

MPJO-755-10: Summer 2008

CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES IN DOCUMENTARY FILM AND VIDEO: A PRACTICAL APPROACH

Class Location: New South Film Screening Classroom

Meeting Time: Mondays 7:40 - 10:10 PM

Instructor: Vartan Akchyan
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I. Rationale for the Course:

This is a survey course covering the production processes of non-fiction filmmaking and videography. Students will learn about idea development, writing, production preparation, camera operation, lighting, sound, and editing techniques. Documentary genres and non-fiction film/video history will inform student projects and aesthetic/technical decisions. Current and early examples of documentary films and videos will be screened and discussed. Students will work in groups and will collaborate to create short video projects dealing with themes and issues of their choice. This course will provide opportunities and practical training in (1) conceiving an idea for a non-fiction video and developing it into a written project ready for production; (2) technical and creative aspects of production and post-production; (3) an immersion experience into researching and thinking visually and creatively about an issue, a community, or a cultural experience that in many ways differs from the process of producing written work. No prior film/video experience is required. Research and production will take place outside of scheduled class time.

This course will include hands-on workshops on camera, lighting, sound, and editing.

II. Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation policy:

The class will consist of screenings, in-class and online discussions. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and team meetings. All students are expected to contribute fully to their individual and group projects and assignments.

2. Course readings:

(a) Required:

- Author Tom Schroepel
- Title The Bare Bones Camera Course for Film and Video
- ISBN 0960371818
- Publisher Tom Schroepel
- Edition 2nd

- Author Patricia Aufderheide
- Title Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction
- ISBN 978-0-19-518270-5
- Publisher Oxford University Press
- Edition

(b) Optional:

- Author Herbert Zettl
- Title Video Basics 4
- ISBN 0-534-61245-8
- Publisher Thomson/Wadsworth
- Edition 4th

3. Course screenings:

Required:

- **...No Lies**, Mitchell Block, 15 min., (1972)
- **Seeing Is Believing: handycams, human rights, & the new**, Katerina Cizek and Peter Wintonick, 59 min. (2002)
- **Man With The Movie Camera**, Dig Veto, 68 min., (1929)
- **Black Is... Black Ain't**, Marlon Riggs, 86 min., (1995)
- **Promises**, B. Z. Goldberg, 102 min., (2001)
- **Amanda!** 108 min., Lee Hirsch (2003)
- **Boxers and Ballerinas**, Mike Cahill and Brit Marling, 89 min (2004)

III. Evaluation and Grading Procedures:

- (a) Attendance and Participation (20%)
- (b) Writing Assignments – story pitch, treatment, outline/script, reflection (20%)
- (c) Video exercises – place, portrait, performance (20%)
- (d) Individual responsibilities for documentary project (20%)
- (e) Group responsibilities for documentary project (20%)

This syllabus is subject to change by the instructors with notice to the students.

Students are expected to adhere to Georgetown University's honor code:

http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/hc/honor_pledge.html.

Week 1

June 2 Course introduction and overview: Student Goals and Course Goals
Screening of Social Justice Documentary Video (Spring 2008) projects:

- ***Dash of Change (10 min)***
- ***Pipeline (10 mint)***

Groups

Defining the documentary: early documentaries, names, and forms

Pre-production workshop

Reading: Aufderheide (pp IX-25)
Schroeppel (pp 1-16)

Assignment: Video exercise: shoot five minutes of video composed of ten shots to convey sense of place
Brainstorm documentary ideas and write a short pitch (150-250 words)

Week 2

June 9 Pitching a story: identifying a documentary story

Screening:

- ***...No Lies***, Mitchell Block, 15 min., (1972)
- ***Seeing Is Believing: handicams, human rights, & the new***, Katerina Cizek and Peter Wintonick, 59 min. (2002)

Video Workshop I: Camera techniques

Reading: Aufderheide (pp 25-55)
Schroeppel (pp 17-42)

Assignment: Video exercise: shoot five minutes of video composed of ten shots to convey a human portrait

Week 3

June 16 **Video Workshop II: Composition and audio techniques**

Treatment due
Start production

Reading: Aufderheide (pp 56-81)
Schroeppel (pp 43-63)

Assignment: Video exercise: shoot five minutes of video composed of ten shots to convey performance

Week 4**June 23 Video Workshop III: Composition and lighting techniques**

Screening: *Man With The Movie Camera*, Dziga Vertov, 68 min., (1929)

Treatment due: 2nd draft

Reading: Aufderheide (pp 81-106)
Schroeppel (pp 64-86)

Week 5**June 30 Post-production Workshop I: Introduction to Final Cut Pro (Meeting will take place in Gelardin New Media Center)**

Screening: *Black Is... Black Ain't*, Marlon Riggs, 86 min., (1995)

Assignment due: rough cut of a single documentary sequence to be screened and critiqued in class

Reading: Aufderheide (pp 106-136)

Week 6**July 7 Post-production Workshop II: Final Cut Pro (Meeting in Gelardin New Media Center)**

Screening: *Promises*, B. Z. Goldberg, 102 min., (2001)

Assignment due: 2nd rough cut of a longer documentary sequence to be screened and critiqued in class

Week 7

July 14 Screening: *Amandla!* 108 min., Lee Hirsch (2003)
Editing (cont'd)

Week 8

July 21 Screening: *Boxers and Ballerinas*, Mike Cahill and Brit Marling, 89 min., (2004)
Editing (cont'd)
Assignment due: 1st rough cut of documentary project due

Week 9

July 28 Editing (cont'd)
Assignment due: 2nd rough cut of documentary project due

Week 10

August 4 **Screening of Documentary Projects**
Final Reflection Paper Due (5 pages): Post on Bb by 12:00 Midnight