

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 are interested in the media arts, storytelling, broadcast journalism, filmmaking or editing. Will benefit from this course.

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

- 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
- Documentary film short

Content Outline	Standards	Grade Level Skills
<p>I. Unit 1 - Representing Reality and Truth: A Brief History of Documentary Filmmaking</p> <p>II. Unit 2 - Documentary Genres: Expository, Observational, Interactive & Reflexive</p> <p>III. Unit 3 - Using Video Equipment & Manual Functions to Capture Footage and Interviews</p> <p>IV. Unit 4 - Pre-Production: Planning and Preparing to Tell the Story</p> <p>V. Unit 5 - Production: Interviewing and Capturing B-roll Footage</p> <p>VI. Unit 6 - Post-Production: Editing, Distribution, Screening & Critiquing</p>	<p>21st Century Skills are met in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and Innovation Skills • Information, Media and Technology Skills • Life and Career Skills <p>Common Core State Standards for ELA are met in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Standards 9-12 (Text Types and Purposes, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Range of Writing) • Speaking and Listening Standards 9-12 (Comprehension and Collaboration, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas) • Language Standards 9-12 (Conventions of Standard English, Knowledge of Language, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use) 	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trace the early evolution of documentary film • Deconstruct a documentary film for production techniques and bias • Utilize a code of conduct as they develop story ideas • Discuss the ethics surrounding documentary case studies • Identify various modes of documentary films, their benefits and disadvantages • Develop open-ended questions and plan for interviewing subjects • Utilize manual camera settings, tripods and wireless microphones • Conduct interviews of documentary subjects using techniques discussed in class • Develop story ideas • Pitch ideas to an audience • Create interview questions • Develop a list of relevant footage • Conduct research • Seek permissions to film and schedule appointments • Utilize production equipment to capture interviews with professional audio quality • Capture a variety of professional quality b-roll footage for inclusion in documentary film • Choose most relevant sound bites to tell their story • Edit all footage into a cohesive timeline • Write and record well-paced voiceovers that help tell their story • Use graphics to identify documentary participants/subjects and give credit • Incorporate theme related/royalty free music for added effect • Create compressed versions of their films for viewing and distribution

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
<u>Representing Reality and Truth: A Brief History of Documentary Filmmaking</u>	<u>Documentary Genres: Expository, Observational, Interactive & Reflexive</u>	<u>Using Video Equipment & Manual Functions to Capture Footage and Interviews</u>	<u>Pre-Production: Planning and Preparing to Tell the Story</u>	<u>Production: Interviewing and Capturing B-roll Footage</u>	<u>Post-Production: Editing and Distribution, Screening & Critiquing</u>

Unit 1 –Representing Reality and Truth: A Brief History of Documentary Filmmaking

Standards:

Students will be able to:

- Elaborate, refine, analyze and evaluate their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts (21st CS - *Think Creatively*)
- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts (21st CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions (21st CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Understand both how and why media messages are constructed, and for what purposes (21st 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 (21st 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

- 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
- Develop a code of conduct for their documentary film making
- Discuss ethical issues that arose from the making of a documentary film

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What creative solutions can we develop to address possible ethical issues that may arise during filmmaking? • What role does editing play in the creation of a documentary film? / How can editing shape the impact on an audience? 	
<p>Lesson Planning Resources</p> <p>May include but are not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional books, video resources • Digital projector 		<p>Skill Objectives</p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trace the early evolution of documentary film • Deconstruct a documentary film for production techniques and bias • Utilize a code of conduct as they develop story ideas • Discuss the ethics surrounding documentary case studies

Unit 2 - Documentary Genres: Expository, Observational, Interactive & Reflexive

Standards:

Students will be able to:

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

Unit Objectives

Students should:

- identify the various modes of documentary film production.
- identify the production techniques used in each mode of documentary production.
- analyze the effect of each mode on the viewer and the message.
- discuss how each mode may best suit the exploration of a particular topic.

Essential Questions

- What are the four modes of documentary films?
- What approach to documentary filmmaking is taken in each mode?
- How does each mode best suit various topic explorations?
- What affect does each mode have on the audience?

Focus Questions

- What are the characteristics of the various modes of documentary production?
- What production techniques are inherent to each mode?
- How do we decide which mode best suits our topic of interest?

Assessments

- 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
- 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

Lesson Planning Resources

May include but are not limited to the following:

- Professional books, video resources

Skill Objectives

Students will:

- Identify various modes of documentary films, their benefits and disadvantages

Unit 3 –Using Video Equipment & Manual Functions to Capture Footage and Interviews

Standards:

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work and understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas (21st 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 (21st CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Use communication for a range of purposes (21st CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member (21st CS - *Collaborate with Others*)
- Conduct themselves in a respectable, professional manner (21st 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
- 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we set up equipment to capture professional quality interviews? • How do we use manual camera settings to capture quality b-roll footage? • How do we care for equipment? 	
<p><u>Lesson Planning Resources</u> May include but are not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional books, video resources • Digital Video Camcorder with microphone & headphone jacks and peak meter view capability • Wireless microphones • Tripods • Headphones • Tripods • Digital projector for demonstration purposes 		<p><u>Skill Objectives</u> Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop open-ended questions and plan for interviewing subjects • Utilize manual camera settings, tripods and wireless microphones • Conduct interviews of documentary subjects using techniques discussed in class

Unit 4 – Pre-Production: Planning and Preparing to Tell the Story

Standards:

Students will be able to:

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a production calendar that outlines a shooting schedule for the production stage. • secure necessary equipment and permissions for shooting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we prepare a production calendar? • How do we secure location and talent permissions? 	
<p><u>Lesson Planning Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers with internet access for research • Online databases 		<p><u>Skill Objectives</u></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop story ideas • Pitch ideas • Create interview questions • Develop a list of relevant footage • Conduct research • Seek permissions to film and schedule appointments

Unit 5 – Production: Interviewing and Capturing B-roll Footage

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 (21st CS - *Implement Innovations*)
- Communicate effectively in diverse environments (21st CS - *Communicate Clearly*)
- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal (21st CS - *Collaborate with Others*)
- Adapt to varied roles, jobs responsibilities, schedules and context (21st CS - *Adapt to Change*)
- Monitor, define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight (21st CS - *Work Independently*)
- Set and meet goals, even in the face of obstacles and competing pressure (21st CS - *Manage Projects*)
- Use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal (21st 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

Lesson Planning Resources

- Digital Video Camcorder with microphone & headphone jacks and peak meter view capability
- Wireless microphones
- Tripods

Skill Objectives

Students will:

- Utilize production equipment to capture interviews with professional

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dollies• Headphones	audio quality <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capture a variety of professional quality b-roll footage for inclusion in documentary film
--	--

Unit 6 – Post-Production: Editing and Distribution, Screening & Critiquing,

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 (21st 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 (21st CS - *Analyze Media*)
- Understand and effectively utilize the most appropriate expressions and interpretations in diverse, multi-cultural environments (21st CS - *Create Media Products*)
- Utilize time and manage workload efficiently (21st CS - *Manage Goals and Time*)

Unit Objectives

Students should:

- log footage for best film takes.
- import chosen footage into editing software.
- use digital editing software 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.
- Create a compressed version of 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?

Assessments

- Edit footage using digital editing software
- Write and record copy for voice overs
- Create and utilize titles, credits and transitions
- Create a sound track of royalty free music

Lesson Planning Resources

May include but are not limited to the following:

Skill Objectives

Students will:

- Digital editing software
- Audio recording device for voiceovers
- Graphics software
- Royalty free music library

- Choose most relevant sound bites to tell their story
- Edit all footage into a cohesive timeline
- Write and record well-paced voiceovers that help tell their story
- Use graphics to identify documentary participants/subjects and give credit
- Incorporate theme related/royalty free music for added effect
- Create compressed versions of their films for viewing and distribution