



**CTPR 474 , Documentary Production**

**Units: 4**

**Spring 2021**

**Wednesdays, 9am - 12:50pm**

**Location:** Zoom (link emailed separately).

**Instructor:**

**Office:** via Zoom

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Contact Info :**

Replies within 24 hours

**Student Assistant:**

**Office:** via Zoom

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Contact Info:**

**IT Help:**

SCA Knowledgebase: <https://knowledgebase.sca.usc.edu>

[Creative Technology and Support](#)

(213) 821-4571

[creativetech@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:creativetech@cinema.usc.edu)

Location: SCA 227

Support Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM

## **Course Description**

This class is an exercise in documentary filmmaking and total collaboration. During the 15 weeks of the course, each individual/partnership will make one short documentary film, working individually or in teams from initial conception to final finish. For people partnering up, you 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.

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will learn the importance of collaboration with others whether it is with their classmates or their documentary subjects/characters, to think creatively, and to push through diverse challenges while working towards the completion of their short documentary projects.

### **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.

**Recommended Preparation:** I have compiled a list of useful resources listed on the google drive. I encourage you reviewing it and coming with eventual questions to class.

### **Course Notes:**

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

- 1) The final length of each project will be between 10 and 20 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 USC 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) The school will not be providing equipment this Fall semester due to current Covid19 protocol and restrictions. Students will have to use their own smartphones or personal cameras to film. More details on the app and equipment will be talked about in our first class.
- 4) Students will provide their own: SCA approved drive and headphones. If you're looking for industry standard headphones, we recommend the Sony MDR 7506, which are available at the USC *Bookstore*.
- 5) 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.
- 6) Except by explicit permission, all shooting must take place within a 50 mile radius of USC. Exceptions will be made for students who are currently residing outside of Los Angeles.

**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 students 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.

**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:

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, FCPX/7, or Adobe Premiere)...then we're done. We will schedule a public screening at the end of the semester.

**Conferences and Such:**

I am available by appointment. Conferences will take place on Zoom. Do not hesitate if you wish to contact me at any time with questions, problems, or to schedule a meeting.

## Equipment

### Students will provide their own:

1. **Headphones (required) for editing.** We recommend Sony MDR 7506, which are available at the USC *Bookstore*.
2. **Cameras or filmic device such as smartphone.**
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 at <https://cinema.usc.edu/Laptops/> before purchasing a drive.

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

### Partnerships:

Learning to work with someone else is very important in your career as a filmmaker. 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 once you have selected a project partner.

We will quickly find a time that will work for both or all of us. Also feel free to contact your SA, Echo. Most issues can be easily solved, so don't be shy.

### Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Proposal and Shooting plan		10%
Dailies & rough cuts. Includes meeting weekly schedule of exercises and materials.		25%
In-class participation and contribution to the discussions		15%
Final project. Includes success of final project, effort, and process.		50%
Extra credit for completed final		Up to 15%
<b>TOTAL</b>		

“Participation” is defined as constructive in-class activity, including, but not limited to, asking questions, giving constructive opinions on lessons and other students’ work.

“Collaboration” is defined as working well with your classmates, or project partners both in spirit and as an equal contributing partner

### 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**

Weekly assignments are to be uploaded on the google drive under each student's folder at the latest by **8pm on Tuesday** evening the day before the class meets.

### **Additional Policies**

This semester, the School of Cinematic Arts will be covering all student Insurance Premiums and Lab Fees which are normally charged to students. Students will be required to use approved "Fast Track" Insurance companies only for rentals and equipment. No other insurance requests will be honored. USC does not insure Sharegrid or companies not on the "Fast Track List."

Students may still make requests for location insurance verifications (or COIs) when requested by locations. Students are reminded that these requests can take 3-10 days from request to final approval.

All necessary forms and online request forms are available on SCACommunity under the "Student Productions" heading. Contact your SA with any questions that you may have.

In terms of shooting plans, student are required to vet their plans with their faculty including discussing any Hazardous Shooting Conditions as defined by the SCA's Safety Book as posted on SCACommunity. This semester students will also be required to vet their plans for remaining Covid-safe with our Covid Safety Monitor. Ask your SA if you are unclear about these protocols.

### **SCA Production Division Virtual Production Protocols**

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.

USC and SCA are governed by LA County Health Regulations, according to which no in-person instruction or collaboration is allowed or sanctioned. This is the case on any USC project or exercise no matter where in the world it is executed.

In order to continue instruction and production for the purposes of cinema education the Production Division has adopted Virtual Production Protocols to govern our activities.

The underlying principle of our Virtual Production Protocols is:

**NO IN-PERSON COLLABORATION, EXCEPT AMONG MEMBERS OF A DEFINED AND DECLARED “BUBBLE”**

The specifics that follow may not apply to all courses but the principles do apply to all.

Certain multi-section courses and groups of courses (e.g. Capstone Production Courses) may have additional guidelines. Those additions will be presented to classes by faculty at the beginning of semester.

These materials will be available at all times on SCA Community. They should also be incorporated into each course syllabus or distributed with course syllabi.

By registering for the semester students are automatically subject to the Production Division’s Covid Compliance Agreement, also reviewable on SCA Community

### **Virtual Production:**

- Pre-production will be done completely online.
- Production will be recorded remotely
- Students will fulfill their roles by working on computers from their separate homes. Communication among the students and between filmmakers and performers will be conducted via Zoom, FaceTime or similar platforms.
- Actors or Documentary Subjects in their own homes will perform and assist in adjusting lighting and sound. They will capture their performances, under student filmmaker direction, using smartphones or approved rental cameras.
- If the director chooses not to use professional actors, they may cast themselves and/or housemates within their defined Bubble.
- Additional photography, such as establishing shots and B-roll, may be shot on the students’ own premises or approved adjacent locations. This must be property that the Bubble controls in order to prevent coming into accidental contact with the public.
- The use of stock footage is encouraged.
- Post-production will be done completely online: picture editing on Avid, sound editing on ProTools, remote color grading on Avid, and sound mix.
- Workflow will be modified to support different cameras available to students & actors.
- As with any SCA production class, we will follow current safety and health guidelines for LA County, USC and SCA.



### **Bubble Definitions:**

- **Bubbles** are zones within which safer contact normally occurs for each participant. These are your housemates (people with whom you live and interact without a mask or physical distancing on a daily basis). Each student has their own **Bubble**. They must not meet in person with other students.
- Each actor or documentary subject in a film also has their own **Bubble**. Unless actors/doc subjects live with one another, they will not have any in-person interaction with each other. Filmmakers may not interact in-person with their actors/doc subjects unless those actors/doc subjects are part of the filmmaker's Bubble.
- Note: When you cast an actor, you are also casting a location (the house, yard, apartment, stairway, etc.) available to that actor and controllable for production. You also have potential access to the services of anyone else in the performer's bubble, their roommate, housemate, spouse, etc. as long as they are declared and certified as Bubble members in advance of production.
- You will cast, rehearse, block and shoot remotely as defined above.
- You may support actors only with production gear rented from SAG approved rental houses, or personal gear of theirs that is approved. You may use your own approved gear when you are filming. Any transfer of gear to actors must follow specified Production Division COVID-Safe guidelines posted on SCA Community.

### **Recommended Readings and Supplementary Materials**

- Directing the Documentary by Michael Rabiger
- Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Digital Videos by Alan Rosenthal
- Documentary Storytelling: Creative Nonfiction on Screen by Sheila Curran Bernard
- Documentary Editing: Principles & Practice by Jacob Bricca
- The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism 1st Edition by Jonathan Kahana (Editor), Charles Musser (Foreword)
- A New History of Documentary Film - by Betsy A. McLane
- This Much is True: 15 Directors on Documentary Filmmaking - by James Quinn
- Ferocious Reality: Documentary according to Werner Herzog - by Eric Ames

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

In all film work deadlines are important and expected to be met. This is especially true of documentaries which, unlike fiction films, regularly turn out not to be the film you started to make in the first place. Such unpredictability makes it easy to fall behind and get swamped in the end. Keeping to the timetable and deadlines for this class will prevent that from happening. So, look ahead and keep up. The timetable for the class and schedule of deadlines are as follows:

	<b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>	<b>Assignments/Deliverables</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	January 20 <sup>th</sup>  In-Class orientation, syllabus & calendar Partnerships formed	Due Tuesday, January 26 <sup>th</sup> by 8pm  Students work on Pitch
<b>Week 2</b>	January 27 <sup>th</sup>  Partnerships pitch ideas to class Documentary styles	Due Tuesday, February 2 <sup>nd</sup> by 8pm  Proposal and shooting plan development
<b>Week 3</b>	February 3 <sup>rd</sup> Present Proposals to class (Powerpoint or PDF) Guest Lecture TBD Assign Exercise 1	Due Tuesday, February 9 <sup>th</sup> by 8 pm  Shoot Exercise 1
<b>Week 4</b>	February 10 <sup>th</sup> Screen Exercise 1 AVID Orientation Interview techniques Assign Interview Exercise	Due Tuesday, February 16 <sup>th</sup> by 8pm  Shoot interview exercises
<b>Week 5</b>	February 17 <sup>th</sup>  View interview exercises Shooting the documentary scene	Due Tuesday, February 23 <sup>rd</sup> by 8pm  Principal photography & editing begins
<b>Week 6</b>	February 24 <sup>th</sup> First written proposals and shooting plans due Each student/partnership screens five minutes of dailies selects for class Class discusses dailie	Due Tuesday, March 2 <sup>nd</sup> by 8pm  Principal photography & editing contd.

<b>Week 7</b>	<p>March 3<sup>rd</sup></p> <p>Guest Lecture TBD Each student/partnership screens five minutes of dailies selects for class Class discusses dailies</p>	<p>Due Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> by 8pm</p> <p>Principal photography &amp; editing contd.</p>
<b>Week 8</b>	<p>March 10<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Each student/partnership screens five minutes of dailies selects for class Class discusses dailies</p>	<p>Due Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> by 8pm</p> <p>Principal photography &amp; editing contd.</p>
<b>Week 9</b>	<p>March 17<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Each student/partnership screens selected cut scenes for class Class discusses scenes</p>	<p>Due Tuesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> by 8pm</p> <p>Principal photography &amp; editing contd.</p>
<b>Week 10</b>	<p>March 24<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Each student/partnership screens selected cut scenes for class Class discusses scenes</p>	<p>Due Tuesday, March 30<sup>th</sup> by 8pm</p> <p>Principal photography ends editing contd.</p> <p>Cut first rough cut</p> <p>Shoot pick-ups</p>
<b>Week 11</b>	<p>March 31<sup>st</sup></p> <p>Guest Lecture TBD First rough-cut screenings of projects in class</p>	<p>Editing continues Cut second rough cut</p> <p>Shoot pick-ups</p>
<b>Week 12</b>	<p>April 7<sup>th</sup></p> <p><b>NO CLASS</b> <b>Wellness Day</b></p>	<p>Due Tuesday, April 13<sup>th</sup> by 8pm</p> <p>Editing continues Cut second rough cut</p>
<b>Week 13</b>	<p>April 14<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Second rough-cut screenings of projects in class</p>	<p>Due Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup> by 8pm</p> <p>Editing continues Finish Fine Cut</p>

<b>Week 14</b>	April 21 <sup>st</sup>  Fine Cut Screenings  Final Proposals Due	Due Tuesday, April 27 <sup>th</sup> by 8pm  Tweak picture editing Sound & color polish. Picture Lock!!!  <b>Output Quicktimes</b>
<b>Week 15</b>	April 28 <sup>th</sup>  Check Quicktimes  FINAL OUTPUT	

### 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).

#### Safety:

All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

#### Stressful Times:

These are stressful times in our country, and Graduate School in and of itself is stressful. I encourage you to take care of yourself and your fellow students. USC provides opportunities for Mindful Meditation <http://mindful.usc.edu> and Mental health counseling is available at the Engemann Student Health Center, 1031 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, 213-740-9355.

#### Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.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](https://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 and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

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

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*

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

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by 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. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

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

[dsp.usc.edu](https://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 Campus Support & Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call*

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

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

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

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.