

Cross-cultural documentary filmmaking
JOUR 266
Spring 2010

Instructor:

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Location: Lab

Course meeting times, M,W,F: B,C,D hours

Course Description:

The United States is a melting pot of nationalities and cultures from all over the world. As people move to the U.S. from other countries they go through cross-cultural adaptation. They are learning to adapt to their new host society, but also want to maintain their culture from their home country. As a result the U.S. becomes a mixing bowl of cultures, and identity is an issue for everyone. The closest documentary that begins to describe the cross-cultural experience is Gordon Quinn's "The New Americans." This documentary focuses on immigrants more than one specific community. The focus of this course is for students to produce a short documentary (5 min.) on an ethnic community in our region. Students will submerge themselves into this 4-week course and really get to know the ethnic community they are trying to profile. This course is designed to teach students about how to make a documentary film, not a PSA (public service announcement), not a film about an issue or cause, but a narrative film with a beginning, middle and end. The students are expected to take ownership of their film. By becoming completely immersed in the process, the students will develop their writing, story-telling, shooting and editing skills. Students will work in teams of three. By working in teams, students will have the opportunity to exchange ideas among each other and draw from each other's perspective.

Goal: To teach students how to be film producers!

No pre-requisite for this course! Even if you don't know how to use the equipment—I'm going to teach you!

Required Texts:

Documentary Filmmaking, A Contemporary Field Guide by John Hewitt and Gustavo Vazquez, Oxford University Press, 2010.

Course Packet includes:

- 1) Instructions for equipment and editing
- 2) Sample script
- 3) Excerpts from *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking*, Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1997.
- 4) Excerpts from *Documentary in Practice*, Jane Chapman, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007.
- 5) Excerpts from *Directing the Documentary*, Michael Rabiger, Focal Press, Elsevier, 2009.

6) Excerpts from *Documentary Storytelling*, 2nd edition, Sheila Curran Bernard, Focal Press, Elsevier, 2007.

Documentary Films on reserve in the Library:

The New Americans (2003), Gordon Quinn

Super-Size Me (2004) Morgan Spurlock

Sacrifice (1998) Ellen Bruno. Personal, cross-cultural work examines the forces at work in the trafficking of Burmese girls into prostitution in Thailand.

Daughter from Danang (2002) Gail Dolgin, Vicente Franco. An Amerasian woman taken from Vietnam at the close of the war returns to find her mother.

An American Family (1972), Craig Gilbert. Documentary series about the Loud family of Santa Barbara.

Course Structure (B,C,D hours):

Week 1: Story development, Research, Planning

M (4/26): Review syllabus, cameras, lighting, editing, scripting, I-news, and more.

W (4/28): Review reading assignments, films to watch.

F (4/30): The Pitch- Outline of narrative story to be told. Outline should have a clear beginning, middle and end. This outline includes subjects to be interviewed, ethnic community to be profiled, and/or specific focus on the ethnic community. (100 points). Meet with groups later that day individually to review Pitches.

Week 2: Shooting, Logging, Ingesting

M (5/3): Set-up interviews and scout locations to be shot.

W (5/5): Shoot

F (5/7): Most of the video for the film should be ingested by now into your Avid bin. Instructor reviews interviews and b-roll. (100 points).

Week 3: Script-writing

M (5/10): Work on scripts—drafts to be reviewed with instructor (optional).

W (5/12): Scripts due (100 points). Set-up individual meetings with instructor to review scripts.

F (5/14): Meet with instructor to review scripts. Once scripts are approved, editing begins.

Week 4: Editing

M (5/17): Edit

W (5/19): Edit

F (5/21): Final films due by 5pm (200 points).

Mini-film festival on campus showcasing the students' films the following week.

Point System for Grades:

(I=individual, G=group)

Task	Due	Points
Narrative Outline (G)	4/30, 5pm	100
Interviews & b-roll (G)	5/7, 5pm	100
Final scripts (G)	5/12, 5pm	100
Final films due (G)	5/21, 5pm	200
Contribution to group effort (I)		100

Total Points: 600

For example: 540 points = 90 (see scale below)

480 points = 80

420 points = 70

360 points = 60

Grading Scale:	
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	86-89
B	83-85
B-	80-82
C+	75-79
C	72-74
C-	70-71
D	69-61
F	60 or below

Learning Objectives:

Washington and Lee's Department of Journalism and Mass Communications is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. Only about 25 percent of journalism and mass communications programs in the nation are accredited. The course content in J366 addresses each of the 11 professional values and competencies on which ACEJMC evaluates programs:

- Understand the principles of freedom of speech and press.
- Understand the role of professionals in a newsroom.
- Learn to serve an increasingly diverse community with local news coverage, providing accurate, contextualized stories that allow all constituencies in the community to understand and monitor their governmental, educational, economic and socio-cultural institutions.
- Understand how video can be used effectively.
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Think like a producer.
- Write correctly, clearly, concisely — using active verbs.
- Use correct spelling, grammar, punctuation and proper sentence structure.
- Use number appropriately when needed.
- Use the equipment effectively to produce the best newscast or online production.

Professionalism:

You will be judged by the accuracy, maturity and thoroughness of your work. Keep this perspective in mind in everything you do. Students are expected to act in a professional manner, meeting deadlines, solving problems, cooperating with classmates, and generally contributing in a positive way to the class. Working as professional often means searching for solutions in a group context. Teamwork is also essential to a good documentary production. Please come to class with a positive attitude. Please present a professional attitude and demeanor toward your classmates and colleagues. Students will be evaluated on their professional demeanor as they produce their films.

Please make sure your cell phones are turned off! Also no checking personal email, instant messaging while you are in class, or in the newsroom.

Deadlines:

I will not remind you of your due dates or deadlines. That's your job as it is spelled out in the syllabus. **You must meet deadline, otherwise it is an automatic zero!** We only have 4 weeks so you can't afford to miss a deadline.

Requirements for ALL SCRIPTS:

SCRIPTS must have accurate content

Use Active verbs, present tense

Correct Spelling, Grammar, Punctuation, Proper sentence structure

How to succeed in this course:

A: Superior to above-average work.

- Few changes to scripts—shows full story development in The Pitch/Outline and Script.
- Exercises creativity in building the documentary
- Reads all the assigned readings and watches the assigned films.
- Has excellent attendance
- Knows how to be a team player and maintains professionalism
- Completely submerges themselves into the making of the documentary
- Students must try and develop a story to attract and hold an audience's attention.
- Stories should show visual/audio storytelling, editing continuity, shot quality (composition, steadiness, lighting, focus), use of scene components, audio quality, memorable moments in their films.

B: Good to average work.

- Some problems in scripts, but generally it could be corrected with a moderate amount of rewriting or re-editing.
- Does the work, but is not fully engaged in the production.

C: Satisfactory to below average work.

- These scripts may contain problems with story development.
- This person has difficulty working with a team.

D: Poor work.

- Usually reserved for exceptionally damaging problems with writing.
- Also does not participate as a team player in the making of the documentary.

F: Failure.

- Fabricates the story.
- This grade is usually reserved for assignments that do not make deadline or work that breaks the ethical codes.
- Also this grade is reserved for a producer who has trouble getting along with others.

0: Zero

- Missed Deadline