

**CTPR 474, DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION, 4 units**  
**SYLLABUS: Spring 2017**  
**WEDNESDAYS: 9-11:50 SCA 258**

**Instructor: Bill Yahraus; (661) 944-3741 (before 9 PM)**

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**Office: SCA 418**

**Hours: By appointment**

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**Class Description:**

This class is an exercise in documentary filmmaking and total collaboration. During the 15 weeks of the course, each partnership will make one short documentary film, working together from initial conception to final finish. The partners will be equally responsible both creatively (deciding what subject to film and how to film it) and managerially (who will fulfill what role when). So, you may very well find yourselves swapping roles during production and most certainly will be sharing all tasks. You yourselves will be your entire crew/production unit.

During the semester you will screen selected dailies and cuts for your classmates, SA, and me (your instructor). We will all serve as your filmmaking community and give you a ton of feedback. Much of what you will learn, you will learn on your feet-by doing. But you will also benefit by learning to listen to and filter the critiques you receive.

Your documentary may follow any of the traditional formats, from clip show to verite, but I also encourage you to experiment as much as you wish. The "documentary form" is very plastic and constantly changing, and you should feel free to mold it to your subject. Aesthetic risk taking is condoned here.

**Boundaries and Rules:** (well, there always are some)

- 1) The final length of each project will be between 10 and 15 minutes, including credits. Your finished project will be a digital file of your color-corrected fine cut picture and mixed sound.
- 2) You may shoot as much material as you wish, but remember that the more you shoot, the more material you will have to organize. It would be wise to purchase an additional drive that would meet your needs throughout your entire SCA career, we recommend purchasing one of the SCA approved drives which are readily available at many vendors. The USC books store carries many of them as well as some SDHC memory cards. Keep any drive you use dedicated to your CTPR 474 project alone.
- 3) If you intend to edit your project outside of the school's Avid Lab you must clear this with your SA and instructor.
- 4) The school will provide you with a camera (NXCAM) a mixer, shotgun mic, boom pole, pistol grip, and cables. Please use school equipment for shooting.
- 5) Students will provide their own: SCA approved drive, headphones (required) for shooting and Avid lab. We recommend Sony MDR 7506, which are available at the USC *Bookstore*. Also a smaller set of headphones for the camera operator. SDHC memory cards for the Sony NXCAM camera (see approved list under Equipment and Facilities.)
- 6) Any re-enactments or directed action must conform to all SCA policies regarding use of actors; SAG agreements, child labor laws, permit requirements, safety forms, etc. If you can avoid re-enactments, you should.
- 7) Except by explicit permission, all shooting must take place within a 50mile radius of USC.

**Gray Areas and Red Flags:** (check these out with me and your SA before you proceed or just stay away from them)

- 1) Use of professional facilities or technicians can result in failing the course. The core idea of the course is that the partnerships make the documentaries entirely on their own. However, there may well be situations where you might want to shoot with two cameras or have a slightly larger crew. In such a case, you must turn first to members of the class to help.
- 2) All featured copyrighted material must be cleared and acknowledged in your credits. Clearance can run the gamut from being a giant pain to totally impossible, and copyrighted material can include everything from the obvious (film clips and photographs) to the unexpected (an album cover or a featured baseball cap). So be sure to check that anything of this nature is in the public domain. That said, we will apply the current SCA Fair Use Policy to any such material.

- 3) All music in the film must be composed for the film. This really is a sub-set of #3, but publishing and performance rights are really hard to clear in the amount of time available. Furthermore, if you want to score your documentary, a composer is the best way to go. USC has a fabulous school for film composing with many many eager young composers.
- 4) Working with children can be tricky. Normally, filming with any child, even your own, requires a Certified Studio Teacher to be present. Directing a child's action or calling one to a "set" most certainly does. This can cost bucks unless you can talk one of LA's CSTs into doing it for the credit and the glory. Check with me and Joe Wallenstein, in SCA 304, if you intend to use a child in any part of your documentary and bring a written clearance from Joe to your instructor (that would be me) **before** filming with a child.

## ***EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES***

### **The School will provide:**

#### **1. Sony NXCAM HD Cameras and tripods.**

**N.B. WITH THE NXCAM CAMERA, THIS SETTING IS THE ONLY SETTING THAT WILL ENABLE YOU TO EDIT YOUR FOOTAGE ON AVID:**

#### **HD 1080/60i FX (59.94i)**

Setting can be found by clicking on "Menu"

Toggle down to REC/OUT SET then select "Exec"

Toggle arrow to the right and down to select "Rec Format" then select "Exec"  
then choose: HD 1080/60i FX (59.94i) and select "Exec"

To verify you've selected the correct format at the main screen select the "Display" button until you see HD 1080/60i FX

(59.94i) on the viewfinder screen.

Editing stations in the SCA Avid lab.

. Students must pay a Lab Fee of \$225 and also an Insurance Fee of \$300.

**Students will provide their own:**

1. **Headphones (required) for Avid lab.** We recommend Sony MDR 7506, which are available at the USC *Bookstore*.
2. **SDHC Cards for the camera**
  - Must have a Class 10 rating
  - Must pass minimum Class 10 requirement tests (transfer speeds minimum of 10MB/s)
  - Must be marked as SDHC (Secure Digital High Capacity)
  - This excludes both Micro and Mini SDHC, as well as SDXC.
  - Low failure rate
3. **One of the following approved External Hard Drives:**
  - Samsung T3 SSD Portable (bus-powered, USB-C\*\*, laptop friendly), approximate retail price \$170 - \$370
  
  - Glyph Black Box Plus (bus-powered, USB-C\*\*, laptop friendly), approximate retail price \$99-\$120
  
  - Glyph Studio (requires AC power), approximate retail price \$149
  
  - G-Tech G-Drive Mobile USB-C (bus-powered, USB-C\*\*, laptop friendly), approximate retail price \$130
  
  - G-Tech G-Drive (requires AC power), approximate retail price \$230 and up

Notes: The hard drives listed are recommended to have a drive speed of 7200rpm. Capacity: We do not recommend hard drives over 2TB.

\*\*All of the "mobile" drives are USB-C, also known as USB3.1

**Check SCA Approved Drives on Supported Hard Drive document at <http://knowledgebase.sca.usc.edu/> before purchasing a drive.**

**A second drive or 16GB flash drives are highly recommended to back up material in the case of drive failure.**

**Students will be required to bring their projects to class on their drives from time to time.**

## **The Schedule and Deadlines:**

In all film work deadlines are important and expected to be met. The timetable for the class and schedule of deadlines are as follows:

**Schedules Vary Semester to Semester, see accompanying class calendar for this semester's deadlines and assignments.**

## **Recommended Readings:**

Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos, Alan Rosenthal

Documentary Storytelling, Second Edition: Making Stronger and More Dramatic Non-Fiction Films, Shelia Bermard

Making Documentary Films and Videos: A Practical Guide to Planning, Filming ,and Editing Documentaries, Barry Hampe

The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide: A Down and Dirty DV Production, Anthony Artis

## **Safety:**

USC BOILERPLATE: “All students are expected to understand and abide by the USC School of Cinematic Arts guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.”

Remember that you are responsible for reading and following the safety procedures in the Safety handout. (See Student Production Notebook). And that means all partners. Here, especially, you hang together, or we will hang you together. Discuss with your instructor and SA any and all shots that involve weapons, projectiles, cars, stunts, children, or risky procedures involved in shooting your project. They must be cleared and signed off on the proper forms **before you shoot**, not only by the instructor, but also by the school Safety Coordinator.

Think and plan out the situations you will be shooting in and stay alert at all times. Shooting a documentary can be far more dangerous than a studio set. I have been kicked, clubbed, gassed, knocked down, had a gun stuck in my face, bit by a horse, almost run over by an elephant as well as a truck, etc., etc., while shooting documentaries. I've never so much as stubbed my toe on a set.

Any accident or damage **must** be documented in an ACCIDENT REPORT, in writing, signed by all partners. A copy must be given to your instructor the next day.

If you are faced with a change in production plans that raises new safety or ethical issues, CALL your instructor or SA and discuss it. If you are uncertain as to how to proceed or cannot reach your instructor or SA, post-pone the shot/scene until a later time and continue shooting scenes that pose no safety problem.

**PARTNERSHIPS:** Learning to work with someone else is one of the most important aspects of this class. Some of you have made films on your own, some have worked with or as part of large crews, and some have worked with a partner on projects where the roles were clearly defined. What this course asks of you is relatively unique. We are asking that there be no "boss" in your partnership: that you together decide on all aspects of your project, both aesthetic and practical from initial concept to final completion. From this point on, with very few exceptions, you will be making films with other people. Working with equal partners presents unique challenges, mostly enriching, but sometimes producing very negative feelings. Your SA and instructor will do their best to help you through any partnership difficulties you may have, but ultimately the success of your partnership is your responsibility. Bottom line, though, you may not change partners or do a film on your own in this class.

## **Details, Details:** (and other paperwork)

- 1) If you wish to have your film considered for festivals or any release outside of this class or personal use, each partnership must collect photocopies of all required permits, releases, emergency medical information, etc., and put them in a production notebook

for archival purpose. Paperwork necessary for a Documentary Production note book include: CHECKLIST:

- Treatment (both initial and final)
- Proposed Shooting Schedule
- Completed Call Sheets
- Participant list with contact information
- Participant Releases (including Minor Releases & Studio Teacher Form if applicable)
- Crew List with Addresses & Phone Numbers
- Crew Emergency Information (for Worker's Comp)
- Location Permits & Releases (if required or requested owner of location)
- Weapons/Stunts Permits
- Hazardous Shooting Conditions Sign-Off's
- Releases for any copyrighted material not deemed to be public domain or fair use
- Music Performance Releases
- Composer Releases
- Music Library Track Information
- Credits List
- Transcript (if requested)
- Other, specify: Anything additional that your instructor or SA requests

- 2) Deadlines are important and must be met all along the way if you are to complete your project on time. Please refer to the calendar weekly to be sure that you know what is expected at all times. In particular, those of you who come into the class without a partner will have a week to find a partner. If the class happens to have an odd number of students, one partnership of three students will be allowed. All of you have until the fifth week to solidify your ideas and shooting plans. You have five weeks of principal photography, during which you will also be editing, a week off from shooting and then two weeks for pick-ups. Then about two weeks to work on your mix and color correction (both of which you do on Avid)...then we're done. We will schedule a public screening at the end of the semester.

## **Conferences and Such:**

I am available in my office during the hours listed above. Contact me if you intend to drop by or if you wish to schedule a meeting for a different time. Please feel free to contact either your instructor or the SA with any questions or problems that you might have during the semester. Most issues can be easily solved, so don't be shy.

### **And yes...The Grades:**

10% of your final grade is based on your grade on your first written proposal and shooting plan \*

20% on your dailies & rough cuts. Includes meeting weekly schedule of materials

10% on your in-class contribution to the discussions.

50% on the grade you receive on your final project. Includes success of final project, effort, and process.

\*extra credit for completed final proposal (up to 15%)

By the way, we do not grade "on a curve." Each student's grade reflects his or her individual work during the semester. Also, attendance and punctuality will influence your final grade. You will be graded down one notch (e.g. B to B-) for every three unexcused absences and/or every four times you are late for class.

Ringling cell phones make everyone unhappy. Vibrating ones make me wonder what that weird noise is. Please turn your phone all the way off during class. This applies to **ALL PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES** (known or unknown throughout the present or any expanded universe), with the exception of laptops used for class purposes. Don't let me or your SA catch you on Facebook, Email, or Twitter!! This is under grades because the success of this class is depends on every student's full presence. Or, as Ram Dass said, "Be here now." I will grade down one notch anyone who violates this policy more than two times.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered one of the faculty (or the TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open 8:30am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**ACADEMIC CONDUCT:** Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of



academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the Department of Public Safety <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

#### **SUPPORT SYSTEMS:**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**And Finally.....**

**Good luck & let's have some fun with this.**

# January 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Week 1	9 First Day of Classes	10	11 In-Class orientation, syllabus & calendar Partnerships formed	12	13	14
15 Week 2	16	17	18 Partnerships pitch ideas to class	19	20	21
22 Week 3	23	24	25 Proposal and shooting plan development  Equipment check-out	26	27	28 <b>Practice with Gear</b>
29 Week4	30	31				

## February 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
Week 4 (contd.)			1 AVID Lab Orientation Interview techniques Documentary styles	2	3	4 <i>shoot interview exercises</i>	
Week 5	5	6	7	8 View interview exercises The documentary scene	9	10	11 <i>Principal photography &amp; editing begins</i>
Week 6	12	13	14	15 First written proposals and shooting plans due	16	17	18 <i>Principal photography &amp; editing contd.</i>
Week 7	219	20	23	22 Each partnership screens five minutes of dailies selects for class Class discusses dailies	23	24	25 <i>Principal photography &amp; editing contd.</i>
Week 8	26	27	28				

## March 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 8 (contd.)			1 Each partnership screens five minutes of edited scenes for class Class discusses scenes	2	3	4 <i>Principal photography ends editing contd.</i>
5  Week 9	6	7	8 Each partnership screens selected cut scenes for class Class discusses scenes	9	10	11 <i>Principal photography ends editing contd.</i>
12	13 Begin Spring Break	14	15	16	17	18
19  Week 10	20	21	22 Each partnership screens selected cut scenes for class <b>Final completed proposals due</b>	23	24	25  <i>Editing continues</i>
26  Week 11  Easter	27	28	29  In-class editing session <b>Principal Completed</b>	30	31	

## April 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 11 contd.						1 <i>Editing continues</i>  <i>Shoot pick-ups</i>
2 Week 12	3	4	5 <b>First rough-cut screenings of projects in class</b>	6	7	8 <i>Editing continues</i>  <i>Shoot pick-ups</i>
9 Week 13	10	11	12 <b>Second rough-cut screenings of projects in class</b>	13	14	15 <b>Edit Fine Cut</b>
16 Week 14	17	18	19 <b>Fine Cut Screenings</b>	20	21	22 Sound & color
23 Week 15	24	25	26 <b>Picture, sound, &amp; titles locked</b> <b>OUTPUT</b>	27	28 <b>Last day of classes</b>  <b>SCREENING:</b> <b>Norris 7-10</b> Final Proposals Due	29 Begin Study days
30						

