
SUBJECT DESCRIPTION**57061 Issues in Documentary**

Course Name:	Graduate Program in Media Arts and Production
Level:	400
Number of Credit points:	8
Prerequisites:	None
Grading:	Graded

HANDBOOK DESCRIPTION

This subject introduces students to contemporary debates in documentary through screenings and readings. It allows students to develop skills in critically analysing documentaries and encourages the development of research and scriptwriting skills for documentary. Students develop a documentary idea through research to treatment or first draft stage and/or produce critical analyses of documentaries.

CONTRIBUTION TO GRADUATE PROFILE

Students completing this subject:

- Have developed advanced professional knowledge in documentary production.
- Have enhanced their knowledge of media cultures and industries, in particular, the issues and debates within the documentary film and television industries.
- Are able to conceptualise, research and develop a documentary project idea at an advanced level.
- Have developed their conceptual skills and critical thinking in media production.
- Have had the opportunity to enhance their professional skills in film and video documentary production.

OBJECTIVES

- a) To enable students to develop skills in critically analysing documentaries.
- b) To introduce students to contemporary issues and debates through screenings and readings and to foster a climate of critical engagement with these debates.
- c) To encourage the development of research and/or scriptwriting skills for documentary which students can use in the industry.
- d) To provide students with an overview of the Australian documentary sector.

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The subject will be conducted as weekly seminars throughout the semester.

There will be lectures, seminar discussions, screenings and case study presentations.

Students will present critical documentary case studies, film reviews and participate in script workshops to discuss and workshop their documentary script proposals.

This subject is linked to UTS on line: course materials, on line communication and discussion board use is an intrinsic part of the course.

CONTENT

The subject will cover the following content areas:

Documentary Overview: brief history of documentary; documentary genres.

Documentary Analysis: developing a textual and contextual critique of documentaries; documentary approaches to visual style; analysis of argument, structure and editing styles; authorial point of view.

Documentary Evidence: the contemporary debates about reality, truth and history as relevant for the documentary maker; the role of the interview, archival and actuality as evidence in documentaries.

Documenting Lives: different documentary approaches to biography and autobiography; the role of memory in documentary biography; the personal documentary.

The Essay Documentary: origins of the essayist approach to documentary; the development of the filmmaker's voice; different genres of the essay; the poetics of documentary.

Compilation/Archival Documentary: archival sources; the use of still photographs, home movies, graphic elements; re-enactments and fictional archival footage.

Intercultural Documentary/Representing the Other/Inside the Skin: contemporary debates in ethnographic documentary; indigenous filmmaking and queer documentary.

Changing Forms of Documentary: from Ethnographic Film to Cinema Verite to Reality Television and Mock-documentary: the relationship between reality television and cinema verite; advantages and disadvantages of different documentary forms; the impact of internet on documentary.

Script Writing For Documentary: researching for documentary; taking an idea through synopsis, treatment and subsequent drafts; preparing a funding proposal.

Documentary Production in Australia: the contexts for documentary production; current funding climate; policy of broadcasters and commissioning editors, non institutional funding of documentaries; international marketing and distribution; hyper-distribution of documentary.

ASSESSMENT:

Students will be required to successfully complete both assessment items

Assignment 1: In Class Seminar Presentation

Due Date: Dates of individual presentations to be confirmed in Seminars 1 & 2

Value: 35%

Objective: a, b,c

Task: An in class oral presentation of a contemporary issue in documentary, screening documentary examples where relevant.

Choose a contemporary issue and relate it to the seminar topics and relevant readings.

Illustrate your presentation using a documentary from the class screening list.

Prepare to show a segment (5-10 mins.) and speak to it for 10 mins.

A written summary of your presentation in point form (1-2pp), including key film credits and readings discussed, is to be made available to the lecturer for copying and distribution prior to the seminar.

Your choice of documentary must be approved by the lecturer.

Come in early to line up the tape and organise photocopying

Assessment criteria: Demonstrated ability to:

Engage with a contemporary documentary through textual and contextual analysis.

Make links between the chosen documentary and the relevant issues and debates raised in the course readings and seminar discussion.

Assignment 2: 3000 word essay OR detailed documentary treatment /script accompanied by a 1000 word analytic essay

2.1 3000 word essay
Due Date : Week 14
Value: 65%
Objective: a, b, c, d

Task A 3000 word critical analysis of a documentary. Your choice of documentary must be approved by your lecturer. You may refer to more than one documentary in your essay. Your analysis should include a detailed textual and contextual critique, as well as relating the film to relevant readings. (NB. Your essay documentary cannot be the same as your class presentation title).

Assessment criteria: Demonstrated ability to:

Analyse documentary in relationship to concepts discussed in seminars and in relevant critical scholarship.

Develop a clear and well supported argument that indicates a familiarity with issues and debates in documentary.

Present a coherently written and articulate essay, grammatically and typographically correct, with consistent referencing of sources.

OR

2.2 Synopsis and detailed documentary treatment or script and 1000 word analytic essay

Due Date: Week 14 and as specified by script workshops

Value : 65%

Objective: a, b, c

Task A detailed documentary treatment or script (minimum 12pp-maximum 40 pp). This includes a 1-2 page synopsis and a one line synopsis of the documentary. This is to be accompanied by a 1000 word analytic discussion in which the script is linked to theoretical readings and research undertaken throughout the semester. Participation in class script workshops is essential.

Assessment criteria: Demonstrated ability to:

Conceptualise, research, draft and refine a documentary proposal through to subsequent and/or final draft.

Deliver a professional standard of written expression

Deliver a professional standard script lay out and visual presentation.

Demonstrated understanding of the Australian documentary sector or relevant international sector; the nature of support available for documentary film projects and the possible strategy for this project.

Demonstrated ability to relate the writing of a documentary script to the theoretical concepts, readings and research undertaken in the semester.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Since class discussion and participation in activities form an integral part of this subject, you are expected to attend, arrive punctually and actively participate in classes. Should you experience difficulties meeting this requirement, please contact your lecturer. Students who have a reason for extended absence from class (e.g., illness) may be required to complete additional work to ensure they achieve the subject objectives.

To pass this subject students must submit all assessment items and reach a satisfactory level in each assessment item. Students must attend 80% of the classes.

TEXTS AND REFERENCES

A subject reader will be provided.

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

Darren-Smith, Kate and Hamilton, Paula *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* Melb: Oxford University Press, 1994

Devereaux, Leslie and Hillman, Roger (ed) *Fields of Vision: Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology and Photography*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1995

Gaines, Jane and Renov, Michael *Collecting Visible Evidence*. Visible Evidence Vol 6 Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1999

Grant, Barry and Sloniowski, Jeanette (ed) *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998

Holmlund, Chris and Fuchs, Cynthia (ed) *Between The Sheets, In the Streets: Queer, Lesbian, Gay Documentary*. Visible Evidence Vol 1 Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999

MacDougall, David *Transcultural Cinema*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1998

Macdonald, Kevin and Cousins, Mark *Imagining Reality* London and Boston, Faber and Faber, 1996

Nichols, Bill *Introduction to Documentary* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001

Nichols, Bill *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994

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

Plantinga, Carl R *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997

Rabinowitz, Paula *They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary* London: Verso, 1994

Renov, Michael (ed) *Theorizing Documentary*. New York: Routledge, 1993

Rosenthal, Alan *Writing, Directing and Producing Documentary Films*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990

Roscoe, Jane and Hight, Craig *Faking It: Mokumentary and the subversion of factuality*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2001

Russell, Catherine *Experimental Ethnography: the work of film in the age of video*. Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1999

Sherman, Sharon *Documenting Ourselves: Film Video and Culture* University of Kentucky Press, 1998

Sobchack, Vivian (ed) *The Persistence of History: Cinema, television and the modern event*. AFI Film Reader Routledge, 1998

Waldman, Diane and Walker, Janet (ed) *Feminism and Documentary* Visible Evidence Vol 5 Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1999

Winston, Brian *Claiming the Real: the Documentary Film Revisited*. London: British Film Institute, 1995

Winston, Brian *Lies, Damn Lies and Documentaries* London: British Film Institute, 2000