

1-2014

MAR 455.01: Visions of Documentary Film

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Visions of Documentary Film - 34075 - MAR 455 - 01

Professor: Jason Gutzmer

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9:10 am – 10:30 am Tuesday Thursday- McGill Hall 127

Spring 2014

This class is both a lab and lecture class that will explore the evolution and historical development of styles in making documentary films, through research, lectures, and the making of short documentary films. The class will look at early French shorts, Setting the Scene (or reenactments), Newsreels, Kino Pravada (Cinema Truth), Propaganda, Cinema Verite, Direct Cinema, and various contemporary takes on Direct Cinema. The class will also explore the distinction between reality videos, journalism and the documentary or non-fiction cinema. The experimental aspects will rely on the artists(film makers) to convey their story with visual evidence that sets forth the statement of the documentary in visual terms and unique style and point of view. The practical part of this class will focus on planning, filming (production), and editing the non-fiction story in compelling, and innovative ways.

This is an advanced production class. Students are expected to use and apply all of their production knowledge from fiction cinema to their documentaries. Students will be expected to work in groups and contribute fully to their production crews. As in all other productions, planning is essential. Poor production and poor post production will not be tolerated.

The class will meet twice a week to look at films, discuss readings and research, discuss documentary subjects, discuss production planning, and to look at footage for critiques. The class attendance is absolutely mandatory as is showing up for shoots with your crew and having work for critiques. There will be peer evaluations for the group work. Generally there will not be class time for Production and Post-Production.

This course also coincides with the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival and you are required to view some of the film screenings and or panel presentations by film makers.

Barry Hampe's book Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos is recommended reading.

The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide: A Down & Dirty DV Production (Paperback) is recommended reading.

Students must have a stable external hard drive with at least 100 G free for MAR 455. Students will also be responsible for buying tape or digital shooting medium. (B&H, and Tapestock.com are good sources for quality affordable tape or cards.) Production equipment is on a first come first serve basis so planning and reserving for shoots is a must. Know the equipment check out and drop of times and stick to them, late equipment screws up everyone.

The following is a tentative schedule of topics and dates. We may look at scenes from many other films as well as do more short exercises in non fiction cinema.

Week 1

Jan. 28 Overview of class. Intro to Doc. History and Styles. Birth of Cinema Early French, Nanook of the North, Triumph of Will and Why we Fight

The three week three minute doc. intro

Assignment: Style differences watch and compare: Watch Thin blue line and prepare 1 minute report.

Week2

Jan 30 Discuss and Assign Hampe Reading. (It looks so easy)? Finding subject and narrative. Thin Blue Line **Short reports due 5pts.** Verite, Don't Look Back

Watch Brothers Keeper and prepare 1 minute report.

_Three minute doc check in.

Week 3

Feb 5 Discuss Reading and assign Reality is not enough... Recording Human Behavior and assign short paper on Film fest. **1 Min Report 5pts** Brothers Keeper

Assign: Choose one: Shermans March/ Bright Leaves/ Six O'clock News

Prepare a 1minute report Due next class.

Three minute doc check in.

Big Sky Documentary Film Festival. Feb 15-23 Film review compare and contrast three picks, your choice. Volunteer for extra credit and free movie tickets and a good chance to see films and meet filmmakers.

Feb. 11 **Critique 3 min Shorts Rough Cuts.**

McElwee **1 Min Report 5pts** Discuss and Assign Reading. Preproduction The crew, the equipment, scheduling, costs.

Pitching the documentary. Assign pitch for longer doc 150 words.

Feb 21 Washington-Lincoln Holiday, no classes held. Film fest papers due next week. Fine Cuts Due next week.

Feb 28 **BSDFF Papers due 10pts. Pitch Due 5pts.** Discuss BSDFF. Select Assign Scenes from Deliver us From Evil and Favela Rising short report due next class.

March 7 Begin Preproduction work on Final Documentaries. **1 Min Report 5pts** Discuss and Assign Reading. Production: Picture and Sound. short report due next class on scenes from Bowling for Columbine, and Harlan County USA. Story Coverage Vs. B and A roll. Avoiding The dreaded Talking head and opening the window to the character. Shoot, Shoot , Shoot!

March 14 Discuss and Assign Reading. **1 Min Report 5pts** Post production. Scenes from: Grizzly Man, Jesus Camp short report due next class

March22 Discuss and Assign Reading. **1 Min Report 5pts** Post production. Scenes from: Keep the River on your Right and The Fog of War short report due next class

March 28 Discuss and Assign Reading. **1 Min Report 5pts**
Critique Scenes from Docs. Scenes from Production Summary, Shoots and Interview
footage. Scenes from: Born Into Brothels: Calcutta's Red Light Kids American
Dream short report due next class

April 4 (Monday-Friday) - Spring Vacation (Keep the movie rolling.)

April 11 **Critique Scenes from Docs.** Discuss and Assign Reading. Post
production. **1 Min Report 5pts** Scenes from The Panama Deception short report due
next class

April 18 **1 Min Report 5pts** Discuss and Assign Reading. Post production.
Critique Scenes from Docs. Scenes from Once We Were Kings and Murder on a Sunday
Morning short report due next class

April 25 **1 Min Report 5pts** Discuss and Assign Reading. Post production.
Critique Rough cuts from Docs.

May 2 **Final Critiques last recommendations. Shorts 15pts 10 min docs 20pts**

May 11-15 Finals Week- Final Screening TBA Final Presentation peer evaluations.

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an
academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University.
All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for
review online at www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/Index.cfm/page/1321.