NYU ACCRA

SCA-UA 9124
Documenting the African City

Instructor Information

- Yahaya Alpha Suberu, MFA (NYU)
- 024-4225408
- Office hours: By appointment
- Ys860@nyu.edu
- Editing Workshop: Laurene Abdallah, 024-4267934
- Teaching Assistant: Carlmax Gbormittah, 024-3010933

Course Information

- SCA-UA 9124
- Course Title: Documenting the African City
- Tuesdays: 3:00pm-6:00pm
- Venue: Room 2, NYU Accra Academic Centre
- Course Description: This course is designed to introduce students to the fundamentals of documentary filmmaking by utilizing the visual techniques of directing and editing three short digital video projects. Students will use a digital video camera and edit on Apple computers with Adobe premiere Pro software.

Course Overview and Goals

The class will be divided into crews of two to five. Each crew will be assigned a camera and tripod that they will share (and be responsible for). During each class session, one crew member will be the Director and the rest of the crew will be available to be crew members in order to support the current Director. In the next sessions, the Director position will rotate to the next crew member. Desired outcome: Students will produce a five (5) minutes documentary by mid semester and a final Ten (10) minute documentary at the end of the semester. All researched, written, shot and edited by groups of 2 to 5. Assessment Components: There will be one (1) week time allotted to complete the five (5) minutes mid-semester group project and four (4) weeks for the ten (10) minutes group project, shooting should take place during the lab session and other times convenient to the students, editing may be completed anytime before the project is due. The director must email a production book the day before due date and hand in a labeled copy of their finished project on a DVD on their assigned screening
date. To label the DVD properly, please write your name, crew #, project # and title, on the disc itself. **Assessment Expectation:** (PRODUCTION BOOKS) For each project, directors must submit a production book that includes the following: the Statement of Objective; which is the main idea of the topic in a concise statement; the Script and/or Treatment, with a list of Subjects and Locations and a Shooting Schedule, including any Permits or Permissions; and finally, the Evaluation. Everything minus the Evaluation must be presented to the instructor one week before shooting. The Evaluation is to be written after editing is completed. This should be written as a one page journal entry. Analyse intention, realization, mistakes, and crew work, and give a self-evaluation. Comment on how you did as a director, what you might do differently next time, and what really worked for you. Completed Production Books, with the Evaluation included are to be emailed to the professor prior to the screening day and should include director’s name, title of film, project number, and crew list. All Production Books must be emailed before the screening or they will be considered late. If there are any original photos, drawings or sketches, they can be shown to the professor in class the day of the screening.

**Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:**

- Find story ideas, research them, write a treatment/proposal (Pre-production process)
- Shoot, direct, record sound on location, using digital video cameras and professional sound recording equipment (Production process)
- Edit using Adobe Premiere Pro (part of the Post production process)

**Course Requirements**

**Hardware**

External Hard Drive

**Class Participation**

Every student is invited to participate in class discussion. The topic of each class is chosen to illustrate motivation and techniques of the assignments. Class participation adds knowledge and point of view on the subject. During project critiques it is important to your peers that you express your honest, positive and constructive opinion. The goal of the critique sessions is to help each other become better documentary filmmakers and visual storytellers.

**Assignments**

**First Assignment**

Photo Roman

Group 1 and Group 2 each come up with a simple story and shoot the story with a digital still camera. The story should be told using six (6) still images.

**Second Assignment**
Exterior Location Exercise

Group 1 and Group 2 each shoot a film in the same general location in the same lab session.

Conduct extensive research on the location. Look for various camera angles and meaningful details. Pay attention to the foreground, middle ground, and background, use long shots, medium shots, close ups and extreme close ups. What “story arc” can you find in the location? Think about how and why the location will add meaning and significance to that story.

The Directors should decide on one location they are to shoot their films. This is to help shorten the amount of time required for the production of this first filming assignment.

This project must be shot during the lab session with the entire crew. The footage from this assignment will be used during the editing workshops.

Third Assignment: 5 minutes group project

Interior/Exterior Interview

Choose a person and interview them on a topic. Both the person and the topic should first be researched. Subject should be shot to ensure sufficient editing opportunities. Consider action/reaction shots, coverage and cut-away. Gather B-roll footage that is relevant to the interview. What can you find out about the person and the topic in advance? What questions will you ask in the interview? What is your opinion on the topic? What do you hope to learn or discover?

Fourth Assignment: Final ten (10) minutes group project.

Document an Activity

Visually document a topic that includes at least one person doing an activity. Research the topic, location and person. Use what you have learned from both the Exterior Location and the Interior/exterior Interview. Pay attention to the continuity of action in front of the camera. Gather enough footage to accommodate the change of angle, the overlap of action, the continuity
of screen direction, and the flow of movement, so that your film will cut smoothly. How will each shot develop and strengthen the information you will present? What kind of interview will enhance the meaning and interest of your topic? What information will clarify and illuminate your topic, not confuse or distract your audience? What kind of point of view will you have on the topic?

**Assigned Readings**

- Not Hollywood by Brendan Shehu
- African Cinema by Manthia Diawara
- Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction by Patricia Aufderheide
- Theorizing Documentary by Michael Renov
- In search of Africa by Manthia Diawara

**NB:** .pdf of all assigned readings are available via NYU Classes

**Assigned Screenings**

- The price of Gold by Richard Cookson
- Les maîtres fous by Jean Rouch

**NB:** Links to all assigned screenings are available via NYU Classes

**Grading of Assignments**

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments/Activities</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo Room</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exterior Location</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior /Exterior Location interview</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production book</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateness</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration (Team work)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final 10 minutes production</td>
<td>30%</td>
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View Grades
All assignments will be graded and handed over in class. However, midterm grades and final grades will be uploaded unto NYU Classes.

Letter Grades
Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>94%-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>90%-93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>87%-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>84%-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>80%-83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>77%-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>74%-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>70%-73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>65%-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>Below 65%</td>
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Course Schedule
Topics and Assignments
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2, September 4</td>
<td>Photo Roman Exhibition by Group 1 and 2 CAMERA TECH Image sizes, framing and composition  -Camera and its parts  -Camera movements</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exterior location exercise (to be filmed during class time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3, September 11</td>
<td>POST PRODUCTION TECH (Adobe Premiere Pro)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Edit exterior location exercise (to be edited during class time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4, September 18</td>
<td>LECTURE: Documentaries or Non-fiction, Types of Documentaries SOUND TECH</td>
<td>“Nanook of the north” by Robert Flaherty  “Exterior location exercise” by Group 1 and 2  -Theorizing Documentary by Michael Renov pgs 1-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week/Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Assignment Due</td>
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| Week 5, September 25 | LECTURE: -The Interview: The Setting and The Questions  
-PRESENTATION Group 1 and 2 for Interior/Exterior Interview | -In search of Africa by Manthia Diawara pgs 12-58  
-“The thin blue line” by Eroll Morris | ASSIGNED SCREENINGS:  
- “The price of Gold” by Richard Cookson  
- “Les maîtres fous” by Jean Rouch  
- Compare the structure and style of the two short documentaries |
| Week 6, October 2   | PRACTICE LOCATION FILMING: CITY OF ACCRA                              |                                                                        | SHOOTING Interior/Exterior Interview by Groups                                  |
| Week 7, October 9   | Editing Workshop                                                      |                                                                        | EDIT Interior/Exterior Interview by Groups                                        |
| **Week 8, October 16** | FALL                                                                |                                                                        | **BREAK**                                                                      |
| Week 9, October 23  | LECTURE: -Finding a Topic that Matters (Guest Lecturer)  
-Form groups for final 10mins project | “TBD (Guest Lecturer)”  
- “Group 1 and 2 Interior/Exterior Interview assignment” |                                                                                 |
| Week 10, October 30 | LECTURE: Structure; Before and After Shooting  
-PRESENTATION by Group 1 and 2 for Final 10mins project | “The manuscripts of Timbuktu” by Zola Maseko |                                                                                 |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 11, November 6</td>
<td>LECTURE: Ethical Responsibility (Guest Lecturer) PRESENTATION by Group 1 and 2 for Final 10mins project</td>
<td>“TBD (Guest Lecturer)”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12, November 13</td>
<td>LECTURE: Re-telling your story LAST PRESENTATION by Group 1 and 2 for Final 10mins project</td>
<td>“Woubi Cheri” by Philip Brooks &amp; Laurent Bocahut</td>
<td>FINAL PRODUCTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13, November 20</td>
<td>FINAL PRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
<td>FINAL PRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14, November 27</td>
<td>Editing workshop</td>
<td>“Rushes/rough cuts of 10mins project”</td>
<td>Final post-production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15, December 4</td>
<td>LECTURE: Finishing your film</td>
<td>“Final cut of 10min project”</td>
<td>Finessing the final cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15, December 7</td>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>SCREENING</td>
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**Course Materials**

**Resources**
- Access your course materials: [NYU Classes](nyu.edu/its/classes)
- Databases, journal articles, and more: [Bobst Library](library.nyu.edu)
- Assistance with strengthening your writing: [NYU Writing Center](nyu.mywconline.com)
- Obtain 24/7 technology assistance: [IT Help Desk](nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

**Course Policies**
Attendance and Tardiness

- Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in harsher penalties including failure.

- Unexcused absences affect students’ grades: In classes meeting once a week, a 2% deduction from the student’s final course grade occurs on the occasion of the first unexcused absence.

- Absences are excused only for illness, religious observance, and emergencies.

**Illness:** For a single absence, students may be required to provide a doctor’s note, at the discretion of the Assistant Directors of Academics. In the case of two consecutive absences, students must provide a doctor’s note. Exams, quizzes, and presentations will not be made up without a doctor’s note.

**Religious Observance:** Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their instructor and the Academic Office in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose. If exams, quizzes, and presentations are scheduled on a holiday a student will observe, the Assistant Directors, in coordination with the instructor, will reschedule them.

**Note:** If for any reason you are unable to attend class, you are **FIRST** required to contact and inform the NYU Accra Manager of Student Services directly at the Academic Centre or email mao9@nyu.edu. You are also required to email your professor directly to notify them.

Late Assignment

Late submission or work will be accepted only with justifiable reasons of health or family emergency. In cases where the reasons adduced for the late submissions are not tenable, appropriate marks will be deducted.

**Classroom etiquette**
The use of Blackberrys, phones and iPods in class are forbidden. Laptop use is permissible only for taking notes.

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

*At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community.*

**Plagiarism:** presenting others' work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one’s own. Plagiarism is a form of fraud. We all stand on the shoulders of others, and we must give credit to the creators of the works that we incorporate into products that we call our own. Some examples of plagiarism:

- a sequence of words incorporated without quotation marks
- an unacknowledged passage paraphrased from another’s work
- the use of ideas, sound recordings, computer data or images created by others as though it were one’s own
- submitting evaluations of group members’ work for an assigned group project which misrepresent the work that was performed by another group member
- Altering or forging academic documents, including but not limited to admissions materials, academic records, grade reports, add/drop forms, course registration forms, etc.

**Disability Disclosure Statement**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

**Note:** Aspects of this syllabus could change in the course of the semester