COMM 3346 - Documentary Video Practicum, Fall 2016 (CRN: 13170)

Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00-1:20 (Lecture)

Location: Classroom Building C201

Instructor: Dr. Sabiha Khan
Office: Cotton 307A
Office hours: Mon + Wed 3:00-4:00 pm or by appt.

Email: skhan2@utep.edu
Office phone: 915-747-7690

COURSE SYLLABUS

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: lecture and group discussion of techniques of documentary video production and theory of documentary film based on assigned readings and class screenings; and documentary video production exercises. This will entail individual and group projects.

Coursework will also include a final, documentary project comprised of student teams who will collaborate to produce, script, direct, and edit the final product. A theme for the semester may be determined (e.g. Border Stories or Cross-Cultural Life), and students will be encouraged to select subjects relating to that general theme.

COURSE TOPICS & OBJECTIVES: Students will experience the process of independent video production – from initial research, treatments and scripts (including principles of documentary structure and storytelling), fundraising, production planning, archival research, production, editing, and final distribution & publicity. In-class screenings will provide students with examples of the various approaches to documentary film, with an emphasis on recent American theatrical and television documentary films.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students will:
Demonstrate the ability to produce a film combining conceptual, creative, and technical skills sets:

- Apply all three phases of production
- Aggregate various forms of communication to create a topical basis for a documentary film project
- Pursue assorted outlets and venues to showcase a film

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT STATEMENT: “The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence and students are expected to uphold the highest
standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.”

**CENTER FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES POLICY:** If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu. Or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS staff are the only individuals who can validate and, if need be, authorize accommodation for students with disabilities.

**STUDENT ASSESSMENT:** 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 group production assignments. This is an advanced level course in which students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of issues through participation in the group discussions.

*** NOTE: 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. Be part of a collaborative original documentary video production, 12-15 minutes in length, for which you have served in one of the following roles: director/writer, producer, cinematographer, sound person, editor, assistant editor. There can be more than one producer, cinematographer, or sound person depending on the project. I will meet individually with both entire crews and separately with each crew role. Each student will prepare a 6-8 pp. double-spaced document (standard 12 point font) that will explain his or her role in the production and the challenges they faced, a kind of summary of a production diary, to be handed in at the end of the semester. More details to follow.

The final group project must include the following
- A treatment for the final documentary
- screening/discussion of rushes and cuts as assigned
- A “work-in-progress” or “rough cut” assembly (of representative footage/images) will be screened in class and critiqued.
• Additional requirements include: a final shooting script; a timeline (especially if an historical documentary); copies of talent release forms, licensing agreements for any copyrighted materials used; and your distribution plan.

• 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) submitted 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:

- Attendance + quizzes + response papers + peer review 15%
- Midterm exam 15%
- Final exam 15%
- Final paper (production diary) 20%
- Final group grade (rough cut; final cut; group exercises; final supporting docs) 35%

  Total: 100%

**COURSE TEXTBOOKS** (required - available at the UTEP bookstore or online):

Additional assigned readings will consist of book chapters and xeroxed material at the Reserve Desk in the UTEP Library, under my name and “COMM 3346/FILM 3394 Documentary.”

**OTHER REQUIREMENTS:** Students must have their own external hard drive (and relevant cable) to capture footage; headphones; SD cards.

**GUIDELINES:** No eating or drinking (aside from water bottles) in class or Lab. No texting or emailing during class lectures, discussion, or screenings. Laptops are to be used for relevant note-taking only. If you have personal business to take care of please do it outside of class time.
GENERAL RULES

Check the class schedule each week and be prepared for class by doing the assigned readings for that class – be prepared to discuss or ask questions about the material when you come to class.

You are responsible for information from missed classes – be sure to get notes and info from a classmate.

All class work is to be original, produced by you for this class. If you use music, photos, film clips etc., they must be your original work, “public domain” materials, or if copyrighted materials you MUST have written permission from the copyright holder(s). If you do not, your films will be marked down, and will not be able to be screened at film festivals, on TV, sold on DVD, etc.

Use a tripod, and an external microphone to record sound – otherwise your work will never look professional (we will discuss exceptions to the tripod rule).

Before you export your video be sure to go through and check your sound levels by listening, and watching the VU (“volume unit”) meters in the Final Cut Pro editing software. If the sound jumps up into the red area it’s too loud and will distort, so lower the volume in the “timeline” window (we’ll cover this in class).
BORROWING EQUIPMENT

Pick up and return video equipment during the designated hours for the semester (to be announced). When you check out, you will fill out and sign a “check-out sheet” assuming full responsibility for the equipment.

Be sure to return ALL accessories, including tripod plates, mic cables, lens caps & cases etc.

DO NOT keep electronic equipment (or videotapes) in you car or car trunk – the heat or cold will damage them.

Return ALL equipment on-time - be sure to return the equipment on the day and time you have agreed to – if you don’t it will not be available for the next person, and your future use of the equipment may be restricted.

Readings will come from Hewitt and Vazquez’ *Documentary Filmmaking* (HV) and Curran Bernard’s *Documentary Storytelling* (CB). Reserve readings may be assigned and posted on Blackboard.

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CLASS SCHEDULE for COMM 3346 - *Documentary Video Practicum*, Fall 2014

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

| Week 1: Aug 23/25 | Intro; Discuss syllabus, course objectives, course expectations, and final project planning  
Researching Topics + Crew Assembly  
**Read:** Bernard, *Doc Storytelling*, Ch. 1; Hewitt + Vazquez *Doc Filmmaking*, Ch. 1 |
| Week 2: Aug 30/Sep 1 | Doc Modes + Story Basics |
| Week 3: Sept 6/8 | Story Structure  
Pitches |

*Pre-Production (Weeks 2-4)*
| Week 4: Sep 13/15 | Pitches  
Crew Meetings (during class) |
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<td><strong>Production (Weeks 5-8)</strong></td>
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| Week 5: Sep 20/22 | Treatments  
Interviewing + Lighting |
| Week 6: Sep 27/29 | Camerawork + Audio  
CREW MEETINGS  
**SEPT 29: TREATMENTS DUE @ 12 MIDNIGHT ON BLACKBOARD** |
| Week 7: Oct 4/6 | OCT 4: NO CLASS- WORK INDEPENDENTLY ON PRODUCTION  
OCT 6: MIDTERM EXAM |
| Week 8: Oct 11/13 | NO CLASS- WORK INDEPENDENTLY ON PRODUCTION |
| **Post-Production (Weeks 9-10)** |  |
| Week 9: Oct 18/20 | Editing  
CREW MEETINGS |
| Week 10: Oct 25/27 | Editing  
Titles + Graphics + Data visualization |
| **Funding + Distribution (Week 11)** |  |
| Week 11: Nov 1/3 | Mar 29: Funding + Distribution + CREW MEETINGS  
Mar 31: NO CLASS- WORK ON ROUGH CUTS |
| **Screenings (Weeks 12-15)** |  |
| Week 12: Nov 8/10 | SCREEN ROUGH CUTS |
| Week 13: Nov 15/17 | NOV 15: FINISH SCREENING ROUGH CUTS  
EDITING: FROM ROUGH CUT TO FINAL CUT  
CREW MEETINGS |
<p>| Week 14: Nov 22/24 | NO CLASS- WORK ON FINAL CUTS- THANKSGIVING BREAK |</p>
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<th>Week 15: Nov 29/Dec 1</th>
<th>SCREEN FINAL CUTS</th>
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<td>Week 16: Dec 6/8</td>
<td>FINAL EXAM: DATE TBD</td>
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Recommended Reading
(*on reserve at the UTEP Library under this course name & number, or under Film 3394 Documentary Cinema):


**REFERENCE collection at UTEP Library**


**JOURNALS**

(available in the Library periodicals section and some online)


Also:

*Cineaste*. PN1993.C5177

*Film Comment*. PN1993.F438

*FilmQuarterly*. (Electronic Journal).


*The Independent Film & Video Monthly*. PN1993.I617


