

**CTPR 531: PLANNING THE DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION
SPRING 2021
18630D**

Thursday 9 – 11:50, on-line

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

**e-mail apope@cinema.usc.edu; Facetime via i-phone above; skype a_pope
for individual conferences contact me via e-mail**

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Course Description :

The object of this course is to research, develop and pitch a documentary production. **Because of the special parameters of Co-vid 19 which may restrict person to person physical research and filming on location of a pitch tape, we are trying out an approach which gives a students two choices: either develop a single idea to pitch as a director for 547 OR choose to develop a portfolio of not more than 3 abbreviated documentary ideas that would not have sufficiently been developed for 547 consideration but showcase your range of interests and broader professional potential in the job market.** There will also be some consideration of documentary fundraising, distribution, and career possibilities. The overarching 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 projects 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.

NEW DELIVERABLES Due to Co-vid 19 realities, we are exploring slightly different deliverables this semester **as an alternate** to the the traditional one of past semesters. A student wanting to **go the traditional route aiming to direct a 547 must** they 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. **OR a student may choose instead to develop 3 abbreviated documentary ideas with each one including a 2 page treatment, 2-3 sample videos annotated with notes about intended scenes. Students choosing this route will not be eligible to direct a 547.** All students will pitch their project(s) on 547 pitch day, even those students who do not wish their projects to be considered for 547, or who are not eligible (as a graduate production student, you must have completed the 507/508 sequence, and have crewed or be crewing a 546 or 547 project). (as an undergraduate you must have completed 310 and have completed or be currently taking 450. 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.

In addition to the pre-reqs for interested candidates – grads 508 & 531; undergrads 450, 310 & 431 – students must disclose any reasons preventing their projects from adhering to the customary Sat/Sun shooting times at the time they make the decision to pitch. They are encouraged to gather a crew interested in their project prior to pitch day even though it is understood that crew commitments can still stay open until the Wednesday following Friday pitch day at noon. This deadline importantly must be met in order for the project to be ‘green lit.’

Claudia Walters for grads and Marcus Anderson for undergrads, and the 547 Directing Faculty should be kept informed as the crews commit.

This course also takes the place of 553 as the prerequisite for a 581 or 582 documentary.

Learning Objectives :

- 1 - acquire an understanding of the whole range of documentary genres;**
- 2 - develop the ability to measure the feasibility of your idea in terms of its promising components and obstacles;**
- 3 - develop the ability to evaluate your idea within the current nonfiction field;**
- 4 - develop in person interviewing skills;**
- 5 - understand the elements of effective casting choices for nonfiction;**
- 6 - deepen written and internet researching skills;**
- 7 - learn to write a ‘an industry standard core’ documentary treatment’;**

- 8 - create a pitch tape suitable for Co-vid 19 and/or normal conditions;**
- 9 - learn in person presentation aka 'pitching' techniques**
- 10 - master basic legal requirements that apply to nonfiction access and subject participation;**
- 11 - develop concrete collaborative and critical skills for bringing a project to its optimum level.**

REQUIRED READING: (take advantage of used bk rates @ Amazon & other sites

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

Jeremy Royce's Filmic Pro Tutorial:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wIQCKJ_d10iTD2h3j4CEZMJebFS5YED/view?usp=sharing

The Documentary Core Application
<documentary.org/core-application>

Zoom support

<https://usc.zoom.us/en-us/covid19.html>

Recommended:

<agoalex> on YouTube – industry masters on SCA Webcam

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)

**"Make visible what, without you, might perhaps never have been seen."
Robert Bresson**

JOURNALS:

Journals are due by 9 am each Wednesday by e-mail to me

<apope@cinema.usc.edu> 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.

Covid Safety Compliance Understanding and Agreement

Due to concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19 in California and around the world, USC and the School of Cinematic Arts (SCA) have taken a strong stance regarding the need for safe and mindful behaviors among all members of the SCA community. Medical authorities agree that even the young and healthy are capable, if infected, of becoming ill, or of being non-symptomatic, unconscious vectors of the disease's spread.

The health and wellbeing of all community members has to be our paramount concern as we return to learning and collaborating together. We understand that attentiveness to the concerns of all SCA community members – students, staff and faculty, including those with underlying health conditions -- is simply an extension of the key principle of creative collaboration that has guided our school for decades. We're all in this pandemic together and need to behave accordingly.

All of SCA's production work, whether "Virtual" or "in-person, will be governed by rules laid out in each course syllabus. Compliance with these regulations will be monitored by faculty in conjunction with SCA designated Covid Monitors. The rules follow the guidelines in SCA-Covid Production Protocols, which follows SAG/DGA and other industry protocols, and are being interpreted by a SAG-certified SCA Covid Advisor.

Students indicate their agreement to abide by these regulations by enrolling in the production program fall semester 2020.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 Jan 21 **General orientation; Netiquette; Doc genres & 547
Promo;
Initial discussion of students' ideas for projects.
Class organization into groups**

Assignments for wk 2 –Jan 28:

Write descriptive paragraphs about three ideas for documentaries

Write a page in your journal submission 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.

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

Week 2 — Jan 28 **Discuss research ideas with class.**

**Assignment for wk 3 – Feb 4: “Get out of the car” exercise (see separate sheet); do preliminary research and write a one-page description of one project (to be submitted 2/03);
*** e-mail the assignment to all of us BY WED. 2/03**

REQUIRED: Rabiger, Chapters 26, 27 and 30.

Week 3 — Feb 04 **Discuss projects; interview exercises;
Screen Mark Wexler’s doc on his Dad trailer & others**

Assignment for wk 4 – Feb 11: Continue research; locate, pre-interview, and write descriptions of three potential characters for your project (to be submitted 2/10)

Select 4 to 5 examples of powerful interview set-ups & add to your Google Drive folder

Prepare for camera/sound instruction – bring own camera if you plan to use it; **EVERYONE – PREPARE YOUR CAMERA/SOUND NEEDS– if not a smart phone you may need to purchase a sound card 16 gb or less – sound squipment will not work w higher gb cards. **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CAMERA ‘GENIUS BARS’**; SD issues – contact Richardd Burton <rburton@usc.edu>**

REQUIRED: Rabiger, Chapter 17 & 24.

Week 4 — Feb 11 Discuss projects; discuss interviewing and interview production; Improv rel to listening
Camera & Sound equipment instruction –
Doc Structure – day one; subject gives tour
Criteria – access; agency (nothing abt us wout us)
Doc elements: iv, Vox Pop, family archives/fotos; After
Efx

Assignment for wk 5 – Feb 18: - Conduct a video interview, select a **5 minute** segment to be screened, **unedited**; Complete in your journal the Rabiger Interview Assessment & e-mail to instructor instead of regular journal if desired.

REQUIRED: Rabiger 5, 6 & 7

Week 5 — Feb 18: Screen and discuss uncut 5-minute segment of video interviews.

Assignment for wk 6 – Feb 25: 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;

REQUIRED: Rabiger, Chapters 8.

Week 6 — Feb 25: - Screen and discuss uncut 5-minute segment of video interview.

Assignment for wk 7 -Mar 4: — 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 wk 8 -Mar 11.

REQUIRED: Rabiger, Chapters 28 and 29.

Mid-term Individual Meetings with instructor wk 7 – Mar 4-11

These conferences allow you to get a sense of your overall progress, areas for improvement and an estimated grade at mid-point in the semester. If you are in danger of failing, you will be alerted in writing and in a conference; we will outline together what steps must be taken in order for you to pass.

Week 7 — Mar 4 Discuss first draft treatments and research reports.

**Assignment for wk 8 – Mar 11: Work on cut scenes, film
- Complete/polish your resume to be in treatment packet**

Week 8 — Mar 11 Screen cut scenes

**Components of a pitch vs. an oral
Presentation**

Assignment for wk 9 – Mar 18:— Write second draft of treatment (3-4 pages), including bio.

******- email latest to all us, latest 3/17.**

Week 9 — Mar 18 Screen cut scenes.

Assignment for wk 10 – Mar 25: Continue work on treatments, and shooting for pitch tape.

Week 10 — Mar 25 Discussion of pitching (with volunteer demonstrations.) Practice film pitches

Assignment for wk 11 – Apr 1: schedule final filming & continue to work on pitch tape

Week 11 — Apr 1 - Discussion of second draft treatments

Assignment for wk 12 – Apr 8 – Complete final written treatments including bios & pitch tapes.

TREATMENTS DUE to Google Drive: AND if you are pitching for a 547 also submit your written treatment to Instructor & S.A. by Monday, Nov 2, no later than noon.

Prepare for Dress Rehearsal on Apr 8 of final pitch tapes and oral presentations

**Week 12 — Apr 8 OPEN CLASS ON THURSDAY for DRESS REHEARSAL
All 531 students required to come.**

PITCH DAY TO 547 FACULTY & STUDENTS ON FRIDAY, APRIL 9. ALL STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND FULL SESSION OF ZOOM PRESENTATIONS.

Assignment for wk 13 – Apr 15: write a self-evaluation of your treatment, pitch tape and oral presentation and email to instructor by 4/14.

Week 13 — Apr 15 FINAL CLASS. Pitch Recap. Budgeting Overview with sample budgets. Fundraising; documentary careers. Instructor/class evaluations.

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 ESPECIALLY IN THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT 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.

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.

Asynchronous Learning

All class sessions will be Zoom recorded and made available for asynchronous viewing until end of the grading period in early December. Students enrolled in this course from outside the U.S. Pacific Time Zone will still be expected to participate in real time assuming that the official class time falls between 7am and 10pm in their time zones. Wherever possible faculty will be understanding and make accommodations to ease the inconvenience of asynchronous learning.

Students from outside the U.S. Pacific Time Zone for whom the class falls between the hours of 10pm and 7am may still be required to complete certain components of the course synchronously. These components will be announced at the beginning of the semester and students with concerns about meeting these requirements should discuss them with their faculty at that time.

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>.

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>

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>

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>