

**Course Title: DOCUMENTING THE AFRICAN CITY**  
**Course Code: V11.9424.001**  
**Instructor: Awam Amkpa & Yahaya Alpha Suberu**  
**Type of Activity: Lecture and workshop**  
**Credit Hours: 4**  
**Semester: Fall & Spring**

This interdisciplinary course combines ethnographic readings, representations, and interpretations of city and urban cultures with a video production component in which students create short documentaries on the city of Accra. The interpretative classes will run concurrently with production management, sights and sound, and post-production workshops. The course will have three objectives: (1) teach students the documentary tradition from Flaherty to Rouch; (2) use critical Cinema theory to define a document with a camera; and (3) create a short documentary film. We will put traditional emphasis on comparative documentary traditions and aesthetics from African and African-American filmmakers. The students will study and dissect classic documentaries—Borom Sarret, Killer of Sheep, and Lapetite Vendeuse de Solleil, etc.—to highlight the varied styles of their directors. The aim here is to teach students how to tell a story on film/video. Finally, the third part will deal with students' practicum. The object is to send students out to make their own short essays on film/video. In this section, we will discuss with the class the fundamentals of sight and sound, producing, directing, and editing. Based on the adjudication of the faculty and collaborating producers, the best documentaries will be broadcast on Accra's TV-Africa.

#### Course requirements

1. Attendance: All students are expected to be present and on time. If you must be absent seek permission from the director of NYU in Ghana

2. Required texts: Readings will be from the following books;

- "African Cinema: Politics and Culture", Manthia Diawara
- "Third World Film Making and the West", Roy Armes
- "Third Cinema Aesthetics", Teshome Gabriel
- "Questions of Third Cinema", Pines and Willemen
- "Struggles for Representation", Klotman and Cutler
- "In search of Africa", Manthia Diawara, pg. 12-58
- "The shadow of the sun", Ryszard Kapuscinski, pg. 3-34
- "No... Not Hollywood", Brendan Shehu, pg. 64-85

#### Course Schedule

##### Week 1

- General introduction
- Films: Students' final documentary projects, Fall 2004 - Fall 2007

'One year of NYU in Ghana' by Yahaya Alpha Suberu

**Week 2**

- The camera and its parts
- Camera movements
- Introduction to basic sound
- Practical exercise
- Films: 'Woubi Cheri' by Philip Brooks & Laurent Bocahut

**Week 3**

- Framing and Composition
- Basic Shots
- Practical exercise
- Films: 'Dream of Kabul' by Dieter Matzka

**Week 4**

- 5 minutes individual exercise
- Screening and discussion of exercise
- Films: 'Who's afraid of Ngugi' by Manthia Diawara

**Week 5 (Guest from Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations)**

- Field trip to the city of Accra (Old Accra & Nima market)

**Week 6 (Guest Lecturer)**

- Submission of a 3-5 page paper on Accra as a city
- Theories of Documentary
- Documentary traditions from Flaherty to Rouch
- Comparative documentary traditions and aesthetics from African and African-American filmmakers
- Films: TBA

**Week 7 (Guest Lecturer)**

- Writing a treatment for a Documentary
- Producing a Documentary (Pre-production, Production and Post-production)
- Searching for Documentary ideas
- Film: 'Nanook of the north' by Robert Flaherty

## **Week 8**

- Discussion of individual treatments
- Group breakdown
- How to prepare a shooting schedule
- Techniques of Camera & Sound
- Practical exercise

## **Week 9**

- Submission of group treatments
- Introduction to Editing
- Editing exercise

## **Week 10**

- Shooting of 5 minutes group exercises
- Editing of 5 minutes group exercises
- Films: 'La petite vendeuse de soleil' by Djibril Diop Mambety

## **Week 11 (Gust Lecturer)**

- Screening and Analysis of 5 minutes group exercises
- Submission of shooting schedule for final project
- Films: TBA

## **Week 12**

- Revision of Sight & Sound and Editing
- Location scouting
- Final Production (Principal Photography) starts

## **Week 13**

- Editing of Final Production starts
- Final Production continues

## **Week 14**

- Final Production Ends
- Editing of Final Production continues

## **Week 15**

- Screening of final productions

