

# USC School of Cinematic Arts

**Documentary Summer Production Workshop**  
**Units: 4**  
**June 24th-August 2th, 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](mailto:blush@usc.edu)

**Teaching Assistant: Cody Wilson**

**Office Hours:** TBD, arrange with TA

**Contact Info:** [codywils@usc.edu](mailto:codywils@usc.edu)

**Additional instructors:**

**Camera:** Rob Kositchek: [kositche@usc.edu](mailto:kositche@usc.edu)

**Editing:** Jeremy Deneau: [deneau@usc.edu](mailto:deneau@usc.edu)

**Sound:** Cliff Latimer: [latimer@usc.edu](mailto: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 is recommended you purchase one off the SCA Approved Hard Drive list: [cinema.usc.edu/Laptops](http://cinema.usc.edu/Laptops) (click on “Hard Drives”), however, read the guidelines and be sure to get at least a USB 3 Portable “bus” powered drive. You also will need to provide your own SD cards (“chips”) for the cameras we will use. Cameras, sound gear, lights and tripods will provided by USC Cinema equipment checkout - our SA Cody Wilson 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 Thursday (7/4) and Friday (7/5).

Final Film Submission: Thursday, August 1rd, 5:00pm to 7:00pm in SCA 250

Final Party: Friday, August 2th, 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. Jeremy Deneau: [deneau@usc.edu](mailto:deneau@usc.edu) will be your Avid instructor, and the times and dates for these sessions are:

### **EDITING:**

Session 1: Wednesday, July 10: 1pm - 4pm

Session 2: Wednesday, July 17: 1pm - 4pm

Camera technique will be taught by Rob Kositchek: [kositchek@usc.edu](mailto:kositchek@usc.edu), with times TBD

Sound technique will be taught by Cliff Latimer: [latimer@usc.edu](mailto:latimer@usc.edu), 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 Note on Media and Equipment**

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 Cody 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:

	<b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>	<b>Due in Class</b>	<b>Homework for Next Class</b>
<b>Monday, June 24 - Class #1</b>	<b>ORIENTATION - Greetings and intros - class layout - documentary history and current examples - where to find ideas - planning your film</b>	<b>YOU, ON TIME AND READY FOR GREATNESS!</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENT AND DEADLINES DISCUSSED, BEGIN PLANNING AND RESEARCH FOR FILMS</b>
<b>Wednesday, June 26 - Class #2</b>	<b>Discussion of creation of documentary story and character, shaping your idea SAFETY ORIENTATION - ONE HOUR</b>	<b>DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS PRESENTATIONS BEGIN (10 MIN EACH IN CLASS)</b>	<b>CONTINUE RESEARCH AND GATHERING OF INFO FOR PROJECT</b>
<b>Monday, July 1 - Class #3</b>	<b>More examples of documentary form and style Discuss first pitch ideas</b>	<b>FIRST PITCH OF IDEA DUE IN CLASS</b>	<b>SCOUT LOCATIONS, FIRST SAMPLE SHOOTS OR STILLS IF POSSIBLE</b>
<b>Wednesday, July 3 - Class #4</b>	<b>More examples of short and feature docs Refine pitch ideas, show any demo materials and research</b>	<b>REFINED PITCH TREATMENT DUE IN CLASS</b>	<b>FINISH INITIAL RESEARCH AND PRE- INTERVIEWS, PRE- SHOOTING IF READY</b>
<b>Monday, July 8 - Class #5</b>	<b>Examples of expressive camera, interview techniques, ways to shape a story while filming Final project pitch reviews</b>	<b>FINAL PITCH/ TREATMENTS DUE IN CLASS</b>	<b>BEGIN SHOOTING ALL PROJECTS, CREWING OTHER FILMS</b>
<b>Wednesday July 10 - Class #6</b>	<b>Examining your footage, planning new shoots based on your results Review first dailies, discuss follow ups and broll/archival/graphics</b>	<b>BRING DAILIES TO CLASS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>CONTINUE SHOOTING PROJECT, CREWING WITH OTHER PROJECTS, organize edit</b>
<b>Monday July 15 - Class #7</b>	<b>Continue reviewing dailies, planning finishing shoots and pickups. Post production planning, organizing and techniques</b>	<b>BRING DAILIES TO CLASS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>CONTINUE SHOOTING PROJECT, CREWING WITH OTHER PROJECTS, BEGIN FULL EDITORIAL</b>

Wednesday July 17 - Class #8	Finding your story in the edit Review final shoot footage Discuss edit plans	FIRST CUTS DUE FOR REVIEW IN CLASS	SHOOTING PICKUPS IF NEEDED, FULL EDITORIAL IN PROGRESS
Monday July 22 - Class #9	Table Screening and discussion of first cuts How to address camera and sound issues in editorial and shape your story	BRING REVISED CUTS/PICK UP FOOTAGE FOR DISCUSSION	ALL SHOOTS COMPLETE, FULL EDITORIAL IN PROGRESS - EXPORT FIRST CUTS FOR CLASS
Wednesday July 24 - 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
Monday July 29 - Class #11	Fine cut reviews - last edit notes and deep critique - titles/graphics/color	THIRD (FINE) CUTS DUE FOR REVIEW IN CLASS	FINAL EDITING, SOUND, MUSIC, GFX, COLOR
Wednesday July 31 - Class #12 FINAL	The real world - where to go next, getting work in documentary, future careers, film schools, etc	FINAL IN-CLASS PLAYBACK, SELECTION OF SCREENING FILM	FINISH ANY EDIT AND MIX and EXPORT FINAL CUT FOR TY
Friday August 2th - FINAL EVENT	SC SUMMER FINAL SCREENING, 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” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://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, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Support Systems:

*Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710*

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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

[engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086*

[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

*Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421*

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/ notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710*

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

**Diversity and Inclusion**

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail [diversity@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:diversity@cinema.usc.edu). You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

**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.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

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