

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

Robert Rayher, M.A.H., lecturer IV in film, television and media in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 31, 2024.

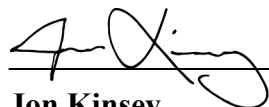
Robert Rayher received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from McGill University in 1979. He then earned a Master of Arts in Humanities degree (1986) in media studies and English literature from SUNY, Buffalo. He worked as an assistant professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1986-1992. He was then hired to join FTVM (then known as the Program in Film and Video Studies) in 1992, where he taught until 2024.

Mr. Rayher's artistic education started in a college town's arthouse theater, sitting in on SUNY Oneonta's film history classes and reading Russian and American novels while under the assumption that without marrying the producer's daughter (Francois Truffaut), getting to make movies was simply unrealistic. Montreal's McGill University exposed him to the American avant-garde filmmaking tradition and he showed his first "experimental" film at the Ann Arbor Film Festival in 1978. From college onward his films were screened widely across Canada, at the essential U.S. experimental film venues, and in some shows in England, Switzerland, and Korea. Following graduate school at SUNY Buffalo he taught in (and periodically chaired) the filmmaking department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1986 until he was hired away in 1992 to LSA's Program in Film/Video Studies (F/V).

Mr. Rayher soon connected with SMTD's theatre and drama to bring collaborations with trained actors into his movie production courses. By the end of the 20th century, Mr. Rayher's movie production courses drew students from across LSA plus SMTD, the Ross School of Business, communications, and the art school (STAMPS). His fundamental realization was that the university is a movie studio, although it doesn't know it. In 2003, with Professor Jim Burnstein, he launched FTVM 423 (Practicum for the Screenwriter), the course that revolutionized the department's production offerings by bringing Michigan's student intellectual capital to bear on a single collaborative project: a pair of short feature movies written, produced, directed, acted, filmed, edited and with music composed by students. Before long these movies premiered at the esteemed Traverse City Film Festival. Movies from FTVM 423 and Mr. Rayher's other courses have screened on PBS, won numerous festival awards, and prepared a generation of filmmakers to excel in every area of the movie, TV, and entertainment industries. As an educator, his greatest legacy is the idea that despite the penchant for universities to create specialized, and therefore siloed, knowledge, our students crave to collaborate, to conquer together, and to learn from each other's disciplines, languages, and cultures. While the university is a "studio" it is also, by nature, a diverse "universe." The idea of an artistic common purpose is always revolutionary exactly because it is equalizing, inclusive, and disarmingly humanizing.

The Regents now salute this distinguished faculty member by naming **Robert Rayher, lecturer IV emeritus in film, television and media.**

Requested by:



Jon Kinsey
Vice President and Secretary of the University

September 2024