

Poitier Film School grad finds industry success, inspiration in Los Angeles

Cooper Goodman moved from Illinois to LA to pursue his dream of being a filmmaker

By Barbara VanDenburgh, ASU News
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Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [spring 2026 graduates](#).

It's a long way from Barrington, Illinois, to Hollywood, but Cooper Goodman felt a pull to study in the heart of the industry if he wanted to build a career in film.

A transfer student, Goodman, 22, graduates this spring with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in film and media production from The Sidney Poitier New American Film School — already with film credits on his resume.

"This was a good opportunity for me to finish my degree without having to add a semester," Cooper said. "Being in Los Angeles has allowed me to work professionally before finishing school. I've been able to learn from my professional experience and get a foothold in the industry while pursuing a formal education."

[Peter Murrieta](#), deputy director of The Poitier Film School and interim associate dean of Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts in Los Angeles, praised Goodman's enthusiasm to learn and ask questions, especially when he already has industry experience.

"Cooper reminds me so much of who I was as a college student," Murrieta said. "Goodman is a working professional. In many ways, he's already accomplished his goal of starting a career in the industry. To see him still here, working hard to finish his education, says something about him and his values."

Cooper, an aspiring screenwriter, cites Japanese animator and film director Satoshi Kon as one of his biggest inspirations.

“I’m drawn to man-versus-self stories. I had a lot of trouble in my early life surrounding mental health, drug abuse and not fitting into conventional systems,” Goodman said. “I want my art to help people like art helped me. I narrowly escaped my troubles because of art, and I hope to give that to others. Art is here to make the world a better place, and I think I am too.”

Read the below Q&A with Goodman to learn more about his ASU experience and plans for the future.

Note: Answers may have been lightly edited for length and/or clarity.

Question: What drew you to study film?

Answer: I had worked as a child actor, which was fun but more of a hobby than a career. In high school, I was looking at studying computer science and had even selected schools to apply to. But at the end of my junior year, I was invited to join AP 2D art studio as I had fallen in love with film photography. I knew there was no satisfying career in film photography for me, so I searched for the next art form. I wanted to be a musician, but I didn’t believe I had the skill. I also already enjoyed writing poetry. When I asked myself what I could do with a trained eye and ear and a passion for creating, the answer was clear. I was going to be a screenwriter.

Q: What is something memorable you experienced at The Poitier Film School?

A: I have never had an experience like being in a class taught by Murrieta. I was impressed with him for being a dean and teaching; I thought he must be very dedicated to developing the next generation of filmmakers. Then I learned that he is a two-time Emmy winner with a lot of experience showrunning. He provided insight into the ongoing WGA (Writers Guild of America) negotiations. Not only did he do this from the perspective of an industry professional, he also spoke as a WGA officer who was in the negotiation room and a WGA staff member while the staff were on strike.

Q: What job experiences have you gotten while in LA?

A: I’ve been working professionally for a while as a grip, electrician or sound mixer on most sets. As an aspiring writer and director, it helps me understand the logistics of different aspects of the shoot, and it will be invaluable to know what I am asking of people in terms of difficulty, timing and costs. Working lighting and sound also keeps my eyes and ears sharp. I get to exercise the muscles of evaluating minuscule details every day. It’s been helpful growing my network, and I know the next team I assemble will have my utmost confidence.

Q: If you were given a blank check to fund your own creative project, what would you make?

A: I’m writing a feature called “The Phantom’s Bearing.” It’s a psychological drama set in a dark fantasy world in which a wandering mercenary is hired to assassinate a king and end a civil war, but must navigate his grief, morality and the phantom haunting him. The hardest thing about this film is keeping it grounded in reality. My intention is to completely bring the viewer into another world for two hours, and that means making this world true to life. If I had a blank check, I’d make this movie a reality.

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Main image



“Being in Los Angeles has allowed me to work professionally before finishing school. I’ve been able to learn from my professional experience and get a foothold in the industry while pursuing a formal education,” said spring film school grad Cooper Goodman, who has worked as a grip, electrician and sound mixer while attending ASU in California. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University