

DC 471 Documentary Production
Syllabus – Spring 2015
Mondays 1:30-4:45

Dana Hodgdon
CDM 407

Advising Hours: Mon. 12:00-1:30
Weds. 1:00-3:00
Office Hours: Mon. 5:00-6:30
Weds. 3:00-5:00

John Grierson



The documentary is the “*creative treatment of actuality.*”

Frederick Wiseman



“What I try to do is edit the films so that they will have a dramatic structure, that is why I object to some extent to the term observational cinema or cinema vérité, because observational cinema to me at least connotes just hanging around with one thing being as valuable as another and that is not true. At least that is not true for me and cinema vérité is just a pompous French term that has absolutely no meaning as far as I'm concerned.”

Edgar Moran



“There are two ways to conceive of the cinema of the Real: the first is to pretend that you can present reality to be seen; the second is to pose the problem of reality. In the same

way, there were two ways to conceive cinéma-vérité. The first was to pretend that you brought truth. The second was to pose the problem of truth.”

Jean-Luc Godard



“Cinema is truth 24 times per second.”

Ken Burns



“Film is a lie 24 times a second”

Course Overview

In this course we will explore the documentary filmmaking process by viewing a wide range of documentary films and by making several documentary projects. Students will learn interview techniques (both formal interviews and on-the run/”vox populi” interviews), techniques for visualizing and shooting “b roll” footage, and how to construct narratives and stories through the integration of sound and images. Special emphasis will be placed on developing technical proficiencies in hand-held cinematography, location sound recording, and editing. Finally, through screening and discussing a variety of historically significant documentary films students will learn to define their own personal directorial approach to documentary filmmaking.

PREREQUISITES: DC 210 and DC 220 or equivalents.

Course Outline

Week 1	3/30	Intro, organization, assignments. Lecture: A brief history of the documentary. Screening: Monterey Pop , D.A. Pennebaker, 1968, 78 minutes. Reading: Rabiger Part 1, pp. 3-49
Week 2	4/6	Lecture/Lab: Documentary cinematography and sound recording techniques, hand-held camera, boom mics, stick mics, lav mics. On the street interviews. Screening: Grey Gardens , Albert and David Maysles, 1975, 100 minutes. Reading: Rabiger Part 2, pp. 51-127
Week 3	4/13	Lecture/Lab: Cinematography and sound recording techniques continued. In class shooting exercises. Screening: WR: Mysteries of the Organism , Dusan Makavejev, 1971, 85 minutes. Reading: Rabiger Parts 4 and 5, pp. 143-281.
Week 4	4/20	Documentary Assignment #1 “Vox Populi” due in class for screening and critique. Screening: Sherman’s March , Ross McElwee, 1986, 157 minutes (1 st half).
Week 5	4/27	Student Teams pitch ideas for Documentary Assignment #2 “Field Piece/Portrait”. Screening: Sherman’s March (2 nd half) Reading: Rabiger Part 3, pp. 119-138.
Week 6	5/4	Student Teams pitch ideas for Documentary Assignment # 3. Screening: The Thin Blue Line , Errol Morris, 1988, 103 minutes. Reading: Rabiger Part 6, pp. 287-406

Week 7	5/11	<p>Documentary Assignment # 2 “Field Piece/Portrait” due in class for screening and critique.</p> <p>Screening: Roger and Me, Michael Moore, 1989, 91 minutes.</p> <p>Reading: Rabiger Part 7, pp. 407-496</p>
Week 8	5/18	<p>Lecture: Student Teams - progress reports/ screen footage for Documentary Assignment # 3.</p> <p>Screening: Murderball, Henry Rubin and Dana Shapiro, 2005, 85 minutes.</p> <p>Reading: Rabiger Part 8, pp. 499-535</p>
Week 9	5/25	Memorial Day. No class.
Week 10	6/1	<p>A special twin bill:</p> <p>Screening: Grizzly Man, Werner Herzog, 2005, 103 minutes.</p> <p>Screening: Blackfish, Gabriela Cowperthwaite, 2013, 90 minutes.</p>
Week 11	6/8	<p>Please Note: The Final Exam for this course is scheduled for Monday June 8th – 2:45-5:00. We will use this time to screen final projects – Documentary Assignment # 3 due in class. Attendance is mandatory. Following the screening, <u>graduate students</u> will take the final exam.</p>

Documentary Creative Assignments

Documentary Assignment # 1 – “Vox Populi”, literally voice of the people. Working in teams of 2 you will shoot and edit together a short (2-3 mins. total running time) series of sound bites on a selected topic. This topic can be political, social, current events, etc. Remember, don’t ask questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no”. Must be turned in as full res Quicktime, SD DVD, and upload to Vimeo.

Documentary Assignment # 2 – “Field Piece/Portrait.” Working in teams of 2-3 you will shoot and edit a short (3-5 minutes) piece with interview(s) and b roll. Must be turned in as full res Quicktime, SD DVD, and upload to Vimeo.

Documentary Assignment # 3 – Working in teams of 2-3 you will shoot and edit a completed documentary film. Target length is 5-15 minutes. Must be turned in as full res Quicktime, SD DVD, and upload to Vimeo.

Text

Directing the Documentary, Michael Rabiger, Fourth Edition, 2004.

Required Materials

External hard drive for delivery of full res Quicktime. SD DVDs.

Grading

Class Attendance and Participation	10%
Documentary Assignment # 1	15%
Documentary Assignment # 2	20%
Dcoumentary Assignment # 3	30%
Final Exam	25%

Course Policies – In addition to DePaul University course policies (see student handbook), the following special policies will apply to this course.

Attendance – Classes will consist of lecture, screenings, discussion, and creative exercises. Attendance is mandatory. An absence is defined as not showing up for class, or showing up 15 minutes or more late. Any absences will result in a reduction of the attendance/participation grade.

Assignments and Exercises – Assignments and exercises must be completed by the due date as indicated in the syllabus. Late work will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor.

Examinations – Students who do not take exams during the regularly scheduled time will receive a failing grade for the exam unless they have contacted the instructor in advance to arrange for a make-up exam. Make-up exams will be administered by the College according to its make-up exam schedule.

Plagiarism – Plagiarism on assignments or cheating on exams are serious offenses and earn the student a failing grade for the class. Please read the Academic Integrity Policy (AIP) at: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/handbook/code16.html>.

Content Changes – Depending on time factors, the assignments projected for the term may require slight alteration or rescheduling.

Working in Groups – For projects for this course you will be working in groups. A major component of producing films and videos is teamwork. In this course many of you will be working as a creative team for the first time. Most student teams work very well together. But sometimes personality conflicts or creative conflicts can arise. It is your job as a team to work through these conflicts, because if you don't, your project will suffer. If things get really difficult you can come to me as a team and I will help mediate/resolve the situation.

Office Hours/My Availability – I enjoy working with my students and am always available for advising, answering questions, etc. **To meet with me your best bet is to set up an advising appointment with me thru MYCDM.** If you stop by during my office hours I may be in the building, but not in my office. If that is the case, call me on my cell phone and we'll connect up.