

COMPREHENSIVE FILM AND FINE ARTS PROGRAM (COFF)

DOCUMENTARY & SHORT FILM – THEORY AND PRODUCTION

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE SCHEDULE

Course Length: 18 weeks
Start Date: January 25, 2020
End Date: June 1, 2020
Location: TV Studio, School of Journalism – University of Regina
Day: Saturdays
Times: 09:00 – 01:30 p.m. (half hour break at 11:00)

Lecture – 2 hours weekly (theory, screenings, creative exercises and conceptualizing initial student story ideas from the pitch to finished documentaries and short films)
Lab – 2 hours weekly (hands on equipment training; camera, lighting, sound, editing, etc.)

TOP NOTE

In order to successfully complete this course an average of 4 hours will be needed beyond lecture and lab time. More as you move into editing your projects.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is centered on individual self-expression through student produced documentaries and short films. We will seek to discover the power of creative storytelling and challenge an audience with original stories that move beyond the traditional. Students will be encouraged to expand their knowledge of how story development, sound and pictures can strengthen audience connection to the material and affect social change through narrative.

In order to gain an understanding of the process the theoretical modes that provide the foundations for filmmaking will be explored, along with hands-on instruction in producing a documentary or short film. Each student, with support from faculty/advisors and fellow students, will conceive, produce and edit a documentary or short film. The films may be experimental, poetic, performative, counter narrative or traditional. Importantly, this course will afford the creative freedom and encouragement necessary for each student to begin to discover their own voice as a storyteller.

This course will be of benefit to students interested in self-expression, storytelling and media. All students will gain hands on experience in conceptualization, writing, filming and editing. It will also be beneficial for those with aspirations to work within the film industry.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Explore creative opportunities within the documentary genre and short films
2. Exposure to theoretical aspects of filmmaking
3. Experience first hand the benefits of working within small creative teams
4. Experiment with a diverse range of narrative and editorial tools
5. Expose students to career options within both mainstream network media and freelance/independent productions
6. Produce a finished documentary or short film

CLASS ENVIRONMENT

The environment is designed to be inclusive, collaborative, supportive and sensitive to special needs of the students. Students will be encouraged to collaborate with each other and with instructors, providing support and feedback to help shape each project. Each student can determine whether they would prefer a public or private screening of their completed work.

COURSE OUTLINE

This course outline is subject to revision at the instructor's discretion. Any changes will be shared with the class. We may do fewer exercises if the work load seems to be too much. This outline is flexible.

MODULES

There are three distinct, but inter-connected modules:

- *Module 1 - The Blueprint (Pre-Production) – 8 weeks*

Lecture: The blueprint incorporates several specific steps (conceptualization, creative treatment and shooting scripts). Each step builds upon the work of all previous steps.

Lab: Camera basics, lighting, sound, advanced camera and lighting

- Module 2 - Production – 4 weeks

Lecture: Production techniques and story feedback

Lab: In class, on location and in studio production support (technical)

- Module 3 – Post Production – 6 weeks

Lecture: Writing, editing, screening works in progress and critical analysis

Lab: edit system workflow, picture editing, sound editing, graphics, colourization and sound mixing

ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

➤ **Camera Stylo – Due TBD**

Conceive, produce and edit a camera stylo approach to a narrative. (01:30 minimum and 03:00 maximum) A focus statement is also required. Camera Stylo translates into the camera as pen. The documentarian and short filmmaker “write” much of their narrative with images (and sound) so this is an opportunity to explore story in creative and impactful ways.

The Camera Stylo Exercise can be an individual project or a group of 2. You may (and are encouraged to do so) assist one another in kicking around ideas and help each other out in the field when filming. However, the concept, the focus, the visual style and the editing must be done on an individual basis. This is an excellent opportunity to express yourselves as a creative writer through pictures and sound.

We will discuss details in class

➤ **Character Study – Due TBD – (Groups of 2) (Voluntary)**

Conceive, produce and edit a Character Study (03:00 minimum and 05:00 maximum). For the purpose of this Exercise - a character study is the visual/aural documentation of the traits, qualities and characteristics of an individual. The camera, sound and editing must work together to reveal the character as a unique individual and engage the spectator by opening up spaces for thinking through observation (Vis a vis your POV as the filmmakers)

➤ **Major Project – Due (Individual Exercise)**

A completed documentary with a running time of approximately 10 - 15 minutes

OR

A completed short film with a running time between 5 and 15 minutes

WEEK-BY-WEEK OUTLINE

❖ **Module 1 Begins**

WEEK 1 – LECTURE

Saturday, January 25, 2020

➤ **THE DOCUMENTARY GENRE - FORM AND FUNCTION**

1. Course Introduction, content & expectations
2. Six Documentary Forms (Poetic, Expository, Observational, Reflexive, Performative and Participatory)
3. Traditional narratives and non-traditional (mainstream and experimental)
4. Generating ideas for documentaries and short films

• *Screenings*

Select scenes from the six documentary forms of story telling

• *Exercise*

Conceive two ideas for a documentary or short film – to be presented in next week's class. Send to the instructor and present in class

WEEK 1 – LAB

Saturday, January 25, 2020

➤ **The Camera – Basics Part 1 of 3**

1. Camera Body - Basics

2. Camera Care and Maintenance
3. Focus, Exposure, Colour Balance
4. Recording and Playback
5. Camera Audio - Basics

WEEK 2 – LECTURE

Saturday, February 1, 2020

Exercise Due – Two ideas for a documentary or short film

- **THE DOCUMENTARY AND SHORT FILM – CHARACTERS, EMOTION, AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**
 - **CONCEPTUALIZATION AND REFINEMENT OF IDEAS**
 1. Students share their two ideas with the class (5 minute maximum)
 2. Assessment of ideas to move into pre-production
 3. Conceiving, evaluating and focusing a documentary or short film idea (Part 1 of 2)
 4. Constructing a concise, compelling pitch and sharing your vision – Step 1 - The Pitch
 5. Discussion – “The Documentary Film Movement” “The Candid Eye Movement, and “Cinema Verite”
- **Screenings**

Select scenes from

1. *Paul Tomkowicz: Street-railway Switchman*
2. *Into the Abyss*
3. *Jesus Camp*
4. *Detropia*

- **Exercise – due on Week 2**

Based on instructor feed-back and in class discussion decide which idea you will move forward into preproduction. Develop a one page “pitch” for your documentary or short film. To be submitted to the instructor and shared with the class

WEEK 2 – LAB

➤ The Camera - Basics Part 2 of 3

1. Tripod (and motivations)
2. Hand Held (and motivations)
3. Camera Lenses (basic)
4. Lighting - Basics
5. **Load Adobe Cloud onto computers and create accounts**

WEEK 3 – LECTURE

Saturday, February 8, 2020

• *Exercise Due*

A one page “pitch” for your documentary or short film. To be submitted to the instructor and shared with the class

THE DOCUMENTARY - AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

THE SHORT FILM – AGENT OF SELF EXPRESSION

1. The Social Change documentary (Theory and Screenings)
2. Developing primary characters
3. The short film – agent of self-expression
4. Audience engagement
5. Share the pitch
6. Filmmaker and Documentarian – Developing your unique voice as a storyteller

Screenings – short films

La Jetee

Chicken Real

Googly Eyes

Caldera

Exercise – Due on Week 3

Write and submit a theme, focus and story synopsis for the major project (1 page)

WEEK 3 – LAB

Saturday, February 8, 2020

➤ The Camera - Basics Part 2 of 3

1. Gear for adverse environments (cold, rain, wind, etc.)
2. Basic compositions and meanings
3. Camera Audio - Intermediate
4. Lighting - Intermediate

WEEK 4 – LECTURE

Saturday, February 15, 2020

Exercise – Due

Theme, focus and story synopsis for the major project (1 page)

➤ **Images tell the story**

1. Camera Stylo (camera as pen)
2. Writing a creative treatment
3. Translating your story-tellers voice into pictures and sound
4. Evaluating and focusing a documentary or short film idea (Part 2 of 2)

Exercise 1 – due week 4

Documentary – 2 page creative treatment

Short Film – 2 page creative treatment

Exercise 2 – due week 6

Camera Stylo Exercise

It is recommended that you consider using this Exercise to film a specific scene and or metaphorical imagery for your documentary or short film.

See details on page 3

WEEK 4 – LAB

February 15, 2020

➤ **Camera Stylo Exercise Preparation**

1. Camera lenses – Prime Lenses (intermediate)
2. Lens experimentation
3. Creative applications (lens, lighting)
4. Camera bookings for the Camera Stylo Exercise

WEEK 5 – LECTURE

February 22, 2020

➤ **Representing Reality and Irreality**

1. We will explore the documentary as a means to “Capture on film social problems and consequences hidden from public view and allow the human being to speak for themselves.”
2. Exploring the character within the documentary form
3. Exploring the role of the actor in short film

Exercise 1 – due week 6

Reminder – the camera stylo is due next week

Exercise 2 – due week 7

Documentary – Blueprint

Short Film – Script V1 and Blueprint

WEEK 5 – LAB

February 22, 2020

➤ **Introduction to Picture and Sound editing**

1. Adobe Premier Pro (Basic – setting up a project, sequence settings, importing and organizing media)
2. Adobe Audition (Basic)

WEEK 6 – LECTURE

February 29, 2020

Exercise – due

Camera Stylo

➤ **NARRATIVE VOICES AND DRAMATIC STRUCTURES**

1. Narrative arcs
2. The Documentarian and POV (Theory and Screenings)
3. Imagining and crafting a shooting script
4. Evolving a story (into Creative Treatment V2 (Locked))

5. In class screening (camera stylo Exercise)

Exercise – due week 8

Shooting script (documentary) or short film script V2

Exercise – due Week 8

➤ **Character Study – Due Week 8**

It is recommended, but not essential, that you consider using this Exercise to film a specific character for your documentary or short film.

See details on page 3

WEEK 6 – LAB

February 29, 2020

➤ **Intermediate Picture and Sound editing**

Adobe Premier Pro (Intermediate)

Introduction to After Effects (basic)

WEEK 7 – LECTURE

March 7, 2020

Exercises Due

Documentary – Blueprint

Short Film – Script V1 and Blueprint

➤ **10 Units of Time and Money**

1. Production Scheduling
2. Budgeting
3. Project Problem Solving

➤ **Exercise Reminders – due next week**

Shooting script (documentary) or short film script V2

Character Study

WEEK 7 – LAB

March 7, 2020

➤ **Camera Blocking**

WEEK 8 – LECTURE

March 14, 2020

➤ **PREPARING FOR PRODUCTION**

Exercises Due

Shooting script (documentary) or short film script V2
Character Studies

1. The Art of the Question (Long Form Strategies)
2. Openings and Closings (aperture and expository)
3. Story and production meetings to ensure all elements are ready for production

WEEK 8 – LAB

March 14, 2020

1. Interview styles and compositions
2. Equipment final bookings and technical checks
3. Individual sessions to work through any issues in advance of production

❖ **Module 2 Begins (Production)**

WEEK 9 – LECTURE

March 21, 2020

➤ **Production Part 1**

1. Production meetings
2. Problem solving

Exercise

On going production of projects

Exercise – Week 12

Principal Photography Wrapped

WEEK 9 – LAB

March 21, 2020

Time may be used for filming or one on one sessions with the instructor

WEEK 10 – LECTURE

March 28, 2020

➤ **Production Part 2**

1. How and why to transcribe interviews
2. How and why to log scenes
3. Production Updates
4. The essential motivations, and how to, for paper cuts and how connect the shooting script or short film script into an edit script

Exercise

On going production of projects

WEEK 10 – LAB

March 28, 2020

1. Instructor's discretion based on class progress and individual needs

WEEK 11 – LECTURE

April 4, 2020

➤ **Production Part 3**

1. Refining Structure (tension points, narrative arc and revealing information)
2. Context
3. Building Dramatic Curves and Narrative Arcs
4. Moving a narrative through time and space (montage, essay, invisible editing and the four forms of "time" within a documentary)

Exercise

On going production of projects

WEEK 11 – LAB

April 4, 2020

➤ **Advanced Picture and Sound editing**

Adobe Premier Pro (Advanced)
Introduction to After Effects (intermediate)

WEEK 12 – LECTURE

❖ **Module 3 Begins**

April 11, 2020

Exercise –Due

Principal Photography Wrapped

➤ **Post Production – Part 1**

1. Story – building emotion, conflict and tension through dramatic arcs Part 2
2. Montage
3. Preparing the edit
4. Editorial Assemblies – how to and why

Exercise Due – Week 14

Editorial Assemblies

WEEK 12 – LAB

April 11, 2020

1. Loading and organizing media (if not done)
2. Editing under the instructors supervision

WEEK 13 – LECTURE

April 18, 2020

➤ **Post Production – Part 2**

1. In class writing workshop

Exercise Reminder - Due – Week 14

Editorial Assemblies

WEEK 13 – LAB

April 18, 2020

1. Instructor's discretion based on class progress and individual needs

WEEK 14 – LECTURE

April 18, 2020

➤ **Post Production – Part 3**

Exercise Due – Week 14

Editorial Assemblies

1. Screening and vetting the assembly
2. Moving from an assembly to a rough cut
3. On-going post production of documentaries

Exercise Due – Week 15

Rough Cuts

WEEK 14 – LAB

April 25, 2020

1. Editing under the instructor's supervision

WEEK 15 – LECTURE

April 25, 2020

Exercise Due

Rough Cuts

➤ **Post Production – Part 4**

1. Screening and vetting the rough cut
2. Moving from a rough cut to a fine cut
3. On-going post production of documentaries

Exercise Due – Week 15

Fine Cut V1

WEEK 15 – LAB

May 2, 2020

➤ **On Line**

1. Color Correction
2. Effects

WEEK 16 – LECTURE

May 2, 2020 ***Exercise Due***

Fine Cut V1

➤ **Post Production – Part 5**

1. Screening and vetting the fine cut
2. Moving from a fine cut V1 to a fine cut V2
3. On-going post production of documentaries

Exercise Due – Week 17

Fine Cut V2

WEEK 16 – LAB

May 2, 2020

Exercise Due

Fine Cut V2

➤ **On Line**

1. Audio Mixing

WEEK 17 – LECTURE

May 9, 2020

Exercise Due – Week 17

Fine Cut V2

➤ **Post Production – Part 6**

1. Screening and vetting the fine cut
2. Moving from a fine cut to a locked cut
3. On-going post production of documentaries

Exercise Due – Week 18

Locked Cut (colour corrected, audio balanced)

WEEK 17 – LAB

May 9, 2020

1. In suite instruction – colour correction and audio balancing

WEEK 18 – LECTURE

➤ **Post Production – Part 7**

May 16, 2020

1. Final screenings and comment

Exercise

Address any final issues in the documentaries and short films

WEEK 18 – LAB

May 16, 2020

Remaining Saturdays are for finishing your films

Public Showcase

Date: TBD (Approx. Aug 12)