

***IMPORTANT COURSE LINKS**

[Course Folder \(click link\)](#)

[NYU Stream \(click link\)](#)

[WordPress Site \(click link\)](#)

Documentary Filmmaking: The Politics and Practice of True Storytelling
Global Topics | Global Liberal Studies | M/W 12:30-1:45pm, GCAL 365
Instructor: Susanna Horng, M.F.A. | susanna@nyu.edu | 212-992-7479
Office Hours: Mondays 2-5pm | 726 Broadway, rm 639

This course will provide you a history overview of influential documentary films and filmmakers, visual storytelling skills, and digital presentation skills. Through common film viewings, we will examine the history, technique, and political power of documentary filmmaking. Students will demonstrate their learning by practicing visual storytelling and digital presentation skills over the course of the semester using their own media devices, i.e. smartphones, cameras, tablets, laptops, etc., and iMovie (available on NYU Computer Lab Macs). By the end of the semester, students will film, edit, and exhibit a 3-5 minute edited documentary short and will create a budget and script for a 20-30 minutes documentary. This class will be run as a supportive and nurturing workshop during which students develop their skills by simultaneously making their art while learning the craft of documentary filmmaking. Three experiential learning reflections on Wordpress are required over the course of the semester.

What are the course goals?

- Develop visual storytelling, editing, and digital presentation skills.
- Make visual and aural connections across texts.
- Engage in independent inquiry.
- Develop critical thinking and frame inquiry in comparative and contemporary contexts.
- Synthesize material and articulate ideas clearly with supporting evidence.

What are the required texts?

Documentary Storytelling: Creative Nonfiction on Screen, 3rd Edition by Sheila Curran Bernard
A New History of Documentary Film by Jack C. Ellis and Bestsy A. McLaine

*Electronic copies are acceptable. Hard copies may be purchased at the NYU

BookCenter. Limited copies are available on [Course Reserves \(click link\)](#) at Bobst.

Nanook of the North (1922) directed by Robert Flaherty

Man with a Movie Camera (1929) directed by Dziga Vertov

Triumph of the Will (1935) directed by Leni Riefenstahl

Rome, Open City (1945) directed by Roberto Rossellini

7 Up (1964) directed by Michael Apted

Don't Look Back (1967) directed by D.A. Pennebaker

Titicut Follies (1967), directed by Frederick Wiseman

Calcutta (1969) directed by Louis Malle

Gimme Shelter (1970) directed by Albert Maysles
Harlan County USA (1976) directed by Barbara Kopple
Koyaanisqatsi (1982) directed by Godfrey Reggio
Stop Making Sense (1984) directed by Jonathan Demme
Roger and Me (1989) directed by Michael Moore (stream through NYU Classes)
Little Dieter Needs to Fly (1997) directed by Werner Herzog
Fog of War (2003) directed by Errol Morris
Manufactured Landscapes (2006) directed by Jennifer Baichwal
Stories We Tell (2012) directed by Sarah Polley (stream through NYU Classes)

What is expected of the students?

Take care of your personal needs *before* class. Be punctual. Be prepared. Participate in class discussion in EVERY class. Exhibit time management and executive functioning skills. Be respectful of your classmate's comments, ideas, effort and time. Disruptions and lack of attention to these details will lower your Citizenship grade.

Full assignment details will be provided during class. If you are late or absent for any reason, you are expected to contact classmates, *not the instructor*, for class notes and assignments. You are expected to check the due dates listed at the end of this syllabus, which are subject to change during the semester. You are also expected to check your NYU e-mail regularly for course announcements and updates.

Watch assigned films before coming to class. Documentary films are on reserve at Bobst and may be viewed at Avery Fisher Center, 2nd floor. You will also be expected to work in small groups and **lead class discussion** on several documentaries. You will be expected to provide thoughtful comments on your peers' work on WordPress and/or NYU Stream. Bring necessary materials to every class.

Attend three Experiential Learning events outside of class. For each event, take notes, take a photo or record less than 1 minute of footage, write and post a review and/or reflection on [WordPress](#) (500 words minimum). Click here for [Experiential Learning Events](#).

Complete all assignments on time with care and thoughtfulness. Ask critical questions, find unstated assumptions in professional and student texts/work, assess arguments, offer original interpretations of primary works. Challenge yourself to be a better thinker and a maker.

What will I make for this class?

You will be expected to record video and audio using your own devices, to upload video and media to [NYU Stream \(click link\)](#) and embed these links in our course [WordPress Site \(click link\)](#).

On WordPress, you will also be expected to create and manage posts and pages, to moderate and comment on student work, to post a minimum of 3 Experiential Learning reviews/reflections, and to offer self-motivated work (28 minimum). All writing for this class must be grammatically

and mechanically correct, must use proper punctuation and spelling, and include proper [MLA documentation](#) and attribution.

The final project will consist of a 3-5 minute documentary that you have film and edited. To edit your short, use iMovie which is available on Mac computers in any NYU Computer Lab or by appointment at [NYU's Digital Studio](#), located at Bobst, 2nd floor. You must also submit a budget and script for a 20-30 minute documentary (this project may be an expansion of your short or a new subject).

*Final documentary shorts will be screened on Wed, May 13, 12:00-1:50 PM (location TBA), which is the date/time of our final exam. Attendance is required.

How will my work be graded?

- 20% Citizenship, Leading Class Discussion, Peer Comments
- 20% WordPress Assignments & Self-Motivated Work
- 20% NYU Stream Assignments & Self-Motivated Work
- 20% Budget & script for 20-30 minute documentary
- 20% Final 3-5 minute documentary short (edited)

What may hurt my grade?

Poor Attendance: You are expected to be punctual and attend ALL class sessions. My course policy allows for **two unexcused absences**, for emergencies only. Two late entries to class constitute one absence; after 15 minutes you will be marked absent even if you come to class. Three unexcused absences lowers your Citizenship by one full letter grade (i.e. A to B); each subsequent absence lowers your Citizenship grade by another full grade.

Absences for **religious observances** are excused by the university; e-mail me these dates by 1/30/15 and make arrangements to submit your work on time. At the instructor's discretion, **serious medical conditions** may be excused with official documentation.

In accordance with LS program policy, if you miss **two consecutive** classes, you must provide me with a written explanation of your absences. If you miss **four consecutive** classes, you must provide me with a written explanation of your absences, and I must report these to the Assistant Dean for Academic Advising. If you miss **six consecutive or nonconsecutive** classes for any reason besides religious observance, you cannot pass the course.

Late Work: Late work *may not* receive instructor or peer feedback. Late final pieces will only be accepted with a penalty of a full grade per day (A to B). Final work submitted more than 5 days late automatically earns an F. All late work **MUST** still be submitted by 5/11/15 in the appropriate online course spaces in order to pass the course.

Non-Completion of Work: To pass this course, students must complete and submit all assignments and work no later than 1:50pm on 5/13/15.

Privacy

All online spaces for this course, including but not limited to the Google Drive Shared Course Folder, NYU Classes Site, NYU Stream, and course WordPress sites are PRIVATE to the members of GT-UF 201-002. Two FAS Education Technologists Armanda Lewis (al861) and Kamili Posey (kmp234) will be providing support and troubleshooting for us, so I have given both administrator access. Be advised that our online spaces are NOT searchable by search engines, the NYU community, or the public. For teaching, learning, and research purposes, I reserve the right to exhibit student work from this course in future courses, conference papers or presentations. If you have concerns, please let me know.

Plagiarism & Breaches of Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is the act of taking the ideas, writing, material, work, etc. of another and presenting it as your own. Paraphrasing and/or quoting the work of another author without MLA citation also constitute plagiarism. Recycling and/or rewriting/revising work done for another course represents a breach of academic integrity. Plagiarism and breaches of academic integrity are very serious offenses that will result in an F for the course and additional academic penalties at the university.

Where can I get support as a student?

Students requiring accommodations for a disability should contact the [Center for Students with Disabilities](#) at 212-998-4980 or <http://www.nyu.edu/osl/csd>. Please provide the appropriate paperwork no later than one week in advance of the assignment for which you need accommodations.

NYU takes our safety seriously. Please make sure you know the numbers to [NYU Public Safety](#) 212.998.2222 and [The Wellness Exchange](#) 212.443.9999.

Course Outline

Assignments are due on date listed and are subject to change. Full details provided in class.

- 1 M 1/26 Introductions & Syllabus

- 2 W 1/28 NYU Stream/WordPress Assignment: Who Dat?
 - Make a Who Dat? post in our course WordPress site (click Who Dat? for category). In your post, incorporate video, image(s), links and text (500 words minimum) to tell us who you are and what you care about. Be specific in your writing, your choices of images and videos and links.
 Read Chapter 1 in *A New History of Documentary Film*

- 3 M 2/2 *Nanook of the North* (1922) directed by Robert Flaherty
 Read Chapter 2 in *A New History of Documentary Film*

- 4 W 2/4 *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) directed by Dziga Vertov
 Read Chapters 3 & 4 in *A New History of Documentary Film*

- 5 M 2/9 *Triumph of the Will* (1935) directed by Leni Riefenstahl
Read Chapters 1 & 2 in *Documentary Storytelling*
Discussion Leaders: Daniel Sully, Roz DeMesa
- 6 W 2/11 NYU Stream/WordPress Assignment
M 2/16 No Class--President's Day
- 7 W 2/18 NYU Stream/WordPress Assignment
Read Chapters 4-6 in *Documentary Storytelling*
- 8 M 2/23 *Rome, Open City* (1945) directed by Roberto Rossellini
Read Chapters 7-9 in *Documentary Storytelling*
Discussion Leaders: Hannah Brower, Chloe Brake
- 9 W 2/25 *7 Up* (1964) directed by Michael Apted
Read Chapter 13 in *A New History of Documentary Film*
Discussion Leaders: Kaidia Pickels, Chloe Brake
- 10 M 3/2 *Don't Look Back* (1967) directed by D.A. Pennebaker
Read Chapter 10-13 in *Documentary Storytelling*
Discussion Leaders: Lisa Zhou, Hannah Brower
- 11 W 3/4 *Titicut Follies* (1967), directed by Frederick Wiseman
Read Chapter 14 in *A New History of Documentary Film*
Discussion Leaders: Taylor Nemetz, Hamp Haynes
- 12 M 3/9 *Calcutta* (1969) directed by Louis Malle
Read Chapter 14 in *Documentary Storytelling*
Discussion Leaders: Lindsay LeBoyer, Mathilde van Tulder
- 13 W 3/11 NYU Stream/WordPress Assignment
M 3/16 & W 3/18 No Class--Spring Break
- 14 M 3/23 NYU Stream/WordPress Assignment
- 15 W 3/25 *Gimme Shelter* (1970) directed by Albert Maysles
Discussion Leaders: Holly Farkas, Taylor Nemetz
- 16 M 3/30 NYU Stream/WordPress Assignment
- 17 W 4/1 *Harlan County USA* (1976) directed by Barbara Kopple
Read Chapter 15 in *A New History of Documentary Film*
Discussion Leaders: Kaidia Pickels, Hamp Haynes
- 18 M 4/6 NYU Stream/WordPress Assignment

- 19 W 4/8 *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982) directed by Godfrey Reggio
Discussion Leaders: Colter Kozal, Daniel Sully
- 20 M 4/13 NYU Stream/WordPress Assignment
- 21 W 4/15 *Stop Making Sense* (1984) directed by Jonathan Demme
Discussion Leaders: Isabel Stub, Celina Huynh
- 22 M 4/20 Draft budget and script for 20-30 minute documentary due.
Editing demo in class.
- 23 W 4/22 *Roger and Me* (1989) directed by Michael Moore (stream through NYU Classes)
Discussion Leaders: Xenia Rankin, Colter Kozal
- 24 M 4/27 Editing Assignment
- 25 W 4/29 *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (1997) directed by Werner Herzog
Discussion Leaders: Xenia Rankin, Mathilde van Tulder
- 26 M 5/4 Final budget and script for 20-30 minute documentary due.
Fog of War (2004) directed by Errol Morris
Discussion Leaders: Roz DeMesa, Isabel Stub
- 27 W 5/6 *Manufactured Landscapes* (2006) directed by Jennifer Baichwal
Discussion Leaders: Celina Huynh, Lindsay LeBoyer
- 28 M 5/11 *Stories We Tell* (2012) directed by Sarah Polley (stream through NYU Classes)
Discussion Leaders: Lisa Zhou, Holly Farkas
- Exam Date 5/13, 12:00-1:50pm Screening of Final Documentary Shorts