



SYLLABUS

DOCUMENTARY VIDEO PRODUCTION

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Contact Hrs: 45

MACERATA, ITALY

Brief Description: Investigation and application of the long-form nonfiction video format. Using digital video cameras and laptop computers, students will work collaboratively to produce and direct an hour-long documentary video.

Course Objectives: Students who successfully complete the course will learn:

- Structure and format of nonfiction films;
- Expectations on producers and directors on remote locations;
- Working effectively with others to produce a complete video;
- Delegation of responsibilities and coordination of effort;
- Advanced video production techniques including video editing.

Suggested Excursions: Having had the tremendous advantage of traveling to Macerata previously, I have tried to devise a documentary that would fit well with the existing structure of the program. I decided that the class project would be to produce a documentary about Italian food. Not a cooking show, but a program that would explain some of the Italian traditions and attitudes about food.

I plan to incorporate the existing excursions to make this happen. In my previous experience we visited two wineries, and that could serve as good material. On every excursion there is a meal opportunity, and with a little bit of research on my part I could probably make arrangements to shoot/interview at a location in those communities (restaurant, food production facility, etc). One new excursion I would try to request would be to visit a Slow Food Institute in nearby Jesi, the Istituto Superiore di Gastronomia di Jesi. I would love to incorporate some material from Modena (home of Balsamic vinegar) and/or Parma (Parmesan cheese and prosciutto). If excursions cannot be arranged to these locations, I might just visit those on my own during the term break to get footage.

Instructional Methodology: The course is project-based learning. It provides a wonderful opportunity for students to apply what they are learning each week.

Students will take on the different roles of producing, directing, writing and editing for the production. Students will be expected to learn all of the basics but will be allowed to specialize in areas of most interest to them. As such the activities will vary for each, but the greatest instructional value comes in their interaction. The director must work closely with the scriptwriter to achieve the writer's purpose, closely with the producer to make certain the locations are scouted and available, and closely with the editor to have the intended effect. A writer may primarily write, but s/he must

also work in concert with the others. The making of the documentary will involve students in all the activities described above. Shooting will all be done on location and as such must deal with the realities: crowds, weather, noise, ambient light, etc. In addition students will have to work cooperatively to handle the multiple tasks required on a shoot.

Method of Evaluation/Grading/Attendance:

Each of the following five evaluative tools will weight 20 percent of the final grade:

- Midterm Exam
- Final Exam
- Production Work
- Peer Evaluation
- Class Participation

Exams: Each exam will contain definition questions (10 percent), true/false (20 percent), multiple choice (30 percent) and short answer (40 percent). Questions will be based on text material, class discussions and in-class videos.

Production Work: I will subjectively evaluate each individual student's contribution to the video. This is both a qualitative and quantitative evaluation. Because each student's skills coming into the project will differ, the emphasis will not be on skill level but rather dedication and professionalism with the project. Even beginning students who have never before used a camera can be expected to learn from their mistakes. I expect that students show improvement each week, regardless of their skill level.

Peer Evaluation: Every time I teach a class involving group work, I find it extremely valuable to have the students assess each other. The fact is the students usually give themselves higher grades than I would but in terms of the rankings (highest to lowest), the majority are completely in line with what I think. The feedback is invaluable, and I always give them the opportunity to hear what was said about them (but not "by whom").

Class Participation: I like an active classroom. I do not read students the content of their texts. I expect them to be conversant about the topic. In addition, in this class I show a lot of video examples of documentaries. I expect the students to critically analyze and determine what they would have done differently.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is mandatory at every class session and assigned laboratory (shooting, scripting, editing, etc). Any more than one absence may result in a failing grade for the course. You should plan to be at every class meeting, and on time. Strikes by public transportation, heavy traffic or other avertable inconveniences will not excuse an absence. Students who leave town on weekends are responsible for their timely return on Monday. In addition students must be available at least three hours per week for production work outside of the scheduled class meeting time. This can be arranged for their convenience but the hours should be considered "lab time" that are part of the class.

Course Readings/Texts:

The main required reading for the class will be:

Sheila C. Bernard, *Documentary Storytelling for Video and Filmmakers*, Focal Press, 2004

Recommended Advance Readings:

Megan Cunningham, *The Art of the Documentary*, New Riders, 2005

S. Martin Shelton, *Communicating Ideas with Film, Video and Multimedia*, Southern Illinois University Press, 2004

Keith Beattie, *Documentary Screens*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Michael Rabiger, *Directing the Documentary*, Focal Press, 2004.
David A. Goldsmith, *The Documentary Makers*, Rotovision, 2003.
Alan Rosenthal, *Writing, Directing and Producing Documentary Film and Videos*, Southern Illinois University Press, 2004
Barry Hampe, *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos*, Henry Holt & Co, 1997

Proposed Daily/Weekly Schedule: Each week the class will have assigned text reading. Class meeting time will be used in three ways: discuss/review the reading material; view documentaries to critique and analyze, and; plan the following week's production schedule.

Discussion of Readings: The text follows this order:

Week 1: Story Basics
Week 2: Documentary Storytelling
Week 3: Structure
Week 4: Manipulating Time
Week 5: Approach
Week 6: Research
Week 7: Pitching and Proposal Writing
Week 8: Outlines, Treatments and Scripts
Week 9: Casting
Week 10: Shooting
Week 11: Editing
Week 12: Narration

Over the 12 weeks, the documentary samples we will watch may include:

Nanook of the North	The Future of Food
Primate (or some other Frederick Wiseman work)	Hamburger America
Harvest of Shame	Frontline: Is Wal-Mart Good for America?
Super Size Me	Burt Wolf: What We Eat
The Civil War	Troublesome Creek
Hearts and Minds	Bowling for Columbine
The River	Life and Times of Hank Greenberg
NOVA – The Elegant Universe	Lalee's Kin
March of the Penguins	Hoop Dreams
The Meaning of Food	Eyes on the Prize

Production Schedule:

Throughout the term, remote locations will be shot as the travel opportunities arise. For example, if the Florence trip occurs in Week 10, then all Florence-related shooting will be scheduled for that time, regardless of where it falls in the schedule.

Week 1: Orientation – learn basics of shooting
Week 2-3: Scripting Begins; B-Roll Shooting Begins; Treatment
Week 3-4: Begin shooting interview segments;
Week 5-6: Script; Script breakdown; shooting schedule
Week 7-8 Principal shooting
Week 9-10 Record Voice-Over audio; begin rough-cut edits
Week 11-12 Audio sweetening; Music; Graphics
Week 13-14: Build credits; Complete Editing