

Disclaimer: This is an indicative syllabus only and may be subject to changes. The final and official syllabus will be distributed by the Instructor during the first day of class.

The American University of Rome
Film and Digital Media Program

Department or degree program mission statement, student learning objectives, as appropriate

Course Title:	Documentary Production Workshop
Course Number:	FDM 307
Credits & hours:	3 credits – 3 hours
Pre/Co-Requisites:	FDM 202 or permission of the instructor

Course description

This course is designed as both a colloquium on the many issues involved in conceptualizing and filming a documentary and a hands-on technical workshop. Through discussion, the students will be encouraged to focus on a subject and establish their own line of communication with it. Students will have to create short documentary videos shot on location in Rome, based on their research of fiction and non-fiction video ideas, learning how to direct a small crew and maintain creative control during filming and the evolutionary process of postproduction. They will be taught basic camera and editing techniques. The course will be complemented with occasional screenings of non-fictional material, whose distinctive features, merits and flaws, students will be invited to identify and discuss.

Required Textbook (subject to change)

- Producing with Passion: Making Films That Change the World, by Dorothy Fadiman and Tony Levelle, Michael Wiese Productions, 2008

Recommended Readings (subject to change)

- Directing the Documentary, by Michael Rabiger, Focal Press, 2002
- How to Make Documentary Films and Reality Videos, by Barry Hampe, Henry Holt & Co, 1997
- Documentary storytelling for film and videomakers, by Sheila Curran Bernard, Second Edition, Focal Press, 2009

Course Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. demonstrate the ability to relate the importance of research and planning, and critical thought to the success of documentary motion pictures
2. critique the meaning of shots and the choices made to achieve it. They will learn to reveal through the camera focusing on composition and lighting, developing an eye for and an understanding of variables such as point of view, depth of field, layers, object isolation, object placement and metaphoric implications, light sources and light direction
3. recognize the value of technical skills and organization as essential in bringing to life one's own personal and intellectual vision and insight, essential to effectively telling a reality story on film

4. understand the essence of truth in documentary film, and recognize the value of balance and not letting one's personal bias take over to the detriment of truth
5. demonstrate their power of observation in their writing. They will show their ability to describe what they see in the work of established documentary filmmakers and what it conveys. They will show their ability to write about their own work
6. demonstrate the ability to work in teams and the ability to present material viewed in class and out orally to their peers, critique their own and their colleagues' work, produce oral presentations to go along with the screening of their daily rushes and final cuts, and justify their creative choices every step of the way material not covered in class and presenting it orally to the class

Course Learning Activities

- In-class activities: Will include viewing and analyzing full feature- and short documentary films and selected clips. Lectures and group discussion based on assigned readings and the material viewed will follow (LOs 1,2,3,4,7)
- Oral Presentations: will seek to analyze material covered in class and give students an opportunity to effectively introduce their projects-in-progress to their peers on a bi-weekly basis (LOs 1,2,3,4,6,7)
- Writing Assignments: Students are required to write one essay on a specific documentary short or feature of their choice. Papers will have to reflect both personal insight and a familiarity with research material. Length (4-6 pages) and minimum bibliography will be explained in class. Students are required to present their daily rushes to their peers. Each presentation will be accompanied by a one page written statement seeking to show the progress of their proposal/treatment/script on a bi-weekly basis from the second week of the course (LOs 1,2,4,5)
- Journals: Students are required to keep a journal focusing on the projects they will be working on, sort of a logbook covering the genesis of such projects from development to the final cut (LOs 1,2,3,4,5)
- Practical Work: Students will work in group of three on their documentary film projects. Each individual student in a work group will receive the same grade for the group project. Raw footage and edited clips will be presented in class and group-critiqued bi-weekly (LOs 1,2,3,4,6)

Assessment tools

Participation in Class Discussion	15%
Written Essay	15%
Development and Implementation	15%
Portfolios	
Oral presentation	15%
Journals	15%
Final Exam	25%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Topic
Week 1	Groundwork: What's a documentary? Fiction vs. actuality
Week 2	Choosing a subject. Identifying and pursuing one's interests The three main phases of documentary filmmaking: planning, filming, editing
Week 3	The reality problem; how to handle reality Recording human behaviour Verisimilitude in documentary Truth in documentary Subjectivity and truth Ethics in making a documentary
Week 4	Making a documentary: Steps in producing a documentary Elements of structure Preproduction, production, postproduction
Week 5	Preparation: the documentary idea: what's feasible and what isn't the initial concept; bias of interest; assumptions; planning
Week 6	Writing a documentary a. preproduction b. editing
Week 7	The writer's job - proposal writing Your Proposal: Treatment/Your Treatment The script/Your Script With or without words? Narration: Yes or No Writing the words that are said suggestions When the Story Writes Itself Expect the Unexpected The Importance of Humility
Week 8	Casting for Balance The documentary crew Who does what on a production Who will do what on your production
Week 9	Scouting Scheduling Planning the shoot Budgeting resources and time Camera equipment Sound equipment

	Miscellaneous (lighting, tripods, etc.) Locations Fees and permits Your cast Release forms General considerations
Week 10	Making a documentary, Phase 2, production Using the camera and other equipment Shots & Sequences Interviewing techniques Inciting incidents Location shooting Allow yourself some slack
Week 11	The Shoot Postproduction Scheduling postproduction Editing Music Narration
Week 12	The cost of documentary films Factors affecting the budget
Week 13	Above- and below-the-line costs A budgeting checklist Marketing your documentary
Week 14	FINAL EXAM

ATTENDANCE POLICY

In keeping with AUR's mission to prepare students to live and work across cultures, the University places a high value on classroom experience. As a result attendance is expected in all classes and attendance records are maintained. The University's attendance policy is as follows:

1.0. Minimum Attendance Requirement: Students must attend a minimum of 70% of a course in order to be eligible to be considered for a passing grade.

1.1. Automatically Accepted Absences

Students will not be penalized for one absence from classes meeting once a week;
Students will not be penalized for three absences from classes meeting twice a week;
Students will not be penalized for four absences from classes meeting more than twice a week, as in the case of some intensive courses.

1.2. If further absences are recorded, grade penalties will be applied according to the Instructor's specific attendance policy, as stated in the syllabus, and following the institutional parameters given in the Note* below.

1.2.1. If the Instructor does not specify an attendance policy, there will be no grade penalty other than that attached to the minimum attendance requirement, and any penalized absences recorded above the basic 70% attendance requirement for the course will be invalidated.

1.3. During Summer sessions where courses are taught more intensively over a shorter period the following applies:

- Students will not be penalized for two absences from class.

2.0. Tolerated Absences

Certain categories of absence will not be penalized but they will be counted as an absence (for a 3-credit course meeting twice a week). These absences are:

- The Model United Nations (MUN);
- Permit to Stay,
- SG's "Ambassador Program" (Student Government initiative)
- Religious Holidays

The American University of Rome makes all reasonable efforts to accommodate students who must be absent from classes to observe religious holidays. (Please refer to the Provost's Office list of accepted absences for religious holidays)

Not attending a class due to the observance of a religious holiday will normally not be counted as an absence.

Students who will need to miss class in order to observe religious holidays must notify their Instructors by the end of the Add/Drop period (first week of classes), and must make prior arrangements with their Instructors to make up any work missed.

2.1. The list does NOT include academic field trips because these (including arrangements for travel) must not overlap with other classes.

3.0. Cases of prolonged absences caused by an emergency or a medical condition may require students to withdraw from some or all of their courses. Under such circumstances students should first consult their academic advisors.

*Note: No Instructor may penalize a student more than half a letter grade for each absence beyond the tolerated limit (e.g. from A- to B+).

Grade Point Average

A student's grade point average (GPA) is computed by multiplying the quality points achieved by the number of credits for each course. The result is then divided by the total number of credit hours taken. The Cumulative or Career Total Grade Point Average (CGPA) is the grade point average for all credit hours taken at the University and at approved study abroad programs. The GPA and CGPA are calculated by truncating after the second digit after the decimal point. Transfer credits have no effect on the CGPA at The American University of Rome.

Grades

Grades are posted on a secure area of the University's official website and are mailed to AUR degree students only upon written request. Grades are mailed to the various study abroad programs. Grades computed in the (GPA) reflect the following grade equivalents:

GRADE		GPA	
A	Excellent	4.00	94 – 100 points
A-		3.70	90 – 93.99 pts
B+	Very Good	3.30	87 – 89.99
B	Good	3.00	83 – 86.99
B-		2.70	80 – 82.99
C+		2.30	77 – 79.99
C	Satisfactory	2.00	73 – 76.99
C-	Less than Satisfactory	1.70	70 – 72.99
D	Poor	1.00	60 – 69.99
F	Failing	0.00	59.99 – 0
WU	Unofficial withdrawal counts as an F	0.00	
P	Applicable to development courses	0.00	
<i>Grades not computed into the grade point average are:</i>			
W	Withdrawal		
AUDIT (AU)	Only possible when the student registers for a course at the beginning of the semester as an audit student		
I	Incomplete work must be completed within the ensuing semester. Failure to do so results in automatically converting the I grade to the default grade, which is then computed into the grade point average		
P	Pass grade is applicable to courses as indicated in the catalog.		
WIP	Work in progress		