

= James Franco =

James Edward Franco ( born April 19 , 1978 ) is an American actor and filmmaker . His first prominent acting role was the lead character Daniel Desario on the short @-@ lived cult hit television program Freaks and Geeks . He later played the title character in the TV biographical film James Dean ( 2001 ) , for which he won a Golden Globe Award . For his role in 127 Hours ( 2010 ) , Franco was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor . He is also known for his roles in Spider @-@ Man , Pineapple Express ( 2008 ) , Rise of the Planet of the Apes ( 2011 ) , and Oz the Great and Powerful ( 2013 ) and other films , as well as TV roles in General Hospital and 11 @.@ 22 @.@ 63 . In 2014 , he made his Broadway debut in Of Mice and Men .

Franco volunteers for the Art of Elysium charity , and has also taught film classes at New York University , the University of Southern California , UCLA , and Palo Alto High School .

= = Early life and family = =

Franco was born in Palo Alto , California . His mother , Betsy Lou ( née Verne ) , is a writer and occasional actress , and his father , Douglas Eugene " Doug " Franco ( d . 2011 ) , ran a Silicon Valley business . The two met as students at Stanford University . Franco 's father was of Portuguese ( Madeiran ) and Swedish descent . Franco 's mother is Jewish ; her family were Russian Jewish immigrants , and her father , Daniel , had changed the family surname from " Verovitz " to " Verne " some time after 1940 . Franco 's paternal grandmother , Marjorie ( Peterson ) Franco , is a published author of young adult books . Franco 's maternal grandmother , Mitzie ( Levine ) Verne , owned the Verne Art Gallery , a prominent art gallery in Cleveland , and was an active member in the National Council of Jewish Women .

Franco 's family upbringing was " academic , liberal , and largely secular " . He grew up in California with his two brothers , Tom and Dave ( " Davy " , also an actor ) . A " math whiz " , Franco interned at Lockheed Martin . He was often encouraged by his father to get good grades and did well on his SATs . He graduated from Palo Alto High School in 1996 , where he acted in plays . This led to him attending CSSSA in 1998 for theatre . In his high school years , Franco was arrested for underage drinking , graffiti , and for being a part of a group that stole designer fragrances from department stores and sold them to classmates . These arrests led to his briefly becoming a ward of the state . Facing the possibility of juvenile hall , Franco was given a second chance by the judge . " It was teen angst . I was uncomfortable in my own skin . I was shy . I changed my ways just in time to get good grades , " he recalled of his troubles with the law .

Although the idea of becoming a marine zoologist interested him , Franco had always secretly wanted to become an actor but feared being rejected . He enrolled at the University of California , Los Angeles ( UCLA ) as an English major , but dropped out after his first year against his parents ' wishes to pursue a career as an actor , since he would have had to wait two years to audition for their acting program . Franco instead chose to take acting lessons with Robert Carnegie at the Playhouse West . Around this time , Franco took up a late @-@ night job at McDonald 's to support himself since his parents refused to do so . He was a vegetarian until working there . While working at the establishment , he would practice accents on customers , an experience he remembered nostalgically in a 2015 Washington Post editorial ( " McDonald ? s was there for me when no one else was " ) .

= = Acting career = =

= = = 1997 ? 2001 = = =

After 15 months of training , he began auditioning in Los Angeles . His first paid role was a television commercial for Pizza Hut , featuring a dancing Elvis Presley ( who died 20 years prior . ) . He found guest roles on television shows but his first break came in 1999 , after he was cast in a

leading role on the short @-@ lived but well @-@ reviewed NBC television series Freaks and Geeks , which ran for 18 episodes and was canceled due to low viewership . Later , the show became a cult hit among audiences . He has since described the series as " one of the most fun " work experiences that he has had . In another interview , Franco said : " When we were doing Freaks and Geeks , I didn't quite understand how movies and TV worked , and I would improvise even if the camera wasn't on me ... So I was improvising a little bit back then , but not in a productive way " . After his film debut Never Been Kissed , he played a popular jock Chris in Whatever It Takes ( 2000 ) , a modern @-@ day remake of the 1897 play Cyrano de Bergerac .

He was subsequently cast as the title role in director Mark Rydell 's 2001 TV biographical film James Dean . To immerse himself in the role , Franco went from being a non @-@ smoker to smoking two packs of cigarettes a day , bleached his dark brown hair blond , and learned to ride a motorcycle as well as play guitar and the bongos . To have a greater understanding of Dean , Franco spent hours with two of Dean 's associates . Other research included reading books on Dean and studying his movies . While filming James Dean , the actor , to get into character , cut off communication with his family and friends , as well as his then @-@ girlfriend . " It was a very lonely existence , " he notes . " If I wasn't on a set , I was watching James Dean . That was my whole thinking . James Dean . James Dean " . Despite already being a fan of Dean , Franco feared he might be typecast if he'd captured the actor too convincingly . Ken Tucker of Entertainment Weekly wrote : " Franco could have walked through the role and done a passable Dean , but instead gets under the skin of this insecure , rootless young man " . He received a Golden Globe Award and nominations for an Emmy Award and a Screen Actors Guild Award ( SAG ) .

== 2002 ? 2007 ==

Franco achieved worldwide fame and attention in the 2002 superhero film Spider @-@ Man , when he played Harry Osborn , the son of the villainous Green Goblin ( Willem Dafoe ) and best friend of the Spider @-@ Man ( Tobey Maguire ) . Originally , Franco was considered for the lead role of Spider @-@ Man / Peter Parker in the film , though the lead went to Maguire . Todd McCarthy of Variety noted that there are " good moments " between Maguire and Franco in the film . Spider @-@ Man was a commercial and critical success . The movie grossed \$ 114 million during its opening weekend in North America and went on to earn \$ 822 million worldwide .

He next starred in Sonny , a 2002 release in which he was directed by fellow actor Nicolas Cage , whose involvement had attracted Franco to the film . Set in 1980s New Orleans , Sonny follows the titular character ( Franco ) returning home after just being discharged from the Army . To prepare for his role , he met with sex workers or people who had previously been prostitutes . The movie was panned by critics , with the New York Post 's Lou Lumenick calling it an " instant candidate for worst movie of the year " . Franco was cast as a homeless drug addict in the drama City by the Sea ( 2002 ) after co @-@ star Robert De Niro saw a snippet of his work in James Dean . He lived on the streets for several days to better understand the subject matter as well as talk to former or still @-@ using drug addicts . He also co @-@ starred with Neve Campbell in Robert Altman 's ballet movie The Company ( 2003 ) . The success of the first Spider @-@ Man film led Franco to reprise the role in the 2004 sequel , Spider @-@ Man 2 . The movie was well received by critics , and it proved to be a big financial success , setting a new opening weekend box office record for North America . With revenue of \$ 783 million worldwide , it became the second highest @-@ grossing film in 2004 . The following year he made and starred in the black comedy The Ape and the 2005 war film The Great Raid , in which he portrayed Robert Prince , a captain in the United States Army 's elite Sixth Ranger Battalion . In 2006 , Franco co @-@ starred with Tyrese Gibson in Annapolis and played legendary hero Tristan in Tristan & Isolde , a period piece dramatization of the Tristan and Iseult story also starring British actress Sophia Myles . For the former , he did eight months of boxing training and for the latter , he practiced horseback riding and sword fighting . He then completed training for his Private Pilot Licence in preparation for his role in Flyboys , which was released in September 2006 ; the same month , Franco appeared briefly in The Wicker Man , the remake of the seminal horror film . Also in 2006 , he made a cameo appearance in the romantic comedy The

Holiday .

He again played Harry Osborn in Spider @-@ Man 3 ( 2007 ) . In contrast to the previous two films ' positive reviews , Spider @-@ Man 3 was met with a mixed reception by critics . Nonetheless , with a total worldwide gross of \$ 891 million , it stands as the most successful film in the series , and Franco 's highest @-@ grossing film to date . In this same year , Franco made a cameo appearance as himself in the Apatow @-@ directed comedy Knocked Up , which starred Freaks and Geeks alumni Seth Rogen , Jason Segel and Martin Starr . Franco co @-@ starred with Sienna Miller in the low @-@ budget independent film Camille , a dark fantasy dramedy about a young newlywed couple and Interview , where he appears in a voice only role , both 2007 movies that were ignored by audiences and critics alike . Among his other 2007 projects were Good Time Max , which Franco wrote , directed and starred in . The movie premiered at the 2007 Tribeca Film Festival and centers around two talented brothers who take very diverse paths in life , one going on to become a doctor whilst the other sibling ( Franco ) experiences unemployment and uses drugs . The actor chose to cast himself in that role because , " It was really just a process of elimination . I was better suited for this role than the responsible surgeon " .

= = = 2008 ? 2010 = = =

He next starred in Pineapple Express ( 2008 ) , a stoner comedy co @-@ starring and co @-@ written by Seth Rogen and produced by Judd Apatow . Of Franco 's character , Apatow said , " You tell him , ' Okay , you 're going to play a pot dealer ' , and he comes back with a three @-@ dimensional character you totally believe exists . He takes it very seriously , even when it 's comedy " . In her New York Times review , critic Manohla Dargis wrote : " He 's delightful as Saul , loosey @-@ goosey and goofy yet irrepressibly sexy , despite that greasy curtain of hair and a crash pad with a zero WAF ( Woman Acceptance Factor ) . It 's an unshowy , generous performance and it greatly humanizes a movie that , as it shifts genre gears and cranks up the noise , becomes disappointingly sober and self @-@ serious " . His performance earned him a second Golden Globe nomination , for Best Actor in a Musical or Comedy . He has stated in some interviews that he no longer uses cannabis ( although he has occasionally alluded to smoking it , most notably during an extended segment on The Colbert Report ) . He was awarded High Times magazine 's Stoner of the Year Award for his work in Pineapple Express . In 2008 he also appeared in two films by American artist Carter , exhibited at the Yvon Lambert gallery in Paris . On September 20 , 2008 , he hosted the sketch comedy show Saturday Night Live ( SNL ) , and a second time on December 19 , 2009 .

Franco starred opposite Sean Penn , Josh Brolin , and Emile Hirsch in Gus Van Sant 's Milk ( 2008 ) . In the film he plays Scott Smith , the boyfriend of Harvey Milk ( Penn ) . Kenneth Turan of the Los Angeles Times , in review of the film , wrote : " Franco is a nice match for him [ Penn ] as the lover who finally has enough of political life " . For his performance in the film , Franco won the Independent Spirit Award in the category for Best Supporting Actor . In late 2009 he joined the cast of the daytime soap opera General Hospital on a recurring basis . He plays Franco , a multimedia artist much like himself , who comes to Port Charles with unfinished business with mob enforcer Jason Morgan ( Steve Burton ) . Franco has called his General Hospital role performance art .

Franco began 2010 by making an appearance on the sitcom 30 Rock where he played himself and carried on a fake romance with Jenna Maroney ( Jane Krakowski ) in a scheme concocted by their respective agents . After appearing in the commercial successes Date Night , an action comedy , and Eat Pray Love , an adaption of a novel , Franco played poet Allen Ginsberg in the drama Howl , released on September 24 . The latter , about his most known poem and the trial about the work , premiered at the Berlin Film Festival and earned modest reviews .

In his next project , 127 Hours , directed by Danny Boyle , Franco portrayed real @-@ life mountain climber Aron Ralston . It was given a limited release starting on November 5 , 2010 . 127 Hours centered on Ralston trying to free his hand after it became trapped under a boulder in a ravine while canyoneering alone in Utah and resorting to desperate measures in order to survive , eventually amputating his arm . During the five @-@ week , 12 @-@ hours @-@ per @-@ day shoot , Franco would only leave the gully set to use the lavatory and would read books such as academic textbooks

to keep busy . Franco later called making 127 Hours a once in a lifetime experience . To date , 127 Hours is one of his most well @-@ reviewed movies and was also a commercial success , earning \$ 60 @.@ 7 million against an \$ 18 million budget . His performance earned him universal acclaim from critics . Subsequently , he was nominated for an Academy Award , Golden Globe and SAG award , as well as winning an Independent Spirit Award .

" I didn 't have many actors to act opposite with , so the crew and the director and the writer , they all became my co @-@ stars in a way and we all had this one character to share in . I , it was my body but we were all kinda jammed in there [ the gully ] .

= = = 2011 ? present = = =

On February 23 , 2011 , Franco made a cameo appearance on NBC 's Minute to Win It where the real @-@ life Ralston was participating as a contestant playing for charity . After having an uncredited cameo in the opening scene of The Green Hornet ( 2011 ) , he starred opposite Natalie Portman and Danny McBride in the Medieval fantasy comedy Your Highness . In the film , he plays Fabious , a prince who teams up with his brother ( McBride ) to rescue the soon to be bride of Fabious ( played by Zooey Deschanel ) . In May 2010 , he was cast to star in Rupert Wyatt 's \$ 93 million budgeted Rise of the Planet of the Apes , a reboot of the Planet of the Apes series which was released on August 5 . Franco starred alongside Winona Ryder in The Letter , originally entitled The Stare , directed by Jay Anania . He was cast as a drug @-@ addicted lawyer in About Cherry , also starring Heather Graham , which started shooting the following month in California . He dropped out of the indie film While We 're Young to star in Oz the Great and Powerful , a Disney prequel to L. Frank Baum 's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz ( 1900 ) . Filming began in July 2011 , and the film was released on March 8 , 2013 . He has signed to do a sequel to it .

At the end of September 2010 , the actor acquired the rights to Stephen Elliott 's The Adderall Diaries , with the intention to adapt , direct , and star in the film . It was announced in January 2011 that the actor has planned to , not only star in , but direct himself in The Night Stalker , a film version of author Philip Carlo 's book about the 1980s serial killer , Richard Ramirez . Co @-@ screenwriter of the screenplay , Nicholas Constantine , was initially unconvinced that Franco would be right for the movie , until he learned of Franco 's desire to be a director and later watched three of his short films , one of which featured a serial killer , ultimately confirming to the writer that the actor had a darker side . The actor also has plans to direct a film version of William Faulkner 's As I Lay Dying . The film was screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival . In late 2013 Franco starred in This is the End as a fictionalized version of himself stuck in a house with Seth Rogen , Jay Baruchel , Craig Robinson , Jonah Hill , and Danny McBride , also fictionalized versions of themselves , when the Apocalypse happens .

In February 2012 , Franco began shooting a film version of Cormac McCarthy 's 1973 novella Child of God , which stars Scott Haze as Lester Ballard . The film chronicles the depraved and violent impulses of the young Tennessee backwoodsman after he is dispossessed of his ancestral land . Child of God was selected in official competition at the 70th Venice Film Festival , an official selection to the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival and an official selection to the prestigious 51st New York Film Festival . In 2013 , Franco starred as the gangster " Alien " in Harmony Korine 's Spring Breakers , with Vanessa Hudgens , Selena Gomez , Ashley Benson , Gucci Mane and Rachel Korine . A24 films began a campaign in September 2013 in support of a Best Supporting Actor Oscar nomination for Franco 's performance .

In March 2013 , it was announced that Franco was set to make his 2014 Broadway stage debut in the role of George in a revival of John Steinbeck 's Of Mice and Men . In October 2013 , Franco appeared in the music video for " City of Angels " by Thirty Seconds to Mars .

In February 2014 , Franco was announced as the director and co @-@ producer for The Masterpiece , the film adaptation of actor Greg Sestero 's non @-@ fiction book , The Disaster Artist , which talks about the making of the film The Room . In April of the same year , Franco directed and appeared in " Techno Color Sunglasses " , which promoted Gucci 's eyewear collection . In December , Franco starred in the controversial Sony comedy thriller , The Interview , a film which

played a central role in the real world diplomatic relations between the United States and North Korea as they related to the 2014 Sony hacking incident . In April 2015 , two of his projects , titled I Am Michael and True Story , were shown at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival . In I Am Michael , Franco plays a gay activist who rejects his homosexuality and becomes a conservative Christian pastor with a girlfriend . In True Story , based on a true story , Franco played Christian Longo , a man who was on the FBI 's most wanted list for murdering his wife and three children in Oregon , and who had also been hiding under the identity of Michael Finkel , a journalist played by Jonah Hill .

In 2015 , Franco was cast in the lead role for the Hulu limited series 11 @. @ 22 @. @ 63 which is based on the novel of the same name by Stephen King . The eight @-@ episode series premiered on February 15 , 2016 .

= = Other projects = =

Franco produced and directed a documentary titled Saturday Night documenting a week in the production of an episode of SNL . The film began as a short for an NYU class but grew due to his two episodes as host , while short stories he wrote for other classes appeared in Esquire and McSweeney 's . In summer 2010 , the fictional Franco from General Hospital held an exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles , while the real Franco held an exhibit at the museum based on his experiences on the soap opera .

In 2008 , Franco was named as the face of Gucci 's men 's fragrance line . His short films as director The Feast of Stephen and Herbert White were both presented within Maryland Film Festival in May 2010 . Another of his short movies , The Clerk 's Tale , was screened in competition at the Hamptons Film Festival at the end of 2010 . In June 2010 , James Franco presented his first solo exhibition , " The Dangerous Book Four Boys " , presented at The Clocktower Gallery in New York City . Curated by Alanna Heiss , the show featured video , drawings , sculptures and installation .

On October 19 , 2010 , Scribner published a collection of short stories , Palo Alto , by Franco . The book is named after the California city where Franco grew up and is dedicated to many of the writers he worked with at Brooklyn College . Inspired by some of Franco 's own teenage memories Palo Alto , and memories written and submitted by high school students at Palo Alto Senior High School , consists of life in Palo Alto as experienced by a series of teenagers who spend most of their time indulging in driving drunk , smoking weed and taking part in unplanned acts of violence . Each passage is told by a young narrator . The book has received mixed reviews ; Los Angeles Times called it " the work of an ambitious young man who clearly loves to read , who has a good eye for detail , but who has spent way too much time on style and virtually none on substance " . The Guardian said that Franco 's " foray into the literary world may be met with cynicism in some quarters , but this is a promising debut from a most unlikely source " . Writing in the New York Times , reviewer and fellow author Joshua Mohr praised Franco for how , in the story " American History " , he juxtaposed historical parts with a present @-@ day social commentary that " makes the we wonder how much we 've actually evolved in post @-@ bellum America " . At least one editor of a literary journal testified he would not publish Franco 's stories , claiming he has been published due to his star power , not literary talent . Publishers Weekly reviewed the collection , stating " The author fails to find anything remotely insightful to say in these 11 amazingly underwhelming stories " .

In January 2011 , the actor screened his multimedia project entitled Three 's Company The Drama , in which he merges video and art to update the former sitcom , at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival . Franco reunited with Milk director Van Sant to make Unfinished , a project that features two movies : Endless Idaho and My Own Private River . Endless Idaho showcases edited outtakes , deleted scenes and behind @-@ the @-@ scenes footage from the 1991 movie My Own Private Idaho , while My Own Private River focuses on the late actor River Phoenix . The idea for the exhibition was conceived after Van Sant introduced unused footage from the 1991 film to Franco , inspiring him to turn it into something more . Unfinished opened from February 26 to April 9 at the Gagosian Gallery in Beverly Hills .

On February 27 , 2011 , he and Anne Hathaway hosted the 83rd Academy Awards . The two were selected to help the awards show achieve its goal of attracting a younger audience . Franco had previously said that he accepted the job for the experience and because it was a once in a lifetime opportunity . Numerous media viewers criticized Franco for his discontent and lack of energy on stage and the show was widely panned , with some reviewers dubbing it the worst telecast in its history . The actor later spoke about his hosting in an interview on the Late Show with David Letterman . He explained that when accepting the job he never had high hopes , adding " It was never on my list of things to do . It doesn 't mean I didn 't care and it doesn 't mean I didn 't try , right ? ? Regarding allegations that he was under the influence of marijuana while hosting , Franco commented " I think the Tasmanian Devil would look stoned standing next to Anne Hathaway . She has a lot of energy ! " He concluded that he tried his best and could have had " low energy " during the telecast .

A few months later , he continued talking about the hosting gig at an interview for Playboy . There he said he told a producer , " I don 't know why you hired me , because you haven 't given me anything . I just don 't think this stuff 's going to be good " . He also said he felt " kind of trapped in that material " and that there was " no way out " . He also admitted to a post @-@ ceremony fight on Twitter with longtime Oscars writer Bruce Vilanch . When Vilanch intimated that the busy actor appeared less than fully committed to the job , Franco posted a photo of the two of them together graffiti @-@ ed saying " James Fucked up the oscars . Trust me , I KNOW comedy . I mean , come on , I write for Bette Midler " . Franco explained to Playboy that " I personally do not do my best thinking when I 'm angry . Before Twitter , I always had that buffer period when I could actually think and decide , Is this worth it ? ... For me Twitter is a dangerous thing " .

In May , Franco made his dance @-@ theater directorial debut at New York 's Stella Adler studios , where he narrated all the performances . Entitled " Collage " and described as a " mixed @-@ media piece " , the show featured live dance , theater , music , and poetry . Tickets were free but were distributed on a first @-@ come , first @-@ served basis . The actor also directed two short films for songs ( " Blue " and " That Someone Is You " ) by R.E.M. from their album Collapse into Now ( 2011 ) . Franco continued his career as a filmmaker with The Broken Tower , a 90 @-@ minute docudrama shot in black and white about poet Hart Crane , who committed suicide by jumping off the steamship SS Orizaba . It originally started out as his masters thesis . It was screened at 2011 's Los Angeles Film Festival ? among more than 200 feature films , short projects , and music videos from more than 30 countries . It was released on DVD in 2012 .

Since 2012 , Franco has served as a lecturer at UCLA teaching classes in the School of Theater , Film and Television . In September 2012 , Franco announced the release of his band Daddy 's first single Love in the Old Days and their first EP MotorCity . On March 8 , 2013 , Franco received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame , located at 6838 Hollywood Boulevard . On July 9 , 2013 , Franco announced that he would be the featured roastee on the next Comedy Central Roast . The roast aired on September 2 , 2013 .

In February 2014 , Franco wrote an article in The New York Times in support of the metamodernist performance art of Shia LaBeouf , describing LaBeouf 's project as one " in which a young man in a very public profession tries to reclaim his public persona " . In April 2014 , the literary publisher Graywolf Press issued Franco 's first collection of poetry , Directing Herbert White . The title alludes to a poem ( made by Franco into a 2010 short film ) by Frank Bidart , who has served as friend and mentor to Franco .

In September 2015 , Franco announced he would be teaching an eight @-@ part film class to high school students at Palo Alto High School . The class began on September 13 , 2015 .

= = In the media = =

Viewed as a sex symbol , Franco was named the Sexiest Man Living in 2009 by Salon.com. There has often been frequent media coverage of Franco , particularly regarding his interest in going to colleges . In addition to that , Franco has also claimed to have been strongly misquoted by reports in the media and news outlets reporting erroneous information about him . This led to the actor being

parodied in an episode of SNL 's Weekend Update segment , which an Entertainment Weekly writer deemed " clever " . In a 2011 interview , he stated :

" I ' ve been perceived as this guy yelling , ' Hey , look at me . I want attention ' . I ' m not going to school to get articles written about me . I ' m just going to school . But the fact that I ' m going to school or that someone takes a picture of me sleeping is like , ' We ' re gonna jump on that and criticize him for his antics ' . What antics ? I write . I make movies . I ' m going to school . I hosted the Oscars . I take these projects seriously " .

Franco has deliberately garnered a reputation for publishing " selfies " ( self @-@ shot photos of oneself , alone or with others ) and wrote an explanatory article for the New York Times in December 2013 . Franco writes :

" But a well @-@ stocked collection of selfies seems to get attention . And attention seems to be the name of the game when it comes to social networking . In this age of too much information at a click of a button , the power to attract viewers amid the sea of things to read and watch is power indeed . It ' s what the movie studios want for their products , it ' s what professional writers want for their work , it ' s what newspapers want ? hell , it ' s what everyone wants : attention . Attention is power " .

In April 2012 , Shalom Life ranked Franco and his brother , Dave , together as number two on its list of 50 talented and attractive Jewish men . In 2013 , Franco was featured as the cover model and featured focus in the men ' s magazine Man of the World .

In other forms of media , a Chicago @-@ based theater company , Under the Gun Theater , developed a show inspired by and titled after Franco . The 2015 production of Dear James Franco used , parodied and deconstructed letters penned to or by celebrities . The performances used improvisation to satirize their subject matter .

= = Personal life = =

Franco has described himself as Jewish ; regarding his secular upbringing , he told The Guardian that he feels as if he has " missed out on the Jewish experience " , but has been told not to worry about that by his Jewish friends and said in the same interview that he likes " the idea of religion as a source of community " . When asked if he was a " believer , " he responded " In God ? I don ' t know . Yes . To a certain extent . It ' s a complicated question " . In 2015 , Franco had an official Bar Mitzvah ceremony , presided over by a rabbi .

Due to his support for the LGBT community , and his portrayal of gay characters in his projects , Franco ' s sexuality has been a subject of discussion in media sources , relentlessly questioning if he himself is gay . In response to questions regarding his sexuality , he insists he finds plenty more dimensions to the characters than their bedroom proclivities . " Or , you know what , " he quipped , " maybe I ' m just gay " . In a March 2015 interview with Four Two Nine magazine , Franco again opened up about his sexuality , commenting that it is not who you have sex with that defines your sexuality , but instead how you act . " In the twenties and thirties , they used to define homosexuality by how you acted and not by whom you slept with . Sailors would fuck guys all the time , but as long as they behaved in masculine ways , they weren ' t considered gay " . Franco added , " Well , I like to think that I ' m gay in my art and straight in my life " .

The rumors concerning his sexuality led to a Gawker article linking him to a New York Post Page Six blind item about a closeted gay actor , nicknamed " the Gay Rapist " . Despite the victim of the alleged attack denying that it was Franco , two magazines then contacted Franco ' s lawyer to alert them that they might run stories suggesting his involvement , but were unable to , as at least part of their stories were fabricated . However , Gawker refused to take their article down as they were simply reporting what another outlet published and instead offered him a chance to make a comment about the speculation on its website . He declined , hoping it would die down . The actor later called the episode very offensive because he has friends who have been raped . In July 2015 , a former Gawker employee admitted on his Twitter account ? in now deleted posts ? that he was pressured to write a series of articles about " the Gay Rapist " , and lead readers into believing the man was Franco .

After meeting on the set of *Whatever It Takes*, Franco dated co-@-@ star Marla Sokoloff for five years. He was later in a relationship with actress Ahna O'Reilly, until 2011. He confirmed their separation in an interview for *Playboy* magazine's August 2011 issue, saying that his interest in education got between them. He received unwelcome attention in April 2014 for trying to set a date with a 17 @-@ year @-@ old girl from Scotland in New York (age of consent in New York is 17) via social media. Although the age of consent in New York is 17, Franco's interactions with the girl were still illegal on the grounds that the girl was a foreign citizen and the interactions took place over the Internet, both of which are circumstances invoking Federal United States law (18) rather than lesser state @-@ by @-@ state age limits. The woman filmed the conversation they had and released it to the public. Franco acknowledged flirting with her.

= = Education = =

Franco, dissatisfied with his career's direction, reenrolled at UCLA in autumn 2006 as an English major with a creative writing concentration. He received permission to take as many as 62 course credits per quarter compared to the normal limit of 19, while still continuing to act; receiving many of his credits from independent study for his involvement on the set of *Spider @-@ Man 3*. He received his undergraduate degree in June 2008 with a GPA of 3 @. @ 5 / 4 @. @ 0. For his degree, Franco prepared his departmental honors thesis as a novel under the supervision of Mona Simpson. While at the university, the actor studied French, the Holocaust, philosophy of science, and American literature among other things. To continue acting, he would study on film sets.

He was selected as the commencement speaker at his alma mater, UCLA, and was to speak at the ceremony on June 12, 2009. Several months before commencement, an editorial in the student newspaper questioned his "caliber" and a student created a Facebook page protesting the choice. On June 3, Franco withdrew, citing a date conflict with location pre @-@ production on a film. On January 26, 2011, Franco and the *Harvard Lampoon* released a satirical video on prominent comedy website *Funny or Die* mocking his last @-@ minute cancellation.

He moved to New York to simultaneously attend graduate school at Columbia University's MFA writing program, New York University's Tisch School of the Arts for filmmaking, and Brooklyn College for fiction writing, while also attending the low @-@ residency MFA Program for Writers at North Carolina's Warren Wilson College for poetry. He received his MFA from Columbia in 2010. Franco is a PhD student in English at Yale University and also attended the Rhode Island School of Design.

The actor opted against watching the 2011 Academy Award nominees' being announced (where he was a top contender) in favor of attending class. "I'm not gonna miss class to go and presume that I'm going to be nominated, but if you want to bring out a camera crew to Yale and wait and see if I get nominated, I'd be happy to step out of class and say I'm very grateful", he commented.

It was announced in March 2011 that Franco will teach a fall semester course on modifying poetry into short films to ten to twelve third @-@ year graduate film students at NYU. The course will focus mainly on production, meaning that the students will be in charge of creating their own film based on poetry.

When asked about his education, Franco said that he loves school and that it keeps him focused as well as grounded. "I go to school because I love being around people who are interested in what I'm interested in and I'm having a great experience ... I'm studying things that I love so it's not like it's a chore", he told the *Washington Post*, according to a *New York Magazine* article. Franco has also credited his education for helping him "take acting seriously" when his parents did not see it as a successful post @-@ college career.

Franco developed an aptitude for art? painting in particular? during his high school years while attending the California State Summer School for the Arts (CSSSA). Franco has said painting was the "outlet" he needed in high school, and he "has actually been painting longer than he has been acting". His paintings were displayed publicly for the first time at the Glü Gallery in Los Angeles, from January 7, through February 11, 2006. He launched his first European art exhibition in 2011 at Peres Projects in Berlin. He enjoys reading on the set of his films. Pineapple Express producer



Judd Apatow has said of him : " He 's a very education @-@ minded person . We used to laugh because in between takes he 'd be reading The Iliad on set . We still haven 't read The Iliad . It was a very difficult book . With him , it was always James Joyce or something " .

In an interview with Showbiz411 , on September 23 , 2010 , Franco made the erroneous public announcement that he received a " D " grade in " Acting " class at the NYU Graduate Film School . It was in fact a " Directing the Actor " class . Franco admitted to missing most of his classes that semester . A professor at New York University , José Angel Santana , alleged that Franco did not earn his grades while attending that school , stating that Franco missed over 80 % of his classes and only received high marks and a degree because of his celebrity status as an actor . In September 2012 , Santana filed a lawsuit against Franco for defamation seeking unspecified damages . In September 2013 , James Franco and Santana settled the defamation lawsuit . " The matter has been resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the parties ? , said Santana 's attorney Matthew Blit .

Franco defended himself when he was on the Howard Stern Show , stating that he missed the classes to film 127 Hours . Franco has taught at USC , UCLA , CalArts and NYU in Film and English departments . For his students ' film projects , he has helped to attach actors including Seth MacFarlane , Kate Mara , Natalie Portman , Chloe Sevigny , Kristen Wiig and Olivia Wilde . In March 2013 , Franco was featured in half @-@ page print advertisements for his alma mater UCLA , which celebrated the university 's famous alumnus as a " prolific academic " , and carried the tagline : " Some A @-@ Listers Actually Get A 's " .

= = Charitable work = =

Franco has said " aiding others is the key to life , the key to happiness and , as an actor , you can get wrapped up in yourself and your career ... A little secret is one of the greatest ways to break that is to stop thinking about yourself for a second " . When Franco was at a point in his life where he wanted to give back but was unsure how , he asked his Spider @-@ Man co @-@ star Kirsten Dunst for advice . At the suggestion of Dunst , he started volunteering at the charity Art of Elysium , where she also volunteers , which helps children with serious medical conditions . He said the experience helped save his life . In January 2011 , at the Art of Elysium Heaven Gala in Los Angeles , Franco was honored for his work at the hospital , receiving the Spirit of Elysium accolade .

On March 31 , 2011 , the actor took part in " An Evening with James Franco " , a Washington D.C. dinner benefit for 826DC , a non @-@ profit foundation created to help neighborhood students reach their goals , as well as provide after @-@ school literature programs and workshops that encourage them to improve their writing skills . Franco became involved with Dave Eggers ' 826 National after Eggers asked him to do a conceptual idea for the program , and he directed a documentary for them and has since been a supporter of them . At the event , he spoke about how he thought schools needed to be more original with their literature programs . " Writing can do things that video cannot " , he added . In April 2011 , Franco autographed a T @-@ shirt that would be auctioned off through the Yoshiki Foundation , with the proceeds being donated for Japanese tsunami relief . On June 14 , he was honored by amfAR , the foundation for AIDS research , at the Museum of Modern Art . Franco received the Piaget Award of Inspiration for his humanitarian work and contributions to men 's style .

In April 2013 , Franco received the Ally Award at the 15th annual Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival . The award was presented to him in recognition of his unwavering support of the LGBT community .

In April 2014 , Franco presented at Broadway Cares / Equity Fights AIDS Easter Bonnet Competition with Leighton Meester and Chris O 'Dowd , after raising donations at his Broadway show Of Mice and Men . In June 2014 , Franco performed in the BC / EFA benefit Broadway Bares

= = Filmography = =

= = Awards and nominations = =

= = Selected works = =

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= = Discography = =

= = = Albums = = =

2011 : Turn It Up EP ? collaboration with Kalup Linzy

2012 : MotorCity EP ? with Tim O 'Keefe , as the duo " Daddy "

= = = Music on other albums = = =

2013 : " Hanging with Da Dopeboys " ? featuring DangeRuss from album Spring Breakers : Music from the Motion Picture

2013 : " I Love You " ? featuring Kalup Linzy from album Romantic Loner

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