

DC 369: Documentary Story and Development

DC 469: Non-Fiction Storytelling and Development

Fall 2017

Section: 701; Class number: 16716/17

Meeting time: Wednesday 5:45PM - 9:00PM

Location: Loop Campus. 14 E. Jackson or 247 S. State - Room 214

Instructor: Lee Ferdinand

Email: LFERDIN1@depaul.edu

Phone: 773.718.2287

Office hours: Wednesdays 2:30 - 5:30. Room 200B

Description

This course is designed for makers who want to engage in animated and serious discussions about the nature of non-fiction cinema, its forms and its narrative strategies while simultaneously shooting and editing short, non-fiction works toward the development of a final, festival worthy finished piece.

Class discussions will be contextualized and informed mostly by you and your thoughts and experiences as an artist, but also through selective screenings and the introduction of current media topics regarding the documentary in the form of readings and short lectures delineating the evolution of various forms.

The class will investigate various approaches to documentary and analyze the basic narrative principles in various media. Regular viewing of documentary films will encourage discussion on topics of finding original stories, research and development of narratives, developing characters, story structure, the ethics of representation, and the question of 'what is truth?'

Type of Instruction: Lecture, Discussion, Lab, pre-production creative work.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to analyze and understand the basic elements of story structure.
- Students will understand the key aspects of constructing documentaries and the following terms: narrative voice, point of view, theme, arc, and temporality.
- Students will be able to know what makes a good character and how the character functions in relation to narrative.
- Students will be able to evaluate the basic artistic and formal elements that go into the making of documentary films.

- Students will grasp the recent history of documentaries and the differences in documentary forms and styles.
- Students will be able to apply this knowledge to the writing of a draft documentary proposal.
- Students will be able to grasp the ethical and business issues related to nonfiction practice and the industry.

Important Dates:

September 6 - BEGIN AUTUMN QUARTER 2017 ALL CLASSES

September 13 - Last day to add (or swap) classes to AQ2017 schedule **(8:00am Deadline)**

September 19 - Last day to drop classes with no penalty (100% tuition refund if applicable and no grade on transcript). Last day to select pass/fail option

September 20 - Grades of "W" assigned for AQ2017 classes dropped on or after this day

September 26 - Last day to select auditor status

October 1 - DEADLINE: Application for November 2017 degree conferral

October 12 - Begin December Quarter/Graduate Intercession Registration

October 24 Last day to withdraw from AQ 2017 classes

November 14- End AQ2017 Day & Evening classes

Course Readings

All course readings will be made available for download at least one week prior to the session in which the reading is to be discussed.

Assignments and Grading

Final pre-production package for a short documentary.

Conceive, research, develop, Look-book, pre-interviews, plan and budget a short non-fiction film. (see assignment pdf for more details.) Due weeks 3 (10%), 6 (10%) and 10 (30%).

Screening and reading responses: (25%)

Three to five, 2-3 page reflexive essays to accompany specified screenings and readings. Prompts will also be given the week essay is assigned.

All assignments and handouts will be posted as downloadable files on D2L (LMS).

Participation/Attendance (25%)

Students are expected to be involved in class discussions and attend every class and be in class on time. Three tardies will be treated as an absence. The college-wide policy permits no more than two absences per semester for this course. If you have three unexcused absences, you will fail the course.

Bibliography

The following titles are recommended as starting points for further study and/or exploring parallel research project ideas:

Introduction to Documentary, by Bill Nichols (Indiana University Press, 2010)

Directing the Documentary, by Michael Rabiger (Focal Press, 2009)

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email.

Email return policy:

I will always try to return your emails as promptly as possible but I do not mind being reminded when I forget.

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. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Whenever your work incorporates someone else's research, images, words, or ideas, you must properly identify the source. Proper citation gives credit where it is due and enables your readers to locate sources and pursue lines of inquiry raised by your paper. Students who do not comply will be penalized. This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of 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 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) at: csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312) 362-8002; TTY: (773)325.7296

Schedule of Classes:

NOTE: SCREENINGS, CLIPS, & READINGS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Week One: 9/6 Introduction: Narrative and its function within culture and The Social. Ethics and The Documentary mode.

Feature Screening: *Burden of Dreams* (Les Blank, 1982, 95 minutes)

Assignment:

Screening Response #1
Start final project: part one due week 3
(see handout)

Due next week:

Screening Response #1
Reading:
“What Types of Documentary are there?” (excerpt from Introduction to Documentary by Bill Nichols. 2001, Indiana University Press)

Week Two: 9/13 Finding the Story and Story Structure

Screening: (clips)
Manakamana (Stephanie Spray & Pacho Velez, 2013)
Visions of an Island by Sky Hopinka, 2016
I'm in Pittsburgh and it's Raining by Jesse McLean, 2015

Due:

Screening Response #1
“What Types of Documentary are there?” (excerpt from Introduction to Documentary by Bill Nichols. 2001, Indiana University Press)

Due next week:

Final Project Part One: Concept and Form, an abstract

Week Three: 9/20 Constructing/Editing the Story

Screening: (clips)
Roger and Me (Michael Moore, 1989)
F for Fake (Orson Welles, 1973)
Gimme Shelter (Charlotte Zwerin, Albert and David Maysles, 1970)

Due:

Final Project Part One: Concept and Form, an abstract

Assignment:

Final Project Part Two: due week 6

Due next week:

Reading: "Framing People: Structural Film Revisited" from Experimental Ethnography by Catherine Russell, 1999 Duke University Press

Week Four: 9/27 Subjectivity/Objectivity/Point of View:

Screening:

(clip) News from Home (1977, Chantal Akerman, 88min)

Real Italian Pizza (1972, David Rimmer)

(clip) *High School* (1928, Frederick Wiseman 75min)

Due:

"Framing People: Structural Film Revisited" from Experimental Ethnography by Catherine Russell, 1999 Duke University Press

Assign:

Screening/Reading Response #2

Due Next Week:

Screening/Reading Response #2

Week Five 10/4: Agency and the representation of bodies

Shorts and Clips:

Fake Fruit Factory (Chick Strand, 1982, 22min)

Irma, or Flexing Muscles (2010-2012, Charles Fairbanks)

(clip) *Cannibal Tours* (1988, Dennis O'Rourke, 70 min)

Due:

Screening/Reading Response #2

Due next week:

Read:

"The Third Meaning" from The Responsibility of Forms by Roland Barthes.

~ MIDTERM ~

**Week Six: 10/11 Visual Strategies:
Cinematography**

Screening:

Leviathan (2012, Verena Paravel & Lucien Castaing-Taylor, 87 min.)

Due:

Final Project Part Two: Narrative and Visual Strategies
“The Third Meaning” from The Responsibility of Forms by Roland Barthes.

Assignment:

Final Project Part Three: Due Week Ten
Screening Response #3

Due Next Week:

Read:

Stealing Pictures by Mike Hoolbloom (2006)
Screening Response #3

**Week Seven: 10/18 Visual Strategies:
Archival Footage & Reenactments**

Screening: Short works

Kid Beat Box by Steve Wetzel

(clip) *The Act of Killing* (2012, Joshua Oppenheimer)

(clip) *The Thin Blue Line* (1988, Errol Morris)

Due:

Stealing Pictures by Mike Hoolbloom (2006)
Screening/Reading Response #3

Due Next Week:

Read: “Signal to Noise: An Interview with Ernst Karel at the Harvard Sensory
Ethnography Lab” by Max Goldberg (*Moving Image Source*, 2013)
TBD

Week Eight: 10/25 Sound and Story

Screening: Short work and Audio Art

TBD

Assignment:

Screening/Reading Response #4

Due:

Read: “Signal to Noise: An Interview with Ernst Karel at the Harvard Sensory
Ethnography Lab” by Max Goldberg (*Moving Image Source*, 2013)
TBD

Due next week:

Screening/Reading Response #4

Week Nine: 11/1 Doc Pitching & the Doc Marketplace

Screen:

TBD

Due:

Screening/Reading Response #4

Due next week:

Final Project - Complete Pre-production Package

**Week Ten: 11/8 Experimental Documentary and Non-Traditional
Narrative Forms**

Screen:

TBD

Due:

Final Project - Complete Pre-production Package