

Documentary Assignment

Advanced TV Production

March 2016

Name: _____

Documentary Assignment

A documentary film is a movie that attempts, in some way, to document reality. Even though the scenes are carefully chosen and arranged, they are not scripted, and the people in a documentary film are not actors. Sometimes, a documentary film may rely on voice-over narration to describe what is happening in the footage; in other films, the footage will speak for itself. Often, a documentary film will include interviews with the people in the film.

The earliest film of any sort was a documentary film. These featured single shots of actual events, such as a boat leaving shore, and were referred to as "actuality" films. Other early forms of the documentary film included propaganda films, such as the famous Leni Reifenstahl movie, *Triumph of the Will*, which made Adolph Hitler appear heroic.

One type of documentary film that became popular in the 1950s was called *cinema verité*, which is the literal French translation of "cinema truth." Cinema verité is a type of documentary film that includes no narration; the camera simply follows the subject. One famous example of such a film is *Don't Look Back* a biography film about Bob Dylan, covering his tour of the United Kingdom in 1965.

In recent years, the documentary film genre has become more popular and high profile, though it is still far less popular generally than the action or adventure film genre. Many of today's examples of the documentary film have a political or otherwise controversial agenda, such as *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Super Size Me*, and *Fahrenheit 911*. Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 911, which documented the Bush family's ties to Saudi Arabia and Osama bin Laden, was the most popular documentary film of all time, with over \$228 million US Dollars in ticket sales.

The documentary film is still low on the radar of most movie audiences, but the popularity of recent films illustrates that audiences are willing to watch a movie that has a serious agenda. Because documentary films are much cheaper to produce than commercial movies, they are a low risk for studios. In the future, we are likely to see many more documentary film releases in theaters.

Source: Internet. Author unknown.

Expectations for Documentary

3 to 4 minutes TRT

Treatment

Fully scripted narration

Recorded Narration

2 interviews on topic

Title graphic, lower thirds, credits, Transitions

Music + attributions

Serious topic

Fully edited

| Process: | | Day: | Week |
|--|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| • Initialization + Assignment | | 1 | 1.1 |
| • Select topic – write treatment | | 2 | 1.2 |
| ○ Treatment evaluation | 25 points | 3 | 2.1 |
| ○ 1 class of initial research | | | |
| • Rough script + research | | 4 | 2.2 |
| ○ Script evaluation | 50 points | 5 | 3.1 |
| • Script revision + image acquisition | | | |
| • Narration recording + editing | 25 points | 6 | 3.2 |
| • Interview recording + capture | | 7,8 | 4.1 |
| • Rough Edit | | | |
| ○ Rough Edit Evaluation | 50 points | 9 | 5.1 |
| • Second edit | | | |
| • Graphics and Credits | | 10 | 5.2 |
| • Audio sweetening + music | | | |
| ○ Pre export feedback | | 11 | 5.2 |
| • Export | | 12 | 6.1 |
| • Self evaluation | 25 points | 13 | 6.2 |
| • Peer evaluation | 25 points | | |
| ○ Instructional evaluation | 50 points | | |
| Share Day. No submissions after this date. | | 14 | 7.1 |
| Total: | 250 points | | |

How to produce your documentary

During research I figure out who needs to be interviewed, what they will say, and what locations should be shot. Here I'm looking for an interesting angle with a dramatic human element. This will guide the narrative, and keep the focus of the documentary tight.

I plan the story into "parts" (usually three), and split each part into "sequences". Each part and each sequence has a dramatic structure (high and low points).

Then I write out lists of questions to ask each person to get them to say what needs to be said -- keeping in mind the purpose of the documentary. Many questions get answered by different people to get their views of the same subject. These questions go into the plan to illustrate each of the "sequences".

Since I already know what the answers will be, I write out a shot list that can be used to illustrate the interviews.

Then I shoot the interviews, collect archive materials (photographs and old videos), shoot the filler and anything else that needs to be shot. This is usually done very fast.

During editing I go through the interviews and figure out who says the best things, and organize the interviews to best illustrate the story. Since different people answer the same questions, I can cut between them and it greatly increases the effectiveness of the interviews.

At this point the rough-cut is simply a bunch of talking-head interviews. If there's narration, I'll put a rough-track of this in as well. I may add music here as well if that'll help figure out the mood for each section. I don't move forward until I get the structure right.

Now I fill-in the talking-heads with shots (new or archive) to illustrate what they're talking about. Talking-heads are boring, and I use only a few seconds of each person -- usually before leading into a different subject or to show an emotion.

At this point I may go back and shoot some more material, for example some video of one of the interviewees re-living a particular event.

Finally, I force a few suckers into watching it, then I cut out all the boring bits and figure-out ways of tightening everything up.

Now the first official rough-draft is ready for the client to take a look at. Usually there's a few minor changes, but by this point it looks complete. If there's any translations to other languages, I give the client the transcript to get translated, and then add subtitles or narration as required.

Source: Internet. Author unknown.

January

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

February

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
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| 28 | 29 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
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March

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| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 |
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April

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| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

May

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| 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
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June

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| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 |
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July

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| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

August

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
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| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

PRODUCTION SCHEDULE:

Deadlines:



- Treatment** Due: March 21
- Rough Script** Due: March 28
- Final Script and Narration** Due April 4
- Interviews and rough editing** Due: April 21
- Second Edit with graphics, credits, music** Due: May 5
- Exports and evaluations:** Completed by May13

Criteria for Production: (See rubric on next page)

- **Typed Script**
Script must be typed into a script template.
- **3 Minutes Minimum**
No shorter than 3 minutes. Documentaries shorter than 3 minutes will lose one “final” letter grade
- **Narration**
Must include narration.
- **Interviews**
Must include at minimum 2 interviews on the topic
- **Music**
Must include a music bed
- **Graphics**
Must include a dedicated title page
Must include lower thirds, credits, and other relevant graphics
- **Finished**
Must be polished and completed to the standards on the rubric.
- **Authentic**
Must be a real documentary on a real topic.

TV Production – Digital composition scoring rubric

| | 1 (Poor) | 2 (Fair) | 3 (Good) | 4 (Excellent) | Score |
|------------|--|---|--|--|-------|
| Content | The project strays from its focus and/or contains weak organizational structure. Inadequate evidence of student learning and effort is reflected in the project. | There is a general focus that is maintained through the project. The project presents organization in a loosely organized manner. Some evidence of student learning and effort is reflected in the project. | The project has a clear focus related to the chosen theme. The project presents information in an organized manner that can be understood by the intended audience. Substantial evidence of student learning and effort is reflected in the project. | The project has a clear focus, which addresses the chosen theme. The project presents information in a manner that is understood by the intended audience. Reflects research and application of critical thinking skills, and shows notable insight into techniques specific to the medium. Outstanding evidence of student learning and effort is reflected in the project. | |
| Script | Many spelling, syntax and grammatical errors in the language. | Moderate amount of spelling, syntax, and/or grammatical errors in the language. | Few spelling, syntax, and/or grammatical errors in the language. | Clear, concise, well-written language; no syntax, spelling or grammatical errors. | |
| Design | Lack of preparation is evident, illogical sequence, or transitions which distract the viewer are shown. | Adequate preparation and sequence is shown. Some transitions are shown. | Sequence of project components is clear and evident. Transitions provide easy movement from one scene to another. | Sequence of project is excellent. Transitions are well timed and provide smooth movement between scenes. | |
| Resonance | The project lacks ability to generate interest. | The project is interesting to the students who created it. | The project is interesting to the audience beyond the students who created it; and contains a theme. | The project compels the audience's attention and contains a universally appealing theme. | |
| Audio | Audio is poor quality. No music is present. | Few audio considerations are present. Sound is overly ambient. Music is a poor fit. | Audio is used to help construct meaning. Music is used effectively. | Audio thoroughly and artfully constructs meaning. Music provides a noticeable impact. | |
| Appearance | Visuals are random and/or lacking appeal. | Visuals are constructed with some purpose. | Visuals are appealing and arranged purposefully. | Visuals are finely constructed with purposeful detail and maximum aesthetic impact. | |

Documentary Assignment - Assessment Sheet:

_____ day

Please Print your name:

1 _____

2 _____

Treatment:

Date Submitted: _____ Grade: _____

Script:

Date Submitted: _____ Grade: _____

Rough Edit:

Date Submitted: _____ Grade: _____

Evaluations:

Date Submitted: _____ Grade: _____

Comments: _____

