

COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

Academic School/Department:	Communications and The Arts
Programme:	BA Film
FHEQ Level:	5
Course Title:	Documentary Theory and Production
Course Code:	FILM 5103
Total Hours:	160 (Lev 3-5) (4 US Credit)
Timetabled Hours:	45
Guided Learning Hours:	15
Independent Learning Hours:	100
Credit	16 UK CATS credits 8 ECTS credits 4 US credits

Course Description:

This course gives students hands-on experience in producing their own short documentary films. Students will examine some of the major works of the genre and explore how documentaries, like other types of “factual” texts, can present evidence, argue persuasively, shape public opinions, as well as entertain. We will also analyze many theoretical debates posed by the documentary practices, including the blurring of fiction and nonfiction, the shifting definition of “documentary” through the last century and the problematic assumption of objectivity. Students have the opportunity to try the different ‘parts’ of documentary filmmaking, including researching and developing topics for a documentary production, writing a treatment or proposal for the film, shooting and interviewing in the field, as well as crafting a story during the post-production and editing process.

Prerequisites:

FILM 4102 Introduction to Filmmaking plus 40 credits

Aims and Objectives:

This course aims to expose students to the theories and practices of documentary film. It poses questions about how to analyse documentary films and what are the genre's forms, grammar and purpose. It also exposes students to contemporary debates and theories about documentary films. Students will put theory into practice by creating short documentary films. Successful students at the end of the course will have:

- Detailed knowledge and understanding of documentary theories and practices.
- Further developed the critical thinking and imaginative abilities needed to undertake the entire process required in documentary filmmaking.
- Developed an understanding of how to analyse successful examples of documentary films, taking into account the genre's form, grammar and purpose.
- Further developed the transferable skills, knowledge and ability to create a successful proposal and to complete a documentary project.

Programme Outcomes:

5AII, 5BII, 5CII, 5DI, 5DII

A detailed list of the programme outcomes is found in the Programme Specification. This is located at the archive maintained by Registry and found at:

<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, successful students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a critical engagement with theories and concepts used in the documentary genre.
- Demonstrate engagement with the selection, application and utilization of appropriate methods in documentary preproduction, directing, cinematography, sound design & operation, as well as postproduction.
- Deliver short documentary films with limited supervision and/or effectively engage in teamwork according to a given brief.
- Demonstrate both critical reflection on ethical principles in the research process of documentary proposal and production, and self-reflection for the capacity of criteria-based evaluation of work.
- Engage in action-learning and developing links to external organisations and actors in the process of enabling film career planning to take place.

Indicative Content:

- Key definitions of documentary
- Key debates and theories about the documentary genre
- Evolution of the documentary genre
- Selecting a documentary subject
- Writing a short proposal about the documentary project
- Producing a documentary film
- Manage cinematography, sound design & operation, and directing a documentary
- Editing a documentary

Assessment:

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

Teaching Methodology:

Course meetings will consist of interactive lectures, class discussions, presentation of audiovisual materials, and one-on-one tutorials. Student work is assessed through a variety of ways using both formative and summative approaches. Feedback is intended to help improve student approach to learning and achieve better results. Students will spend three hours per week in the classroom and one additional hour per week on various activities including but not limited to self-guided practice, screenings, and guest lectures.

Indicative Texts:

Bogre, M. (2019) *Documentary Photography Reconsidered: History, Theory and Practice*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Chanan, M. (2008) *Politics of Documentary*. London: BFI Publishing.

de Jong, W., Knudsen, E., and Rothwell, J. (2011) *Creative Documentary Production and Practice*. Harlow: Longman.

Fox, B. (2017) *Documentary Media: History, Theory, Practice*. 2nd edn. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Nichols, B. and Baron, J. (2024) *Introduction to Documentary*. 4th edn. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Walsh, S. (2023) *The Documentary Filmmaker's Intuition: Creating Ethical and Impactful Non-fiction Films*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Journals:

Documentary Dox Magazine.

Filmmaker Magazine.

Point of View Magazine.

Sight & Sound.

Studies in Documentary Film.

Websites:

BBC Filmmaking Guide.

European Documentary Network.

EU Media.

Hot Docs.

Independent Filmmaker Project.

International Documentary Association.

International Documentary Film Festival.

Sheffield Documentary Film Festival.

Student Filmmakers.

Video conversion to Quicktime format.

See syllabus for complete reading list.

Change Log for this CSD:

Nature of Change	Date Approved & Approval Body (School or AB)	Change Actioned by Academic Registry
First edition document	Nov 2024	