Documentary Producing
DC 326-801 / DC 426-801
Winter Quarter 2020
Tuesdays: 5:45 to 9:00 p.m.

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Weekday email communication only
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*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 preproduction, 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 your story idea into 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 crowdbuilding campaign

**REQUIREMENTS:** Have a story idea for your documentary.

**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 with updates on D2L. 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 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 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 abiity 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 will be available on d2l.depaul.edu

**FILM VIEWING**
Films will be screened and analyzed as part of in-class assignments. 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 Disabiities (CSD) at: 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. I will respond until 6 p.m. on Fridays.

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.

**SPEAKERS**
Depending on the availability of filmmakers, distributors and film festival representatives who are invited to speak, the syllabus topic schedule may need to be adjusted to make room for their visit.

Week 1: Jan.7

TOPICS: Introductions
What doc background/films have you made? Past films, work in progress, films you want to make
The Baobab Stories
Documentary Producing - Breaking down the process
The Five Ws of your Film
Who are the Main Characters/Archetypes
Why this Story/Why Now
Loglines, Synopsis
Research Strategy
View Film and In-Class Analysis

**Assignment Due By Next Class:** Be prepared to talk about your proposed documentary in class using the 5 Ws as your guide. Submit a logline and synopsis to D2L.

Week 2: Jan.14

TOPICS: THE PITCH - film/ideas
In-Class Review of Your Loglines and Synopsis
Breakout Session on Research Strategy
Archetypes
Main Characters
The Proposal/What's the story?

View Film and In-Class Analysis

**Assignment Due By Next Class:** Write a two-page proposal draft based on the documentary that you will produce. Use the 5 Ws as your guide. Submit to D2L. Be prepared to talk about two of your main characters or key organizations and their importance to your doc. Bring questions on how to research your documentary.

Week 3: Jan.21

TOPICS: Research Strategy/Where are you in your research?
Timelines/Shooting Schedules/Budget
Finding Your Audience and Community Engagement
Niche marketing, outreach to communities and organizations, and partnerships
Film impact
Social Media/Tools
Websites and Content
How doc films live on the internet
View Film and In-Class Analysis

**Assignment Due By Next Class:** Write timeline and shooting schedule for your documentary. Calculate your budget based on this timeline and shooting schedule. Answer the following questions: Where are you now in researching your documentary? Who will you interview? If you have already interviewed someone, where are you in this process? What does this person bring to the story? What, if any, footage or interviews have been recorded or captured?

In-class students, be prepared to pitch in class.
Online students, submit your pitch to D2L.

Week 4: Jan.28

TOPICS:

Hear doc pitches in class
Review timelines and shooting schedules
What works/What needs more time
Update on Doc Research
View Film and In-Class Analysis

**Assignment Due By Next Class:** Who is your audience and why? Choose two film websites on a topic similar to yours and present to class. What works or what's missing in the websites? Choose a good example as a model for you to follow and point to a bad example of one to avoid.

Write a Call to Action Statement. Outcomes - how do you see your film creating impact? Find three funders or organizations whose mission fits your call to action.

Week 5: Feb.4

TOPICS:

Doc Films and Call to Action or Observational
Foundations and Organizations as Partners
Mission Statements and What to Learn From Them
Review Funding and Grant Applications

**Assignment Due By Next Class:** Complete Funding/Grant Application for your doc film. An example will be provided for you. Submit to D2L. Fine tune your doc pitch based on notes from your previous pitch and the work you've done on your documentary so far.

In-class students, be prepared to pitch again in class.
Online students, submit your pitch to D2L.

Week 6: Feb.11

TOPICS: Hear fine-tuned doc pitches
Class Feedback
Final Doc Package discussion

**Assignment Due By Next Class:** You're already working toward this by completing assignments and pitching in class, but now earnestly begin work on your final doc project.

Week 7: Feb.18

TOPICS: Community Screenings. Study Guides
Conceptualize community screenings. Look at screening kits.
Introduce Study Guides. Activities.
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.

View film and class analysis based on community screenings examples.

**Assignment Due By Next Class:** Think of activities to go with the issues in your film. Write an outline for these activities and a study guide that includes a list of resources such as narrative films, books, fiction, poetry. Be prepared to provide an update on your documentary project.

**Assignment:** Continue working on your final doc project.

Week 8: Feb.25

TOPICS: Doc Project Updates/Troubleshooting
Distribution Strategies
Distributor representative class visit
Ethics and Fair Use
Copyright, Clearance and Releases

View film and analysis based on today's class topics.

**Assignment Due By Next Class:** What is your distribution strategy for your film? Why is this the right fit for your film? Provide examples of other films that are similar to your topic that have taken this approach?

**Assignment:** Continue working on your final doc project.

Week 9: March 3

TOPICS:
Film festival strategies
Film festival representatives class visit
Q&A with film festival representatives

**Assignment:** Continue working on your final doc proposal project.

**Assignment:** Be prepared to pitch in our next class.

Week 10: March 10

Hear fine-tuned pitch
Pitch Feedback
Class Review

Questions about final doc proposal project

**Assignment:** Continue working on your final doc proposal project. This constitutes as your final and it is due next week.

Week 11: March 17

Finals are due by class time today.
**Assignment Due:** Final Doc Proposal Package