

EMF 461: Documentary Film & Video

Spring 2012 Mon & Wed 2:00-3:15 Media Center 102/TV Studio

Instructor: Dr. David Reiss

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Office Hours:

MON 12:30-2p by Appointment

TUE 12:30-2p Drop In

WED 12:30-2p by Appointment

All required readings will be handouts or online via Class Website:

<http://www.davidreiss.com/EMF461.html>

Not required but suggested is an excellent reference text available in paperback:
DSLR Cinema: Crafting the Film Look with Video by Kurt Lancaster.

http://www.amazon.com/DSLR-Cinema-Crafting-Film-Video/dp/0240815513/ref=pd_sim_b_1

In this course each student will produce their own short non-sync documentary portrait film, based on a series of Audio Interviews of a SINGLE PERSON supported by visuals. This type of filmmaking and use of M.O.S. technique will make you tell a story through the use of sound and supported by images - BUT not rely on a talking head. It also allows a single person to create a polished portfolio-quality film.

Your final film represents the majority of your grade - so it's up to you to choose a subject that will be available to you to record interview(s), AND shoot visuals. You MUST be able to meet the deadlines of the course, so make sure your subject is willing to participate fully - or choose another.

The course begins with intensive theoretical learning combined with "hands-on" workshops of DSLR HD Video Camera, Lighting, and of course - Location Sound recording. During this period, students will read relevant texts on film theory and view documentary films. This affords students the singular chance to watch and dissect a film, and then discuss the thinking behind the creation of that work with the filmmakers themselves. Simultaneously, the students will be listening to lectures on various aspects of film preproduction, story and treatments, theory, reading relevant texts, and completing a series of preliminary assignments.

The overall goal of the program's first month is that by the time students pick up a camera or sit down at to edit, they will have learned - from practice, from study, from lectures, from professionals - how to best tell a true story, by using the complicated blend of elements that make up a documentary film. Simultaneously, while they're learning the technical tools, students are starting production for the non-sync documentary film they will make.

As we move to Pre-Production for the Final Films - the course will go into a workshop mode in the classroom w/ the Canon 60D DSLR HD Video package w/ double system Audio recording, and the VML Final Cut Pro HD Suites. These next 4-weeks are devoted to advanced techniques and technical training, shooting and editing.

Months 3 & 4: During the last two months of the course, EACH student will have selected their subject to audio interview, continue to shoot visuals and edit into a short 5-7 minute documentary film.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

1-VML approved External Hard Drive w/ Firewire 800 and 7200 RPM speed for HD.
1-Professional Headphones per VML recommendations.

GEAR

For All Course Video projects we will share the TWO (2) DSLR Canon 60D HD camera packages, with audio and lighting equipment. A newly updated VML guide will be issued and reviewed on the proper procedures for checking out equipment and using the VML Final Cut Pro editing workstations.

MEDIA DRIVE: ONLY A VML approved FireWire Media Drive (7200 rpm w/ FW 800) is acceptable for this and future EMF production courses. This will allow you to take your projects and edit them on any of the Media Center's Apple-based Final Cut Pro Studio stations, or any off campus Mac w/ FCP, either on a laptop or desktop system. NO USB Drives allowed!

EMF GOOGLE GROUP LIST SERVE: All EMF students are required to join the EMF Google Group List Serve at <http://groups.google.com/group/TowsonEMF>.

This will guarantee that you receive daily postings regarding digital media, video, film, and audio production topics including festivals, special screening, guest speakers, film/video crew needs, internships, and jobs. Use this email address (TowsonEMF@googlegroups.com) to post your own messages to the group. The main page will also archive all posts.

EMF ID CARDS: EMF IDs MUST be obtained in the equipment cage (MC 007) during the first weeks of the term by presenting a valid Towson photo ID (your OneCard), passing a written policy test, and presenting proof of production class enrollment. Validation of production class enrollment is obtained via production instructor signatures on the bottom of Equipment Use and Loan Agreements (which will be distributed by your instructor).

Students must present their valid EMF ID Card each time they check out equipment or use EMF facilities. No other ID will be accepted. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Should violations of policy occur, students are required to surrender their EMF ID upon request by ML Supervisor, ML Assistant Supervisor, or ML staff. Please see "Media Labs Handbook".

Weapons Policy

To promote a safe and secure campus, Towson University prohibits the possession or control of any weapon while on University property. The term weapon includes any potentially dangerous object or substance or replica thereof. The full policy can be found at this link: <http://inside.towson.edu/generalcampus/tupolicies/documents/06-01.11%20Weapons%20Prohibited.pdf>

Emergency Text Alerts

All students must sign up for the Campus Emergency Alert Text Message Notification System. Go to following link for instructions to do so:
<http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/facilities/police/campusemergency/> and watch the emergency preparedness video and print out the pocket guide by clicking on this link:
<http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/facilities/police/campussafety/emergencyprep.asp>

CLASS POLICIES

No EATING or DRINKING is permitted at ANY time in the EMF classroom/tv studio. The ONLY exception is a beverage bottle you can CLOSE and SEAL, and use occasionally.

ATTENDANCE

This class meets twice a week for 15 weeks and attendance is mandatory. This is a vigorous advanced film production course with in-class workshops, multiple screenings, in-class assignments and discussions, so you will need to be sure you make it to every class.

Each unexcused absence will result a one full grade lowering of the final grade. More than three unexcused absences will result in a failed grade in the course. A written note from qualified individuals is required for absences resulting from illness, family emergency, etc. The instructor may allow absences in certain situations, but only if the student has talked with the instructor beforehand. For Emergencies the instructor can be notified via cell phone. The responsibility of making up for missed classes will be solely on the student.

LATENESS

Since most of the class is commuting - I ask EACH of you to safely TEXT or CALL my cell phone - 301-806-2843 W/ Name in text/message, if you are going to be late. This is the ONLY acceptable way of coming into class late. PLEASE do everything you can - like leaving early to anticipate parking, and get here ON TIME - as we'll be covering key topics at the start of class.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

CELL PHONES are NOT Permitted to be used at ANY time in my class. PERIOD. If you a text in my class you will be asked to leave the classroom.

If you must use your laptop for NOTE TAKING, be advised that any activity OTHER than note taking is not tolerated - PERIOD. We'll be screening work in class and the laptops screens are a distraction for OTHER students. During screenings laptops must be closed.

EVERYONE needs to be FOCUSED on the FRONT of the class. Recent research findings indicate that some college students who multitask during class perform at the same level as those who NEVER came to the class, and my doctoral research <http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/164/154> has shown LEARNING requires a SINGULAR FOCUS for remembering information.

ASSIGNMENTS

Students are expected to complete assigned exercises before class on the due dates listed in syllabus or as announced in class.

LATE WORK is NOT accepted without prior arrangement w/ instructor.

PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to participate in class critiques, discussions and exercises with undivided attention.

DISABILITY POLICY

This class adheres the Towson University Disabilities Policy. If you have a documented disability, please see me right away after the first class privately, so we discuss how to best accommodate your specific needs.

PLAGARISM

The EMF department has a published statement on Plagiarism, and Towson University has statements on both Academic Dishonesty and Student Academic Integrity, all of which pertains to your work in this course. ALL WORK must be newly created for THIS COURSE.

CIVILITY CODE

All EMF students, staff, and faculty are committed to collegial and academic citizenship demonstrating high standards of humane, ethical, professional, and civil behavior in all interactions.

EMF places a priority on learning. We value the inherent worth and dignity of every person, thereby fostering a community of mutual respect. Students have the right to a learning environment free of disruptive behaviors. Faculty have the right to define appropriate behavioral expectations in the classroom and expect students to abide by them. Faculty have the responsibility to manage and address classroom disruption. Staff have the right and responsibility to define appropriate behaviors necessary to conduct any university activity free of disruption or obstruction.

The use of offensive, threatening or abusive language, writing, or behavior will not be tolerated and can lead to academic dismissal. Further information about civility can be found in Appendix F of the university catalog.

SCHEDULE

Managing your schedule is critical for this course, and anticipating other course conflicting projects due dates.

GRADING POLICY

The grade of A is awarded for excellence. An A student turns in all work on time with consistently excellent standards of quality, creativity, and original thinking. This person is fully engaged in the content of the class and performs exceptionally in presentations and critiques.

The student shows superior knowledge and practice of the basic and advanced content of the course.

The grade of B+ is awarded for VERY Good Work: students who have consistently completed all work on time and in a high quality manner. The work shows creative thinking and care in presentation. The student has mastered all of the basic and most of advanced content of the course.

The grade of B is awarded for Good Work: students who have consistently completed most work on time and in a high quality manner. The work shows some creative thinking, and care in presentation. The student has mastered all of the basic and some of advanced content of the course.

The grade of C is earned when most class work is turned in and the student has participated in to some extent. The student has mastered all of the basic and none of advanced content of the course.

The grade of D or F is given for work that is incomplete, late, and/or does not demonstrate mastery of the basic material of the course. This grade is below average or failing work in the class.

Course Evaluation/Grading

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>% of final grade</u>
Final Doc Film Audio Production	15
Final Doc Film Video Production	15
Final Doc Film Post Production	30
Final Doc Film Title Sequence	20
Written Assignments	10
Attendance/Participation	10

Written, Practical, and Final Projects:

Written Assignment #1: Treatment for Final Film

Everyone must submit a treatment for a final documentary film, as well as pitch their film idea to the class. The written assignment is a one- to two-page description of the story you plan to tell. It is a thought paper, and can really be any length, but for this assignment's purposes, 1-2 pages will suffice. Your treatment should contain a short description of the project you plan to do, some background on the subject, give a sense of how you will tell the story (e.g. the storyline), detail the kinds of materials you are going to access for the project, and give some thoughts on who you will interview. *It's somewhat of a sales piece, a way to put your best foot forward in introducing a film you want to make.*

Written Assignment #2: Identifying and Securing Location.

But before you can ever go out and shoot anything, you need to "pre-produce" a location - and that is what this assignment is about.

Each student must "pre-produce" two (2) locations, one indoor and one outdoor to ADD to their final film treatment. You'll need to write up a paragraph about each location. Pre-producing means that you need to obtain information about that location (what it is, what happens there), and you need to say what kind of thing you would shoot if you were to go there. For example, if shooting in a pottery studio, you'd explain that you'd be shooting people working on the wheel, loading a kiln, etc., and explain whom you would interview there. Also, call the person responsible for these locations and make sure it would be OK (hypothetically) if you were to come for two or three hours and shoot video for a class, interview, shoot visuals, what have you. Try to secure visually interesting locations, where there is action of some kind. PICK locations that would end up being used in a final film if your idea is chosen to shoot.

FINAL DOCUMENTARY FILM

In this course each student will create their own short non-sync documentary portrait film, based on a series of Audio Interviews OF A SINGLE PERSON supported by visuals. This type of filmmaking and use of MOS technique will make you tell a story through the use of sound and supported by images - BUT not rely on a talking head. It also allows a single person to create a polished portfolio-quality film.

Your final film's audio & video production, as well as post production represents the majority of your grade - so it's up to you to choose a subject that will be available to you - and can meet the deadlines of the course.

Audio interview(s)

Each student will conduct audio interview(s) of their subject. These sound recordings will tell the story of your film. The interviews will need to be TRANSCRIBED - which is a tool that professionals use to organize and create a plan before editing. These transcriptions can be general in nature - and are often helpful to have on index cards for each question answered.

Production

While shooting projects with the Canon 60D packages (2) you'll be converting DSLR Canon files on SD cards to Apple ProRes 422 HD files/footage with Compressor to your media drive(s). As you gather footage to use in your film (whether it be diverse shots of still images, interview footage, archival footage, etc.), you will need a systematic way to organize and access this material for it to be useful to you when you edit.

Screening and logging EACH SHOT is an essential part of the production process. It is the foundation of any good film, and if it isn't done and done well, then you will run into serious problems later. Basically, the purpose is to generate an organized bin with written information regarding CONTENT of all of your footage. From this will be able to select the portions of your footage that you will use to edit the film.

Your documentary film production will be broken up into 4 stages:

1. Audio Production

Recording of Interview(s) and Natural Sounds. Transcription and organizing of audio content.

2. Video Production

Shooting visuals with nat sound. Conversion of footage to Apple Pro-Res 422.

3. Open & Title Sequence

The creation of a 30-60 second opening title sequence.

4. Post Production

Organizing footage into bins and creation of assigned select reels. Editing from assigned select reels into roughcuts. Review and revisions lead to editing of fine-cuts with sound mix.

Revised Fine cuts with opening title sequence. Color Correction and sound design/mixing. Creation of Quicktime masters.

EMF 461: Documentary Film & Video WEEKLY Schedule

Week 1 – Jan 30 & Feb 1

INTRODUCTION: Review of syllabus and course assignments.

Intro to Marantz Audio Kit & Canon 60D DSLR HD Video package.

Written Assignment: Treatment for Final Film

Week 2 – Feb 6 & 8

DUE - Written Assignment: Treatment for Final Film

Lecture: The documentary film treatment.

DSLR Camera Workshop I: Shooting, Sound Recording & Lighting w/ DSLR Camera, Marantz recorder, and Rifa Softlight Kit Workshop.

Assignment: Final Film Location Scout Report

Week 3 – Feb 13 & 15

DUE: Final Film Location Scout Report

Lecture: Location Scouting, mixing color temperatures, documentary shooting styles. DSLR Camera Workshop II w/ location sound recording.

Assignment: Audio Interview

Week 4 – Feb 20 & 22

Lecture: Documentary film clip screenings and discussion of various types of documentaries.

Week 5 – Feb 27 & 29

DUE: Audio Interview Selects

Lecture: Documentary film clip screenings II/discussions of various types of documentaries.

Assignment: Visual/Broll Shoot

Week 6 – March 5 & 7

Lecture: TBD – Guest Speaker

Week 7 – March 12 & 14

DUE: Visual/Broll Shoot selects

Lecture: Advanced HD editing techniques

Class HD Suites exercises

Week 8 – March 19 & 21

NO CLASS – Spring Break!

Week 9 – March 26 & 28

IN PROGRESS: INTERVIEW & BROLL SELECT Reels on DVD, Screen & Critique.

Week 10 – April 2 & 4

DUE - FINAL FILM INTERVIEW & B-ROLL SELECTS Reels

Screen & Critique.

Week 11 – April 9 & 11

DUE - FINAL FILM Rough Cut 1 w/ OPEN TITLE Sequence on DVD or .mov, Screen & Critique.

Week 12 – April 16 & 18

DUE Nov 14th FINAL FILM Fine Cut 1 w/ Revised OPEN TITLE Sequence on DVD or .mov, Screen & Critique.

Week 13 – April 23 & 25

Assignment - FINAL Film Title Sequence & Open

Screen & Critique.

Week 14 – April 30 & May 2

DUE - FINAL FILM Fine Cut 2

Screening & Critique in HD Edit 1 or 2 with Media Drive/FCP.

Week 15 – May 7 & 9

DUE Dec 5th- FINAL FILM Color Correct, Sound Design/Mix.

Professor/Team Screening & Critique in HD Edit 1 or 2 with Media Drive/FCP.

Week 16 – Final Class May 14

DUE SCREENERS: Final Projects on Widescreen SD DVD,

and a DATA DVD with exported final Quicktime file.

Final Film Screenings in-class via DVD or data/media drive.

Week 17 – Screening May 21

Documentary SCREENING: VB 204 Monday 5/21 7:30-9pm

Final Versions of Quicktime .mov Screener files due before screening.

Course Bibliography

Lancaster, K. (2010) *DSLR Cinema: Crafting the Film Look*. Focal Press.

Aufderheide, P. (2007) *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press

Millerson, G. (2001) *Video Production Handbook, Third Edition*. FocalPress.

Musburger, R. (2005) *Single-Camera Video Production*. Focal Press.

Rabiger, Michael. *Directing the Documentary 2nd ed.*, Focal Press, 1992.

Rose, J. (2002) *Producing Great Sound for Digital Video*. CMP Books.