



Documentary Summer Production Workshop
Units: 4
June 26th-August 4th, 2017
Mondays/Wednesdays 9am-1pm

Location: USC SCA Room 203

Instructor: Doug Blush

Office Hours: TBD as needed, via email or Skype

Contact Info: blush@usc.edu

Teaching Assistant: Amir Arzanian

Office Hours: TBD, arrange with TA

Contact Info: arzanian@usc.edu

Additional instructors:

Camera: Gary Wagner:

gwagner_cinematog@yahoo.com

Editing: Paul Petschek: petschek@usc.edu

Sound: Cliff Latimer: latimer@usc.edu

Course Description

Welcome to the exciting world of documentary filmmaking! In recent years, documentaries have reached a new “golden age”, due to public interest, new technologies, increasingly cinematic storytelling, and urgent issues being directly addressed by filmmakers. We’ll explore the many ideas and techniques of modern non-fiction filmmaking, both through examples from recent documentaries and your own work as you craft a short film.

Learning Objectives

The goal of this class is to give you a solid basis as a filmmaker to plan, produce, shoot, direct, edit and exhibit your own documentary films. You’ll create a short film (5-7 minutes is a likely length) that will be yours to show as an example of your craft at the end of the seminar. We’ll also learn some of the current issues around pitching and financing your future projects, and we’ll explore new territories like VR and multimedia non-fiction.

Prerequisite(s): no formal prerequisite is required for this class, some previous filmmaking experience is helpful but will not influence your final grade. Effort and growth are the goals of the class, along with effective collaboration and participation

Recommended Preparation: throughout the seminar, it’s highly recommended that you watch documentary films outside of class time. We will be viewing clips from dozens of examples of documentary craft and you should keep notes on those films that you’d like to study during the seminar and beyond.

Course Notes

You are **strongly** encouraged to take notes in every class, and you’ll be receiving PDFs and weblinks for additional reading. All text and media materials for required reading and viewing will be sent via email and/or posted on the USC Blackboard webpage.

Hardware/Software Required

You **MUST** bring your own hard drive for the storage and editing of your film. It should be USB 3 capable and have its own power source (not relying on USB bus power). USB “sticks” and thumb drives are not adequate for editing of class material. You also will need to provide your own SD cards for the cameras we will use. Cameras, sound gear, lights and tripods will provided by USC Cinema equipment checkout - our SA Amir will assist you.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

We will develop, for EACH student, a short documentary, generally in the 5-7 minute range. Your planning, production, editing and assessment of your film will make up a large part of your semester grade, and will be your central focus in the class. You’ll also be required to watch and analyze one feature documentary during the seminar, and pick a scene to talk about in class for about 10 minutes.

IMPORTANT DATES:

July 4 Holiday: The university will be closed Monday (7/3) and Tuesday (7/4).

Final Film Submission: Thursday, August 3rd, 5:00pm to 7:00pm in SCA 250

Final Party: Friday, August 4th, 6:00pm start time. Theater TBD

Edit and Camera Seminars

There will be several very important additional class sessions on editing and camera techniques. We'll be editing on the Avid platform, which may be new to some of you but will prove very valuable even if you're already comfortable on another editing platform.

Paul Petschek will be your Avid instructor, and the times and dates for these sessions are:

EDITING:

Session 1: Wednesday, July 12: 1pm-4pm

Session 2: Wednesday, July 19: 1pm-4pm

Camera technique will be taught by Gary Wagner, with times TBD

Special Guests

We may have some very interesting guests coming to discuss their documentaries with you this semester - these are subject to change but I'm hoping we'll have some great visitors. They may be present for your film rough cut screenings...listen carefully to the ideas and advice they give you!

Grading Breakdown

Your grade is based on successful completion of the class assignments, on time and to the best of your abilities. Class participation, attendance and promptness, crewing with your classmates on their films, and professional attitude are all part of your overall grade. Two or more unexcused absences will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade.

20% Class participation, critiques, attendance, promptness and professionalism

30% Weekly assignments, including rough cuts, presentation of film analysis, and dailies

50% Final film

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100	A-	90-94		
B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+	67-69	D	63-66	D-	60-62
F	59 and below				

Assignment Submission Policy

There will be a number of important deadlines during the course in order to guarantee you'll be able to finish your film for the final screening. Please plan your time carefully to be able to make these deadlines, missing them will affect your final grade.

Important Additional Policies

You are responsible for your own digital film media (including backing your footage up and managing and maintaining your hard drive and checked-out equipment. Our class SA Amir will help you with checkout and other issues in production and post.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

This schedule is subject to change based on the class progress and other factors, but we'll be trying to keep very close to this format this summer:

	Topics/Daily Activities	Due in Class	Homework for Next Class
Monday, June 26th - Class #1	ORIENTATION - Greetings and intros - class layout - documentary history and current examples - where to find ideas - planning your film	YOU, ON TIME AND READY FOR GREATNESS!	ASSIGNMENT AND DEADLINES DISCUSSED, BEGIN PLANNING AND RESEARCH FOR FILMS
Wednesday, June 28th - Class #2	Discussion of creation of documentary story and character, shaping your idea SAFETY ORIENTATION - ONE HOUR	DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS PRESENTATIONS BEGIN (10 MIN EACH IN CLASS)	CONTINUE RESEARCH AND GATHERING OF INFO FOR PROJECT
Monday, July 3rd - NO CLASS!	<i>NO CLASS - JULY 4th HOLIDAY Continue planning and researching film proposal for Wednesday pitch on your own</i>	HAVE FUN, KEEP PLANNING!	CONTINUE RESEARCH AND GATHERING OF INFO FOR PROJECT, PREPARE PITCH
Wednesday, July 5th - Class #3	More examples of documentary form and style Discuss first pitch ideas	FIRST PITCH OF IDEA DUE IN CLASS	SCOUT LOCATIONS, FIRST SAMPLE SHOTS OR STILLS IF POSSIBLE
Monday, July 10th - Class #4	More examples of short and feature docs Refine pitch ideas, show any demo materials and research	REFINED PITCH TREATMENT DUE IN CLASS	FINISH INITIAL RESEARCH AND PRE-INTERVIEWS
Wednesday July 12th - Class #5	Examples of expressive camera, interview techniques, ways to shape a story while filming Final project pitch reviews	FINAL PITCH/ TREATMENTS DUE IN CLASS	BEGIN SHOOTING PROJECT
Monday July 17 - Class #6	Examining your footage, planning new shoots based on your results Review first dailies, discuss follow ups and broll/archival/graphics	BRING DAILIES TO CLASS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION	CONTINUE SHOOTING PROJECT, CREWING WITH OTHER PROJECTS, organize edit

Wednesday July 19th - Class #7	Continue reviewing dailies, planning finishing shoots and pickups. Post production planning, organizing and	BRING DAILIES TO CLASS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION	CONTINUE SHOOTING PROJECT, CREWING WITH OTHER PROJECTS, BEGIN FULL EDITORIAL
Monday July 24th - Class #8	Finding your story in the edit Review final shoot footage Discuss edit plans	BRING DAILIES TO CLASS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION	SHOOTING COMPLETE! FULL EDITORIAL IN PROGRESS
Wednesday July 26th - Class #9	Table Screening and discussion of first cuts How to address camera and sound issues in editorial and shape your story	FIRST CUTS DUE FOR REVIEW IN CLASS	FULL EDITORIAL IN PROGRESS - EXPORT FIRST CUTS FOR CLASS
Monday July 31st - Class #10	Is the film working in story, structure and character? Discuss improving and tightening the edit. Sound design and music	SECOND CUTS DUE FOR REVIEW IN CLASS	PREPARE FINE (VERY CLOSE TO LOCKED) CUTS FOR NEXT CLASS
Wednesday August 2nd - Class #11	How to get your films out to the world - festivals, distribution, and more. Fine cut reviews	THIRD (FINE) CUTS DUE FOR REVIEW IN CLASS	FINISH EDIT AND MIX and EXPORT FINAL CUT FOR SCREENING
Friday August 4th - FINAL EVENT	Screen final projects, discuss future plans and say farewell!	COMPLETED FILMS EXPORTED BY THURSDAY FOR TY!	HAVE A GREAT LIFE!

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b>. 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, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office* <http://equity.usc.edu> and/or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://dps.usc.edu>. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

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://ali.usc.edu>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://dsp.usc.edu> 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.

Disruptive Student Behavior:

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

<p style="text-align: center;">PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX</p>
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