

FALL 2007
(Env. Studies 402 Section 6/Comm Arts 469, Section 2)

A Documentary Production Workshop

Credits: 3
Time: Fridays, 1-3:30 PM
1240 Biotech

Non-Fiction Story-Telling in Pictures
Moving and Still
***FOCUS* on the Environment**

Instructors/Filmmakers & Artists in Residence:

Judith Helfand
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Thursdays 2:00-5:00 pm (By appointment)

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Office Hours: Tues., 12:30-2:30 pm

Coordinator:
Gregg Mitman
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Office: 1415 MSC
Office Hours: Wed., 10-11am
Thurs., 11-12

Final Cut Pro Instructor:
Erika Simon
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“Office”: Mac Lab/1240 Biotech
Office Hours: Wed 4:30-7:00 pm
Only in Sept: 12, 19, 26

Course Description:

This production workshop will require students to engage in an intensive exploration into the world around them, the “natural” and the “unnatural”, the fact and the fiction. Over the course of the semester students will develop the skills and ability to create short non-fiction projects that actively explore, critique and expand on just what makes an environmental documentary, “environmental”.

The very issues that define non-fiction -- access, trust, ethics, objectivity, point-of-view and accountability to both subject and subject matter will be explored in theory and practice.

Students will receive hands-on training in the following areas: conducting primary research, interviewing, directing, digital videography, basic sound recording and editing. Over the course of the semester the class will produce two exercises and two shorts – each one strategically and systemically building on the next.

Exposure to and critical analysis of “environmental” filmmaking as a genre, fiction and non-fiction alike, will strengthen student’s ability and facility to use and experiment with these distinct yet inter-related crafts. Thus this class is highly encouraged to learn about the origins and evolution of environmental cinema through weekly screenings in the sister course GREEN SCREEN. We will also view excerpts from a range of documentary features and shorts that represent diverse genres and topics.

Students will be required to do primary research, outreach and fieldwork -- on the street, in the forest, at the Saturday’s farmers market, on the web, through local/regional lore and official history. Expect cold calling and face-to-face interviewing on and off camera.

Through collaboration, teamwork and mutual support for the creative process, the class will explore what it takes to translate a subject's unique experience and distinct point-of-view and an environmental tragedy, myth, irony or phenomena into visual and narrative choices.

The overall goal is for students to individually and collectively:

- Explore/experience the power, responsibility and privilege that a documentary maker wields;
- Question how those power dynamics relate to the politics of documenting the “environment”;
- Add to, build on and perhaps even enlarge the definition of environmental film.

The assignments given over the course of the semester will guide the research, production and post-production process of your exercises & projects. To the greatest extent possible the topics/subjects of the class projects will be what we use as examples and jumping off points for exploring and engaging with the entire process of making a documentary.

In addition to viewing student work (selects, assemblies, rough-cuts/fine-cuts), excerpts from feature and short docs, independently made classics to contemporary works and examples of film festival trailers will be screened and mined for examples of style, content and form. Our particular focus will always be on how the environment is presented and “messed” and how we can build on, extend or break with those traditions, confines and styles.

Guest filmmakers (a director/cinematographer and an editor) in addition to Helfand and Siegel have been invited to class to share their technical knowledge and field experience. Special attention will be given to tone, story-telling styles, how to make the local global and the personal universal, techniques for shooting “large stories” with small format video and how to use the editing process can be used to shape and re-shape a story.

The workshop is built around production, two exercises followed by two projects, each one building on the other.

The underlying principle and philosophy for the workshop:

One filmmaker's questions, problems, pitfalls and stumbling blocks,
is another filmmakers' about to happen.
From fieldwork, research, and story development
to production, editing, feedback, re-editing,
and audience development...

My challenge is Your challenge

ALL QUESTIONS ARE INTERESTING, USEFUL and IMPORTANT

Students are required to play a supportive roll in creating a documentary community that is built on active listening, constructive critique and rigorous collaboration.

GRADING

To earn a grade for the class, you must complete all of the exercises and projects. For each project, you must complete each step of the project (e.g., assembly, rough cut, fine cut, etc.)

Exercise #1 – 10%
Exercise #2 – 10%
Production #1 (Trailer) – 25%
Production #2 (Final Project) – 30%
Attendance and Class Participation – 25%

Evaluation will include your ability to be a team player and collaborate in the field and the edit room (producing, shooting, and editing), and your participation in classroom discussion and critiques. Attendance to classes and FCP tutorials is mandatory. In class screening dates are built around your projects being ready to review and critique. If you don't have your work there, we have nothing to screen.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Directing the Documentary, Michael Rabiger (Fourth Edition) Focal Press
(At Book Store)

Anthony Q. Artis, *Down and Dirty DV Documentary (Vol. 1)*
Download at: www.DownAndDirtyDV.com

REQUIRED ARTICLES: to familiarize you with guest filmmakers/instructors)

Sarita Siegel, “Reflections on Anthropomorphism in *The Disenchanted Forest*,” in *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (pdf on class site)

“Radical History Review,” Interview with Judith Helfand, Duke University Press
(pdf on class site)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS/Readings & DIGITAL MEDIA:

Story, Robert McKee, 1997, HarperCollins, Chapters 1 and 2
Theorizing Documentary, Edited by Michael Renov. AFI Film Readers Series,
Routledge, 1993 (Pb. Ed.)
New Challenges for the Documentary, Alan Rosenthal (ed). © 1995
The Documentary Tradition, 2nd Edition, Jack C. Ellis © 1995

WEB SITES

Making Your Documentary Matter 2007 Podcast & Discussion Forum Center for Social Media

http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/resources/publications/2007_mydm_agenda/

D-Word – <http://www.d-word.com/>

DocuClub - <http://www.docuclub.org/>

Media Rights - <http://www.mediarights.org/>

<http://www.documentaryfilms.net/television.htm>

<http://www.docurama.com/staffpickdetail.html>

<http://festival.sundance.org/2006/watch/index.aspx>

(Watch doc shorts online)

www.hbo.com/docs

<http://www.hotdocs.ca/home.cfm>

www.newday.com/

<http://www.pbs.org/pov>

<http://witness.org>

www.workingfilms.org

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/>

(Watch Feature docs on line)

Production Exercises & Projects

Exercises:

Both exercises, ONE and TWO, are focused on teaching you the fundamentals of editing on Final Cut Pro and shooting high-quality images with a mini-DV camera. Despite the fact that you are creating, shooting & working with story-driven content, when it comes to these exercises -- **PROCESS trumps Product.**

Exercise #1: MEMORABLE, VISIBLE, INVISIBLE & TOXIC

Contrast your personal “take” and relationship with “home”, the memorable, the visible, the audible and perhaps the ephemeral, with the invisible and the “toxic”, the chemicals that have become an intrepid part of our daily life. The images are collected and supplied by you and the chemicals are “supplied” by www.scorecard.org. (This was assigned on Aug. 3 by email).

Based on your presentation/feedback in class choose a strand of your story, 10-20 [MAX] of your collected images, a few of your sentences, a list of chemicals and the cd/music of your choice. All words/sentences/chemicals will appear as typed text or “cards”. Use final cut pro to edit those elements into a sequence. (Output on DVD-R or DVD-RW.)

Length: .30 – One Minute (MAX).

Due: Friday September 15. To be screened in class.

Exercise #2: ALL NATURAL AT THE SATURDAY’S FARMERS’ MARKET

Part 1: This is an opportunity to put award-winning Director/DP Daniel Gold’s intensive mini-DV workshop into practice! Each student, working in crews of 2-3 will be provided with a “shot list” and assigned a vendor. Each student will have up to one hour (max) to direct/shoot their series of shots and conduct a short interview with the vendor.

The benefit of having more than one student do the same vendor is that we will get to see one distinct spot in the market over time. Students are encouraged to arrive at the “location”/the market at 7:30-8:00 am, before the crowds arrive. Students will rotate positions between director/shooter and sound-person/production manager.

DO NOT SHOOT more than thirty minutes, 20 minutes preferred, on one tape. Hold shots minimum fifteen seconds. Each student will have 45-minutes to an hour to shoot every different kind of shot on the list and conduct a short interview with the vendor (using a lavalier). A major part of this exercise is about learning: the necessity of excellent “COVERAGE”, the power of looking for and using natural light, how to take the time to design/conceive and compose frames/images that in and of themselves tell a story...

Part 2: Edit the material into a sequence using natural/ambient sound and the interview in sync & in V.O. supported with story-driven visuals. The sequence must show the activity, tell a story, utilize all the shots on the list and include a wide “big picture” establishing shot that introduces and closes the market.

This material is for learning how to digitize and edit digital video/audio on Final Cut Pro. (Output on DVD-R or DVD-RW).

Length: 2-3 minutes

Due: Friday September 21 for screening in class.

Production Projects:

There are two projects, each one building on the other. Each student will be responsible for researching, pitching, directing and editing a two-minute trailer, “What’s So Natural About Wisconsin”, to premiere at the Tales From Planet Earth Film Festival Nov. 2-4. The final project builds on the 2-minute trailer by literally opening it up and extending the narrative into a 5-7 minute “short”.

Production #1: 2-minute Film Festival Trailer WHAT'S SO NATURAL ABOUT WISCONSIN?

Students will work in crews of two. This means producing your projects in coordination with each other. This requires sharing equipment and switching off between directing, shooting, and taking sound. In some instances, two students might want to focus on two different aspects of the same topic and make two different trailers. (We will go over this option in class.)

The trailers will premiere at the Tales From Planet Earth Film Festival, will find “homes” on local websites and will be the “narrative seed” for your final project. Research for this project will start at the beginning of the semester and a final “pitch” to the class and instructors is due September 28. Production will commence immediately, with the first three weeks of October devoted to shooting, editing and re-editing the trailer. This process of honing your story through rigorous rounds of editing will prepare you for extending the story in a productive and intentional way with lots of room for experimentation.

DUE: Fri. Sept. 28 – Commit to & declare your trailer topic in pitch format

DUE: Fri. Oct. 12 – Screen rough cut (3:00 minutes)

DUE: Fri. Oct. 19 – Screen fine cut (1:45)

DUE: Mon. Oct. 22 – “Polish” in Monday Lab -- instructors present for feedback

DUE: Fri. Oct. 26 – Screen FINAL trailer in class and OUTPUT.

Production #2:**5-7 minute short**

Based on all of the notes you've been taking while shooting and editing your trailer, extend, open up and explore your story with the depth you have been longing for... in a 5-7 minute short.

This will offer you the opportunity to:

- Re-examine and mine your original research, footage and production journals for material and stories you had NO TIME to tell. What did you HATE to cut out?
- Review feedback you've received from audience members and classmates. What more did they want to know about this character and story? What were their questions? What questions do you want to pursue at this point?
- Experiment with form, style, content, intent and tone.
- Team up with a classmate to work more collaboratively.

This production/post-production project will include each step of the editing process, to be completed and screened in class. The completed shorts will have their world premiere at the final Thursday Night GREEN SCREEN class.

DUE: Fri. Nov. 9th Present concept of larger film in a rough assembly - 12 mins MAX
DUE: Fri. Nov. 16th Screen Rough-cut in class
DUE: Fri. Nov. 30th Screen Fine-cut in class
DUE: Fri. Dec. 7th Screen Refined fine-cut in class
DUE: Mon Dec 10th Out-put final version ready for Th. Screening
DUE: Th. Dec. 13 PREMIERE in GREEN SCREEN Final Class (After Party on us!)

WEEK- BY-WEEK SCHEDULE

Friday Sept. 7: CLASS ONE

Exercise #1 – assembled and reviewed in 3D in class
Introduction and overview of syllabus & workshop
In-depth review of exercises & projects
Show examples of “trailers” from other film festivals
Brainstorm ideas/suggestions for trailer topics
Brief intro to FCP tutorials and Erika Simon
Scan images into jpegs as needed

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Simon, “Ease Into Editing” pp. 1-4 **Due 9/8**

Rabiger, Directing the Documentary:

Chap. 1 “The Director’s Role” pp. 3-14.

Chap. 17 “Missions and Permissions” (release forms will be provided)

Michael Rubin, “Organizing Your Video” Chap. 4

www.hiddenrhythmpictures.com

www.bluevinyl.org

www.everythingscool.org

read @ Daniel Gold see clips from his work Due 9/14

Bring one idea that appealed to you from 9/7 brainstorm session or a new one of your choice to talk about briefly in class on 9/15 in terms of the kinds of images, visuals and actions you might want to shoot.
Due 9/14

FCP: Complete Exercise #1: Memorable, Visible, Invisible & Toxic Based on what you learn in the FCP tutorials on Saturday 9/8 and Monday 9/10. **Due to screen in class 9/14**

For Saturday: Bring drives, jpegs, cd with music, headphones for Saturday FCP tutorial.

Sat. Sept. 8: **FCP Session #1**

Intro to FCP using still images, text, and music from a CD.

(Refer to “Ease Into Editing” pp. 1-8, 23-26)

Connecting your fire wire drive to the computer.

Where to store your media (i.e., “setting scratch disk”)

Titles, dissolves, importing a song from a CD

Working with still photos

FOR MONDAY: Bring fire wire drives containing your jpegs, a blank DVD-R or DVD-RW, a blank CD-R or CD-RW (to back-up FCP project), DV camera if you own one (to be used as a deck), headphones.

Mon. Sept. 11: FCP Session #2 (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)

Intro to FCP continued.

(Refer to “Ease Into Editing” pp. 16, 30)

Exporting sequence to QuickTime for burning DVD

Creating an iDVD project

Burning a DVD

Backing up the project file on CD for safety

Log Tape & Select Clips for Capture

Wed. Sept. 13: Drop-in FCP Work Session w/Erika (4:30-7:00PM Mac Classroom)

Friday Sept. 14: CLASS TWO (1:00-5:00PM)

Topic: Storytelling in Pictures featuring Daniel Gold

Intensive Mini-DV workshop with Daniel Gold

Sundance Award Winning Cinematographer

Co-Director, BLUE VINYL & EVERYTHING'S COOL

Screen Exercise #1. Dan will give feedback on “strong images”, what made an impact on him and why.

Slide Show: A quick history of Light & Image-making

Hands-on/Interactive lecture will include

- The power of light to enhance, gird and strengthen images.
- Images that tell/support a story vs. “B” roll
- Framing & Composition
- “Coverage” -- what does it mean and why you should do it?
- Shooting from a variety of angles (low, high, on the ground, CU, Wide...)
- POV – seeing from all sides
- Shooting a person engaged in an action, activity or process.
- Verite & Observational shooting.
- Analysis of a scene/s shot by Dan that show principles at work

Hands-on mini-DV lesson complete with technical “once-over”

Set up equipment, test it, check tape and prep for Saturday

Review Exercise #2 – Shooting at Farmers Market

Go over shot list and interview questions

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Rabiger, chap. 24 “Interviewing”

chap.22 Location Sound

Artis, Down & Dirty pgs 128-133 **Due 9/21**

- FCP:** Complete Exercise #2: All Natural at the Farmer's Market
Due to screen in class 9/21
For MONDAY Sept. 17: Log Farmer's Market tape and select 15-20 minutes for capturing
- Sat. Sept. 15:** **SHOOT ONE (7:00 or 8:00 AM-5:00PM)**
Exercise #2 – All Natural at the Farmer's Market
Meet back up at 1:00 to view Dan shoot & Judith conduct an interview
Regroup back at class to review everyone's footage
- Mon. Sept. 17:** **FCP Session #3 (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)**
(Refer to "Ease into Editing" pp. 9-15, 18-22)
Capturing (bringing video footage into the computer to edit)
Linking & unlinking (to separate audio from video)
Laying down the interview track and covering it over with visuals
- Wed. Sept. 19:** **Drop-in FCP Work Session w/Erika (4:30-7:00PM Mac Classroom)**
- Friday Sept. 21: CLASS THREE**
(* Might extend class by hour re: guest sound recordist , TBA)**
- Active listening and supportive critique
Screen Exercise #2: All Natural at the Farmer's Market
The art of the interview
Developing your story
How to Pitch
Crewing & two approaches for producing trailer/short
Production Journals – why/how to keep them
***Additional Sound Tech

ASSIGNMENTS

Production: Do a brief interview with the proposed subject of your trailer. If this is not possible, find some archival material, old movies, an add

Reading: Chap. 11 "Developing Your Story Ideas". Use questions on page 132-133 to guide your initial ideas for WHAT'S SO NATURAL ABOUT WISCONSIN trailer pitch **DUE 9/28**

Pitch: Based on your primary research and fieldwork to date (if you have not done enough do some more) come to class prepared to pitch your topic/subject for production projects # 3-4. Pitch needs to include the specific story to be featured in the 2-minute trailer and how you envision expanding it for the 5-7 minute short. Talk about how this topic fits into the theme (“What’s So Natural about Wisconsin?”) and who, what, why, where, how you will translate the subject's unique experience and distinct point-of-view into visual and narrative choices and of course. Use “pitch format”, to be handed out, and include an original interview or excerpt from archival/historical material; consider it a “screen test”. **Due 9/28**

FCP: **FOR MONDAY 9/24** – Choose either Exercise #1 or #2 to polish for screening on Friday, 9/28, to welcome guest instructor/filmmaker Sarita Siegel.

Mon. Sept. 24: **FCP Session #4 (LAST SESSION) (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)**
(Refer to “Ease into Editing” pp. 27-28)
Polishing (e.g. cleaning up audio levels, transitions, pan audio center)
Outputting to mini-DV tape

Wed. Sept. 26: **Drop-in FCP Work – LAST OPPORTUNITY w/Erika (4:30-7:00)**

Friday Sept. 28: CLASS FOUR
Welcome Sarita Siegel (with us through October)
Screen polished piece
Pitch proposed topic for trailer/short documentary
including proposed production schedule
Feedback/Brainstorm by instructors & class

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Rabiger, Chap. 25 “Directing Participants”
Chap. 27 “Authorship”
Chap. 35 –pp.466-467 “When to Use Music and When Not”
“Edit Transitions” – In Conversation with Walter Murch
(pdf on course website)

Due 10/5

FCP: Review, log, capture and begin to edit your material on Oct. 1

Mon. Oct. 1: **Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)**

Friday Oct. 5: CLASS FIVE
Review (selects) from those who have been shooting
Review production plans, stories being followed
Sound review and trouble shooting for specific projects
Tone/Style
Music and sound to support storytelling

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Rabiger, Chap. 30 “The Paper Edit: Designing the Structure”
Chap. 31 “Editing the First Assembly”
Chap. 32 “The Process of Refinement”
Chap. 33 “Narration”
DUE Oct. 12

FCP: Edit trailer assembly (3:00 minutes) **DUE TO SCREEN Oct. 12**

Mon. Oct. 8: Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)

Friday Oct. 12: CLASS SIX
Screen assembly (3:00 minutes) with feedback
Look at excerpts from films relevant to your specific topics
Narration & Character-Driven V.O.
Title, Log-line, and Drafting Short Description

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Rabiger, Chap. 34 “Editing: The End Game” **Due Oct. 19**

Write a Title, Log-line, and draft a Short Descript. Bring in a paragraph about what you’re cutting out and first rough ideas for what the longer piece might look like. **DUE Oct. 19**

FCP: Edit Fine Cut (1:45) – **Due To Screen Oct. 19**

Mon. Oct. 15: Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)

Friday Oct. 19: CLASS SEVEN
Screen Fine Cut (1:45)
Trouble-shoot

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Review your production journals for notes and ideas for longer piece.
Refine Title, Log-line, and Draft Paragraph

FCP: Polish Fine-Cut for Screening Oct. 26

Mon. Oct. 22: **Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)**

Friday Oct. 26: **CLASS EIGHT**
Screen Final Trailer in Class and Output for Transfer

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Rabiger, Chap. 5, “Time Development & Structure”
Review Chap. 11, “Developing Your Story Ideas”
Due Nov. 9

FCP: Edit Assembly of larger piece for presentation **DUE Nov. 9**

Mon. Oct. 29: **Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)**

Friday Nov. 2: **NO CLASS – Attend Film Festival**

Mon. Nov. 5: **Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)**

Friday Nov. 9: **CLASS NINE**
Present concept of larger film in rough assembly – 12 mins. MAX
Review Doc Styles: Interventionist, Personal, Hybrid, Verite

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Review Rabiger, Chap. 30 “The Paper Edit: Designing a Structure”
Write outline of film in paper-cut form **DUE Nov. 16**
Create scene-by-scene list to distribute to classmates on **Nov. 16** (Used for feedback)

FCP: Edit Rough-Cut **Due to Screen in Class Nov. 16**

Mon. Nov. 12: **Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)**

Friday Nov. 16: CLASS TEN
Screen Rough-Cut
Brainstorm story-structure, tone, style, additional shooting & research

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: NONE – Edit & shoot additional footage if necessary. Based on feedback, refine your structure, outline & paper cut. **DUE NOV. 30**

FCP: Edit Fine-Cut **DUE to Screen in Class Nov. 30**

Mon. Nov. 19: Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)

Friday Nov. 23: NO CLASS

Mon. Nov. 26: Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)

Friday Nov. 30: CLASS ELEVEN
Screen Fine-Cut

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: TBA

Turn in 12 copies of Final Title, Log-Line, Short Descrip **Dec. 7**

FCP: Edit Refined Fine-Cut for screening in class **Dec. 7**

Mon. Dec. 3: Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)

Friday Dec. 7: CLASS TWELVE
Screen Refined Fine-Cut
Review Final Title, Log-Line, Summary/Short Description

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Review the work of Working Films at www.workingfilms.org
DUE Dec. 14

FCP: Polish Refined Fine-Cut for GREEN SCREEN screening **DUE FOR OUTPUT MONDAY DEC. 10**

Mon. Dec. 10: **Open Editing in FCP Lab (12:00-3:00PM Mac Classroom)**
Out-put final version ready for Thursday night GREEN SCREEN
screening Dec. 13

Thurs. Dec. 13 Screen in GREEN SCREEN (location TBA)

Friday Dec. 14: **CLASS THIRTEEN – LAST CLASS!**
Review feedback from night before
Where Content Meets Intent: Linking Your Films to an Audience
Who Can Use Them
Workshop evaluations