
DOCUMENTARY VIDEO PRODUCTION

RTV 4332

Syllabus and Course Schedule

Instructor: Dr. Andy Opel

Office: UCC 3111

E-mail: aopel@fsu.edu

Office Hours: Thur 12-2 - Additional hours by appointment.

Phone: (W) 644-8768

(C) 322-3349

COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the newsreel footage of the civil rights movement to films such as *The Thin Blue Line*, documentary film and video has played a central role in shaping the lives of individuals and society as a whole. This class will emphasize the power of documentary and the potential to address issues of social significance. Given our privileged location in the capital city of one of the largest states in the nation, this class will encourage you to tap the political, social and cultural resources within Tallahassee.

This class will explore the contemporary world of documentary video production with an overview of the history and major trends in documentary production. The course will combine critical viewing skills with practical instruction in documentary production. This class will be organized as a workshop, requiring weekly participation and collaboration among the class members. Just as you would expect to read great work in a writing workshop, we will view and critique a range of contemporary documentary work. You will learn to critically “read” documentaries at the same time that you learn to critically “write” documentary in the form of a final finished piece that will be submitted to a film festival.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Plan and create documentary videos which communicate specific, identified messages to particular audiences;
- Utilize visual and audio technology in a technically competent and creative way;
- Successfully operate a variety of video cameras and recorders, microphones and mixers;
- Use non-linear video editing software and hardware with skill and elegance;
- Act as a member of a video production team; and constructively critique other's creative work;
- Understand the broad trends in the history and tradition of documentary film and video.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Michael Rabiger, *Directing The Documentary*, 5th Edition. Focal Press, 2009

You should plan to get a NetFlix account for the semester. The basic price is \$7.99/month with a one month free trial, giving you unlimited access to their on-line, on-demand films. They have an extensive documentary collection.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Because this class is organized as workshop where students will be dependent on one another for feedback and input into your projects, class attendance is required. One unexcused absence will be accepted. Further absences will reduce your grade by 2% for each unexcused absence. Please make arrangements prior to classtime if you are unable to attend class.

LATE WORK

Late work will only be accepted when special arrangements have been made prior to the day any assignment is due.

No incompletes will be offered for this class. Grades will be based on the work submitted by the date of the final exam.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments should be well edited with clear, concise writing.

ADA STATEMENT

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations must:

- 1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disabilities Resource Center (SDRC).
- 2) Bring a letter to me from the SDRC indicating your needed accommodations. This must be done within the first two weeks of class.

HONOR CODE

Students are expected to uphold the academic honor code published in the *Florida State University Bulletin* and the *Student Handbook*. The academic honor system of The Florida State University is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility to:

- (1) Uphold the highest standards of integrity in your work
- (2) Refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community.
- (3) Foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community.

MEDIA PRODUCTION PROGRAM (MPP) STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

The Media Production Program (MPP) is highly competitive, expensive, professionally-oriented course of study. Classes have a small number of students compared to most FSU courses due to the need for cohesive team work and

the limited amount and high cost of equipment. Indeed, in some courses students may be working on projects that have actual “clients” with actual deadlines and/or are seen by an audience, thereby putting the students in actual professional situations.

Students depend upon one another as creative team or crew members when they work together. When working individually, each student depends upon the other students in the course and MPP to act responsibly, respectfully, professionally and maturely by keeping to agreed-upon deadlines (especially regarding use of equipment and facilities). Thus, with such a small and specialized program it is possible for a small number of students to disrupt the optimal production and educational experience for the many. It is to prevent this from happening or, if it does happen, to allow for swift, meaningful and consistent consequences for those disrupting the maximum performance of any member or aspect of the MPP, that the following policies are being adopted for all MPP courses.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Since the MPP tries to prepare you for careers in the real world, we feel it is our obligation to communicate to you what the consequences of certain actions or lack of actions would be in the work place. By so doing, we maintain and improve our reputation in the academic and professional worlds, thereby increasing the value of a MPP degree for past, present and future students. Thus, if a student performs an action or fails to perform an action that would likely lead to being fired or reprimanded in a “real world,” professional position, s/he will AT A MINIMUM receive an automatic “F” for the project or unit in progress and/or for any crew work/class participation element of the final course grade. Given the weighting of each project in most MPP classes, an “F” will significantly reduce the final course grade. If there is a second offense, another “F” will be assigned for the current project, thereby in all likelihood leading to a failing grade for the course. Please note that grades lower than C- do not count toward the major and that a course in which a student receives less than a C- would then need to be retaken or another one taken in its place – if there is indeed space in such course(s).

If an offense is sufficiently serious, e.g., it disrupts a live broadcast by Seminole Productions or a cablecast of FSU LIVE or if it disrupts the overall schedule of any production class, it may warrant an “F” as the final course grade. Criminal behaviors such as theft or software piracy at FSU facilities also can warrant an “F” as the final course grade.

Examples of “inappropriate behaviors” include, but are NOT limited to:

- (1) using MPP equipment for personal or income-producing work not explicitly a part of a MPP course or faculty-approved project or checking out said facilities or equipment under your name for such use by another person.
- (2) committing misdemeanor or criminal violations or otherwise being removed or detained by police while in a MPP class or working on a MPP project
- (3) behavior that proves embarrassing to the MPP during a class or while working on a project, especially if the incident takes place in or is seen by members of the public.
- (4) ***Illegally copying software licensed to FSU or in any way corrupting or undermining the MPP’s software or hardware.***
- (5) creating an educational or work environment that disrupts or negatively impacts the members of a class or project group
- (6) changing script copy without permission and notification of the instructor or appropriate student members of the course or project
- (7) adding obscene or inappropriate language or other material to script material, prompters, graphics, packages, or other material
- (8) not giving the proper, professional, respectful attention to any crew assignment especially if such behavior negatively impacts on the performance of another student or a faculty or staff member
- (9) inappropriate language on headsets, the IFB, or microphones
- (10) showing up to a class or production session or using MPP equipment in a impaired state due to use of alcohol or other substances
- (11) not submitting properly completed elements of a group project in a timely and appropriate manner
- (12) erasing, moving or altering the material of another student or faculty or staff member without the explicit advance permission of that student or of the relevant faculty or staff member
- (13) using equipment or facilities during a time booked by other students, faculty or staff unless you receive explicit advance approval to do so

The above are merely a list of examples of inappropriate behaviors. It is offered only to give SOME operational examples of the concept. If there is a dispute over whether an action or lack of action by a student would be such an infraction, the student can ask the entire full-time MPP faculty to review the behavior in question to receive a ruling on whether it qualifies as an inappropriate behavior worthy of sanctions. The MPP faculty ruling will be the final decision on the matter. Students may, of course, pursue a formal grade appeal after the final course grade has been given.

Please also note that some of the above behaviors can also lead to the student being referred to university bodies for disciplinary actions. Some behaviors, e.g., use of illegal drugs or use of state equipment for personal projects, can lead to expulsion from the Media Production Program as well as civil and/or criminal penalties.

The MPP faculty fully realizes that these policies are unnecessary for 99% of the students currently in the MPP. These rules have been put into effect to prevent abuses by the other 1% and to swiftly deal with those abuses that do occur.

The desired outcome is to never have to apply any of these rules and, by publishing them in advance, to reinforce in MPP students' minds how important it is to act professionally, responsibly and respectfully in a production context, whether it be here in the MPP or in the work world. If that desired outcome occurs, the MPP experience will be a better one for present and future students. If that desired outcome does not occur, these rules will hold the relevant students responsible and have them face swift, real consequences. In that event, we will hopefully reduce the number and scope of such violations and minimize whatever negative impacts do occur.

ASSIGNMENTS

Documentary Video Project - 35% - Details Forthcoming

Ideas Assignment - 5%

Documentary Literature Review - 15%

Students will work in small groups and develop a list of documentaries that relate to their project. These films may be connected by content, production techniques, editing style or story structure. Each team will make a presentation to the class, showing clips from the relevant films and explaining how these films will influence their project.

Documentary Viewing Journal - 15%

You will be expected to watch 10 films over the course of the semester. For each film, you will complete a film journal entry.

Written Exam – 20%

Attendance and Participation - 10%

Students are expected to attend class and participate in classroom discussions. Students are encouraged to view documentaries outside of class during this course.

GRADING SCALE

100-94 = A	73-70 = C-
93-90 = A-	69-67 = D+
89-87 = B+	66-64 = D
86-84 = B	63-60 = D-
83-80 = B-	59-0 = F
79-77 = C+	
76-74 = C	

Spring Class Schedule 2013

	Date	TOPIC/ ACTIVITY	READING	DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
Week One	1/8	Introduction to Course - Begin topic choice discussion	Rabiger Chapter 1	
Week Two	1/15	Generating Ideas and Documentary Approaches	Rabiger Chapter 2, 3, 4	First 4 Film Journal Entries Due
Week Three	1/22	Organization, Evidence and Point of View	Rabiger Chapter 5, 6, 17	Second 4 Film Journal Entries Due
Week Four	1/29	Deciding on Projects!	Rabiger Chapters 18, 19, 20	Ideas Assignment Due. Production Team Assignments Final Film Viewing Journal Due
Week Five	2/5	Interviewing Workshop	Rabiger Chapter 30	
Week Six	2/12	Lighting, Sound and B- Roll	Rabiger Chapters 10, 11, 27	
Week Seven	2/19	Project Workshop		First Sample Footage Due
Week Eight	2/26	In Class Presentations		Documentary Literature Review Due
Week Nine	3/5	Project Workshop		Second Sample Footage Due Group Meeting 1
Week Ten	3/12	SPRING BREAK		
Week Eleven	3/19	Editing	Rabiger Chapters 13-16, 31-34	
Week Twelve	3/26	Written Exam		Written Exam
Week Thirteen	4/2	Project Workshop		Third Sample Footage – Edited Sequence Due Group Meeting 2

Week Fourteen	4/9	Press Kits, Distribution and Marketing	Handout	
Week Fifteen	4/16	Project Workshop		Rough Edit Due
Week Sixteen	4/23	Final Project Viewing		FINAL PROJECT DUE
Week Seventeen	4/30	EXAM WEEK	Tuesday, 5:30-7:30pm	FINAL EDITS DUE AT EXAM DATE