FILM 448—DOCUMENTARY: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Prof. Sean O’Brien  Autumn 2015  NAS 009  M 11:00-2p
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Office: LA 110  Office Hours:  T/H 11-2:30, W 2-3:30 & by appointment

Course Description:

This course will introduce the students to the basics of documentary production: researching, interviewing, shooting and editing. Students will each produce a 15-minute documentary in production teams of two, and all documentaries will be shown at the “We Did It Ourselves Film Festival” at the Crystal Theater at the end of the semester.

Required Readings:

Production handouts will be passed out throughout the semester.

Assignments:

Short film analysis essays
Documentary treatment
Documentary exercises
15-minute documentary: All students will be required to show their documentary in the class’s We Did It Ourselves Film Festival at the Crystal Theater on Sunday, December 13
Note: NO DOCUMENTARY SHOULD EXCEED FIFTEEN MINUTES!

Attendance:

No unexcused absences!

Plagiarism

Defined in the UM Student Conduct Code as representing another person’s words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own. In this course it will result in a failing grade for the class and a report to the Dean of Students.
Disabilities

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please come and see me to make arrangements. Be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.

Schedule:

8/31   Introduction
       Assignment for 9/14– 2-pg. review of *Brother’s Keeper*
            - ½ pg. review of four docs from Sean’s list

9/7    Labor Day

9/14   Discussion of *Brother’s Keeper*
       Approaches to Documentary
       Due today:  review of *Brother’s Keeper* plus 4 other short reviews
       Assignments for 9/21:
            Composition exercises      2-3 minute documentary
            Treatment for the final documentary

9/21   Documentary Basics:  Pre-Production, Production, Post-Production
       Critique student documentaries
       Choose documentaries and groups
       Due today:  Treatment for documentary
       Assignment for 9/28:  Short review essay of
            Herzog’s *The White Diamond*

9/28   The Interview - Bring your cameras!!
       Due today: 2-pg. review essay of *The White Diamond*
       Assignment for 10/5:  a 15- minute interview cut to 3 minutes

10/5   Cover
       Critique of interviews
       Due today:  3-minute cut interview
       Assignment for 10/12:  cover a 3-minute interview
10/12  Critique of covered interview
       Shooting video: guest lecture
       Due today: cover of 3-minute interview
       Assignment for 10/19: character devel. exercise

10/19  Critique of non-interview exercise
       Due today: non-interview exercise
       Assignment for 10/26– Keep going – have something to show!!

10/26  The Introduction
       Due Today: show something new
       Assignment for 11/2 – Documentary’s Introduction

11/2   Workshopping Introductions
       Due today – Documentary’s Introduction
       Assignment for 11/9 – first half of doc.

11/9   Workshopping first half of documentary
       Due today: first half of documentary
       Assignment for 11/16 – ¾ of the documentary

11/16  Workshopping ¾ cut
       Assignment for 11/23 –First complete cut

11/23  Workshopping first cut
       Due today: Complete first cut of documentary
       Assignment for 11/30 – Second cut of documentary

11/30  Workshopping second cut of documentary
       Assignment: polish, polish, polish

12/9   Review of Final Cuts

12/13  CLASS’S DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL AT THE
CRYSTAL THEATER at 7:00 p.m.

12/14  Final Exam 1:10-3:10