

## **CMST 23930/1: DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION I**

Cross-listings: (CMST 33930 HMRT 25106 ARTV 33930 ARTV 23930 HMRT 35106 MAAD 23930 CHST 23930)

Autumn 2022, W & F, 10:30AM–1:20PM, Logan Arts Center 014 & 003

Lecturer: Marco G. Ferrari, [marcogferrari@uchicago.edu](mailto:marcogferrari@uchicago.edu), 773-230-1106 (mobile)

Office Hours: by appointment, in-person or remote

Course Assistant: Kendra Sanders, [klsanders@uchicago.edu](mailto:klsanders@uchicago.edu)

### **SYLLABUS**

#### **Course Description**

Documentary Video Production focuses on the making of independent documentary video. Examples of various modes of documentary production will be screened and discussed. Issues embedded in the genre, such as the ethics, aesthetics, the politics of representation and the shifting lines between “the real” and “fiction” will be explored. Experimental approaches, story development, pre-production strategies, and production techniques will be our focus, in particular—research, relationships, the camera, interviews and sound recording, shooting in available light, working in crews, and post-production editing. For the final project students will work in crews and be expected to purchase a portable hard drive. A five-minute string-out will be screened at the end of the quarter. Students are strongly encouraged to take Documentary Production II to complete their group work.

#### **Overview**

An important part of the fabric of contemporary society is made up of the images we produce and receive every day. How these images affect us is tied to how and why we produce them. This production course is a way to facilitate the awareness of this interaction through fundamental technical exercises in listening, looking, and making—key pillars in documentary filmmaking.

The course will strive to answer: How do students perceive their relationship to the environment? How can that relationship be translated into a visual vocabulary? How can this vocabulary be refined, through the craft of writing, researching, filming, editing and presenting? Ultimately, how can the environment itself participate in facilitating the students’ creative expression?

#### **Goals**

1. To explore the creative process by being introduced to the fundamental techniques in pre-production, production and post-production using digital video.
2. Through historical/theoretical readings and viewings cultivate the ability to see the world cinematographically and find creative solutions to “capture” or “interpret” that vision.
3. To develop relational skills in working collectively through the modes of documentary production while realizing a final expression.
4. To be an attentive spectator and expand the skill of critiquing, reflecting sincerely and meaningfully on readings, discussions, screenings, and in peer review contexts.

#### **Class Structure**

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

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**Canvas** (course page), <https://courses.uchicago.edu>

The online course will follow the syllabus as much as possible. Since the schedule is subject to change please stay current to the canvas course page, as changes or additions will be made in that platform.

### **Classrooms**

We will use room 014 as our base for class meetings. We will have access to room 003/DML where we can edit from **12:30pm-1:20pm on Wednesdays** and **10:30am-1:20pm on Fridays**. When not reserved for other classes you are free to edit in the DML or reserve editing suites. As group projects begin to develop there will also be the ability to use editing suites during class time.

### **Readings**

All required readings are posted on **Canvas** along with auxiliary readings and points of reference that can help further understanding. The extra readings will generally be on technical aspects of production or to expand on theoretical topics discussed in class. Additional material may be distributed in class and uploaded onto the course home page. In the event of absence, the student is responsible for all new assignments and information given during class time.

Suggested Reference Readings:

- Rabiger, Michael. (numerous editions). *Directing the Documentary*. Abingdon, Oxon: Focal Press. (available as pdf on canvas)
- Murch, Walter. 2001. *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*. 2Nd ed. Los Angeles, California: Silman-James Press. (available as pdf on canvas)
- 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. (available as pdf on canvas)
- Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor, *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking: A Handbook for Making Documentary and Ethnographic Films and Videos*, University of California Press, 1997. (available as pdf on canvas)

### **Viewings**

Each class will have a time where we will view screenings of works. A Viewing List (with links when possible) will be available on Canvas and updated on a weekly basis.

### **Projects**

1. Sound—Sculpting Place. 2 min.
2. Cinematography—Forming a Subject. 2-3 min.
3. Documentary—Group Project. (five-minute string-out)

### **Grading**

The success of this course depends on the commitment of the students to engage creatively with theoretical and technical course matter. The student's openness and sensitivity towards fellow classmate's expression will allow for greater growth and exploration in the class as well. Evaluation of all student work will take into consideration the student's availability to experiment intellectually and creatively in a way that demonstrates a thoughtful consideration and creative

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interpretation of the themes and technical matter raised through course readings, screenings and class discussions. \*Late Assignments will affect your grade.

- Class Participation: 20%
- Individual Projects (1 & 2): 20%
- Group project—Proposal, Plan of work/shot list: 20%
- Group project—Selects: 20%,
- Group project—String out: 20%

Written feedback is given throughout the quarter, and an individual meeting at the mid-way point of the semester will be arranged to go over the student's current status and any concerns.

A = Outstanding participation and attendance, asks questions and embraces the process, substantial growth is evident by the end of the quarter.

B = Above average participation and attendance, palpable growth is evident by the end of the quarter.

C = Average execution of assignments, participation and attendance, little or no growth is evident by the end of the quarter.

D = Well below average of the above.

F = Unsatisfactory work, participation, and attendance.

### **Attendance**

This class does not meet remotely. Regular in-presence attendance is required. More than two absences in class will result in a full letter drop in the final grade. A quarter is a very short amount of time, missing one class can mean missing out on a major technical lesson, which can affect the quality of your projects. In the case of excused absences due to documented illness or family emergencies, please present a dean's note as soon as possible.

### **Out of Pocket Materials**

Macintosh formatted external 500gb to 1tb hard drive. Available for purchase at the DML.

### **Inhouse Equipment and Resources**

- Digital Media Center, <https://arts.uchicago.edu/logan-center/jonathan-logan-family-foundation-media-center>. Through the media center certain gear will be explored and available for your use on projects. As the course develops you will be introduced to gear and technical demonstrations.

- We will be using Adobe Premier Pro for editing projects. You will need to create an account to use the application, <https://www.adobe.com>. This does not give you the ability to edit off-site, for this you will have to go on a payment plan through adobe.

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### **SCHEDULE** (subject to change)

#### **WEEK 1: BEGINNING WITH SOUND**

##### **Wednesday, September 28**

Introductions, course overview. Non-narrative film forms lecture. Project 1: Assignment given.

##### Due 9/30

- Project 1: Proposal
- Reading: Bordwell, “Chapter 10: Documentary, Experimental, Animated Films”, pp. 338-370.
- Reading: Altman, “The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound”, pp.15–31.

##### **Friday, September 30**

DML online and in-person orientation. Non-narrative film forms lecture continue. Sound recording basics and beginning with Adobe Premier Pro. Project 1: Proposal review.

##### Due 10/5

- Project 1: Record material
- Reading: Nichols, “Documentary Modes of Representation”, pp. 32-74.
- Reading: Astruc, “The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Camera Stylo”, pp. 17-23.
- Reading: Bresson, “Notes on the Cinematograph”, pp. 1-7.
- Extra reading: De Antonio on “Pig”

#### **WEEK 2: CINEMATOGRAPHY**

##### **Wednesday, October 5**

Non-narrative film forms lecture. Discussions from readings. Project 1: begin to edit work, media management.

##### Due 10/7

Project 1: Continue to edit and record material.

##### **Friday, October 7**

Project 1: Edit, exports and presentations. Project 2: Assignment given.

##### Due 10/12

- Project 2: Proposal
- Reading: Bordwell, “Chapter 5: The Shot-Cinematography”, pp. 162-217.
- Reading: Lopate, “In-Search of the Centaur: The Essay Film”, pp. 243-268.
- Reading: Bresson, “Notes on the Cinematograph”, pp. 8-15.

#### **WEEK 3: CINEMATOGRAPHY**

##### **Wednesday, October 12**

Camera and light lecture and lab. Non-narrative film forms lecture. Project 2: Proposal review.

##### Due 10/14

- Project 2: Initial recorded material or proposal revisions.

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- Reading: Epstein, “Magnification”, “The Senses”, “Photogénie”.
- Extra reading: Dislocation Blues (2017) Sky Hopinka.

### **Friday, October 14**

Camera and light lecture and lab continue. Project 2: bring in initial material, begin to organize and edit. Project 3: Group—Documentary assignment given

#### Due 10/19

- Project 2: Record material
- Project 3: Ideas
- Reading: Bordwell, “Chapter 2: The Significance of Film Form”, pp 54-71.
- Reading: 4-Juhasz, “Observing the Observers”, pp. 1-6.
- Reading: Bresson, “Notes on the Cinematograph”, pp. 16-23.

## **WEEK 4: DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH—IDEAS**

### **Wednesday, October 19**

Camera and light lecture and lab continue. Project 3: Ideas discussed. Project 2: edit review

#### Due 10/21

- Project 2: final shots and edit
- Reading: Deren, “Tempo and Tension the Movies as Medium”, pp. 144-150.
- Reading: Eisenstein, “Film Form: The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram”, pp. 28-44.

### **Friday, October 21**

Discussion on readings. Project 2: final edits and presentation.

#### Due 10/26

- Project 3: Proposals
- Reading: Rabiger, “Chap 05: Time, Development, Structure”, pp. 79-90.
- Reading: Espinosa, “For an Imperfect Cinema”, pp. 295-300.
- Reading: Bresson, “Notes on the Cinematograph”, pp. 24-31.

## **WEEK 5: DOCUMENTARY PRE-PRODUCTION—PROJECT SELECTION, CREW FORMATIONS, TREATMENT, SHOOT SCHEDULE**

### **Wednesday, October 26**

Discussion on readings. Project 3: Proposals review, project selection, formation of crews.

#### Due 10/28

- Reading: Bunuel, “Cinema Instrument of Poetry”, pp. 66-69.
- Reading: Dorsky, “Devotional Cinema”, p. 1.

### **Friday, October 28**

Project 3: Treatment and Shooting Schedule work.

#### Due 11/2

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- Project 3: Treatment and Shooting schedule
- Reading: Bazin, “Ontology of the Photographic Image”, pp. 9-16.
- Reading: Bordwell, “Chapter 4: The Shot; Mise-en-Scene”, pp. 112-154.
- Reading: Bresson, “Notes on the Cinematograph”, pp. 32-39.
- Extra reading: Quinn & Temaner, “Cinematic Social Inquiry”, pp. 1-9.

## **WEEK 6: DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION—SHOOTS**

### **Wednesday, November 2**

Non-narrative film forms lecture. Treatment review. Camera & Sound—interviewing lab.

#### Due 11/4

- Project 3: Preliminary shots, bring material to class
- Reading: Deren, “Cinematography: Creative use of Reality”, pp. 150-167.

### **Friday, November 4**

Discussion on readings. Project 3: Review material, media management & edit work. Camera & Sound—interviewing lab.

#### Due 11/9

- Project 3: Record material
- Reading: Bordwell, “Chapter 6: The Relation to Shot to Shot Editing”, pp. 218-260.
- Reading: Vertov, “Kino Eye”, pp. 6-126.
- Reading: Bresson, “Notes on the Cinematograph”, pp. 40-47.

## **WEEK 7: DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION & POST—SHOOTS & EDITING**

### **Wednesday, November 9**

Non-narrative film forms lecture. Project 3: Review material & Edit work. Camera & Sound—interviewing lab.

#### Due 11/11

- Project 3: Continue to shoot
- Reading: Murch, “Blink of an Eye” selected readings.
- Reading: Hito, “In Defense of the Poor Image”.

### **Friday, November 11**

Discussion on readings. Project 3: Review material & Edit work.

#### Due 11/16

- Reading: Hooks, “Art on My Mind: Visual Politics”, pp. 301-305.
- Reading: Bresson, “Notes on the Cinematograph”, pp. 48-55.

## **WEEK 8: DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION & POST—SELECTS, EDITING AND PICK UP SHOTS**

### **Wednesday, November 16**

Project 3: Editing in suites. Review selects.

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Due 11/18

- Project 3: Continue to shoot/edit

**Friday, November 18**

Project 3: Editing in suites. Review selects.

Due 11/30

- Project 3: Record pickup shots, finalize string outs and read critique guidelines

- Reading: Bresson, “Notes on the Cinematograph”, pp. 56-72.

***Week 9***

*Thanksgiving Break 11/21-25*

**WEEK 10: DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION & POST—STRING OUT & PREPARE FOR CRITIQUE**

**Wednesday, November 30**

Screen string out and critiques.

**Friday, December 2**

Screen string out and critiques.

~FINE~