

A Pride Month Watch List

Twelve notable films centered on LGBTQ+ characters, all made by or starring Columbians.

By

[Julia Joy](#)

|

Jun. 03, 2024



Kaitlyn Dever and Beanie Feldstein in *Booksmart*. (Annapurna Pictures / Gloria Sanchez Productions / IMDb)

Booksmart

Susanna Fogel '02CC and Katie Silberman '12SOA cowrote *Booksmart*, the 2019 buddy comedy about a pair of nerdy best friends who spend their last days of high school hard-partying. Kaitlyn Dever plays Amy Antsler, a curious queer teen set to

attend Columbia in the fall.



Chloë Sevigny and Hilary Swank in *Boys Don't Cry*. (©1999 Fox Searchlight Pictures / IMDb)

Boys Don't Cry

Starring Hilary Swank in her first Oscar-winning role, *Boys Don't Cry* is based on the true story of Brandon Teena, a young transgender man who was murdered in a 1993 hate crime. Filmmaker and advocate Kimberly Peirce '96SOA, the current co-chair of the Directors Guild of America LGBTQ+ Committee, co-wrote and directed the 1999 indie film.



Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger in *Brokeback Mountain*. (River Road Entertainment / IMDb)

Brokeback Mountain

Before dropping out of school to focus on acting, Jake Gyllenhaal studied Eastern religion and philosophy at Columbia College. He is known for starring as Jack Twist in *Brokeback Mountain*, the neo-western about a relationship between two cowboys. The film, released in 2005, is considered one of the first mainstream Hollywood movies to feature a gay couple as romantic leads.



Natasha Lyonne in *But I'm a Cheerleader*. (Ignite Entertainment / Kushner-Locke Company / IMDb)

But I'm a Cheerleader

Barnard alumna Jamie Babbit '93BC directed the 1999 cult comedy-satire *But I'm a Cheerleader*, which stars Natasha Lyonne as a lesbian high schooler who embraces her sexuality while at a conversion-therapy camp, and RuPaul as a “formerly gay” counselor.



Catherine Keener and Philip Seymour Hoffman in *Capote*. (©Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc. All Rights Reserved. / IMDb)

Capote

This 2005 biopic of Truman Capote, the writer and gay icon best known for penning the 1965 true-crime tour de force *In Cold Blood*, was written by filmmaker and actor Dan Futterman '89CC. Futterman, who broke onto the scene as Louis Ironson in Broadway's *Angels in America* (written by Tony Kushner '78CC, '10HON about the AIDS epidemic), is also known for playing the son of a gay couple in the 1996 comedy *The Birdcage*.



Brendan Fraser and Ian McKellen in *Gods and Monsters*. (Lions Gate / IMDb)

Gods and Monsters

The story of James Whale, the openly gay director of *Frankenstein*, *The Invisible Man*, and other 1930s horror classics, is immortalized in this 1998 Oscar-winning biopic written and directed by Bill Condon '76CC. Condon has also directed acclaimed films like *Kinsey* and *Dreamgirls* and is reportedly working on a new adaptation of the musical *Guys and Dolls*.



Benedict Cumberbatch in *The Imitation Game*. (©2014 The Weinstein Company / IMDb)

The Imitation Game

[Graham Moore](#) '03CC won an Academy Award for best adapted screenplay for this biopic of Alan Turing, the mathematician who helped break German codes during World War II. Turing, who today is celebrated for being a pioneer of computer science and artificial intelligence, was prosecuted by the British government for his homosexuality and subjected to “chemical castration” before dying in 1954 at age forty-one.



Ali Junejo and Alina Khan in *Joyland*. (©Courtesy of Sundance Institute / IMDb)

Joyland

For his debut feature film, *Joyland*, Pakistani filmmaker Saim Sadiq '19SOA worked with a number of Columbia collaborators, including cowriter Maggie Briggs '19SOA, producer Apoorva Charan '18SOA, and editor Jasmin Tenucci '20SOA. The film, set in the Punjabi region of Pakistan, is about a young man who gets a job at an erotic dance club and begins a relationship with a transgender coworker. Although the final cut was banned in Sadiq's home country, *Joyland* won several awards, including the Queer Palm prize at the 2022 Cannes festival.



Annette Bening and Julianne Moore in *The Kids Are All Right*. (Photo by Suzanne Tenner / ©2010 Focus Features / IMDb)

The Kids Are All Right

In *The Kids Are All Right*, winner of the 2010 Golden Globe for best motion picture (musical or comedy), Annette Bening and Julianne Moore play a Los Angeles lesbian couple whose teenage children seek out their sperm-donor father. Lisa Cholodenko '97SOA, who in recent years has directed and produced television series like *Unbelievable* and *The Girl from Plainville*, cowrote and directed the comedy.



James Franco in *Milk*. (©2008 Universal Studios / IMDb)

Milk

Several years before getting his MFA in fiction writing from Columbia, actor James Franco '11SOA costarred as Scott Smith, the partner of gay-rights activist Harvey Milk, in the 2008 biopic *Milk*. Two years later, Franco [portrayed](#) openly gay poet and fellow Columbia alumnus Allen Ginsberg '48CC in the 2010 film *Howl*.



Trevante Rhodes in *Moonlight*. (Photo by David Bornfriend / A24 / Plan B Entertainment / IMDb)

Moonlight

As the co-president of Plan B Entertainment, Dede Gardner '90CC has executive produced a string of Hollywood prestige films, including *12 Years a Slave*, *The Big Short*, and *Women Talking*. Plan B's 2016 drama *Moonlight*, written and directed by Barry Jenkins, follows a gay, Black Miami man through three phases of life and won the Academy Award for best picture.



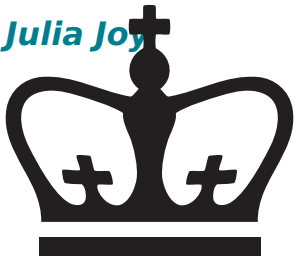
Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington in *Philadelphia*. (©1993 Tristar International / IMDb)

Philadelphia

Screenwriter and gay-rights activist Ron L. Nyswaner '81SOA wrote the screenplay for *Philadelphia*, which stars Tom Hanks as a gay attorney who sues his former legal firm for discrimination. The 1993 film, which landed Hanks his first of two consecutive Oscars for best actor, is one of the first Hollywood movies to feature an openly gay protagonist and to deal with the AIDS epidemic.

Read more from

[Julia Joy](#)



[Guide to school abbreviations](#)

[All categories >](#)

Read more from

[Julia Joy](#)