, Cameron Scoggins, Aurelia Thierree and ***Martin Eden*** (2021), w/ Andrew Richardson, Hayley Griffith and Annet Mahendru, based on Jack London's autobiographical novel. His current project, ***Lost Nation***, will tell a multi-racial and multi-cultural adventure/drama set in Vermont during the American Revolution.

Craven also wrote and directed ***The Year That Trembled*** (2003, w/ Fred Willard, Marin Hinkle, Jonathan Brandis, Martin Mull) for Ohio producers Tyler Davidson and Scott Lax and Novel City Pictures. He directed, produced, and co-wrote the New England Emmy Award-winning public television comedy series, ***Windy Acres*** (2004 w/ Rusty DeWees, Bill Raymond, Seana Kofoed) that has been broadcast by PBS affiliates in twelve states.

His documentaries include ***Martin Luther King - Beyond Vietnam*** (2021) featuring Alice Walker, Bill T. Jones, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Dr. Ibram Kendi, Rosanne Cash, Jane Fonda, Bill McKibben and others, reading King's celebrated speech; ***Empty Stages*** (2021), exploring the impact of the Covid pandemic on performing artists; ***After the Fog: Interviews with Combat Veterans*** (2006); ***Dawn of the People*** (1984) about Nicaragua's 1980 National Literacy Crusade; ***Gayleen*** (1985) profiling outsider artist Gayleen Aiken and, as producer, ***Approaching the Elephant*** (2014), that premiered at the True False Film Festival in Columbia, MO, and was featured at the BAM CinemaFest at the Brooklyn Academy of Music - and festivals in Torino, Belfast, Tel Aviv, Rio de Janeiro, Copenhagen and others. The film was nominated for The Gotham Award and The Independent Feature Project's (IFP) Truer Than Fiction Award.

Craven also produces, directs, and co-writes the place-based ***Queen City*** and ***Fog and Flounder*** radio hours, all-original programs of sketch comedy and music performed for a live audience, for broadcast over Vermont Public Radio and Cape and Islands Public Radio. Special guests have included Jerry Stiller, Anne Meara, Tom Bodett, Anais Mitchell, Gary Farmer, Sierra Hull and The Lost Fingers. Craven's short film, ***Ghost Theater*** (2013), was commissioned by the Albany Symphony Orchestra for a collaboration with modern composer Robert Paterson. It was screened in May 2013 as part of the American Music Festival at the

Experimental Music and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) in Troy, NY, with live musical accompaniment by the Orchestra's experimental rock band, Dogs of Desire.

Craven's films have sold more than 800,000 DVD's and played 345 U.S. cities and towns, 52 countries, and more than sixty international film festivals, including Sundance, Seattle, South By Southwest, St. Louis, Vienna, Vancouver, Nantucket, Avignon, Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Havana, Savannah, Santa Fe, and The American Film Institute's AFI Fest. Also, television broadcasts on Showtime, Starz, the Disney Channel, Sundance Channel, Encore, PBS affiliates in twelve states, and syndication to more than 200 commercial U.S. TV stations.

Special screenings include The Smithsonian, Lincoln Center, Anthology Film Archives, the American Film Institute, Art Institute of Chicago, Harvard Film Archives, George Eastman House, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, Jerusalem Cinematheque, Cinémathèque Française, The Constitutional Court of Johannesburg, La Cinemateca Nacional de Venezuela and Beijing Normal University. U.S. Ambassador to France, Craig Stapleton, hosted a gala screening of Craven's film, *Disappearances*, to UNESCO ambassadors in Paris on Barack Obama's 2009 inauguration day - as The President's Committee for the Arts and Humanities' first cultural exchange.

Craven has also led workshops, screenings and classes at Columbia University, Dartmouth College, Boston University, Middlebury College, Yale University, Duke University, Webster University, Marquette University, San Francisco State University, University of Vermont, Keene State College, Colby Sawyer College, Amherst College, Cornell University, Mount Holyoke, Wellesley College, Sarah Lawrence, Vassar College, University of South Carolina, University of Mississippi, New York University, Skidmore College, University of California at Berkeley, and others.

Craven's first feature, *Where the Rivers Flow North*, is included in *The Sundance Collection* at the UCLA Film Archives and was selected as one of three U.S. Finalists, from among 120 submissions, to Critics Week at the 1993 Cannes International Film Festival.

Awards include the 1998 Vermont Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. Also, 24 film festival prizes, two New England Emmys (for *Windy Acres*); six New England Emmy nominations (*Windy Acres* and *Peter and John*), 1995 Producers' Guild of America NOVA award for Most Promising New Motion Picture Producer of the Year (for *Rivers*); a MacDowell Colony Fellowship; the American Indian Film Festival's Eagle Spirit Award; 2002 Salzburg Seminar Fellowship; Knight Ridder's "Ten Best Films of 1995" (for *Rivers*); two National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Regional Film fellowships (for *Gayleen* and *High Water*); and two NEA Film Production Grants (for *Rivers* and *Disappearances*); two NEA/IFFCON appointments (for *Rivers* and *Stranger* scripts) and three Independent Feature Project/No Borders appointments (for *Disappearances* and *They Don't Dance Much* scripts and *Approaching the Elephant* documentary film). *Rivers* and *Disappearances* were selected for the Southern Circuit tour, America's only regional film touring initiative.

In 2009, Craven was selected for the National Endowment for Arts' American Masterpieces initiative. He and his work have been profiled by The New York Times, Boston Globe, Washington Post, Esquire Magazine (*Best of the New Generation* profile by Ann Beattie), Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Philadelphia Inquirer, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the CBC, and National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, *Fresh Air*, *Morning Edition*, *Here and Now*, among others. Local honors include The Northeast Kingdom Chamber of Commerce "Business Leader of the Year" (2014) and finalist for the first-ever Con Hogan Prize (2015) from the Vermont Community Foundation for "creative non-profit leadership and entrepreneurship."

*** *Founder, Curator, and Producer, KCP Presents (2009-present)***

Craven programs and produces the KCP Presents series that he established Kingdom County Productions in 2009 and forged into a collaborative partnership with Catamount Arts in 2015. This ambitious series annually attracts people from some 250 cities and towns to St. Johnsbury and Lyndonville, for world-class music, theater, and dance performances. Recent artists include Alvin Ailey II, Momix, Lucky Plush, Jessica Lang Dance Company, The Infamous Stringdusters, Ballet Jazz of Montreal, Zap Mama, Clint Black, Leann Rimes, Suzanne Farrell Ballet, The Russian National Ballet's *Swan Lake*, Second City, soul diva Bettye LaVette, and the Guthrie Theater/Acting Company productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Hamlet*, and *Of Mice and Men*. ALSO Mummenschanz, Pink Martini, Ethan Lipton and His Orchestra, Femi Kuti, Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue, James Blood Ulmer, Buddy Guy, Cassandra Wilson, The Flying Karamozov Brothers, Dublin's Gare St. Lazare Players performing Samuel Beckett's *The End*, TAO Drummers of Japan, Stile Antico, Natalie MacMaster, blues singer Beth Hart, and the Weston Playhouse's production of *Death of a Salesman*, starring Christopher Lloyd.

*** *Arts Education at KCP***

At **Kingdom County Productions**, Craven established and directed the **Fledgling Films** program for teen filmmakers (1997-2007) that was profiled in the New York Times (July 1999) and funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and The National Endowment for the Arts. He also served as one of two founding writers-in-residence for **Vermont Young Playwrights** (1994-98) an annual workshop and performance program for high schools. Between 2009 and 2013, he directed **The Nantucket Film Festival's Teen View** program for high school filmmakers – and, the film score for Craven's 2015 film, *Peter and John*, was developed, in part, through a special music residency conducted in association with the **Nantucket Community Music Center**. Craven also leads the **Nantucket Young Playwrights** project.

*** *Founder, Producer and Director, Semester Cinema (formerly Movies from Marlboro and Cinema Sarah Lawrence) (2006 - present)***

Through a KCP/Marlboro College partnership, Craven established the Movies from Marlboro project in 2006 as a biennial program to produce professional quality feature films during a film intensive semester where 24 professionals mentor and collaborate with 32 students from a dozen colleges. The project creates learning opportunities inspired by education pioneer John Dewey's call for "intensive learning that enlarges meaning through the shared experience of joint action"—and to develop a model for sustainable place-based production. Films produced through Movies from Marlboro include *Disappearances* and *Northern Borders*, based on Howard Frank Moshier novels, *Peter and John*, based on the novel by Guy de Maupassant, *Wetware*, a noir thriller set in the near future and based on the novel by Craig Nova and *Martin Eden*, based on Jack London's autobiographical novel.

In 2017, this program transitioned from Marlboro to Sarah Lawrence College where, in 2019, Craven worked with 28 professionals and 35 students to make *Martin Eden*. Student participants have come from Wellesley College, Mount Holyoke, Skidmore College, Hamilton College, Dartmouth College, Kenyon College, Bates College, Wesleyan University, Middlebury College, University of Vermont, Lyndon State College, Augsburg University, Boston College, Colby-Sawyer College, Emerson College, the University of Maine, Connecticut College, and the University of California at Berkeley.

*** *Founding Artistic Director, Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival (2014-present)***

Through a KCP partnership, Craven serves as Founding Artistic Director of the Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival which debuted in August 2015, in Middlebury, VT. The festival screens first or second films by emerging filmmakers. Award-winning films from the festival are then supported by for touring to venues throughout the region. Festival programs include Middlebury's Winter Film Series and annual screening and discussion programs for high school students. Special events have included tributes to filmmakers Ken Loach, Dawn Porter, Barbara Kopple, Steve James, Mo Naqvi, Peter Davis, the Ross Brothers, writers Russell Banks and Dick Lehr, actors Maggie Gyllenhaal, Peter Sarsgaard, M. Emmet Walsh, Michael Murphy and others.

*** *Producer, Burlington International Waterfront Festival (2008-2009)***

In July 2008, Craven received a year-long appointment from the City of Burlington to work as artistic director and producer of its 2009 **Samuel de Champlain Quadracentennial** celebration. The resulting Burlington International Waterfront Festival was a \$1.8 million multi-faceted 13-day international film and arts festival that staged more than 120 events. For the festival, Craven also commissioned original new work based on Champlain themes--including 1) the development and production of Abby Paige's one-woman play, *Piecework: When We Were French*, 2) French/Algerian choreographer Heddy Maalem's Champlain-themed dance performance, *From the New World*, and 3) the Champlain 400 performance parade: *Legends of Our Past and Future*. He also originated the *Queen City Radio Hour* for the Champlain 400, hosted by Tom Bodett (NPR's *Wait Wait Don't Tell Me*). Waterfront Festival presentations involved more than 1200 regional and international artists including Danse Fragments (Quebec), *Aurelia's Oratorio* (France), the Native American play, *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth* (U.S./Canada), Ensemble Karel (Quebec), and Les Sage Fous' *Bizarrium Aquarium* (Quebec). Also presentations of 12 films from France and Quebec and concert appearances by Tony Bennett, Bette Lavette, Buddy Guy, Steve Earle, Aimee Mann, The Roots, Grace Potter, The Lost Fingers, Les Cowboys Fringants, Le Vent du Nord, Counterpoint, The Horse Flies, and many others. Responsibilities include programming, artistic direction, fundraising, marketing, and management of international funding and diplomatic relations with cultural and government officials from France and Quebec.

*** *Founder, Producer, and Executive Director, Catamount Arts (1975-91)***

Craven established Catamount Arts in St. Johnsbury and directed (1975-91) its wide-ranging, multi-disciplinary film and performing arts producing, presenting, and educational program. Craven started Catamount in 1975 as a five-night-a-week traveling 16mm film series to small rural towns. By 1984, it had become northern New England's largest independent media and performing arts presenter, with nightly 35mm film screenings and 65 annual world-class music, theatre and dance events. While at Catamount Arts, Craven was noted by the National Endowment for the Arts Inter Arts program for his pioneering work, presenting contemporary dance and theater companies in small rural towns of fewer than 8,000 people – that had no previous exposure. Dance companies presented included Merce Cunningham, Alwin Nikolais, Trisha Brown, Laura Dean, Elisa Monte, Pilobolus, Momix, Washington Ballet, Ohio Ballet, Bebe Miller, Jane Comfort, New Amsterdam Ballet, American Indian Dance Theater, Murray Louis, Feld Ballet, Stephen Petronio, and others. Theater companies included Mabou Mines, Spalding Gray, Guthrie Theater, American Repertory Theater, Negro Ensemble, Pan Asian Repertory Theater, The Talking Band, San Francisco Mime Troupe, Asolo Theater, Alley Theater, Acting Company, Duck's Breath Mystery Theater, Vietnam Veterans Theater Ensemble, and others. Also musicians Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Miles Davis, Flying Karamozovs, Kodo Drummers, Bob Dylan, Ray Charles, Johnny Cash, Pat Metheny, Stephane Grappelli, Wynton Marsalis, Arlo Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Mummenschanz, Pat Metheny, Bonnie Raitt, Odetta, Joan Baez, Emmylou Harris, Inti-Illimani, and many others.

*** *Founding Producer, Circus Smirkus (1986-88)***

At Catamount, Craven also co-founded and produced the Circus Smirkus (1986-88) a professional circus arts training and performance program for kids aged 10-18—now in its 31st year of training and touring internationally and in New England. Circus Smirkus is the nation’s only tented touring youth circus. It’s alumni have gone on to Ringling Brothers, Big Apple Circus, Cirque du Soleil, and many others.

*** *Teaching Experience.*** Craven taught at the pioneering alternative Peacham School (1975-1980) where he developed an innovative film appreciation and production program along with experiential classes in journalism and history. In 1998, he was hired to develop and lead a comprehensive Cinema Studies program at Vermont’s Marlboro College, where he remained as a tenured full-time professor until 2017, when he accepted a full-time guest professor position at Sarah Lawrence College and founded/directed the Cinema Sarah Lawrence program. He has also taught at Lyndon State and Johnson State Colleges – and has led short-term residencies at dozens of colleges, ranging from Wellesley and Yale to Macalester and University of California at Berkeley.

*** *Cultural Diplomacy***

Craven and his film, *Disappearances*, were selected in 2007 by the American Film Institute (AFI) to be one of 7 U.S. and 11 international films for its first-ever AFI : Project 20/20 (now operating as the Sundance Institute’s *Film Forward*) - a global cultural exchange project sponsored by the AFI, The National Endowment for the Arts, The National Endowment for the Humanities, The President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the U.S. State Department. For this project, Craven served as Cultural Envoy for screenings and meetings in South Africa, Kazakhstan, Israel, Venezuela, Turkmenistan, France, Peru, Turkey, Lithuania, and China. *Disappearances* was also selected by the AFI and President’s Committee for the Arts and Humanities, for a special screening and discussion by Craven to UNESCO ambassadors in Paris, to commemorate Barack Obama’s inauguration day.

*** *Journalism***

Craven writes a regular column for St. Johnsbury’s Caledonian Record and has been a frequent arts and media commentator for Vermont Public Radio and the Burlington Free Press, Times Argus/Rutland Herald, Addison Independent and Newport Daily Express. His memoir, *Undiscovered Son*, is slated for completion in early 2021.

*** *Activist Work***

Prior to Craven’s 1974 move to Vermont, he worked as a journalist, documentary filmmaker, and activist. He traveled to Vietnam as a college student body president (Boston University College of Liberal Arts) to forge a “peace treaty” with elected Vietnamese student leaders and he helped lead the 1971 May Day demonstrations in Washington, D.C. that resulted in the largest mass arrest - and largest non-violent civil disobedience action in U.S. history. He spoke extensively about the war on more than 100 U.S. campuses and testified, in April 1971, on proposed solutions to the war before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Craven served on the research team for the Pentagon Papers trial, and worked as one of four activists on the planned 1972 John Lennon peace concert tour that was thwarted by the Nixon White House (the subject of the books, *Gimme Some Truth* and *Come Together* and the documentary film, “U.S. vs. John Lennon”) after one concert, in Ann Arbor.

*** *Education***

Jay Craven graduated from the Hill School and attended Boston University’s College of Liberal

Arts (student body president 1971-72), The School of Visual Arts, and Goddard College, from which he holds an MA (1978) in Media Arts and Experiential Learning. He was awarded an honorary BA from Sterling College (2006) and Doctor of Humane Letters from Burlington College (2015).