

NYU Accra

SCA-UA 9124

Documenting the African City

SPRING 2020

Instructor Information

- Yahaya Alpha Suberu
- Office hours: By appointment

Course Information

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.

- Wednesday 1:05pm-4:05pm
- Classroom 2 (NYU Academic Center)

Course Overview and Goals

Collaboration

The class will be divided into crews of two to three. 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 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 3.

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 external hard drive, on their assigned screening date. To label the FILE properly, please write your name, crew #, project # and title, on the folder.

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 e-mailed 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, Group 2 and Group 3 each come up with a simple story and shoot the story with a smart phone. The story should be told using six (6) still images.

Second Assignment

Exterior Location Exercise

Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3 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:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Readings	5%
Photo Roman	5%
Exterior Location	10%
Interior/Exterior location interview	15%
Class participation	10%
Production book	10%
Lateness	5%
Collaboration (Team work)	10%
Final 10 minutes production	30%

Letter Grades

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

Letter Grade	Points	Percent
A	4.00	Example: 92.5% and higher
A-	3.67	Example: 90.0 – 92.49%
B+	3.33	Example: 87.5% - 89.99%
B	3.00	Example: 82.5% - 87.49%
B-	2.67	Example: 80% - 82.49%
C+	2.33	Example: 77.5% - 79.99%
C	2.00	Example: 72.5% - 77.49%
C-	1.67	Example: 70% - 72.49%
D+	1.33	Example: 67.5% - 69.99%
D	1.00	Example: 62.5% - 67.49
D-	.67	Example: 60% - 62.49%
F	.00	Example: 59.99% and lower

Course Schedule

Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Screenings/Readings	Assignment
Week 1, February 5	<p>Introduction to course & syllabus.</p> <p>LECTURE: -Introduction to the Short Documentary subject and African Cinema</p> <p>-Story ideas and Point of View (POV)</p>	<p>“Basic shots” “Past students’ productions”</p> <p>“Borom Sarret” by Ousman Sembene</p> <p>-Not Hollywood by Brendan Shehu Pgs 10-34</p> <p>-African Cinema by Manthia Diawara Pgs 1-11</p> <p>-Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction: Pgs 1-55</p>	Photo Roman
Week 2, February 12	<p>Photo Roman Exhibition by Group 1, 2 and 3</p> <p>POST PRODUCTION TECH (Adobe Premiere Pro)</p> <p>CAMERA TECH</p>		
Week3, February 19	<p>-Image sizes, framing and composition</p> <p>-Camera and its parts</p> <p>-Camera movements</p>		Exterior location exercise
Week4, February 26	<p>LECTURE: Documentaries or Non-fiction, Types of Documentaries</p> <p>SOUND TECH</p>	<p>“Nanook of the north” by Robert Flaherty</p> <p>“Exterior location exercise” by Group 1, 2 and 3</p> <p>-Theorizing Documentary by Michael Renov pgs 1-11</p> <p>-In search of Africa by Manthia Diawara pgs 12-58</p>	

Week/Date	Topic	Screenings/Readings	Assignment
Week5, March 4	LECTURE: -The Interview: The Setting and The Questions -Writing the Research PRESENTATION Group 1, 2 and 3 for Interior/Exterior Interview	“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, March 11	PRACTICE LOCATION FILMING: CITY OF ACCRA NB: Swap day for Independence day shoot (March 6 th)		SHOOTING Interior/Exterior Interview by Groups
Week 7, March 18	FALL BREAK	FALL BREAK	FALL BREAK
Week 8, March 25	Editing Workshop		EDIT Interior/Exterior Interview by Groups
Week 9, April 1	LECTURE: -Finding a Topic that Matters (Guest Lecturer) -Form groups for final 10mins project	Farah Awindor (Guest Lecturer) “Group 1, 2 and 3 Interior/Exterior Interview assignment”	
Week 10, April 8	LECTURE: Structure; Before and After Shooting PRESENTATION by Group 1, 2 and 3 for Final 10mins project	“The manuscripts of Timbuktu” by Zola Maseko	
Week 11, April 15	LECTURE: Ethical Responsibility (Guest Lecturer) PRESENTATION by Group 1, 2 and 3 for Final 10mins project	“TBD (Guest Lecturer)”	

Week/Date	Topic	Screenings/Readings	Assignment
Week12, April 22	LECTURE: Re-telling your story LAST PRESENTATION by Group 1, 2 and 3 for Final 10mins project	“Woubi Cheri” by Philip Brooks & Laurent Bocahut	FINAL PRODUCTION
Week13, April 29	FINAL PRODUCTION		FINAL PRODUCTION
Week14, May 6	Editing workshop	“Rushes/rough cuts of 10mins project”	FINAL POST-PRODUCTION
Week 15, May 13	LECTURE: Finishing your film	“Final cut of 10mins project”	Finessing the Final cut
Week 15, May 15	P U B L I C	S C R E E N I N G	

Course Materials

Resources

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

Course Policies

Attendance and Tardiness

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 for 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.

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.