

Documentary Producing  
DC 386-901 / DC 486-901  
Spring Quarter 2016  
Wed: 5:45 to 9:00 p.m.  
14 East Jackson Blvd. Room 801

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:30 to 5 p.m. and by appointment



*Making films is about having absolute and foolish confidence; the challenge for all of us is to have the heart of a poet and the skin of an elephant.*

*- Mira Nair*

## **COURSE INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Documentary Producing. This course will cover the key areas of producing for documentaries, which encompasses pre-production, production, marketing, fundraising, and community outreach and engagement. You will gain knowledge of the ways in which producers engage with writers, directors, editors, grant making institutions, individual donors, festival marketplaces, exhibitors and broadcasters.

This course is project-based and includes developing a fundraising and distribution plan, identifying audiences, grant writing and developing a proposal.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Develop viable documentary ideas leading to a written proposal, which includes a budget and schedule;
- Conduct primary and secondary source research;
- Develop a fundraising strategy;

- Research and write grants;
- Deliver creative and funding pitches;
- Recognize and address legal and ethical issues related to documentary production;
- Develop a crowdfunding campaign;

**BOOKS:** No required textbooks. The readings on D2L will be assigned and are required reading.

Recommended texts are listed below:

*Directing the Documentary*, by Michael Rabiger, 5th Edition  
*Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos*, Alan Rosenthal  
*The Art of Film Funding*, by Carole Ann Dean  
*Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer* by  
 Fernanda Rossi

## **GRADING:**

### **GRADING SCALE**

Excellent (exceeds expectations):	A = 100-94	A- = 93-90	
Above Average (meets expectations):	B+ = 89-88	B = 87-83	B- = 82-80
Satisfactory (acceptable level of growth):	C+ = 79-78	C = 77-73	C- = 72-70
Poor (does not meet basic requirements):	D+ = 69-68	D = 67-63	D- = 62-60
Failure (inadequate achievement):	F = 59-0		

## **COURSE POLICIES**

In addition to the DePaul University course policies (see student handbook), the following policies apply to this course:

## **CONTENT CHANGES**

This syllabus may be amended as the course continues. You will be notified of all changes via email. As the quarter progresses, some items may change at the instructor's discretion, but the overall workload will not. Make sure you pace yourself accordingly and ensure that you check the email listed on D2L.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each student is responsible for their time management and meeting the expectations in the syllabus. The instructor is not responsible for reminding students of assignment deadlines in class. If a student is absent, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor for details of the homework. If an assignment is listed on the syllabus, you are responsible for completing the assignment on time.

## **DEADLINES**

Late assignments will not be accepted. You will not be eligible for an “A” in the class unless you turn in all assignments on time.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to attend each class and to remain for the duration. Coming 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early constitutes a “Late” notation. Two “Late” notes constitute an absence for the student. The overall grade for participation drops one-third after any absence. Three absences for any reason, whether excused or not, may constitute failure for the course.

As long as I am aware of your situation and you take an active role in catching up, absences may be excused and extensions may be granted. Every situation will be handled according to individual circumstances at the instructor’s discretion. No consideration will be given for those who request special treatment without advanced notice.

**INCOMPLETES** - No incompletes will be given.

## **COMPUTER USE**

Using the computer during class time for any reason other than taking notes will have a negative impact on your participation grade. Phones should be in your bag. If you are texting or surfing the web during class, you are not participating. No computer use during film screenings.

## **ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS**

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. Since 100 percent participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in Campus Connect.

## **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism on assignments or cheating on exams are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for the class and can lead to an Academic Integrity Violation. Students are expected to understand what constitutes original research and how to use proper citation methods. All papers are automatically run through anti-plagiarism software turnitin.com.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Please read the Academic Integrity Policy (AIP) at: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/handbook/code16/html>. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>

## **FINAL FILMS & PRESENTATIONS**

Students who are not prepared to present at their regularly scheduled time will receive a failing grade for the final unless they have contacted the instructor in advance to arrange to present early. Students contacting the instructor after the final presentation will not be allowed to make-up the points for any reason.

## **CLASS DISCUSSION**

Student participation in class discussions will be measured in two ways. First, students are highly encouraged to ask questions and offer comments relevant to the day's topic. Participation allows the instructor to "hear" the student's voice when grading papers. Secondly, students will be called upon by the instructor to offer comments related to the reading assignments or the films screened in class. Students must keep up with the reading to participate in class discussion.

## **ATTITUDE**

A professional and academic attitude is expected throughout the course. Measurable examples of non-academic or unprofessional attitude include but are not limited to: talking to others when the instructor is speaking, mocking another's opinion, cell phones ringing, emailing, texting or using the internet whether on a phone or computer. If any issues arise, a student may be asked to leave the classroom. I will work with the Dean of Students Office to navigate such student issues.

## **CIVIL DISCOURSE**

DePaul is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally to be Socially Responsible Leaders. It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. I will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

## **READING ASSIGNMENTS**

The assigned readings offer an opportunity for independent learning that supplements the lectures. Lectures will introduce material that may not be available in the readings or that may be explored further in the readings. The readings will explore ideas not mentioned in class.

## **HANDOUT & ASSIGNMENT COPIES**

Handout and assignment copies are available on [d2l.depaul.edu](http://d2l.depaul.edu)

## **FILM VIEWING**

Students are required to watch the films in class. Leaving early or sleeping through a film will result in an absence. If you are ill and miss a class, films are available on Netflix and at the DePaul Library.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor early in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone Number: (312) 362-8002

Fax: (312) 362-6544 / TTY: (773) 325-7296

## **ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

This course includes instructional content delivered via audio and video. If you have any concerns about your ability to access and/or understand this material in its default format, please notify me within the first week of the course so accommodations can be made. **Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD).**

## **INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY**

Please email if you have a question or concern about the class. During the week, I respond promptly to emails. If you do not hear back from me within 24 hours during the week, it means I did not receive your message so please check the email address or phone number and contact me again.

If you are emailing with a question the night before an assignment is due, do not expect an extension on the assignment. No late work will be accepted.

Week 1:

3/30

TOPICS:      Introductions - Student work  
                  What doc background/films have you made? Past films, work in progress, films you want to make.  
                  Documentary Producing - breaking down the process  
                  Pitching your film  
                  Loglines, Synopsis  
                  Research Strategy

Assignment:    Pitch in class - Bring in a film, project that you will work on this quarter. This may be a film you have already begun production on, or a film that you are interested in making. Submit a synopsis and logline to D2L.

Week 2:

4/6

TOPICS:      THE PITCH - film/ideas  
                  Treatments, Proposals  
                  Timelines and Schedules  
                  Budgets

Assignment:    Assign - First readers  
                  Look at the CDMPF (Chicago Digital Media Production Fund) Application. Bring in any questions.  
                  Treatments

Week 3:

4/13

TOPICS:      Finding Audiences and Community Engagement  
  
                  Niche marketing, outreach to communities and organizations, and

partnerships

Call to action and outcomes - What impact do you want your films to have?

Social Media/Tools

Websites and Content

How films live on the internet. What are the different components?

Working Films, Active Voice, Participant, etc.

Assignment: Look at different doc film websites. Choose two websites on a topic similar to yours and present to class. What works, what's missing? Write a Call to Action Statement. Outcomes - how do you see your film creating impact? Find three organizations whose mission fits your call to action.

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Week 4: 4/20

TOPICS: Fundraising  
Website Presentations  
Social Media/Tools continued  
Budgets  
Crowdfunding, Grants, Foundations, Fundraisers

Develop ideas for creative fundraising and marketing.

Kickstarter - how to set yourself apart

Questions: Have you hosted or attended a fundraiser?

List components. What worked?

Assignment: Find an awful and an awesome Kickstarter / Indiegogo campaign (one that got funded and one that did not)  
Outline for fundraising event

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Week 5: 4/27

TOPICS: Present/Analyze the Kickstarter campaigns.  
Read Call to Action statements and present potential partner organizations.  
Introduce funding agencies, foundations, organizations. Mission statements and what to learn from them.

Assignment: Research and look for potential funding foundations and partner organizations online.  
Bring in links to websites and copies of the Mission Statements.  
Create an outline for a Kickstarter campaign.

Week 6: 5/4

TOPICS: Present the Foundations and Organizations, Mission Statements.  
Discuss/Evaluate the fit.  
Grant Writing & Mission Statements  
Present your Kickstarter campaigns.

Assignment: Write a grant. (Guidelines on D2L)

Week 7: 5/11

TOPICS: Community Screenings. Study Guides  
Conceptualize community screenings. Look at screening kits  
Introduce Study Guides. Activities, Homework assignments.  
Useful websites for further exploration.  
Gearing study guides for different classes -- literature, history, social sciences, etc. What other media could be linked as a resource?

Handout samples of study guides and accompanying material.

Assignment: Think of activities to go with the issues in your film. Write outlines for these activities.  
Outline for a study guide: list of resources -- narrative films, stories, books, fiction, poetry.

Week 8: 5/18

TOPICS: Present your study guide outlines.  
Demos and Previews  
Ethics and Fair Use  
Copyright, Clearance and Releases

Week 9: 5/25



TOPICS: Digital distribution, contracts.  
Film festival strategies

Assignment: Distribution and Outreach Strategy

Week 10: 6/1

TOPICS: Email grant to presenter (program officer) and teacher.  
Present your applicant grant.

Week 11: 6/8

DUE - Individual Conferences