

SEMINAR IN DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING (TFM 665)

SYLLABUS

Documentary Video Workshop
TFM 665 Spring 2005
Friday 2-4:40

INSTRUCTOR: MARK FREEMAN

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ADVISORY:

Students are expected to be familiar with the basics of location video production and video camera operation. The production demands outside of class are substantial.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This documentary video production workshop emphasizes nonfiction field production. The workshop combines theory, history and practice. Hands-on demonstrations, screenings, readings, lectures and discussion prepare students to produce a documentary video production. Students gain production experience working individually and in groups. Classes include an emphasis on research, pre-planning and writing skills as integral components of video production.

OBJECTIVE

Students will demonstrate the ability to research, develop and produce a 5 to 10 minute documentary.

EVALUATION

Students will be graded according to the originality of their approach to the medium, technical competence in using the equipment, as well as over-all understanding and progress demonstrated in assignments, projects and discussions.

Reflection Journal/Artist's Notebook

Students should keep a journal and make at least weekly entries. These entries can consider the challenges and triumphs of the creative process. It's a place to record significant observations; to record dreams; and to pose questions for further research and development. You may include notes about the development of characters, conflicts and locations. You might also wish to include notes about the production process itself. The journal is a place for you to systematically reflect and consider the progress you are making in this semester's creative journey. Insofar as you may choose to critically consider the "process of your production" in your documentary, the journal can provide important "raw footage." This notebook will constitute a portion of "class participation."

Student Contracts

By the second-class meeting each student will prepare a workplan/timeline describing weekly plans and reasonable expectations of measurable progress by the end of the semester. This workplan will be the basis a class contract. It will be used for student assessment purposes.

Teaching Presentations

Each student will have two opportunities to formally share findings. The purposes of these presentations are twofold. Presenters will gain experience that will help them to prepare for conferences, festivals, job talks and undergraduate teaching. (It is also useful practice for the thesis defense.)

Presentation 1

Each student will prepare a written 3 to 5 page analysis of a documentary. (Inform your discussion with reference to relevant research and articles.) Choose a work that relates stylistically and/or thematically to your documentary. Be prepared to present your work orally to the class. Include selected excerpt(s) from the program illustrating your contentions. Please cue or dub your screening tape before your presentation. DVD's are better. Be prepared to discuss:

Story Structure

Style and Approach

Editing

Credibility

Ethics

Overall Impact

Although you are encouraged to seek out extraordinary films, you may consider work from MTV, HBO, PBS, Discovery, the History Channel and your local video rental store. Documentaries may also be viewed and checked out at the Media Center

Consider the suggesting in (R) chapter 9.

Presentation 2

Using the criteria listed above, present an analysis of your own documentary. Discussion by all workshop participants will provide useful feedback. To facilitate this process, a discussant will be selected who will prepare a response and lead a discussion following each presentation.

Be prepared to screen selected scenes and examples from your work-in-progress.

Grades

Contracted Work 60%

Presentation 20%

Discussant 10%

Attendance and Participation 10%

Grades A-F with plus and minus.

1. Degree of Difficulty. How ambitious, imaginative and challenging is the production? Is it Intriguing? Compelling? or Predictable?
2. Organization. How well organized and efficient is the production team? Is there evidence of thorough pre-production and planning?
3. Technical Competence. Is the production well executed? Are the video and audio elements well integrated? To what degree does technique heighten or diminish the overall impact of the program?
4. Audience reception. How was the program received ? Did it have its intended effect on viewers.

DUE DATES FOR ALL FILM PROJECTS ARE FINAL. LATE PROJECTS RECEIVE REDUCED CREDIT.

Required Text

Directing the Documentary, 4th Edition by Rabinger, Michael (R)

Introduction to Documentary Nichols, Bill (N)

Documentary Story Telling Bernard, Sheila (B)

Recommended Texts

The New Documentary in Action, Alan Rosenthal

Writing, Directing & Producing Documentary Films by A. Rosenthal

Documentary: A History of the Nonfiction Film, Erik Barnouw

Final Cut Pro for Macintosh, Lisa Brenneis

Resources on-line

<http://www.findsounds.com/>

<http://freestockfootage.com/>

CLASS FORMAT

Field Production

This course requires students to participate in field trips, research or studies that include course work that will be performed off-campus. Participation in such activities may result in accidents or personal injuries. Students participating in the event are aware of these risks, and agree to hold harmless San Diego State University, the State of California, the Trustees of the California State University and Colleges and its officers, employees and agents against all claims, demands suits, judgments, expenses and costs of any kind on account of their participation in the activities. Students using their own vehicles to transport other students to such activities should have current automobile insurance.

Week 1

INTRODUCTION

Reading

R 1 and 2; N 2 and 4

Week 2

WHAT IS DOCUMENTARY

Reading

R 3-8, 10, 11 Questionnaire p. 564

Work Plans due

Week 3

RESEARCH, WRITING and PREPRODUCTION

Reading

R 15 and 16, B 1-10, N 3

Oral & Written Reports on Preproduction Interviews Due Week #3

Week 4

OVERVIEW/REVIEW OF BASIC FIELD PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

Camera Sound Lighting

Reading

R 18-27 skip 24, N 6

Treatment and/or Draft Script Due Week #4

Week 5
INTERVIEWS IN THE FIELD
Visualizing
Directing and interviewing techniques

Reading
R 24, B 11

In class Production Exercise

Budget and Shooting Schedule Due Week #5

Week 6
VOICE, ETHICS and AESTHETICS

Reading
R 17 N 1

Week 7
DIRECT CINEMA and CINEMA VERITE
RUSHES

Reading
N 10
Bring Reflection Journals to Class

Week 8
POST PRODUCTION
Reading
R 29-37

Week 9
COMMUNITY BASED DOCUMENTARIES

READING
B 12-14

Week 10 NO CLASS. ENJOY THE BREAK

Week 11
REFLEXIVE DOCUMENTARIES
Untold Stories --The Rights Culture

Shooting Log Due Week #11

Week 12
BLURRED BOUNDARIES

Transcripts Due Week #12

Week 13
FINAL PROJECTS WORK-IN-PROGRESS SCREENINGS

Final Narration Due Week #13

Rough Cut Final Projects

Sign up for individual meetings with instructor.

Week 14
INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR REGARDING FINAL PROJECT

Week 15
May 6, 2005

FINAL PROJECTS DUE with all Notebooks, Reports and Reflection Journal. This includes Client Approval and Delivery of all Dubs.

Reflection Journals

Self-reflection and critical analysis are an important component of the learning process. Students will maintain a weekly journal. The journal is intended to provide a structured opportunity to thoughtfully consider both the process of production.

Please be as specific as possible, providing examples in your discussion of the questions raised below.

Each weekly journal entry should include:
Summary of tasks performed relevant to the final project.

Reflection about the work. Problems? Solutions? Accomplishments? Plans? What are your thoughts and feeling about the process of creation/production?

Consideration of the role of your collaborators and subjects.

During the course of the semester you should also address the following questions:

- What have you learned about your subject?
- How effective was your interpersonal communication. How could it be improved?
- Did your work raises any ethical issues?
- Are there any potential conflicts between your multiple responsibilities --- To the subjects? To the larger community (the audience)? To yourself (in terms of artistic integrity)?
- Is this a subject or issue, which you will continue to be concerned about beyond the work you have done in class? Why? or Why not?

FINAL PROJECT

Documentation

With their final project each team will submit a clearly organized notebook, which contains:

Contract Due Class #3

Oral & Written Reports on Preproduction Interviews Due Class #3

Treatment and/or Draft Script Due Class #4

SDSU Waiver and Release Forms

SDSU Film Shoot Evidence of Coverage

*Budget and Shooting Schedule Due Class #5

Shooting Log Due Class #11

Transcripts Due Class #13

Final Narration Due Class #14

NB: Only cleared music is permitted.

Each student will include in the notebook a sealed envelope containing a confidential production report detailing the work of each member of the crew, as well as an evaluation of the production--its pluses and minuses. What did you learn? What was the best/worst experience? What would you do differently if you could? Advice for students who will take this class in the future? Suggestions for the prof?

This documentation is essential and makes a significant contribution to the final grade.

Students will complete a Mini DV or DVD Tape for the instructor,

Credits will include acknowledgement of all production work and donated equipment and services. In addition please include the following

Music Credits

SDSU TFM standard credit line "A Production of the School of Theatre, Television and Film SDSU (year)

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