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# **DOCUMENTARY VIDEO PRODUCTION COM 3930-02**

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## Syllabus and Course Schedule

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

From the newsreel footage of the civil rights movement to films such as *The Thin Blue Line*, documentary film and video has played a central role in shaping the lives of individuals and society as a whole. This class will emphasize the power of documentary and the potential to address issues of social significance. Given our privileged location in the capital city of one of the largest states in the nation, this class will encourage you to tap the political, social and cultural resources within Tallahassee.

This class will explore the contemporary world of documentary video production with an overview of the history and major trends in documentary production. The course will combine critical viewing skills with practical instruction in documentary production. This class will be organized as a workshop, requiring weekly participation and collaboration among the class members. Just as you would expect to read great work in a writing workshop, we will view and critique a range of contemporary documentary work. You will learn to critically “read” documentaries at the same time that you learn to critically “write” documentary in the form of a final finished piece that will be submitted to a film festival and possibly aired on WFSU-TV.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- plan and create documentary videos which communicate specific, identified messages to particular audiences;
- utilize visual and audio technology in a technically competent and creative way;
- successfully operate a variety of video cameras and recorders, microphones and mixers;
- use non-linear video editing software and hardware with skill and elegance;

- act as a member of a video production team; and constructively critique other's creative work;
- understand the broad trends in the history and tradition of documentary film and video.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Michael Rabiger, *Directing The Documentary*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2004. Focal Press, Boston.

Other readings will be put on reserve on the blackboard website or handed out in class.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Because this class is organized as workshop where students will be dependent on one another for feedback and input into your projects, class attendance is required. One unexcused absence will be accepted. Further absences will reduce your grade by 2% for each unexcused absence. Please make arrangements prior to classtime if you are unable to attend class.

## **LATE WORK**

Late work will only be accepted when special arrangements have been made prior to the day any assignment is due.

No incompletes will be offered for this class. Grades will be based on the work submitted by the date of the final exam.

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

All written assignments should be well edited with clear, concise writing.

## **ADA STATEMENT**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations must:

- 1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disabilities Resource Center (SDRC).
- 2) Bring a letter to me from the SDRC indicating your needed accommodations. This must be done within the first two weeks of class.

## **HONOR CODE**

Students are expected to uphold the academic honor code published in the *Florida State University Bulletin* and the *Student Handbook*. The academic honor system of The

Florida State University is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility to:

- (1) Uphold the highest standards of integrity in your work
- (2) Refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community.
- (3) Foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community.

### **MEDIA PRODUCTION PROGRAM (MPP) STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA**

The Media Production Program (MPP) is highly competitive, expensive, professionally-oriented course of study. Classes have a small number of students compared to most FSU courses due to the need for cohesive team work and the limited amount and high cost of equipment. Indeed, in some courses students may be working on projects that have actual “clients” with actual deadlines and/or are seen by an audience, thereby putting the students in actual professional situations.

Students depend upon one another as creative team or crew members when they work together. When working individually, each student depends upon the other students in the course and MPP to act responsibly, respectfully, professionally and maturely by keeping to agreed-upon deadlines (especially regarding use of equipment and facilities). Thus, with such a small and specialized program it is possible for a small number of students to disrupt the optimal production and educational experience for the many. It is to prevent this from happening or, if it does happen, to allow for swift, meaningful and consistent consequences for those disrupting the maximum performance of any member or aspect of the MPP, that the following policies are being adopted for all MPP courses.

#### **INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

Since the MPP tries to prepare you for careers in the real world, we feel it is our obligation to communicate to you what the consequences of certain actions or lack of actions would be in the work place. By so doing, we maintain and improve our reputation in the academic and professional worlds, thereby increasing the value of a MPP degree for past, present and future students. Thus, if a student performs an action or fails to perform an action that would likely lead to being fired or reprimanded in a “real world,” professional position, s/he will AT A MINIMUM receive an automatic “F” for the project or unit in progress and/or for any crew work/class participation element of the final course grade. Given the weighting of each project in most MPP classes, an “F” will significantly reduce the final course grade. If there is a second offense, another “F” will be assigned for the current project, thereby in all likelihood leading to a failing grade for the course. Please note that grades lower than C- do not count toward the major and that a course in which a student receives less than a C- would then need to be retaken or another one taken in its place – if there is indeed space in such course(s).

If an offense is sufficiently serious, e.g., it disrupts a live broadcast by Seminole Productions or a cablecast of FSU LIVE or if it disrupts the overall schedule of any production class, it may warrant an “F” as the final course grade. Criminal behaviors such as theft or software piracy at FSU facilities also can warrant an “F” as the final course grade.

Examples of “inappropriate behaviors” include, but are NOT limited to:

- (1) using MPP equipment for personal or income-producing work not explicitly a part of a MPP course or faculty-approved project or checking out said facilities or equipment under your name for such use by another person.
- (2) committing misdemeanor or criminal violations or otherwise being removed or detained by police while in a MPP class or working on a MPP project
- (3) behavior that proves embarrassing to the MPP during a class or while working on a project, especially if the incident takes place in or is seen by members of the public.
- (4) ***Illegally copying software licensed to FSU or in any way corrupting or undermining the MPP’s software or hardware.***
- (5) creating an educational or work environment that disrupts or negatively impacts the members of a class or project group
- (6) changing script copy without permission and notification of the instructor or appropriate student members of the course or project
- (7) adding obscene or inappropriate language or other material to script material, prompters, graphics, packages, or other material
- (8) not giving the proper, professional, respectful attention to any crew assignment especially if such behavior negatively impacts on the performance of another student or a faculty or staff member
- (9) inappropriate language on headsets, the IFB, or microphones

- (10) showing up to a class or production session or using MPP equipment in a impaired state due to use of alcohol or other substances
- (11) not submitting properly completed elements of a group project in a timely and appropriate manner
- (12) erasing, moving or altering the material of another student or faculty or staff member without the explicit advance permission of that student or of the relevant faculty or staff member
- (13) using equipment or facilities during a time booked by other students, faculty or staff unless you receive explicit advance approval to do so

The above are merely a list of examples of inappropriate behaviors. It is offered only to give SOME operational examples of the concept. If there is a dispute over whether an action or lack of action by a student would be such an infraction, the student can ask the entire full-time MPP faculty to review the behavior in question to receive a ruling on whether it qualifies as an inappropriate behavior worthy of sanctions. The MPP faculty ruling will be the final decision on the matter. Students may, of course, pursue a formal grade appeal after the final course grade has been given.

Please also note that some of the above behaviors can also lead to the student being referred to university bodies for disciplinary actions. Some behaviors, e.g., use of illegal drugs or use of state equipment for personal projects, can lead to expulsion from the Media Production Program as well as civil and/or criminal penalties.

The MPP faculty fully realizes that these policies are unnecessary for 99% of the students currently in the MPP. These rules have been put into effect to prevent abuses by the other 1% and to swiftly deal with those abuses that do occur. The desired outcome is to never have to apply any of these rules and, by publishing them in advance, to reinforce in MPP students' minds how important it is to act professionally, responsibly and respectfully in a production context, whether it be here in the MPP or in the work world. If that desired outcome occurs, the MPP experience will be a better one for present and future students. If that desired outcome does not occur, these rules will hold the relevant students responsible and have them face swift, real consequences. In that event, we will hopefully reduce the number and scope of such violations and minimize whatever negative impacts do occur.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Documentary Video Project - 40% - Details Forthcoming**

### **Ideas Assignment - 5%**

### **Documentary Resources - 5%**

Each student will explore the Internet, library, bookstores or any other source to find an interesting and/or useful documentary resource. This could be a website with someone's documentaries on it, or a magazine that focuses on documentary, or a listing of festivals or anything else that you discover that is documentary related. We will share these with the class and

### **Documentary Biography - 10%**

Each student will write a brief biography of a documentary filmmaker. In class, each student will summarize their work and provide a handout to the class. This is not a formal presentation, rather a sharing of what you learned.

### **Written Response Essays - 15%**

Each student will be expected to write one short (500 words) response essay.

### **Mid-Term Exam - 15%**

### Attendance and Participation - 10%

Students are expected to attend class and participate in classroom discussions. Tuesdays will be “Viewing” days that require little or no preparation. Thursdays are “Theory and Practice” and will require you to come to class having read the material. A 2-point quiz may be given on Thursdays.

### GRADING SCALE

100-94 = A	73-70 = C-
93-90 = A-	69-67 = D+
89-87 = B+	66-64 = D
86-84 = B	63-60 = D-
83-80 = B-	59-0 = F
79-77 = C+	
76-74 = C	

**Note On Grades:** Education is not about grades but about learning. Part of the learning process involves feedback and one form of feedback is a grade. Each grade will also be accompanied with written and verbal feedback that will often be more helpful to your learning than the letter/number grade. If you are not happy with your grade, I encourage you to rework and resubmit your assignment. Also, because learning is a process, I strongly encourage you to give me feedback about the class as we proceed through the semester.

## Fall Class Schedule 2005

	DATE	TOPIC/ ACTIVITY	READING	DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
<b>Week One</b>	8/30	Introduction to Course - Begin topic choice discussion <b>Viewing:</b> Student Work		
	9/1	A Brief History of Documentary <b>Viewing:</b> Nanook of The North Man With A Movie Camera Triumph of The Will	Rabiger – Chapters 1,2	

<b>Week Two</b>	9/6	Theory and Practice: Organization, Planning, Interviewing	Readings: Rabiger Chap. 15, 16, 17. Gray 87-95 (On Reserve outside my office).	
	9/8	Theory and Practice: Documentary and You	Rabiger – Chapters 3, 4, 10, 11	<b>Ideas Assignment Due.</b> Production Team Assignments
<b>Week Three</b>	9/13	<b>Viewing:</b> Paradise Lost I		
	9/16	Theory and Practice: Modes of Production; Camera Workshop	Readings: Nichols p.32-75	<b>Project Treatment Due</b>
<b>Week Four</b>	9/20	<b>Viewing:</b> Paradise Lost II or TBA		
	9/22	Theory and Practice: Sound and lighting	Readings: Rabiger Chap 21, 22, 23	<b>Documentary Work Plan Due</b>
<b>Week Five</b>	9/27	<b>Viewing:</b> Stranger with a Camera		
	9/29	Theory and Practice: Documentary Theory and Representation	Rabiger: Chap. 5, 6, 7, 8	<b>First Sample Footage Due</b>
<b>Week Six</b>	10/4	<b>Viewing:</b> Experimental Documentary: “Mirror Mirror,” “Glass Jaw” “An Injury to One”		
	10/6	Theory and Practice: Presentations		<b>IN CLASS PRESENTATIONS DUE</b>
<b>Week Seven</b>	10/11	<b>Viewing:</b> Manufacturing Consent	Reading: “Manufacturing Consent” by Noam Chomsky	<b>Detailed Project Outline Due</b>
	10/13	Manufacturing Consent Con’t		
<b>Week Eight</b>	10/18	<b>Viewing:</b> The POV Doc: Michael Moore and Politics		<b>Essay Due</b>
	10/20	Theory and Practice: Project Critique		<b>Second Sample</b>

				<b>Footage Due</b>
<b>Week Nine</b>	10/25	Music and Documentary Viewing: Monterrey Pop, Woodstock, Year of The Horse		
	10/27	Theory and Practice: Editing	Readings: Rabiger Chaps, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34	
<b>Week Ten</b>	11/1	<b>Viewing:</b> Documentary and Humor - American Movie		
	11/3	Exam		<b>EXAM</b>
<b>Week Eleven</b>	11/8	<b>Viewing:</b> American Dream, Harlan Country USA		
	11/10	Theory and Practice	TBA	
<b>Week Twelve</b>	11/15	<b>Viewing:</b> Thin Blue Line, Mr. Death		
	11/17	Theory and Practice: Project Critiques	TBA	<b>Third Sample Footage Due</b>
<b>Week Thirteen</b>	11/22	<b>Viewing:</b> Afghanistan Docs.		
	11/24	Thanksgiving		<b>Rough Edit Due</b>
<b>Week Fourteen</b>	11/29	<b>Viewing:</b> Panama Deception		
	12/1	Theory and Practice:	Readings: "Media in a Capitalist Culture" by Barbara Trent	
<b>Week Fifteen</b>	12/6	<b>Viewing:</b> TBA		
	12/8	Final Project Viewing		<b>FINAL PROJECT DUE</b>