

Documentary Video Boot Camp

MPFV225, June 6-10, 2011, 1.5 Credits

Description

A one-week, immersive and hands-on experience for students who want to learn the fundamentals of video documentary in an intimate and focused setting. Participants will develop an understanding of observation, shooting techniques, picture composition, lighting, interviewing, and editing with Final Cut Express.¹

The class will guide students through a series of assignments using traditional, personal, and cinéma vérité approaches. Through exercises, screening, discussion, and critique, students will be exposed to a range of storytelling, aesthetic, and ethical issues. This class will provide students who want to share stories of social reality with a strong foundation to build upon.

Meetings

Class meets in T713 (7th floor Tower video lab and adjoining classroom) Monday, June 10 through Friday, June 14, 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., an optional (though highly recommended for students new to editing) editing lab will run on Thursday, June 13, 5:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.

Prerequisites

Basic familiarity with Macintosh or Windows computers is required. Macintosh computers will be used for editing assignments. Prior experience with video production or editing is not required, however, some experience is helpful.

Instructor

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Objectives

Upon completion of this class, students will be able to:

- Discuss in broad strokes historical trends in documentary film, define what a documentary is, and describe various conventions and genres that define contemporary documentary film practice
- Apply basic camera, sound recording, and editing techniques to observe people and processes and to present ideas in the form of a short documentary video

Classroom Procedures

The classroom will be used for lecture, discussion, demonstration, practice and critique. Since this is an intensive class with several assignments that involve production, students will also make use of people, resources, and studios in and around the MassArt campus to complete their assignments. Students are expected to treat the classroom as a safe place for open expression and discussion and to treat their fellow students with courtesy and respect at all times.

Grading/Evaluation/Attendance

Grading is on a pass/fail basis. Active participation in class discussion and critique is very important. Assignments will be evaluated on the basis of organization and technique.

Completion of class requirements will be determined by the following: Participation in class discussion and critique: 40%, assignments 60%.

Given the intense nature of the class, missing a half day puts the course grade in jeopardy. Missing one day will result in not passing.

¹ What you learn using Final Cut Express is applicable to Final Cut Pro (bundled with Final Cut Studio), however, Apple is about to release Final Cut Pro X which is a complete redesign of Final Cut, yet, it will not be available in time for this class, but in any case most of what you will learn in this class as far as editing is concerned is transferable to other non-linear editing applications, our focus will be on the fundamentals.

Schedule & Topics

The following topics are a starting point and will be adjusted during the course of the week based on the dynamics and interests of the class. A detailed hourly schedule will be provided as a separate document.

Monday

- Introductions: Who are we and why are we here?
- Discussion: What is Documentary?
- Screening and discussion
- Demonstration: Documentary Camerawork and Recording Sound, Part 1: On camera sound
- Demonstration: Observing People and Documenting Process
- Practice: Plan and shoot Assignment 1 (document a process and observe a person)

Tuesday

- Screening and Critique of Assignment 1
- Presentation: Conducting Interviews
- Screening and discussion
- Demonstration: Lighting an Interview and Recording Sound, Part 2: using boom microphones and lavalieres
- Practice: Plan and shoot Assignment 2 (conduct an interview)

Wednesday

- Screening and Critique of Assignment 2
- Presentation: Directing the Documentary
- Screening and discussion
- Practice: Plan and shoot Assignment 3 (shoot a mini-documentary)

Thursday

- Screening and Critique of Assignment 3 (selected rushes)
- Demo: Editing with Final Cut Express
- Guest Speaker Presentation: Producing and Editing a Documentary
- Screening and discussion

- Tutorial: Editing with Final Cut Express
- Practice: Assignment 4: Capture and begin editing footage shot during Assignment 3 (it is highly recommended to take advantage of the optional editing lab tonight)

Friday

- Practice: Assignment 4: continue editing
- Practice: Exporting an Edit Master and creating an H.264 QuickTime movie for upload to YouTube or Vimeo
- Brief discussion of distribution formats and options
- Screening and Critique of Assignment 4
- Sunset review

Handouts

- Detailed Hourly Schedule (paper)
- Assignment Descriptions (paper)
- Camera (handout, presentation, and notes)
- Notes on the interview (online)
- Lighting (presentation and notes)
- Sound (presentation and notes)
- Editing with Final Cut Express
- Editing the Documentary
- Documentary reading list
- Documentary viewing list

Handouts are available online as PDF documents, only those tagged with “paper” will be provided as hardcopy in class. You may access handouts, related links, and resources at: <http://Kino-Eye.com/dvb/>

Technical Requirements

All equipment required to complete assignments will be provided, however, students are encouraged to bring their own digital video camcorder and use it during the class in order to work towards mastery of their own camera.

Students might need to purchase blank DVD-R disks if they wish to burn a backup of their final video. Optionally, students may want to bring an external hard drive in order to keep media and project files for further exploration.