Documenting the African City
Fall 2017 (August 28-December 15, 2017)

SCA-UA 9124

Instructor Details
Yahaya Alpha Suberu
Ys860@nyu.edu
024-4225408

Laurene Addy (Editing Workshops): 024-4267934
Carlmax Gbormittah (Teaching Assistant): 024-3010933

Class Details
Classroom 2
Tuesday 2:00pm-5:00pm
NYU Academic Center.
Office hours: By appointment

Class 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 or Final Cut Pro software.

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.

COLLABORATION: The class will be divided into crews of three to five. Each crew will be assigned a camera and tripod that they will share (and be responsible for). Each class lab session one crewmember will be the director and the rest of the crew will be available to be crewmembers in order to support the current director. The next session the director position will rotate to the next crewmember, and so on.
Desired Outcomes

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 3 to 5.

Assessment Components

ASSIGNMENTS: 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.**

FISRT 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

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: Five (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?

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 teacher one week before shooting. The Evaluation is to be written after editing is complete. This should be written as a one page journal entry. Analyze 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.

**Grading Policy**

Your final grade will be determined by your **punctual completion** and presentation of the projects and Production Books, your attendance, your participation in class discussion and your collaboration as a crewmember. Lateness will affect your grade. If you are sick, you must e-mail the professor before class begins.

- Readings 5%
- Photo roman 5%
- Exterior Location 10%
- Interior/Exterior interview 15%
- Class participation 10%
- Production book 10%
- Lateness 5%
- Collaboration (Team work) 10%
- Final 10 minutes production 30%

**Grade Conversion**

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<thead>
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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<td>Good</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Study abroad at a Global Academic Centre 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 the class will meet once a week, a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of the course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the center is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students' semester grades. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences will result in harsher penalties, including failure. Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or family emergencies. **For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade.**

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 the professor and the Office of Academic Support in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.** Accommodations would be made to allow students who have been absent for religious reasons to make up any missed work.

Requests to be excused from a class on medical grounds should go to the Student Life Coordinator. All non-medical requests must go to the Site Director and should be made in person (not by email) BEFORE the day of class.

**Additional Required Equipment**

- External Hard Drive
### Session 1

**[29/08/17]**
- Introduction to course & syllabus.
- LECTURE: Introduction to the Short Documentary subject and African Cinema; Story ideas and Point of View (POV)
- SCREENING: “Basic shots”
  “Sembene: The making of African cinema” by Manthia Diawara & Ngugi Wa Thiongo

- READINGS: Not Hollywood by Brendan Shehu: Pgs 10-34
- African Cinema by Manthia Diawara: Pgs 1-11
- Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction: Pg 1-55
- Assignment: Photo roman

### Session 2

**[05/09/17]**
- Photo-roman Presentation: Groups 1 and 2
- CAMERA TECH
- Image sizes, framing and composition
- Camera and its parts
- Camera movements

- Exterior location exercise

### Session 3

**[12/09/17]**
- POST PRODUCTION TECH: Adobe Premiere Pro
- Edit exterior location exercise

### Session 4

**[19/09/17]**
- LECTURE: Documentaries or Non-fiction, Types of Documentaries
- SCREENING: “Nanook of the north” by Robert Flaherty
- READINGS: Theorizing Documentary by Michael Renov: pgs 1-11
- In search of Africa by Manthia Diawara: pgs 12-58

### Session 5

**[26/09/17]**
- LECTURE: The Interview: The Setting and The Questions
  Writing the Research
- SCREENING: “The thin blue line” by Eroll Morris
- PRESENTATION/MEETING: Directors 1 & 2 for Interior/Exterior Interview
Session 6
- LECTURE: Finding a Topic that Matters
- SCREENING: TBD (Guest Lecturer: Jim Awindor)
[03/10/17]
- SOUND TECH
- SHOOTING: Directors 1 & 2 Interior/Exterior Interview

Session 7
- EDITING: Directors 1 & 2 Interior/Exterior Interview (Editing workshop)
[10/10/17]
- LECTURE: Alternative Editing Techniques

Session 8
[17/10/17] FALL BREAK

Session 9
- LECTURE: Structure; Before and After Shooting
- SCREENING: “The manuscripts of Timbuktu” by Zola Maseko Directors 1 & 2, Interior/Exterior Interview
[24/10/17]
- Form groups for final 10mins project

Session 10
[31/10/17] - LECTURE: To Voice Over or Not To Voice Over
- SCREENING: “The price of gold” by Richard Cookson OR “Les maîtres fous” by Jean Rouch
- PRESENTATION/MEETING: Groups 1 & 2 for Final 10mins project

Session 11
- LECTURE: Ethical Responsibility
- SCREENING: “Justice” by Philip Clothier & Paul Sapin (Guest: Q & A session with
[07/11/17]

**main character in the film**

- PRESENTATION/MEETING: Groups 1 & 2 for Final 10mins project

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**Session 12**

- LECTURE: Re-telling your story
- SCREENING: “Woubi Cheri” by Philip Brooks & Laurent Bocahut

[14/11/17]

- PRESENTATION/MEETING: Groups 1 & 2 for Final 10mins project

- Groups start shooting

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**Session 13**

Groups continue shooting

[21/11/17]

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**Session 14**

- Workshop with Fellows (Critical Collaboration, Accra Pod)
- Screening of rushes and projects to fellows

[28/11/17]

- Groups start editing

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**Session 15**

- SCREENING: First cut of final 10mins project
- ALL EQUIPMENT DUE BACK!

[05/12/17]

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[08/12/17]

- PUBLIC SCREENING OF ALL PROJECTS