

Newcomb Institute Takes Newcomb Scholars to 14th Annual Athena Film Festival at Barnard College

|
Lillian Foster (LA '27)

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From 2017 to now, Newcomb Institute has given Newcomb Scholars the opportunity to attend the [Athena Film Festival](#) at Barnard College. This year, 18 Newcomb Scholars flew to New York City to embark on a weekend of feminist-centered learning and exploration.

The Athena Film Festival is an annual event that uses film to showcase the narratives of strong female leaders and foster vital dialogues about what it means to be a woman today.

“Newcomb Scholars is a program that's focused on feminist interdisciplinary leadership and research, so it's a natural fit for these students to engage in this space about telling women's leadership stories,” said Aidan Smith, Director of the [Newcomb Scholars Program](#).

Newcomb College, founded in 1886, was the first coordinate college for women in the United States. Barnard College followed suit in 1889, establishing a women's college at Columbia University.

“Both institutions have long been focused on stories about women's leadership and providing spaces for feminist engagement,” said Smith.

Upon arrival, Newcomb Institute Advisory Council member Rachelle Parker hosted an opening reception to welcome the Newcomb Scholars to New York City. Parker, who graduated from Newcomb College in 1969, said that her college peers made a lasting impact on her future.

“While I was [at Newcomb College], I made incredibly wonderful friends that are now still some of my very best friends in the world,” Parker said.



Carlotta Harold, a Newcomb Scholar and sophomore at Tulane University, had never attended a film festival before getting the opportunity to go to the Athena Film Festival with the Newcomb Scholars.

“I haven't spent a lot of time with films that way before, and I've never thought about who's getting pushed into the [film] industry and who's getting pushed out of it. Especially because these films feature women's stories about leadership, female directors, and a lot of BIPOC creators as well,” Harold said.

Harold felt like the trip gave her the chance to get to know her fellow Newcomb Scholars in a new way.

“Another really amazing part of it was bonding cross-cohort with other Scholars. I really got to be friends with people in the cohorts both above and below me,” Harold

said.



Yubin Lee, another Newcomb Scholar and sophomore at Tulane, said that she was able to learn about topics that she may not have explored on her own.

“I feel like I learned so much in that weekend, and it was stuff that I didn't even know that I wanted to learn about,” Lee said. “This has been one of the highlights of my whole Tulane experience. Everything about it was perfect.”

Newcomb Scholar and sophomore Ella Jeffries said that film gives artists a medium to display the significance of their work in a way everyone can appreciate.

“In so many different disciplines it can be hard to convey what you're doing and the importance of it, but I feel like film is a really accessible medium. That was part of

what drew me to [the Athena Film Festival],” Jeffries said.

While dates for the 2025 Newcomb Scholars New York trip have not been finalized, information to apply will be released in the spring of 2025.

“It's always a good reminder for students here that there's a world beyond [Tulane's] campus that is interested and invested in these kinds of issues,” Smith said.