

## The American University of Rome Film and Digital Media Program

*Department or degree program mission statement, student learning objectives, as appropriate*

<b>Course Title:</b>	Documentary Production Workshop
<b>Course Number:</b>	CIN 302
<b>Credits &amp; hours:</b>	3 credits – 3 hours, MW 5:15 PM-6:40 PM
<b>Pre/Co-Requisites:</b>	FDM 205 or a lower-level film or video production course or permission of the instructor
<b>Professor:</b>	Marco G. Ferrari
<b>Office Hours:</b>	10 minutes before or after class and/or by appointment
<b>Email:</b>	m.ferrari@aur.edu

### Course description

This course is designed as both a colloquium on the many issues involved in conceptualizing and filming a documentary and a hands-on technical workshop. Through discussion, the students will be encouraged to focus on a subject and establish their own line of communication with it. Students will have to create short documentary videos shot on location in Rome, based on their research of fiction and non-fiction video ideas, learning how to direct a small crew and maintain creative control during filming and the evolutionary process of postproduction. They will be taught basic camera and editing techniques. The course will be complemented with occasional screenings of non-fictional material, whose distinctive features, merits and flaws, students will be invited to identify and discuss. Laboratory course fee €75.

### Required Readings *(subject to change)*

All required readings are posted on **MyAUR** (under “Course”) along with technical documents and readings that will provide points of reference that can help further understanding. The auxiliary readings help to expand on theoretical topics discussed in class. Additional material may be distributed in class and uploaded onto the course home page.

### Further/Recommended Readings *(subject to change)*

- Rabiger, Michael. 2002. *Directing the Documentary*. Abingdon, Oxon: Focal Press.
- Murch, Walter. 2001. *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*. 2Nd ed. Los Angeles, California: Silman-James Press.
- Nichols, Bill. 2010. *Introduction to Documentary*. Second edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Nichols, Bill. 1991. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

### In-Class Viewings

Classes will have a time where we will view screenings of works. A Viewings List with online links (when possible) or library references will be available on **MyAUR** (updated weekly).

## Course Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. demonstrate the ability to relate the importance of research and planning, and critical thought to the success of documentary motion pictures
2. critique the meaning of shots and the choices made to achieve it. They will learn to reveal through the camera focusing on composition and lighting, developing an eye for and an understanding of variables such as point of view, depth of field, layers, object isolation, object placement and metaphoric implications, light sources and light direction
3. recognize the value of technical skills and organization as essential in bringing to life one's own personal and intellectual vision and insight, essential to effectively telling a reality story on film
4. understand the essence of truth in documentary film, and recognize the value of balance and not letting one's personal bias take over to the detriment of truth
5. demonstrate their power of observation in their writing. They will show their ability to describe what they see in the work of established documentary filmmakers and what it conveys. They will show their ability to write about their own work
6. demonstrate the ability to work in teams and the ability to present material viewed in class and out orally to their peers, critique their own and their colleagues' work, produce oral presentations to go along with the screening of their daily rushes and final cuts, and justify their creative choices every step of the way material not covered in class and presenting it orally to the class

## Course Learning Activities

- **In-class Activities:** Will include viewing and analyzing full feature- and short documentary films and selected clips. Lectures and group discussion based on assigned readings and the material viewed will follow. (LOs 1,2,3,4,7)
- **Writing Assignments:** Students are required to write one essay. Papers will have to reflect both personal insight and a familiarity with research material and minimum bibliography will be explained in class. Each project will also be accompanied by a "Proposal" outlining the student's initial idea. And a more thorough paper, "Response Text," will follow each project that will reference the theoretical readings, screenings and site visits assigned in class while explaining the student's personal vision and technical challenges encountered while creating the work. Though this is a studio course, planning and then evaluating one's own expression in relation to the course material will help to highlight certain forms that took place during the creative process. Planning and reflecting on your own work is not an easy exercise, but through repetition, tendencies and themes will come to the surface that can help inform the following project. Additional short writing prompts may be assigned for each project. (LOs 1,2,4,5)
- **Creative Projects (Practical Work):** Students will work on two individual projects and one final group short documentary film project. Each individual student in a work group will receive the same grade for the group project. (LOs 1,2,3,4,6)
- **Critique Sessions:** Will seek to analyze material covered in class and give students an opportunity to effectively introduce their work to their peers. (LOs 1,2,3,4,6,7)

- **Journals:** Students are required to keep a hand-written journal on lectures and on the projects they will be working on, sort of a logbook covering the genesis of such projects from development to the final cut. (LOs 1,2,3,4,5)

### **Class Structure**

- Discussions based off of assigned readings and viewings and in-class film screenings.
- Conceptual and technical demonstrations.
- Studio time (planning and production).
- Presentation of works (critiques).

### **Assessment Tools**

- Three Creative Projects 60%
  - Project 1—Sculpting Place, Abstract Sound Piece, 2-3 min. (20%)
  - Project 2—Video Essay, Personal Expression, 5 min. (20%)
  - Project 3—Short Documentary, Group Project, 7 min. (20%)
- Participation & Journal 20%
  - Participation is not simply a question of attendance and raising your hand in class. In order to receive your 20 points, you must attend class, ask questions, participate in in-class exercises and contribute significantly to group members' productions. \*If needed there may be brief quizzes at the beginning of some classes. These will be assigned at least one week before they are given. During the last week of class your hand written journal will be reviewed.
- Response Texts 10%
  - Individual written “Response Texts” will follow each project. The texts will reference readings, screenings and site visits assigned in class while explaining the student’s personal vision and technical challenges encountered while creating the work.
- Final Screenings/Peer Critiques 5%
  - Written and in-class critiques during the screening of works.
- Short Written Essay 5%

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### WEEK 01

Monday January 29

- Introductions, Course Overview & Viewings

Due 1/31:

- "Chapter 1" of Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell. *Film History: An Introduction*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Wednesday January 31

- Lecture/Discussion: Documentary (1900-1950)  
- Studio/Lab: Project 1—Assignment Overview

Due 2/5:

- Reading: "Chapter 10: Documentary, Experimental, Animated Films" in Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. 2008. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 8th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill
- Project 1—Proposal/Meditation Text

### WEEK 02

Monday February 5

- Lecture/Discussion: Documentary (1950-2000)  
- Studio/Lab: Project 1—Proposal/Meditation Text Review

Due 2/7:

- "Chapter 1" of Altman, Rick. *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Wednesday February 7

- Lecture/Discussion: Sound Quality & Elements  
- Studio/Lab: Sound In-class Recording & Editing Exercises

Due 2/12:

- Project 1—Capture Sound Recordings

### WEEK 03

Monday February 12

- Studio/Lab: Project 1—Editing Basics & Media Management

Wednesday February 14

- Studio/Lab: Project 1—Editing & Exporting

Due 2/19:

- Project 1—Exported for Presentation & Response Texts

## **WEEK 04**

### Monday February 19

- Presentation of Project 1—Sculpting Place with Critique Session
- Studio/Lab: Project 2—Assignment Overview

#### Due 2/21:

- Astruc, Alexandre. "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera-Stylo." *L'Écran Française* (1948);
- Lopate, Phillip. "In Search of the Centaur: The Essay-Film." *The Threepenny Review*, no. 48 (1992): 19-22.
- Project 2—Written Idea/Sketch

### Wednesday February 21

- Lecture/Discussion: Film-Essay to the Video Essay History
- Studio/Lab: Project 2—Idea/Sketch Review & Story/Treatment Workshop

#### Due 2/26:

- Sterling, Bruce. "Vernacular Video." (2007).
- Bresland, John. "On the Origin of the Video Essay" *Blackbird*. 9. 1 (2010).
- Steyerl, Hito. "In Defense of the Poor Image." *E-flux* 10 (2010).
- Project 2—Treatment

## **WEEK 05**

### Monday February 26

- Lecture/Discussion: Film-Essay to the Video Essay History continued
- Studio/Lab: Composition, Sound, Available Light; & Production Planning

#### Due 2/28:

- Deren, Maya. "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality." *Daedalus* 89, no. 1 (1960): 150-67.
- "Chapter 4: The Shot: Mis-en-Scene" in Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. 2008. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 8Th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Project 2—Initial Material/Content

### Wednesday February 28

- Studio/Lab: Archival Images & Appropriation; Composition, Sound, Available Light continued

#### Due 3/5:

- Daren, Maya. "Tempo and Tension." *The Movies as Medium*. By Lewis Jacobs. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970.
- "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram" in Eisenstein, Sergei, and Jay Leyda. *Film Form; Essays in Film Theory*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949.
- Project 2—Shoot & Gather Material

## **WEEK 06**

### Monday March 5

- Studio/Lab: Image Editing—Cuts, Superimposition, Timing, Color Correction; Work on Projects

Due 3/7:

- “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram” in Eisenstein, Sergei, and Jay Leyda. *Film Form; Essays in Film Theory*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949.
- Project 2—Final Shoots & Material Gathering

### Wednesday March 7

- Studio/Lab: Editing—Text, Soundtrack, Color Correction, Exporting; & Work on Projects

Due 3/12:

- Project 2: Final Edits, Video Exported for Presentation & Response Text

## **WEEK 07**

### Monday March 12

- Presentation of Project 2—Video Essay with Critique Session

Due 14:

- Chapter II “Documentary Modes of Representation” in Nichols, Bill. 1991. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

### Wednesday March 14

- Lecture/Discussion: Documentary Genres & Modes of Production—In-depth  
- Studio/Lab: Project 3—Assignment; Group selections; & Proposal Workshop

Due 3/26:

- Chapter 5 “Time, Development, and Structure” in Rabiger, Michael. 2014. *Directing the Documentary*. Abingdon, Oxon: Focal Press.
- Espinosa, Julio Garcia. "For an Imperfect Cinema." *The Cuba Reader* (2009): 458-65.
- Chapter 6, “Characterization and Portraiture” in Douglass, John S., and Glenn P. Harnden. 1996. *The art of technique: an aesthetic approach to film and video production*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Project 3—Proposals

## **WEEK 08**

### Monday March 19

- Spring break, no class

### Wednesday March 21

- Spring break, no class

## **WEEK 09**

### Monday March 26

- Lecture/Discussion: Documentary Genres & Modes of Production—In-depth continued
- Studio/Lab: Project 3—Proposal Selections & Treatment/Story Development

Due 3/28:

- Chapter 14 “Interviewing” & “Authorship” in Rabiger, Michael. 2014. Directing the Documentary. Abingdon, Oxon: Focal Press.
- Project 3—Treatment

### Wednesday March 28

- Lecture/Discussion: Documentary Genres & Modes of Production—In-depth continued
- Studio/Lab: Treatment Review & Production Schedule Breakdown

Due 4/9:

- Project 3—Production Schedule
- Fernando Solanas & Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema"

## **WEEK 10**

### Monday April 2

- Easter holiday, no class

### Wednesday April 4

- No class, students to view the exhibit “Home Beirut. Sounding the Neighbors” at the National Center for Contemporary Art and Architecture (MAXXI).  
<http://www.maxxi.art/en/events/home-beirut-sounding-the-neighbors/>.

Due 4/9:

- Short written essay on the exhibit “Home Beirut. Sounding the Neighbors” (details tbd)

## **WEEK 11**

### Monday April 9

- Lecture/Discussion: “Home Beirut. Sounding the Neighbors”
- Studio/Lab: Production Schedule Review; Interviewing, Sound & Lighting Exercises (internal location)

Due 4/11:

- Project 3—Shoot & Gather Material

### Wednesday April 11

- Studio/Lab: Interviewing, Sound & Lighting Exercises (external location)

Due 4/16:

- “The Image-World” Sontag, Susan. On Photography. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.
- Project 3—Shoot & Gather Material

## **WEEK 12**

### Monday April 16

- Lecture/Discussion: The Image World
- Studio/Lab: Project 3—Media Management, Editing & String-outs

Due 4/18:

- Project 3—Shoot & Gather Material

### Wednesday April 18

- Studio/Lab: Project 3—Media Management, Editing & String-outs

Due 4/23:

- De Lauretis, Teresa. "Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Rethinking Women's Cinema." *New German Critique*, no. 34 (1985): 154-75.
- Project 3—String-outs

## **WEEK 13**

### Monday April 23

- Lecture/Discussion: Counter Cinema
- Studio/Lab: Project 3—String-outs Review

### Wednesday April 25

- Studio/Lab: Project 3—Editing In-depth, Sound Design, Text, & Graphics

Due 4/30:

- Chapter 7 "How Have Documentaries Addressed Social or Political Issues?" in Nichols, Bill. 1991. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Project 3—Final Shots & Rough-cut

## **WEEK 14**

### Monday April 30

- Lecture/Discussion: Agency in Documentaries
- Studio/Lab: Project 3—Rough-cut Review

### Wednesday May 2

- Studio/Lab: Project 3—Editing In-depth, Sound Design, Text, & Graphics continued

Due 5/7:

- Philip Rosen, "Document and Documentary: On the Persistence of Historical Concepts," in *Theorizing Documentary*, ed. Michael Renov (New York: Routledge, 1993),
- Project 3—Last Shots



**WEEK 15**

Monday May 7

- Lecture/Discussion: Document or Documentary...?
- Studio/Lab: Project 3—Editing Final Finishes & Videos Exported

Wednesday May 9

- Presentation of Project 3—Short Documentary with Critique Session
- Journal Review

**WEEK 16**

May 14

- Final Exam: Project 3—Response Text Due via email by 4pm

### **Ferrari's Attendance Policy**

*"This course requires an extraordinary amount of work to be completed outside of class hours. Four late arrivals (more than 10 minutes) are counted as one unexcused absence; Four unexcused absences will result in a half letter drop in the final grade; each subsequent absence will also result in an additional half letter drop in the final grade; and seven unexcused absences will result in failure."*

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

In keeping with AUR's mission to prepare students to live and work across cultures, the University places a high value on classroom experience. As a result attendance is expected in all classes and attendance records are maintained. The University's attendance policy is as follows:

1.0. Minimum Attendance Requirement: Students must attend a minimum of 70% of a course in order to be eligible to be considered for a passing grade.

### 1.1. Automatically Accepted Absences

Students will not be penalized for one absence from classes meeting once a week;  
Students will not be penalized for three absences from classes meeting twice a week;  
Students will not be penalized for four absences from classes meeting more than twice a week, as in the case of some intensive courses.

1.2. If further absences are recorded, grade penalties will be applied according to the Instructor's specific attendance policy, as stated in the syllabus, and following the institutional parameters given in the Note\* below.

1.2.1. If the Instructor does not specify an attendance policy, there will be no grade penalty other than that attached to the minimum attendance requirement, and any penalized absences recorded above the basic 70% attendance requirement for the course will be invalidated.

1.3. During Summer sessions where courses are taught more intensively over a shorter period the following applies:

- Students will not be penalized for two absences from class.

### 2.0. Tolerated Absences

Certain categories of absence will not be penalized but they will be counted as an absence (for a 3-credit course meeting twice a week). These absences are:

- The Model United Nations (MUN);
- Permit to Stay,
- SG's "Ambassador Program" (Student Government initiative)
- Religious Holidays

The American University of Rome makes all reasonable efforts to accommodate students who must be absent from classes to observe religious holidays. (Please refer to the Provost's Office list of accepted absences for religious holidays)

Not attending a class due to the observance of a religious holiday will normally not be counted as an absence.

Students who will need to miss class in order to observe religious holidays must notify their

Instructors by the end of the Add/Drop period (first week of classes), and must make prior arrangements with their Instructors to make up any work missed.

2.1. The list does NOT include academic field trips because these (including arrangements for travel) must not overlap with other classes.

3.0. Cases of prolonged absences caused by an emergency or a medical condition may require students to withdraw from some or all of their courses. Under such circumstances students should first consult their academic advisors.

\*Note: No Instructor may penalize a student more than half a letter grade for each absence beyond the tolerated limit (e.g. from A- to B+).

#### Grade Point Average

A student's grade point average (GPA) is computed by multiplying the quality points achieved by the number of credits for each course. The result is then divided by the total number of credit hours taken. The Cumulative or Career Total Grade Point Average (CGPA) is the grade point average for all credit hours taken at the University and at approved study abroad programs. The GPA and CGPA are calculated by truncating after the second digit after the decimal point. Transfer credits have no effect on the CGPA at The American University of Rome.

#### Grades

Grades are posted on a secure area of the University's official website and are mailed to AUR degree students only upon written request. Grades are mailed to the various study abroad programs. Grades computed in the (GPA) reflect the following grade equivalents:

GRADE		GPA	
A	Excellent	4.00	94 – 100 points
A-		3.70	90 – 93.99 pts
B+	Very Good	3.30	87 – 89.99
B	Good	3.00	83 – 86.99
B-		2.70	80 – 82.99
C+		2.30	77 – 79.99
C	Satisfactory	2.00	73 – 76.99
C-	Less than Satisfactory	1.70	70 – 72.99
D	Poor	1.00	60 – 69.99
F	Failing	0.00	59.99 – 0
WU	Unofficial withdrawal counts as an F	0.00	
P	Applicable to development courses	0.00	
<i>Grades not computed into the grade point average are:</i>			
W	Withdrawal		
AUDIT (AU)	Only possible when the student registers for a course at the beginning of the semester as an audit student		
I	Incomplete work must be completed within the ensuing semester. Failure to do so results in automatically converting the I grade to the default grade, which is then computed into the grade point		

	average
P	Pass grade is applicable to courses as indicated in the catalog.
WIP	Work in progress