

USC School of Cinematic Arts

410 Non-Fiction Production Workshop

Units: 4

June 28th-August 6th, 2021

Mondays/Wednesdays 9am-12:50pm

Location: ON ZOOM, see instructor email for link

Instructor: Doug Blush

Office Hours: TBD as needed, via email or Zoom, with advance notice

Contact Info: blush@usc.edu

Additional instructors:

Camera: Jeremy Royce: jroyce@usc.edu

Editing: Jeremy Deneau: deneau@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 webspace.

Hardware/Software Required

SPECIAL ONLINE EQUIPMENT PROTOCOLS: We are an all-Zoom remote class this summer, and therefore we’ll be relying on the equipment you already own or can share from other sources like friends and family. It is recommended you purchase one off the SCA Approved Hard Drive list: 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. We will be having several special seminars on camera and editing that will take into account our remote Zoom workflow.

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. Your grade will be based on both the planning, production and completion of this film, as well as your participation in the class discussions and critiques.

IMPORTANT DATES:

July 4 Holiday: The university will be closed MONDAY (7/5) as part of the July 4th holiday.

Final Film Submission: Thursday, August 5rd, upload process TBD

Final Screening details - TBD

Edit and Camera Seminars

There will be several very important additional class sessions on editing and camera techniques. We'll be ideally editing on the Avid platform (other systems can be used due to remote equipment needs, though USC STRONGLY recommends learning Avid). Avid may be new to some of you but will prove very valuable even if you're already comfortable on another editing platform. We are able to offer free downloads and licenses of Avid Media Composer for both Mac and Windows (USC is a very Mac-centric school, however) - the instructions for getting your Avid software and license are here:

We have instructions at the top of the homepage on the SCA Knowledgebase for how to install Avid Media Composer and license it via USC VPN.

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

You need to use your USC NetID (USC email without the @usc.edu) to log in to the knowledge base. Please do this ASAP to get your software and log into the Knowledge Base!

Jeremy Deneau: 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 Jeremy Royce: kositche@usc.edu, with times TBD

Sound technique will be taught by Cliff Latimer: latimer@usc.edu, with times TBD

Special Guests

We may have some very interesting guests joining on Zoom 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 (when possible and safe), 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 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 computer). We will help with technical challenges during this online session, and USC SCA support will be available via email and Zoom if needed. We'll be discussing proper backup procedures and other technical issues in class.

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 28- 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 30 - Class #2	Discussion of creation of documentary story and character, shaping your idea SAFETY ORIENTATION - ONE HOUR	FIRST IDEAS DISCUSSED, CAMERA AND EDIT HOME EQUIPMENT DISCUSSIONS	CONTINUE RESEARCH AND GATHERING OF INFO FOR PROJECT
Monday July 5th NO CLASS	UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY, NO CLASS TODAY!		
Wednesday, July 7 - 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 12 - 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, SHOOTING IF READY
Wednesday, July 14 - 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 ALL PROJECTS, CREWING OTHER FILMS
Monday July 19 - 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 21 - Class #7	Continue reviewing dailies, planning finishing shoots and pickups. Post production planning, organizing and techniques	BRING DAILIES TO CLASS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION	CONTINUE SHOOTING PROJECT, CREWING WITH OTHER PROJECTS, BEGIN FULL EDITORIAL

Monday July 26 - 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
Wednesday July 28 - Class #9	Table Screening and discussion of first cuts Is the film working in story, structure and character? How to address camera and sound issues in editorial and shape your story	BRING REVISED CUTS/PICK UP FOOTAGE FOR DISCUSSION	ALL SHOTS COMPLETE, FULL EDITORIAL IN PROGRESS - EXPORT FIRST CUTS FOR CLASS
Monday August 02 - Class #10	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 04 - Class #11	Fine cut reviews - last edit notes and deep critique - titles/graphics/color The real world - where to go next, getting work in documentary, future careers, film schools, etc	THIRD (FINE) CUTS DUE FOR REVIEW IN CLASS - FINAL IN-CLASS PLAYBACK	FINAL EDITING, SOUND, MUSIC, GFX, COLOR - FINISH ANY EDIT AND MIX and EXPORT FINAL CUT FOR TY for FRIDAY
Friday August 6th - Farewell/ Turn in session- Time TBD	Possible Farwell session TBD	COMPLETED FILMS EXPORTED FOR TY - REQUIRED FOR FINAL GRADE!	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. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

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

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

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, 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

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

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

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

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, 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

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. 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 -FOR REMOTE CLASSES PLEASE EAT ON BREAKS ONLY IN CONSIDERATION OF YOUR CLASSMATES