

DC 305-701: Documentary and Non-Fiction Storytelling
AQ19

Section: 701;

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

Location: Loop Campus. 14 E. Jackson or 247 S. State - Room 211

Instructor: Lee Ferdinand

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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, nonfiction 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 via 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 11 - BEGIN AUTUMN QUARTER 2017 ALL CLASSES

September 17 - Last day to add (or swap) classes to AQ2018 schedule (8:00am Deadline)

September 24 - 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 25 - Grades of "W" assigned for AQ2018 classes dropped on or after this day

October 1 - Last day to select auditor status

October 29 Last day to withdraw from AQ 2018 classes

November 26 - End AQ2018 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.

Part One - Research, due week 4 (15%)

Part Two - Conceptualize, due week 7 (15%)

Part Three - Proposal, work in progress, sample or test that represents the look and tone of the final version, a plan for execution. (30%)

Participation/Attendance (40%)

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 collegewide 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)

Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video, Catherine Russell. Duke University Press, 1999.

Visualizing Theory. ed. Lucien Taylor. Routledge, 1994.

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: 9/11 Introduction to course, structure, assignments, classmates

Assignment:

Read, "What Types of Documentary are there?" (excerpt from Introduction to Documentary by Bill Nichols. 2001, Indiana University Press)

Read: The Porcupine and The Car, Bill Viola

Begin Part One of final project: due week 4

Week Two: 9/18 Ethnography Part One

Screening: Cannibal Tours, Dennis O'Rourke

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

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

Week Three: 9/25 Ethnography Part Two

Screening: I Touched Her Legs, 2014, Eva Marie Rodbro

Music Club, 2015, Steve Wetzel

Final Project Part One: due next week

Week Four: 10/2 Ethnography Part Three

Screening: Manakamana (Stephanie Spray & Pacho Velez, 2013)

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

Real Italian Pizza (1972, David Rimmer)

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

Due: Part One of Final Project - Research

Begin Part Two of Final Project, due week 7.

Week Five 10/9: Process Part One

Screening: I'm in Pittsburgh and it's Raining by Jesse McLean, 2015

Glas, 1958, Bert Haanstra

The Way Things Go, 1987 Fischli and Weiss

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

Week Six: 10/16 Process Part Two

Screening: TBD

Part Two of Final Project Due Next Week

Week Seven: 10/23 Process Part Three

Screen: TBD short; class work for final project

Due: Part Two of Final Project - Concept

Begin Part Three of Final Project, due week 10

Week Eight: 10/30 Conceptual Part One, collage
Screen: Dani Leventhal, selected work
other collage artists

Week Nine: 11/6 Conceptual Part Two - the essay film
Screen: Prison in 12 Landscapes, 2016, Brett Story
clips: San Soleil, Chris Marker; Images of The World and The Inscription of War, Harun Farocki
Due next week: Final Project - Complete Pre-production Package

Week Ten: 11/13 Conceptual Part Three - The non-fiction films of Deborah Strattman
Screen: The Illinois Parables, 2016, Deborah Strattman
Due: Final Project - Complete Pre-production Package