
SUBJECT DESCRIPTION**50199 Documentary Production**

Course Name:	Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Media Arts and Production)
Level:	200
Number of Credit points:	8
Prerequisites:	50117 /50248 Media Arts and Production 2 No prerequisites for graduate students
Grading:	Graded

HANDBOOK DESCRIPTION

Through screenings and readings students develop a critical understanding of the different techniques and approaches to documentary production. Students take an idea for a documentary through the stages of researching and writing, from synopsis to treatment and script. In small groups students also work through a series of hands-on exercises to advance their skills in producing, directing, shooting and editing for documentaries. Students are encouraged to engage with contemporary debates which concern the documentary sector of the media industries.

CONTRIBUTION TO GRADUATE PROFILE

Students develop their professional skills and creative expertise through the development of skills in documentary video production. Students acquire a conceptual framework for analysing documentaries and become familiar with contemporary issues facing documentary program makers in Australia. This will better equip them to take up industrial and artisan roles in the film and television industries.

SUBJECT OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this subject students are expected to be able to:

1. have been introduced to the professional hands-on skills of producing, directing, shooting and editing video documentaries.
2. have developed a critical understanding of the different techniques, approaches and forms of the documentary.
3. have developed skills in taking an idea for a documentary through the stages of researching and writing, from synopsis to outline or short treatment and production proposal.
4. have developed skills in critically analysing documentaries
5. understood contemporary issues in documentary through screenings and readings
6. have acquired a basic overview of the documentary industry in Australia

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The subject will be conducted as weekly seminars throughout the semester. There will be lectures, seminar discussions and screenings. Students participate in class exercises and out of class group production work. Seminars workshop student's research and project development and work-in-progress on production exercises.

CONTENT

The subject will cover the following aspects of documentary theory and professional practice:

- Overview of the documentary industry in Australia
- Researching the documentary
- Developing a documentary treatment, production proposal and script
- The possibilities and limitations of different documentary forms
- Shooting for documentary
- Interviews
- Observational documentary
- Structuring a documentary script
- The essay documentary
- Narration and sound design
- Montage

- Dramatic elements
- Reflexivity and the authorial voice
- Archival documentary
- Biography
- Budgeting for documentary
- Funding possibilities in Australia
- Marketing and distribution

ASSESSMENT

Assessment item 1: Production of a group devised mini documentary – Group

Objectives: 1, 2 and 3

Value: 50%

Due: Week 14

However each stage of the documentary and each shooting exercise is presented as work-in-progress within classes according to a production schedule in the subject outline.

Task: A mini documentary of no more than 3 minutes is developed and produced in a small group of 4 students. It is taken through all stages from idea to final edit. It results from a series of out of class group exercises including the shooting of an interview, a live action sequence and a montage with narration.

Assessment Criteria:

1. Demonstrated introductory level professional skills of producing, directing, shooting and editing for documentaries.
2. Students must also demonstrate their professional skills in working creatively and co-operatively in a small crew.

Note: Self and peer assessment will be used in moderating group marks to individual marks.

Assessment item 2: Develop a synopsis and short treatment for a documentary.

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Value: 50%

Due: Week 12

Task: To develop a short treatment and production proposal for a documentary (maximum 30 minutes). This will involve the creative visualization of an original idea for a documentary, including synopsis (1 page), treatment (4 pages) and production proposal which will include visual style, character outlines (if relevant), audience and marketing.

Assessment Criteria:

1. Demonstrated ability to take a documentary idea through the stages of research, synopsis and treatment.
2. The production proposal should demonstrate the student's familiarity with different approaches to documentary and the issues involved in taking a documentary idea into production.
3. Overall quality and originality of the proposal.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Attendance is particularly important in this subject because it is based on a collaborative approach which involves essential workshoping of student work and interchange of ideas. Students who attend fewer than ten classes are advised that their final work will not be assessed and that they are likely to fail the subject.

Students are required to attend all scheduled classes unless otherwise agreed by lecturer. They are expected to fully participate in seminar discussions and in and out-of- class group production exercises as required.

All items of assessment must be successfully completed.

TEXTS AND REFERENCES

In addition to this bibliography a reader will be available for this subject.

Required Reading

Bruzzi, Stella *New Documentary A critical introduction*. Routledge, Londn. 2000

Nichols, Bill *Representing Reality - Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991

Rabiger, M *Directing The Documentary*, Focal Press, Boston, London, 1992
Renov, Michael (ed) *Theorizing Documentary* . Routledge, New York, 1993.
Rosenthal, Alan *Writing, Directing and Producing Documentary Films*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1990
Winston, Brian *Claiming the Real: the Documentary Film Revisited*. British Film Institute, London 1995.

Recommended

Darren-Smith, Kate and Hamilton, Paula *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994
Devereaux, Leslie and Hillman, Roger (ed) *Fields of Vision: Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology and Photography*. University of California Press, Berkley, 1995
MacDougall, Transcultural Cinema Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1998
Middlemiss, Jenny *Guide to Film and Television Research*. AFTRS, Sydney, 1992
Nichols, Bill *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* .: Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994
Plantinga, Carl R *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997
Rabinowitz, Paula *They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary* Verso, London, 1994
Rosenthal, Alan (ed) *New Challenges for Documentary*. University of California Press, Berkley, 1988
Sherman, Sharon *Documenting Ourselves: Film Video and Culture* University of Kentucky Press, 1998