

## Documentary Production

### Description

Documentary Production is a one-semester course which is skills and projects-based. It is designed to introduce students to the process of documentary filmmaking. Students will analyze techniques used to produce documentaries and discuss the role of the documentary film in contemporary society. They will learn how to develop ideas for possible exploration, conduct interviews with subjects pertinent to their films, capture professional quality footage and edit a short documentary film over the course of the semester. Students should take this course if they are interested in the media arts, storytelling, broadcast journalism, filmmaking or editing.

### Course Overview

#### Course Goals

Students should:

- Define documentary film and identify its characteristics, elements and modes/genres
- Analyze the effect of each mode / genre on the viewer
- Understand the responsibility of the documentary film maker to his/her craft, subject, and audience
- Discuss the role of the documentary in representing the other
- Discuss the ethical considerations of non-fiction film-making and viewing
- Utilize a video camera and audio equipment to capture interviews and b-roll
- Choose a topic and follow the stages of production to develop a treatment, pitch the idea, and structure a documentary short
- Prepare for and conduct interviews by researching, developing open-ended questions, setting up equipment and actively listening
- Edit interviews and footage into a final documentary short with a beginning, middle and end

#### Essential Questions

- How has documentary film evolved over time?
- Is objectivity in documentary film making a myth?
- How does the documentary filmmaker present the “truth”?
- What are the elements of documentary films?
- What are the modes of documentary film making?
- What are the production characteristics of each mode?
- What responsibility does the documentary filmmaker have to their subject and audience?
- What possible ethical considerations arise when creating a documentary film? How might the filmmaker respond?
- How does editing shape meaning?
- How do we conduct ourselves during interviews and while shooting out in the field?
- How do we use video and audio equipment to capture interviews and b-roll?
- How do we develop an idea for film through the stages of production?

#### Assessments

##### *Common Assessments*

- Ethics debate
- Position paper on an ethical issue that arose from the making of a documentary film
- Presentation of a scene from a documentary film which demonstrates understanding of its elements and the inherent message of the scene
- Using video and audio equipment, create a biographical documentary short about a classmate
- Portfolio of pre-production work for final film: treatment, pitch, research, interview questions and production calendar
- Interview footage and relevant b-roll for final project
- Final DVD of documentary short with director’s commentary

<p><b>Content Outline</b></p> <p>I. <a href="#">Unit 1</a> - Representing Reality and Truth: A Brief History of Documentary Filmmaking</p> <p>II. <a href="#">Unit 2</a> - Documentary Genres: Expository, Observational, Interactive &amp; Reflexive</p> <p>III. <a href="#">Unit 3</a> - Using Video Equipment &amp; Manual Functions to Capture Footage and Interviews</p> <p>IV. <a href="#">Unit 4</a> - Pre-Production: Planning and Preparing to Tell the Story</p> <p>V. <a href="#">Unit 5</a> - Production: Interviewing and Capturing B-roll Footage</p> <p>VI. <a href="#">Unit 6</a> - Post-Production: Editing and DVD Authoring, Screening &amp; Critiquing</p>	<p><b>Standards</b></p> <p><a href="#">21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills</a> are met in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Learning and Innovation Skills</b></li> <li>• <b>Information, Media and Technology Skills</b></li> <li>• <b>Life and Career Skills</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Grade Level Skills</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills Matrix</li> </ul>
	<p><b><u>Information, Communication &amp; Technology Curriculum Skills</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questioning (1)</li> <li>• Notetaking (1-3)</li> <li>• Keywords (1 &amp; 2)</li> <li>• Locate Sources (1 &amp; 3)</li> <li>• Gathering Information (1)</li> <li>• Evaluate Information Sources (3)</li> <li>• Visual Literacy (1,3,4)</li> <li>• Organizing Information (1, 3, 5)</li> <li>• Process (2 &amp; 3)</li> <li>• Synthesis (2 &amp; 3)</li> <li>• Product (1 &amp; 2)</li> <li>• Evaluate Process and Product (1-3)</li> <li>• Citing Sources &amp; Plagiarism (4 &amp; 5)</li> <li>• Collaboration (1, 2, &amp; 5)</li> <li>• Communication (1, 2, 4 &amp; 6)</li> <li>• Digital Library Technology (1 &amp; 2)</li> <li>• Media Literacy (1 &amp; 3)</li> </ul>	

**Pacing Guide**

1st Marking Period			2nd Marking Period		
Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	
Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
<a href="#"><u>Representing Reality and Truth: A Brief History of Documentary Filmmaking</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Documentary Genres: Expository, Observational, Interactive &amp; Reflexive</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Using Video Equipment &amp; Manual Functions to Capture Footage and Interviews</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Pre-Production: Planning and Preparing to Tell the Story</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Production: Interviewing and Capturing B-roll Footage</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Post-Production: Editing and DVD Authoring, Screening &amp; Critiquing</u></a>
2 weeks	4 weeks	3 weeks	3 weeks	3 weeks	3 weeks

**Unit 1 –Representing Reality and Truth: A Brief History of Documentary Filmmaking, 2 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards:**

*Students will be able to:*

- Elaborate, refine, analyze and evaluate their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Think Creatively*)
- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Understand both how and why media messages are constructed, and for what purposes (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Analyze Media*)
- Examine how individuals interpret messages differently, how values and points of view are included or excluded, and how media can influence beliefs and behaviors (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Analyze Media*)

**Unit Objectives**

*Students should:*

- trace the evolution of non-fiction film making.
- define documentary film and identify its characteristics.
- identify the main elements (video, audio and text/narration) of documentary films.
- understand the responsibilities a documentary filmmaker has to his/her audience and subjects.
- discuss the ethical considerations of non-fiction film making and viewing.
- discuss the role of documentary films in representing reality and “the other”.

**Essential Questions**

- How has documentary film evolved over time?
- Is objectivity documentary film making a myth?
- How does a documentary filmmaker present the “truth”?
- What problems arise when representing “the other?”
- What are the elements of documentary films?
- What responsibilities does a documentarian have to their craft, their subjects and their audience?
- What possible ethical considerations arise when creating a documentary film? How might the filmmaker respond?
- How does editing shape meaning?

**Focus Questions**

- What is bias? How does the filmmaker address their own biases when producing a documentary film?
- How does a documentarian make sure to fulfill their obligations to their craft, subjects and audience?

**Assessments**

- Position paper on an ethical issue that arose from the making of a documentary film
- Ethics debate
- Presentation of a scene from a documentary film where students identify the visual, audio and text content and discuss the possible meanings of the scene and the impact it may have on the audience

**Skill Objectives**

Students will:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What creative solutions can we develop to address possible ethical issues that may arise during filmmaking?</li><li>• What role does editing play in the creation of a documentary film? / How can editing shape the impact on an audience?</li></ul>	
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**Unit 2 - Documentary Genres: Expository, Observational, Interactive & Reflexive, 4 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards:**  
*Students will be able to:*

- Use a wide range of idea creation techniques (such as brainstorming) (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Think Creatively*)
- Develop, implement and communicate new ideas to others effectively (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Work Creatively with Others*)
- Use communication for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade) (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Set goals with tangible and intangible success criteria (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Manage Goals and Time*)
- Respond open-mindedly to different ideas and values (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Work Effectively in Diverse Teams*)

<p><b>Unit Objectives</b>  <i>Students should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify the various modes of documentary film production.</li> <li>• identify the production techniques used in each mode of documentary production.</li> <li>• analyze the effect of each mode on the viewer and the message.</li> <li>• discuss how each mode may best suit the exploration of a particular topic.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Essential Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the four modes of documentary films?</li> <li>• What approach to documentary filmmaking is taken in each mode?</li> <li>• How does each mode best suit various topic explorations?</li> <li>• What affect does each mode have on the audience?</li> </ul> <p><b>Focus Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the characteristics of the various modes of documentary production?</li> <li>• What production techniques are inherent to each mode?</li> <li>• How do we decide which mode best suits our topic of interest?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will begin to explore topics of interest and present a position paper on a topic and mode of they have chosen while supporting their creative decisions</li> <li>• Students will write an essay about a documentary film and explain how the themes of the film were presented through a particular director’s POV and style</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Skill Objectives</b>                  Students will:</p>

**Unit 3 –Using Video Equipment & Manual Functions to Capture Footage and Interviews, 3 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards:**

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work and understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Work Creatively with Others*)
- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and non-verbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Use communication for a range of purposes (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Collaborate with Others*)
- Conduct themselves in a respectable, professional manner (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Interact Effectively with Others*)

**Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- identify parts and the various functions of a digital video camera.
- use manual camera settings to adjust white balance, aperture, shutter speed and focus.
- demonstrate responsible use of equipment.
- demonstrate various compositional techniques, angles and camera movement using a digital video camcorder.
- develop open ended interview questions.
- utilize wireless lavalier microphones on interview subjects while monitoring sound quality.
- set up (technically and spatially) and conduct an interview using a digital video camcorder and tripod.
- use a digital video camcorder to capture desired “B-roll” footage.

**Essential Questions**

- How do we use a digital video camera to create professional quality footage and record interviews?
- How do we set up for an interview?
- How do we develop questions that elicit deeper responses?
- How do we build a rapport and put our subjects at ease prior to interviewing?
- How do we conduct interviews?
- What behavioral protocol should we follow when filming others and using various shooting locations?
- How do we develop a shot list of b-roll which supports the interview/topic?

**Focus Questions**

- How do we develop questions that elicit more than yes or no answers?
- How do we conduct ourselves before, during and after an interview?
- How do we actively listen?

**Assessments**

- Student will create a hands-on demonstration of camera manual settings and tripod use – A visual portfolio demonstration of various camera angles and manual settings
- Students will develop a list of questions designed to see specific information about a topic and elicit deeper responses
- Students will set up, conduct and record several interviews in the TV studio – demonstrating active listening skills and developing follow-up questions during the interview
- Students will create a documentary / biopic profile of a classmate with interviews and related personal photos

**Skill Objectives**

Students will:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do we set up equipment to capture professional quality interviews?</li><li>• How do we use manual camera settings to capture quality b-roll footage?</li><li>• How do we care for equipment?</li></ul>	
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**Unit 4 – Pre-Production: Planning and Preparing to Tell the Story, 3 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards:**

*Students will be able to:*

- Create new and worthwhile ideas (both incremental and radical concepts) (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Think Creatively*)
- Develop, implement and communicate new ideas to others effectively (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Work Creatively with Others*)
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Incorporate feedback effectively (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Be Flexible*)
- Set goals with tangible and intangible success criteria (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Manage Goals and Time*)
- Know when it is appropriate to listen and when to speak (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Interact Effectively with Others*)

**Unit Objectives**

*Students should:*

- narrow down to a topic of interest and identify possible themes within the topic to explore in depth.
- determine feasibility of producing a documentary with given time and resource constraints.
- develop a project treatment which outlines their ideas for the film short.
- pitch the project idea to the crew.
- perform research about the topic.
- identify and contact experts and subjects to be interviewed for the film.
- develop specific questions for each subject to be interviewed and indicate a logical question sequence.
- determine the approach (documentary mode, tone, storytelling technique, structure) to be taken in producing the film.
- develop a preliminary shot list of b-roll footage/cutaways to be captured for the film.
- scout out locations for filming.

**Essential Questions**

- How do we prepare for filming?
- How do we choose a topic/story that will be compelling to the audience?
- How do we narrow the focus of a film as to make its production feasible?
- How do we determine the best production approach for our chosen film topic?
- How do we communicate our ideas/vision to interested to interested parties for approval?
- How do we determine a structure which best communicates the message of the film?
- How do we develop questions that elicit deeper responses?

**Focus Questions**

- How do we find themes within a given topic?
- How do we prepare a treatment and pitch our ideas effectively?
- How do we best structure our documentary?
- How do we research the topic and identify possible experts to interview?
- What steps do we take in preparing to shoot?

**Assessment**

- A proposal portfolio with the following will be developed by each production team: a treatment, research notes, a list of subjects with specific questions for each subject, a shot list of desired b-roll footage, a production calendar, and any necessary permissions

**Skill Objectives**

Students will:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• create a production calendar that outlines a shooting schedule for the production stage.</li><li>• secure necessary equipment and permissions for shooting.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do we prepare a production calendar?</li><li>• How do we secure location and talent permissions?</li></ul>	
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**Unit 5 – Production: Interviewing and Capturing B-roll Footage, 3 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards:**

*Students will be able to:*

- Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Implement Innovations*)
- Communicate effectively in diverse environments (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Collaborate with Others*)
- Adapt to varied roles, jobs responsibilities, schedules and context (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Adapt to Change*)
- Monitor, define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Work Independently*)
- Set and meet goals, even in the face of obstacles and competing pressure (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Manage Projects*)
- Use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Guide and Lead Others*)

**Unit Objectives**

*Students should:*

- use recording equipment (video and audio) to capture desired footage.
- utilize and revise production calendar (as needed) to accomplish the filming of a short film within a given timeframe.
- determine the best setup for interviews.
- conduct and record interviews.
- actively listen to responses and develop follow-up questions as needed during interview.
- capture desired “B-roll” footage.
- monitor and address possible technical issues as they arise in the field.

**Essential Questions**

- What tasks are accomplished in the production stage of film making?
- How do we work collaboratively as a film crew?
- How do we remain flexible and problem solve during the production stage?

**Focus Questions**

- How do we develop solutions for possible obstacles (ex: when a key crew member is absent)?
- How do we use our storyboard/ shot list to most efficiently capture desired footage?
- How do we prepare production equipment for shooting?
- How do we divide tasks most effectively?
- How do we utilize our production calendar to accomplish the steps of the production stage?

**Assessment**

- Follow production calendar to conduct interviews and capture necessary b-roll footage

**Skill Objectives**

Students will:

**Unit 6 – Post-Production: Editing and DVD Authoring, Screening & Critiquing, 3 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards:**

*Students will be able to:*

- View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Work Creatively*)
- Examine how individuals interpret messages differently, how values and points of view are included or excluded, and how media can influence beliefs and behaviors (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Analyze Media*)
- Understand and effectively utilize the most appropriate expressions and interpretations in diverse, multi-cultural environments (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Create Media Products*)
- Utilize time and manage workload efficiently (21<sup>st</sup> CS - *Manage Goals and Time*)

**Unit Objectives**

*Students should:*

- log footage for best film takes.
- import chosen footage into editing software.
- use Final Cut to edit footage.
- import royalty free music and sound effects for the creation of a soundtrack.
- create title sequences and credits.
- choose and insert transitions for a desired effect.
- manually adjust audio levels.
- export final film into a compressed file.
- design a DVD of the final film (complete with titles, buttons and still frame graphics).

**Essential Questions**

- What is the purpose of post-production?
- How do we manipulate footage and audio in editing?
- How do we work collaboratively to bring a group project to fruition?
- How do we peer evaluate for the improvement of a group product?
- How do we prepare a film for distribution?

**Focus Questions**

- What are the steps in the post-production stage?
- How do we create title sequences, transitions and credits?
- How do we develop a multi-layered sequence?
- How do we manipulate the quality of a clip?
- How do we import and manipulate secondary sound (soundtracks and sound effects)?
- How do manually adjust audio tracks?
- How do we export a finalized sequence?
- How do we create a DVD that is (closely tied) to the film story?

**Assessments**

- Edit footage using Final Cut
- Create and utilize titles, credits transitions
- Create a sound track of royalty free music and sound effects (if needed)
- Burn final sequence to DVD using DVD authoring software
- Critique and praise aspects of final films after screening

**Skill Objectives**

Students will: