CTPR 531: PLANNING THE DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION

**SPRING 2019**

**18624D**

**Thursday 9 – 11:50, SCB 304**

**Instructor: Amanda Pope 310-397-0425; cell 310-344-3644**

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**office hours Monday noon to 2; or by appointment**

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**Textbook: DIRECTING THE DOCUMENTARY by Michael Rabiger (6th Edition, Focal Press, 2015)**

**Recommended:**

**CLEARANCE AND COPYRIGHT: EVERYTHING THE INDEPENDENT FILMMAKER NEEDS TO KNOW by Michael C. Donaldson (4th edition, Silman-James Press, 2014)**

**DOCUMENTARY FILM: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION, by Patricia Aufderheide (Oxford Press, 2007**)

The object of this course is to research, develop and pitch a documentary production. There will also be some consideration of documentary fundraising, distribution, and career possibilities. (Yes, you can make a living doing documentary films!) The broader goal is to expose the student to the documentary form as a form of cinematic expression that the filmmaker can use to articulate his/her own personal vision. Although we will cover some technical issues, this is not a production class; the emphasis is on the larger picture, issues of story, character and structure; aesthetics and meaning and purpose; cultural context; ethics and responsibilities; what you want to express as a filmmaker and why; what you think film can and should be; all brought to bear through class discussion on the specific project you are developing. You will also be provided with an overview of documentary business issues including fund-raising and distribution.

In recent years the documentary form has been infused with new creative and aesthetic energy. The direct cinema of the sixties and the “balanced” television documentaries of the seventies have given way to a variety of styles and approaches. In addition to discussion of class projects, we will view all or part of numerous documentaries, and consider the almost limitless range with regard to style, tone and subject matter that contemporary non-fiction filmmaking can embrace.

Each student will write a 5-10 page treatment for a 25-minute documentary video, produce a 5-7 minute sample videotape (the pitch tape), and present a 5-7 minute oral pitch for their project. All students will pitch their project on 547 pitch day, even those students who do no wish their projects to be considered for 547, or who are not eligible (you must be a graduate production student, have completed the 507/508 sequence, and have crewed or be crewing a 546 or 547 project). It is possible to co-develop, co-pitch and co-direct a project with another eligible student. The 547 committee will select three documentary projects. In 547, the student who has developed a selected project becomes its writer/director and must find qualified and eligible crew members for the other positions on the project.

This course also takes the place of 551 as the prerequisite for a 581 documentary.

JOURNALS

Journals are due each 9 am Wednesday by e-mail. A lot of your most important learning will happen experientially outside of the classroom. I am interested in how your thinking is developing, what new ideas and observations about your project are coming up, and questions you may be asking yourself about how to proceed. I am especially concerned with how you approach the creative process, how you get to new ideas and concepts, and how you reach deeper levels of understanding of your project. Journals are also a record of your changing connection with and response to the subject matter, which can be useful in retrospect, especially at the production stage.

The journals are private, seen only by me (this restriction doesn’t apply if there are any safety or legal implications). You can discuss anything. I will only respond to something in a journal if you ask for a response (e.g., “please help me with this problem”). Occasionally I may ask your permission to bring up in class, anonymously, a topic or issue of general interest mentioned in a journal entry.

**Week 1 Jan. 10 General orientation; initial discussion of students' ideas for projects. Class organization into groups**

**Assignment 1 for wk 2 – 1/17: Write descriptive paragraphs about three ideas for documentaries (to be submitted, typed, 1/16);**

**REQUIRED: Rabiger, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4.**

**Assignment 2: Write a page in your journal submission for 1/17**

**about things that are important to you. You could write about**

**personal or political concerns, aesthetics, demons, social issues,**

 **what makes you angry, sad, or happy.**

**Week 2 — Jan. 17 Discuss research ideas with class.**

**Assignment for wk 3 – 1/24: “Get out of the car” exercise (see separate sheet); do preliminary research and write a one-page description of one project (to be submitted 1/23);**

**\*\*\* e-mail the assignment to all of us BY WED. 1/23**

**REQUIRED: Rabiger, Chapters 26, 27 and 30.**

**Week 3 — Jan. 24 Discuss projects; interview exercises.**

**Assignment for wk 4 – 1/31: Continue research; locate, pre-interview, and write descriptions of three potential characters for your project (to be submitted 1/30);**

**\*\*\* e-mail written part of assignment to us.**

**REQUIRED: Rabiger, Chapter 17 & 24.**

**Week 4 — Jan.31 Discuss projects; discuss interviewing and interview production.**

**Assignment for wk 5 – 2/7: Group A - Conduct a video interview, select a 5 minute segment to be screened, unedited, in 2/7 class.**

**REQUIRED: Rabiger 5, 6 & 7**

**Week 5 — Feb. 7 Group A - Screen and discuss uncut 5-minute segment of video interview.**

**Assignment for wk 6 – 2/14: Group B - see 1/31. Group A - Write first draft of treatment (1-3 pages), and research report (1 page), including a bibliography of films, books, articles and resource persons you have consulted or intend to consult;**

**\*\*\* Group A -email copies to all of us by 2/13**

**REQUIRED: Rabiger, Chapters 8.**

**Week 6 — Feb. 14 Group B - Screen and discuss uncut**

 **5-minute segment of video interview.**

**Assignment for wk 7 -2/21: Entire class — read Group A draft treatments and be prepared to discuss in class; Group B - see 2/7.**

**\*\*\*Group B -email copies to all of us by 2/20**

**REQUIRED: Rabiger, Chapters 28 and 29.**

**Week 7 — Feb. 21 Discuss first draft of Group A treatments and research reports.**

**Assignment for wk 8 – 2/28: Entire class — read Group B draft treatments and be prepared to discuss in 2/28 class; Groups A and B — plan and shoot enough footage for a scene involving one or more potential characters, and cut the scene together (it should be no longer than 3 minutes), due in 2 weeks – 3/14.**

**Week 8 — Feb.28 Components of a pitch vs. an oral**

 **Presentation**

 **Discuss first draft of Group B treatments and research reports.**

**Assignment for wk 9 – 3/7: Groups A & B — Write second draft of treatment (3-4 pages), including bio.**

**\*\*\*\*- email latest to all us, latest 3/6.**

**Week 9 — Mar. 8 Screen cut scenes.**

**Assignment for wk 10 3/21: Continue work on treatments, and shooting for pitch tape.**

**MARCH 10-17 SPRING RECESS**

**Week 10 — Mar. 21 Discussion of pitching (with volunteer demonstrations.) Practice film pitches**

**Assignment for wk 11 – 3/28: Read second drafts of treatments (emailed by 3/27) and bring print-out with your notes (2 copies) to 3/28 class. Both groups — Complete cut of pitch videos and prepare oral pitches, for presentation to class in 2 weeks – 4/4.**

**Week 11 — Mar. 28 Discussion of second draft treatments.**

**Assignment for wk 12 – 4/4: Both groups — complete final written treatments including bios;**

**WRITTEN TREATMENTS DUE: Duplicate and submit your written treatments to instructor, class, and 547 documentary selection committee by Monday, April 8, no later than noon.**

**Prepare for Dress Rehearsal on April 5 of final pitch tapes and oral presentations.**

**Week 12 — Apr. 4 OPEN CLASS ON THURSDAY for DRESS REHEARSAL of oral presentations and pitch tapes.**

 **All 531 students required to come.**

 **Assignment for wk 13 – 4/11: Complete pitch tapes cuts and oral presentations**

**Week 13 — Apr. 11 Final run-through in class of oral**

 **pitches and pitch videos.**

**PITCH DAY TO 547 FACULTY & STUDENTS SCHEDULED FOR FRIDAY,**

**APR. 12 in SCI 106 9am-2pm. All students are required to be present for all the pitches.**

**Assignment for last class 4/18: write a self-evaluation of your treatment, pitch tape and oral presentation and email to instructor by 4/17.**

**Week 14 – Apr. 18 Final Class. Pitch Recap. Budgeting Overview with sample budgets. Fundraising; documentary careers. Instructor/class evaluations.**

**Week 15 – Apr. 25 Individual conferences by request**

GRADING CRITERIA

 Class contribution 25%

 Final written treatment 15%

 Final video pitch tape 15%

 Final oral pitch 15%

 Journal, other assignments 20%

 Attendance, deadlines 10%

Class contribution includes reading and viewing (in advance at times; see the schedule above) the

assignments of the other students, and offering thoughtful, constructive comments.

Class attendance includes being on time to class (otherwise, the students who present their material first are short-changed). It is also considered inexcusable in professional film production, and you should develop the discipline in film school of always being on time. Anyone not in class at 9:00 or at the end of the break is considered late. Two times being late equals one unexcused absence. Written medical explanations are required for excused absences, in advance (by email) except in case of emergency. Two unexcused absences result in a lowered grade; four absences are grounds for failing the class. If you are late for any reason, you will be considered absent.

Assignments will be evaluated both on the quality of the work and the ability to meet deadlines.

ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO UNDERSTAND AND ABIDE BY THE USC SCHOOL OF CINEMA-TELEVISION SAFETY GUIDELINES. VIOLATIONS OF ANY OF THE SAFETY GUIDELINES MAY RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION RANGING FROM CONFISCATION OF FOOTAGE TO EXPULSION FROM THE UNIVERSITY.

**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/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](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/).

**Support Systems:**

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website:<http://sarc.usc.edu/>

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.<https://equity.usc.edu/>

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response.<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [http://dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu/)

*Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic.<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

*Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

*USC Department of Public Safety –* *213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime*.

Provides overall safety to USC community. [http://dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu/)

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX**