

Film Programme

School of English, Film, Theatre, & Media Studies

Te Kura Tānga Kōrero Ingarihi, Kiriata, Whakaari, Pāpāho

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences



FILM 311 Documentary Film Production

Trimester 1 2015

2 March to 1 July 2015

30 Points



Blackfish (2013) Dir. Gabriela Cowperthwaite.

IMPORTANT DATES

Teaching dates: 2 March to 5 June 2015

Easter/Mid-Trimester break: 3 to 19 April 2015

Last assessment item due: 5 June 2015

Withdrawal dates:

Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds. If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Wednesdays 11:00 - 13:50 77 Fairlie Tce FT77205

Fridays 11:00 - 13:50 83 Fairlie Tce FT83102

NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Dr Paul Wolfram paul.wolfram@vuw.ac.nz 463 6823 Room 105 85 Fairlie Terrace
Office Hours: Wednesday 2-3 pm
Bernard Blackburn bernard.blackburn@vuw.ac.nz 463 9760 Room 106 85 Fairlie Terrace
Office hours: Monday to Friday 9.30 – 11.30am.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information about the course and all changes will be communicated at the start of each workshop; posted on Blackboard; noticeboards in 85 Fairlie Terrace; and via email. If you are not going to use the Victoria email address set up for you, we strongly encourage you to set a forward from the Victoria email system to the email address you do use.

PRESCRIPTION

A critical and practical study of documentary filmmaking. Documentary Film Production aims to provide students with a broad understanding of the forms and styles of documentary. The course will focus on stylistic and structural aspects of the documentary form as a basis from which to inform the productions within the class.

COURSE CONTENT

The course explores the theory and practice of documentary film production in a practically orientated format. In addition to the in-class practical training, students will be expected to conduct research and training in their own time and with other class members. The course's practical sessions will cover camera work, sound recording, basic lighting set ups, interviewing techniques, camera movement and post-production training.

Students will be expected to collaborate on several assignments and to fulfil assigned roles within a production crew.

The major assignment in this course is a short documentary at a maximum 15 minutes in length. Students will be assessed on their particular role within a production crew and are expected to thoroughly research their assigned role and demonstrate their creative, intellectual and technical ability within the scope of their assigned position.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES (CLOS)

Students who pass this course should be able to:

- 1) demonstrate knowledge of the history and diversity of documentary cinema, including its narrative and stylistic conventions

- 2) develop their critical and communication skills
- 3) enhance their technical skills in core aspects of film production
- 4) demonstrate their artistic and craft abilities in one or more of the follow areas of documentary film production: direction, cinematography, sound, editing, or post-production
- 5) demonstrate their ability to work collaboratively.

TEACHING FORMAT

Course delivery will comprise a mixture of seminar classes, technical workshops, practical exercises and discussions of student work. You are expected to take active part in all practical work and discussion.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

- submit the written and practical work specified for the course, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work)
- have attended and fulfilled the requirements of the Health and Safety briefing. The Health and Safety briefing is arranged by appointment between production groups and the course coordinator in week eight
- have at least 85% (20 classes) attendance at all classes and workshops.

WORKLOAD

The expected workload for a 30 point course is 300 hours over the trimester or 20 hours per teaching week.

Over a week 6 hours will be spent in class, 4 hours should be spent on researching and training with equipment outside of class, 3 hours spent on recommended readings and 7 hours on reviewing notes and working towards class assignments as individuals or in assigned groups. The course is highly practical, and the demands on your time will increase as you move into the production phases of your project.

In addition to the time spent in class, students will be expected to attend additional technical workshops/tutorials on the use of equipment.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment items and workload per item		%	CLO(s)	Due date
1	Documentary Analysis Presentation (10 minute presentation) delivered in pairs and assessed individually.	10%	1, 2	18 March
2	Story Pitch (Class Presentation; 5 minutes; students will be assessed individually) and Two Page Proposal.	20%	1, 2	1 April
3	Story Treatment. (15 – 20mins)	25%	1, 2,4,5	6 May
4	Documentary short film (10-15 minutes in length; students will be assessed individually).	45%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	5 June

Assignment 1.

- Documentary Analysis and Presentation- (10%) 18 March – Delivered in class

Working in pairs, students will be assigned one of 10 documentary films to analyse. You should address the ‘determining mode’ of the work, its function/s, its formal strategies, its “spine” or structure, and its surface content and deeper themes. You should also consider the filmmaker’s process, and any ethical questions and issues related to the film’s production.

Presentations will be 10 minutes long. Two students will present on each film and students must coordinate with each other as to which aspects of the film/filmmaker they will focus on. Students will be assessed individually on the marking criteria outlined below.

Marking Criteria:

1. Fulfilling the set task in a direct, relevant and complete manner.
2. Clear evidence that you have understood the major structural and thematic features of the film.
3. Demonstrating your engagement with ideas and materials discussed and analysed in FILM 311.
4. Evidence of preparation.
5. Quality, fluency and coherency of expression.

Assignment 2.

- Story Pitch & Two Page Proposal - (20%) 1 April – Delivered in class

In this individually assessed assignment you are expected to present an idea for a film in five minutes. The pitch should introduce subject, characters and key plot points, dramatic tension, and suggest the story resolution in a compelling way. REMEMBER: You are not telling the story. The pitch, story, concept, and delivery should be designed and presented in a way that will appeal to your audience. You are trying to “sell” your idea and convince your classmates and teachers that your film is worthy of being made into a short documentary. The pitch must be your own original work. The criteria for assessment will be

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emotional impact of the pitch, clarity of the idea, marketability (i.e how relevant to its target audience?), and strength of delivery.

In addition to the pitch you will prepare a two page proposal in which you outline the core elements of your proposed documentary in a manner that exhibits your understandings of the practical and creative aspects of your project. You should aim to prove that the story you want to tell is not only achievable in the time frame and with your limited resources but also compelling and cinematically engaging. Why is the film you want to make important? Why should others care about your subject, issue or topic? Remember you are aiming for four/five shooting days and a three-week edit.

Proposal must include:

1. Logline / film statement
2. Background
3. Approach and style
4. Outline
5. Production schedule
6. Audience
7. Budget

Marking Criteria:

1. Fulfilling the set task in a direct, relevant and complete manner.
2. Clear evidence that you have engaged in the pitching process in a creative way that expresses your own original ideas.
3. Demonstrating your engagement with ideas and materials discussed and analysed in FILM 311.
4. Evidence of preparation and research for presentation..
5. Quality, fluency and coherency of expression.
6. Feasibility of proposed project.
7. Quality, fluency and coherency of written expression in the proposal.

Assignment 3.

- Story Treatment - (25%) 6 May – Delivered in class

In your key creative role as: director, producer, cinematographer, editor, or sound you will prepare for your film project by presenting a creative pitch to the class. This group presentation is delivered as a production group but the assessment and grade will be based on your individual contribution to the presentation, and your alignment with the overall group presentation. The group must communicate a cohesive stylistic treatment for their film. Directors should demonstrate their overall directorial vision for all aspects of visuals, sound, and cutting. However, each member of the group must outline how their role will specifically contribute to the realisation of that vision. This will involve researching the nature of your particular role and demonstrating an understanding of that role. As part of this assignment, your group will present a storyboard (or shooting plan) of a number of shots from one sequence from the film. This will help prepare you for your actual shoot. This assignment will develop your creativity, enhance your

understanding of key creative roles in filmmaking, improve your ability to work as part of a team, and develop your organisational and oral communication skills.

Marking Criteria:

1. Fulfilling the set task in a direct, relevant and complete manner.
2. Clear evidence that you understand and have researched your key creative role.
3. Clear evidence that you have engaged with the pre-production process in a creative way that expresses your own original ideas as well as complementing the script, if you are not the director you should also complement the directorial vision.
4. Evidence of preparation and research for presentation.
5. Quality, fluency and coherency of expression.

Assignment 4.

Documentary Short Film – (45%) 5 June – Handed in at the start of class.

Completion of a **short documentary film**, from the preliminaries of scouting and research, through shooting, audio recording, editing and post-production. In this group assignment you will be given an individual mark that reflects the overall accomplishment of the group and your own achievement in your assigned production role. There will be four production groups (each with 5 members). Delivery of finished films will be as a file on the server drop box (details will be provided).

Marking Criteria:

1. Fulfilling the set task within the production group in a direct, relevant and complete manner.
2. Clear evidence that you understand and have researched your key creative role.
3. Clear evidence that you have engaged with the production process in a creative way that expresses your own original ideas as well as complementing the original pitch. If you are not the director you should also complement the directorial vision.
4. Evidence of preparation and research for the filming.
5. Quality, fluency and coherency of expression in your assigned production role.

SUBMISSION AND RETURN OF WORK

Hardcopy assignments are submitted in class to the course coordinator. Assignments will be marked and returned within 10 days.

Your marked assignment will be handed back in class. Any uncollected assignments can be picked up from the Programme Administrator after the last day of teaching. Assignments will be held in the Administration office until the end of the following trimester. You need to show your student identification to collect marked assignment from the Administration office.

EXTENSIONS AND PENALTIES

Extensions

In exceptional and unforeseen circumstances an extension may be granted. To apply for an extension, email your Course Coordinator before the assignment is due. If granted, your Course Coordinator will inform you of the new due date. Tutors cannot grant extensions. **No assignment with or without an extension will be accepted after Monday 15 June 2015.**

Penalties

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2.5 percent deduction from your total mark per work day. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT AND/OR ADDITIONAL EXPENSES

Most of the equipment, media and resources required for this course can be loaned from the Film Programme through either Paul Wolfram or Bernard Blackburn during the loaning and receiving hours of Monday – Friday, 9.30 – 11.30am. There will be some costs involved in the production of films as students are expected to supply their own consumable materials such as gaffer tape, lighting gels, transportation costs etc. Depending on the nature of the individual film projects, other costs such as location charges, wardrobe rental or construction, transportation rental and so on may also be encountered.

Video cameras, support equipment, lighting, and audio equipment are issued on loan from SEFTMS. Facilities for sound recording, mixing, and editing will be made available by reservation. School equipment must be treated with the utmost care and respect. The student is in exactly the same relationship to the SEFTMS as he or she will be in the outside world renting equipment from a supplier. Learning to bring the gear back on time, and better than you received it, is a valuable lesson.

It is a prerequisite to checking out equipment that the student has gone through the safety, operation, and troubleshooting workshop for that piece of equipment. These sessions will be held early in the course, so that all students will be able to work with the gear for the maximum time.

Equipment bookings must be made with the proper lead time, must be strictly adhered to, and returns must be made on time; otherwise fellow students will be inconvenienced and their shooting schedules disrupted. Any gear damage, malfunction, or failure must be reported at once to the course coordinator at 04 463 6823 or 021 234 0814.

You are required to read The Fat Book, which is Film and Theatre's protocol handbook. This will help you understand the ground rules, and help you know what services, equipment, and facilities are available within the School. Printed copies of The Fat Book will be distributed during the first class.

RECOMMENDED READING

Bernard, Sheila Curran. *Documentary Storytelling: Making Stronger and More Dramatic Nonfiction Films*. 2nd ed. Amsterdam, Boston: Focal Press, 2007.

De Jong, Wilma. *Creative Documentary: Theory and Practice*. 1st ed. Harlow, U.K: Pearson, 2012.

Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. 2nd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Rabiger, Michael. *Directing the Documentary*. 5th ed. Amsterdam: Focal Press/Elsevier, 2009.

Rosenthal, Alan, and John Corner. *New Challenges for Documentary*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.

Rosenthal, Alan. *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos*. Carbondale: SIU Press, 2007.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Student feedback on University courses may be found at

www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

In week six or seven of the trimester your class representative will be invited to a meeting with the Programme staff. In week five your class representative will ask the class for any feedback on this course to discuss at this meeting.

Commented [MG1]: not on course page – did you want to add?

Commented [MG2]: any changes made due to past feedback?

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute:
www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- Victoria graduate profile: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz
- School website: www.victoria.ac.nz/seftms

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COURSE PROGRAMME

Week 1	4 March	<p>Welcome and Administration, Course Outline.</p> <p>Introduction to documentary film history and genres.</p> <p>Introduction to Assignment 1: How to analyse a film.</p> <p>Exploring style, structure and storyline.</p>
	6 March	<p>Workshop: Introduction to Camera. (interview)</p>
Week 2	11 March	<p>The Creative Treatment of Reality? Exploring the documentary form</p> <p>Telling the truth/lying through a lens. Ethics and documentary story telling.</p>
	13 March	<p>Workshop: Camera II. (observation and movement)</p>
Week 3	18 March	<p>Assignment 1: Documentary Analysis and Presentation (deliver in class).</p>
	20 March	<p>Workshop: Introduction to location audio recording.</p>
Week 4	25 March	<p>Introduction to Assignment 2: How to pitch.</p> <p>Key concepts, style and storyline, and feasibility as a short film.</p> <p>Writing proposals and exploring your idea.</p> <p>Introduction to interview styles, techniques and ethical issues.</p>
	27 March	<p>Workshop: Lighting</p> <p>Guest: cinematographer</p>
Week 5	1 April	<p>Assignment 2: Story Pitch & Two Page Proposal.</p> <p>Exploring the creative processes, from idea to fruition.</p>
<p>Easter/Mid Trimester Break: Friday 3 to Sunday 19 April 2015</p>		

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Week 6	22 April	Filming on location: preparations, challenges and trouble-shooting. Guest lecture: filmmaker Costa Botes.
	24 April	Workshop: Introduction to editing with FCP X. Films selected and groups assigned.
Week 7	29 April	Pre-Production phase begins. (Lecture and group work)
	1 May	Workshop: Working as a crew.
Week 8	6 May	Assignment 3: Story treatment (delivered in class) *Producers to arrange health and safety meeting with Dr Wolfram and groups.
	8 May	Production begins.
Week 9	13 May	Production
	15 May	Production
Week 10	20 May	Post-Production begins.
	22 May	Post-Production
Week 11	27 May	Post-Production
	29 May	Rough cut screening
Week 12	3 June	Post-Production. Fine cut group discussions
	5 June	Assignment 4: Films handed in at start of class.
Possible Screening dates:		15, 16, 17, 18 June