

UTEP Dept. of Communication
COMM 4346: Documentary Video Practicum
Fall 2026 Theme: Placing Ourselves
CRN: 22439
SPRING 2026







Instructor: Dr. Sabiha Khan
 Times: Tues/Thurs 1:30-2:50 PM Texas Western Hall (TWHC) 213
 Delivery Method: In-person
 Email: skhan2@utep.edu
 Office hours: Tuesdays 10:30 AM-11:30 AM or by appt on Zoom

















Course Information: What this class is about and what we will do

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An advanced documentary video production course for students who have taken COMM 2342: *Introduction to Video Systems* (or who have had sufficient previous video production experience). Classes will consist of: group discussion of techniques of documentary video production and theory of documentary film based on assigned readings and class screenings and individual documentary video production exercises as well as a final short documentary film made with a crew comprised of class members. This semester’s theme, “Placing Ourselves,” interrogates the relationship between self and place through documentary methods and modes of observation. ([UTEP Edge Experience: Creative Activities](#))

COURSE OBJECTIVES + UNIVERSITY LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will:

Student Learning Objective	Outcome (UTEP Edge Advantages)	
experience the process of independent video production – from initial research, treatments and scripts (including principles of documentary structure and storytelling), production planning, archival research, production, editing, and peer-critique.		Critical Thinking
		Problem Solving
		Communication
		Teamwork
		Leadership
		Confidence

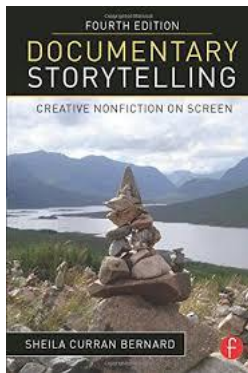
		Entrepreneurship
aggregate various forms of communication to create a topical basis for a documentary film project		Critical Thinking
		Problem Solving
		Communication
analyze award-winning global documentary films to assess the potentials and pitfalls of documentary film as an engine to advance the public good		Critical Thinking
		Global Awareness
		Social Responsibility
work collaboratively with a film crew		Teamwork
		Problem Solving
		Leadership
		Confidence
		Communication
engage in peer-critique of student work		Critical Thinking
		Confidence
		Social Responsibility
		Communication

LEARNING MODULES:

This course uses a modular format using a **Tuesday to Monday posting** schedule on Blackboard. New material will be posted on **Tuesdays** (usually two weeks in advance) and you have until the following **Monday** to submit all work for that week. In each module, material for two to three weeks is packaged together by broad topic, including: lectures, lecture notes, assignment submissions, discussion posts.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Sheila Curran Bernard, *Documentary Storytelling: Creative Nonfiction on Screen*
(ISBN: 0240812417) (ANY EDITION IS OK)



These books may also be supplemented by assigned readings, which will be distributed on Blackboard

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

STUDENT EVALUATION: students will be required to:

I. attend class lectures and screenings, do assigned readings, participate in class discussions and student video screening/critique sessions, complete all interim production assignments. This is an advanced level course in which students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of issues through participation in the group exercises and discussions.

*** NOTE: Since this class is a workshop and requires your active participation, class attendance is mandatory - attendance will be noted and points will be deducted for all unexplained or unapproved absences. Attendance includes arriving for class on time, and staying until the end of class (unless you have an unavoidable time conflict and have notified me of the situation beforehand or as soon as possible afterward).

II. Gain an understanding of documentary form by making an individual microdocumentary (under 2 minutes).

III. **Participate in the making of an original, short documentary video production**, 8-15 minutes in length.

The final short documentary must include the following:

- A treatment for the final documentary
- screening/discussion of rushes and cuts as assigned
- An assembly and rough cut (of representative footage/images) that will be screened in class and critiqued.
- Copies of talent release forms, licensing agreements for any copyrighted materials used
- Final cuts will be screened and critiqued by the class.
- The final videos must include end titles listing your production crew, as well as subtitles for all essential non-English dialogue. A high quality digital video file (exact specs will be provided) should be uploaded for streaming for grading the day of final screening / critique sessions.

GRADING: 90-100 = A 80-89 = B 70-79 = C 60-69 = D 0-59 = F

Final grades will be based on the following:

All work other than what is listed below	60%
Micro-documentary	10%
Final Documentary Project (rough cut; final cut; related screenings + exercises; final supporting docs)	<u>30%</u>
Total:	100%

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need to have access to a computer/laptop, scanner, a webcam, and a microphone. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.

If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office 365](#) and follow the instructions.

IMPORTANT: If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#) as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

Access to Adobe Creative Cloud (you are pre-approved through this course)

Camera kit

Course Communication: How we will stay in contact with each other

- **Office Hours:** My office hours will be held after class and by appointment on Zoom Meetings using [this link](#).
- **Email:** UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. My email address is: skhan2@utep.edu. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student account and please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.
- **Discussion Board:** If you have a question that you believe other students may also have, please post it in the Help Board of the discussion boards inside of Blackboard. Please respond to other students' questions if you have a helpful response.
- **Announcements:** Check the Blackboard announcements frequently for any updates, deadlines, or other important messages.

NETIQUETTE

Some assignments will require that you communicate online via message thread. Sometimes communication online can be challenging. It's possible to miscommunicate what we mean or to misunderstand what our classmates mean given the lack of body language and immediate feedback. Therefore, please keep these netiquette (network etiquette) guidelines in mind. Failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action.

- Always consider audience. This is a college-level course; therefore, all communication should reflect polite consideration of others' ideas.
- Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to the instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

- Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.

Course Policies: What you need to do to be successful in the course

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Attendance in the course is determined by participation in the learning activities of the course. Your participation in the course is important not only for your learning and success but also to create a community of learners. Participation is determined by completion of the following activities:

- Reading/Viewing all course materials to ensure understanding of assignment requirements
- Participating in engaging discussion with your peers on the discussion boards
- Other activities as indicated in the weekly modules

Because these activities are designed to contribute to your learning each week, they cannot be made up after their due date has passed.

EXCUSED ABSENCES AND/OR COURSE DROP POLICY

According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, “When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of “W” before the course drop deadline and with a grade of “F” after the course drop deadline,” which this year is **APR 2**. See academic regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excused absences. I will not initiate the drop process. If you want to drop, you’ll need to contact the [Registrar’s Office](#) to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an “F” for the course.

DEADLINES, LATE WORK, AND ABSENCE POLICY

All assignments will be due on Mondays at 11:59 PM. No late work will be accepted if the reason is not considered excusable.

ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF SUBMITTING WORK IN CASE OF TECHNICAL ISSUES

I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, please contact the UTEP Help Desk. You can email me your back-up document as a last resort.

INCOMPLETE GRADE POLICY

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

CENTER FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES POLICY:

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY: Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

GUIDANCE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT or Claude is permitted on an assignment-to-assignment basis. I subscribe to [Ethan Mollick's view of generative AI as an emergent "co-intelligence"](#) that we need to learn to work with to learn to develop an inner dialogue, which will help us to enhance our ability to engage in metacognition, or thinking about how we think. But we still need to learn how to think independently in order to use generative AI

intentionally. To this end, each assignment will explicitly state which level of AI use is permitted according to Leon Furze’s AI Assessment Scale (see below):

1	NO AI	<p>The assessment is completed entirely without AI assistance. This level ensures that students rely solely on their knowledge, understanding, and skills.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AI must not be used at any point during the assessment.</p>
2	AI-ASSISTED IDEA GENERATION AND STRUCTURING	<p>AI can be used in the assessment for brainstorming, creating structures, and generating ideas for improving work.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No AI content is allowed in the final submission.</p>
3	AI-ASSISTED EDITING	<p>AI can be used to make improvements to the clarity or quality of student created work to improve the final output, but no new content can be created using AI.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AI can be used, but your original work with no AI content must be provided in an appendix.</p>
4	AI TASK COMPLETION, HUMAN EVALUATION	<p>AI is used to complete certain elements of the task, with students providing discussion or commentary on the AI-generated content. This level requires critical engagement with AI generated content and evaluating its output.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">You will use AI to complete specified tasks in your assessment. Any AI created content must be cited.</p>
5	FULL AI	<p>AI should be used as a ‘co-pilot’ in order to meet the requirements of the assessment, allowing for a collaborative approach with AI and enhancing creativity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">You may use AI throughout your assessment to support your own work and do not have to specify which content is AI generated.</p>

[Source: Leon Furze, “The AI Assessment Scale: Verson 2”](#)

As this table shows, not every assignment will use AI, some will use AI in different ways, and some will use full AI. **Since you are all adults in charge of your own education, and I am not in the business of policing AI use, we will use the honor system in this class regarding your compliance with the AI Assessment scale.**

When generative AI tools are allowed to be used for an assignment, students must cite any borrowed content sources to comply with all applicable citation guidelines, copyright law, and avoid plagiarism. Instances that violate these guidelines will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

PLAGIARISM DETECTING SOFTWARE

Some of your course work and assessments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used to review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT FOR COURSE MATERIALS

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

MATERIALS RELEASE FOR DR. KHAN'S RESEARCH

I will be distributing a materials release for me to use any of your assignments or projects as case studies in my published research on documentary film pedagogy and environmental documentary. Your participation will enable me to analyze and develop new pedagogical strategies to enhance future courses as well as help shape the field of documentary film pedagogy studies. You are of course free to decline to sign the release.

COVID-19 INFORMATION

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have any questions or concerns about COVID-19, please email covidaction@utep.edu for assistance.

Course Resources: Where you can go for assistance

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

Technology Resources

- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

Academic Resources

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- [History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.

- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

Individual Resources

- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

CLASS SCHEDULE TBD

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES IN THE SCHEDULE/CALENDAR/ASSIGNMENTS DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF THE CLASS.

Readings will come from Curran Bernard's *Documentary Storytelling* (CB). Reserve readings may be assigned and posted on Blackboard as needed.

DATE	WEEK	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS/ACTIVITIES/DUE DATES
WELCOME MODULE + MODULE 1 : WHAT IS A DOCUMENTARY?			
AUG 26- SEPT 1	1	<i>Course Orientation</i>	IN-CLASS MTG TUES AUG 26 12:00-2:50 PM Work on "Portrait of Home"
SEPT 2- SEPT 8	2		IN-CLASS MTG SEPT 2 12:00-2:50 PM Complete + Submit: "Portrait of Home" assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen: Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary (National Film Board of Canada, 2008) • Read: Course Syllabus • <i>Capturing Reality</i> assignment • Complete + Submit: "Read the Syllabus" Assignment
MODULE 2: PRE-PRODUCTION SKILLS			
SEPT 9- SEPT 15	3	<i>Story Basics + Brainstorming Doc Ideas</i>	IN-CLASS MTG TUES SEPT 9 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON SEPT 15 by 11:59 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: CB Chs. 1-3 • Screen: Flight (Laura Wadha, 2017); Mockumentaries • Post + Respond: Story Basics discussion board • Complete + Submit: Story Basics Reading Questions; Brainstorm 10-15 Doc Ideas
SEPT 16- SEPT 22	4	<i>Story Basics + Brainstorm Doc Ideas cont'</i>	IN-CLASS MTG TUES SEPT 16 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON SEPT 22 by 11:59 PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen: TBD • Read: CB Chs. 1-3 cont'

<p>SEPT 23- SEPT 29</p>	<p>5</p>	<p><i>Story Structure</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete + Submit: Documentary Film Pitch <p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES SEPT 23 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON SEPT 29 by 11:59 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen: TBD • Read: CB Ch. 4 “Story Structure”; “How to Watch a Film” • Complete + Submit: Story Structure Reading Questions; “How to Watch a Film” Assignment
<p>SEPT 30- OCT 6</p>	<p>6</p>	<p><i>Treatments</i></p>	<p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES SEPT 30 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON OCT 6 by 11:59 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Karen Everett, “Squeezing Reality into Three Acts” [handout]; Treatment Packet • COMPLETE + SUBMIT: Everett and treatment questions
<p>MODULE 3: PRODUCTION SKILLS</p>			
<p>OCT 7- OCT 13</p>	<p>7</p>	<p><i>Treatments</i></p>	<p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES OCT 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON OCT 13 by 11:59 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete + Submit: TREATMENT PACKET + TREATMENT 1ST DRAFT (ONE PER GROUP)
<p>OCT 14- OCT 20</p>	<p>8</p>	<p><i>Camerawork I: Observational Style</i></p>	<p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES OCT 14 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON OCT 20 by 11:59 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen: <i>Call Center Blues</i> (Geeta Gandhbir, 2020) and your choice from <i>Short of the Week/Documentary</i> • Read: CB Ch. 11 “Shooting” • Complete + Submit: Reading Questions for <i>Call Center Blues</i> + your choice
<p>OCT 21- OCT 27</p>	<p>9</p>	<p><i>Camerawork II: Interviews + Lighting</i></p>	<p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES OCT 21 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON OCT 27 by 11:59 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen: Clips from “Analyzing Visual Style in Interviews” • Read: CB on Interviews (pp. on BB) • Complete + Submit: Reading Questions, “Interviews,”

			<p>“Analyzing Interviews” assignment; Edited Interview (2-3m assignment) Work independently on assembly cut</p>
--	--	--	---

MODULE 5: ASSEMBLING YOUR SHORT DOCUMENTARY

OCT 28- NOV 3	10	<i>Assembly Cut</i>	<p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES OCT 28 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON NOV 3 by 11:59 PM WORK ON ASSEMBLY CUTS</p>
NOV 4 - NOV 10	11	<i>Assembly Cut</i>	<p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES NOV 4 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON NOV 10 by 11:59 PM WORK ON ASSEMBLY CUTS</p>
NOV 11- NOV 17	12	<i>Assembly Cut to Rough Cut</i>	<p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES NOV 11 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON NOV 17 by 11:59 PM ASSEMBLY CUT SCREENING + PEER REVIEW (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly cut Peer review (in-class) • Screen: <i>Holocaust Survivor Band</i> (in-class)
NOV 18- NOV 24	13	<i>Rough Cut</i>	<p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES NOV 18 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON NOV 24 by 11:59 PM ROUGH CUTS DUE DATE TBA NOV 27 @ 11:59PM- ROUGH CUTS DUE</p>
NOV 25- DEC 1	14	<i>Rough Cut</i>	<p>IN-CLASS MTG TUES NOV 25 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON DEC 1 by 11:59 PM ROUGH CUTS DUE DATE TBA Rough cut to final cut assignment</p>

MODULE 6: ROUGH CUT TO FINAL CUT (DUE DATES TBA)			
DEC 2- DEC 8	15	<i>Rough Cut to Final Cut</i>	IN-CLASS MTG TUES DEC 2 12:00-2:50 PM DUE MON DEC 8 by 11:59 PM
DEC 9- DEC 16	FINALS WEEK	<i>Final Cut Screening</i>	FINAL CUT SCREENING DATE/TIME/PLACE TBD