

IMA 753.00 - Documentary II • Spring 2022

Tuesday 1PM - 5PM • HN544

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Office: HN477 • Hours: Tuesday 11:30AM - 12:30PM

This course asks students to take a single documentary project from proposal through production. There will be a strong focus on story and pre-production planning and development, conceptual approaches to filming and writing the project, as well as careful attention to craft elements of cinematography and sound design. The student should have a project idea in advance of the first class, and be prepared to develop a proposal, do research, and complete substantial filming during the term, as well as preparing material for post-production (typically to rough assembly stage).

The course assumes basic knowledge of documentary videography, and editing techniques, and will help build on that knowledge. The main focus will be on how to develop a rigorous approach to story and how to actually make a film that tells your story while reflecting in the best way the tensions between form, readability and personal vision. In addition to craft concerns, the class will address a variety of conceptual issues in terms of the aesthetics and strategies of documentary, interrogating observational, experimental, essay film and other models for the problems they solve, and the ones they create. The course will include screenings and readings grouped around different discussions that have evolved around documentary media.

Prerequisite IMA 751 or permission of instructor.

Grading will be based on milestones: a written proposal, a production plan, developed research, the completion of principle filming, and ultimately a binder that includes the above plus logs and camera reports and a brief narrative. In addition there will be one presentation assignment: each student will present in class the work of a filmmaker whose approach you find significant or useful. In addition, all students will be required to assist another student in a technical capacity at least once.

Lateness and Absences: Attendance to class is mandatory. This is a graduate course, and it is understood that you may have to miss a class for reasons related to work, or because you are on a shoot, attending a conference, etc. If you think that you will have to miss three or more classes of our fourteen sessions, please speak with me and consider taking the class during a semester when you have more time.

Completion of the project depends on the size and complexity. However, the timeline for the piece should be agreed upon between the student and the instructor as part of the production plan ***at the beginning of the term***. The basic idea is that you will complete both pre-production, and principle cinematography by semester's end, and have good logs, etc. You do not have to have a fully edited version of your project, although you may.

TEXT:

Readings will be made available online.

The website for the class is: <https://imadociispring2021.org/>

I will list everyone as a contributor to the site. You are strongly encouraged to post about relevant screenings, artists, etc.

SCHEDULE

Pt 1 The Proposal

Week 1 - February 1 - The Documentary Proposal & The Subject of Documentary

(NOTE: Tuesday February 8 is running on a Friday Schedule.)

Week 2 - Feb 15 - The Rocky Road to Representation

Project Presentations

READING: Rabiger Chap 6 “Developing Story Ideas”. Also: Allan Sekula “Dismantling Modernism” (pdf); David Levi-Strauss “No Caption Needed” (pdf)

Week 3 - February 22 - Documentary and the Idea of Personal Style

Project Presentations

READING: Brian Massoumi “The Political Economy of Belonging”; Rabiger Chap 17 “POV & Storytelling”; Rabiger Chap 7 “Research.”

Due: Proposal Draft

Pt 2 The Research

Week 4 - March 1 - Art as Research

Screening: Screening: *Chronicle of a Summer* (Rouch & Morin, 1961) excerpt.

READING: Barbash “From Fieldwork to Filming”(pdf); Rabiger Chap 22 “Advanced Research”.

Due: Research Plan

Week 5 - March 8 - “Documentary as Social Text”

READING: Doc V&V Chap 2 “Documentary Styles.”

Pt 3 Pre-production

Week 6 - March 15 - What is Coverage? Approaches to visual evidence.

Developing a Production Schedule

READING: Hampe “Visual Evidence” from *Making Documentary Films and Videos*

Rabiger: Chap 5 “Story Elements & Film Grammar.”

Pt 4 Production

Week 7 - March 22 - The Tech Lecture - Understanding Digital Color

A look at color spaces, color subsampling, bandwidth and more.

Workshop: Setting up a shooting situation.

Due: Production Schedule

Week 8 - March 29 - “The Observer in the Society of the Spectacle”

RABIGER: Production (From Equipment Selection to Production Checklists)

Week 9 - April 5 - The Art of the Interview

READING: Anderson and Lucas “Interviewing and Working with Subjects”; Rabiger Chap 13 “Directing”.

Week 10 - April 12 - Working with other elements: Sound, animation, still imagery, archival material.

READING: Rabiger Chap 10 “Capturing Sound”; Doc V&V Chap 12 “Lighting and Exposure: Beyond the Basics.” (pdf)

Week 11 - APR 26 - Lecture “Documentary and the Utopian Present”

Screening: *War Photographer* (Christian Frei, 2001) excerpt; *Restrepo* (Hetherington & Junger, 2010) excerpt.

Week 12 - May 3 - Reconstruction/Reenactment & Documentary Ethics

Screen: *Far from Poland*, (Jill Godmilow, 1984) excerpt

Week 13 - May 10 - View project presentations.

Week 14 - May 17 - View project presentations.

Week 15 - May 24 - Exam Week. NO CLASS> DUE: Binder with Logs and Post-production Plan.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

Students should be able to develop and shoot a documentary film project of medium length.

Students should have a clear idea of how to take an initial thought and turn it into a fleshed out idea for a film. They should be able to take that film idea and frame it in the form of a professional proposal.

Students should have a clear understanding of how different approaches to non-fiction film making are, and how they offer different routes to telling a story and how those might suit themselves as filmmakers and the particular topic they are addressing. (e.g. observational, expository, experimental, reflexive.)

Students should have a clear grasp of current documentary film production techniques and the technologies behind them in the areas of cinematography, lighting, and sound recording.

Students should be able to deploy professional production equipment in an effective manner in a variety of contexts. (e.g. interview situation, large event, following process)

Students should have a grasp of professional production procedures in relation to legal issues (e.g. releases, location legalities) and working with crews (call sheets, shooting schedules, safety, etc.).

Students should have a sense of the ethical framework of documentary, in terms of what working with non-actors means ethically (e.g. informed consent) as well as their duty to audiences and to colleagues.

HUNTER COLLEGE POLICY ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123. CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link: <http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf>

HUNTER COLLEGE POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is a guiding principle of the Hunter College learning community because all students should have the opportunity to learn and perform on a level playing field. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, obtaining an unfair advantage, and falsifying records or documents (see examples) whether intentional or not.

Hunter College upholds the right to promote academic integrity on its campus as an educational institution of the City University of New York. The College has the responsibility to review all charges of academic dishonesty and implement sanctions, including, but not limited to, failing the course, official transcript notation, suspension or expulsion from the College when it has been determined that academic dishonesty did occur. Please click [here](#) to see a full list of disciplinary sanctions.

READING/WRITING CENTER

Students can receive tutoring in reading and writing skills, critical reading, and the writing process at Hunter's Reading/Writing Center.

ACCESSIBILITY

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of Accessibility located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call (212) 772-4857/TTY (212) 650-3230. If you have registered with the Office of Accessibility, please let your instructor know at the start of the term.