DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this class is to teach documentary filmmaking processes and techniques through lecture, demonstration, and completed class projects. Students will be introduced to six styles of documentary filmmaking and will make a total of four documentaries (two in groups, one individually, and one as a class).

GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

The main emphasis of this course will be on documentary filmmaking from a writing, producing, directing and editing standpoint. Topics to be covered will range from a variety of aspects such as the following examples: understanding six styles of documentary filmmaking; working with your subject(s); setting up and conducting interviews; working with found footage and archival footage/photos; understanding the business aspects of documentary filmmaking; fair use; documentary film distribution, and so on. Many more topics will be covered in a comprehensive structure to better help the student understand the protocols, pitfalls, benefits, and highs and lows of a career in the documentary filmmaking industry.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES / GOALS / OBJECTIVES:

Program learning outcomes

1. Students are expected to learn proficiency in documentary filmmaking.
2. Students are expected to work in a professional manner.
3. Students working in groups are expected to learn to work in a collaborative manner.

Student learning outcomes

4. Students will show their proficiency in documentary filmmaking through completion of projects.
5. Students will learn storytelling techniques of writing, producing, directing, interviewing, and editing as well as pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution from a documentary filmmaking standpoint.

Course objectives

7. Give context to the history of documentary film.
8. Writing, producing, directing, and editing documentaries.
9. Meeting deadlines.
COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES:

Four documentaries will be assigned in this course:

Two group documentaries (Observational and Participatory)

   Observational: Filming only what unfolds around you. You’re the proverbial “fly on the wall.”

   Participatory: The filmmaker(s) will be on screen to tell their side of the story as they cut from one interview/image to the other. The filmmaker(s) advocates for the issue.

One individual documentary (Poetic)

   Poetic: Freeform non-traditional documentary that tells a story or emotion through narration, music, and images both old and new.

One class documentary taking the entire semester (Expository)

   Expository: Re-tell an event through clips, interviews, and narration.

The two group documentaries and one individual documentary should be no less than 3 minutes and no more than 5 minutes in length.

The class documentary should be no less than 5 minutes and no more than 10 minutes in length.

Groups will not be assigned by the instructor, but rather, students may pick their own groups. Students are encouraged to help others on their individual project and vice versa.

Turn in dates will vary based on class size and will be announced in class.

REQUIRED HARDWARE:

Portable hard drive for saving editing projects

GRADING:

Scale: A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = 59 and below

In order to be successful in this course, students will exhibit mastery of documentary film production through in-class exercises and preparation, planning, execution, and post-production of assigned projects. Project grades will be calculated based on the quality of writing, creativity, directing, production, technical execution, editing, and class participation.

Students must meet deadlines for project due dates.

In-class screenings/evaluations of projects are crucial.

Students are encouraged to take notes to count towards class participation.

Attendance to scheduled class meetings is required and will affect your grade.
FILMS TO BE SCREENED IN CLASS:

*When We Were Kings* (1996) – Dir. Leon Gast


*Grizzly Man* (2005) – Dir. Werner Herzog

*John G. Avildsen: King of the Underdogs* (2017) – Dir. Derek Wayne Johnson

Misc.

RECOMMENDED FILMS (Will be discussed in class via lecture and/or specific scene breakdowns. These films are NOT required, only recommended to be able to be familiar with them when discussed in class):

*Gimme Shelter* (1970) – Dir. Albert Maysles, David Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin

*The World at War* (1973) – Televised documentary series (UK)

*Grey Gardens* (1975) – Dir. Ellen Hovde, Albert Maysles, David Maysles

*Filmworker* (2017) – Dir. Tony Zierra

*Won’t You Be My Neighbor?* (2018) – Dir. Morgan Neville

RECOMMENDED READINGS (NOT required, but are informative books on documentary filmmaking):

*Introduction to Documentary* – Bill Nichols

*Ferocious Reality: Documentary According to Werner Herzog* – Eric Ames

*This Much is True: 15 Directors on Documentary Filmmaking* – James Quinn

COURSE EVALUATIONS:

Near the conclusion of each semester, students in the School of Art electronically evaluate courses taken within the College of Fine Arts (COFA). As you evaluate this course, please be thoughtful, thorough, and accurate in completing the evaluation. Please know that the COFA faculty is committed to excellence in teaching and continued improvement. Therefore, your response is critical!

In the School of Art, the course evaluation process has been simplified and is completed electronically through MySFA. Although the instructor will be able to view the names of students who complete the survey, all ratings and comments are confidential and anonymous, and will not be available to the instructor until after final grades are posted.
STUDENT ETHICS AND OTHER POLICY INFORMATION:

Attendance

School of Art Policy: Class absences are not to exceed 6 contact hours in a studio class without consequence. A student will not receive credit for any studio class when missing 18 contact hours or more (this includes excused and unexcused absences).

Course Policy: Class attendance is mandatory; punctuality is expected. Attendance is taken in the first 5 minutes of class; if you are not present, you are marked tardy. If you do not arrive after another 10 minutes, you are absent. Two tardies/early departures equal one unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence beyond two will lower the student’s final grade by one letter. Students with more than four absences will fail the course. Students must provide acceptable documentation to the instructor at the next class meeting for an absence to be excused. Excused/unexcused absences will be determined by the instructor in accordance with university policy. Absence during a presentation or failure to turn in an assignment will result in an automatic F for that assignment. Students are responsible for making up missed work.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

Academic Integrity

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.
Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (5.5)**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the coursework because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to [https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf](https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf).

**Students with Disabilities**

To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats, and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**Student Wellness and Well-Being**

SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

**On-campus Resources:**

**The Dean of Students Office** (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
[www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents)
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

**SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic** Human Services, Room 202
[www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp)
936.468.1041

**The Health and Wellness Hub** “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.
To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:
• Health Services
• Counseling Services
• Student Outreach and Support
• Food Pantry
• Wellness Coaching
• Alcohol and Other Drug Education

www.sfasu.edu/thehub
936.468.4008
thehub@sfasu.edu

Crisis Resources:
• Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
• National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
• Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
• Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741