

**City University of Hong Kong  
Course Syllabus**

**offered by School of Creative Media  
with effect from Semester A 2024/25**

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**Part I Course Overview**

<b>Course Title:</b>	<b>Independent Documentary Production</b>
<b>Course Code:</b>	<b>SM6341</b>
<b>Course Duration:</b>	<b>One semester</b>
<b>Credit Units:</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Level:</b>	<b>P6</b>
<b>Medium of Instruction:</b>	<b>English</b>
<b>Medium of Assessment:</b>	<b>English</b>
<b>Prerequisites:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>Precursors:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>Equivalent Courses:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>Exclusive Courses:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	<b>Nil</b>

## Part II Course Details

### 1. Abstract

This will give students a hands-on experience of independent documentary making. Many great filmmakers have made documentaries, and today the form is more relevant and popular than ever. Students will be guided through each step in the making of a 10-15 minute documentary: preliminary research, production planning, treatment writing, shooting, editing and test screening. As students need to deal with different subjects living in various socio-cultural conditions, they are encouraged to take up the challenge of establishing a comfortable and positive relationship between their camera and their subject(s), and, to explore various techniques of effective documentation when the use of camera is limited. Methods of material organization, interviewing, and narrative are introduced to prepare students for future work in the making of non-fiction works.

### 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	To identify a theme of interest, subject(s) for shooting, and production plan;	25%	✓	✓	✓
2.	To be able to follow a documentary subject and production plan through the phases of production, and to overcome various obstacles in the shooting process;	25%	✓	✓	✓
3.	To discover important questions raised from the shooting process, including subject behavior, ethical questions, and/or unexpected events;	25%	✓	✓	✓
4.	To be able to organize disconnected materials into a relatively complete narrative or innovative documentary work.	25%	✓	✓	✓
		100%			

**A1: Attitude**

*Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.*

**A2: Ability**

*Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.*

**A3: Accomplishments**

*Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.*

### 3. Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

(LTAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

LTA	Brief Description	CILO No.				Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	
<b>Lectures:</b> Technical and problem solving skills	Lectures on step by step techniques of making documentaries, and how to foresee difficulties to be encountered;	✓	✓	✓		1 hour/ week
<b>Screenings:</b> Conceptual skills	Watch and discuss examples of ethical, technical and creative dilemmas in documentary filmmaking;		✓	✓		12 hours total
<b>Seminar discussions:</b> Interactive learning on creative and practical approaches	Seminar discussion about preparation, interview approaches, research techniques, writing, shooting and development in the understanding of selected subject; Extending understanding of creative expression beyond documentation, i.e. picture editing, sound, music	✓	✓	✓		2 hrs/week
<b>Presentations</b>	Students present works-in-progress for feedback and critique and final screenings for peer review at end of term.				✓	8 hours total
<b>Production &amp; completion of original work:</b> Self-initiated	Students must conceptualize, shoot and edit their own original creative work	✓	✓	✓	✓	100+ hours total

### 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.				Weighting	Remarks
	1	2	3	4		
Continuous Assessment: 100%						
Production plan and reflection	✓				25%	
Shooting reports and footage presentation	✓	✓			15%	
Screening discussions and Critique	✓				10%	
Treatment writing and paper editing			✓		25%	
Final Version Screening and discussion		✓	✓	✓	25%	
Examination: 0% (duration: , if applicable)						
					100%	

## 5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Applicable to students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Production Plan	<p>Clear articulation of the steps for initiating production;</p> <p>Time management is well outlined;</p> <p>Production needs are well outlined;</p> <p>Project Feasibility;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excellent grasp of steps for documentary production, demonstrating firm knowledge of the field</li> <li>- Rich content, exceptional research and planning ability</li> <li>- Design and research is firmly built on excellent knowledge of subject matter</li> <li>- Excellent grasp of structure necessary to execute documentary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Firm grasp of steps for documentary production, demonstrating firm knowledge of the field</li> <li>- Adequate content, good research and planning ability</li> <li>- Design and research is firmly built on good knowledge of subject matter</li> <li>- Adequate grasp of structure necessary to execute documentary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comprehensive grasp of steps for documentary production, demonstrating firm knowledge of the field</li> <li>- Adequate content, fair research and planning ability</li> <li>- Design and research is firmly built on fair knowledge of subject matter</li> <li>- Weak grasp of structure necessary to execute documentary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loose grasp of steps for documentary production, demonstrating firm knowledge of the field</li> <li>- Weak content, fair research and planning ability</li> <li>- Design and research is marginally built on subject matter</li> <li>- Poor grasp of structure necessary to execute documentary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor grasp of steps for documentary production</li> <li>- Inadequate content</li> <li>- Fail to make reasonable research and planning</li> <li>- Fail to grasp structure necessary to execute documentary</li> </ul>
2. Shooting Report and Footage Presentation	<p>Footage is well shot with good sound and image quality</p> <p>Key concepts and scenes are starting to emerge in initial footage</p> <p>Student understands and can articulate the stage current</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rich content, excellent ability to interpret and integrate various resources</li> <li>- Well defined and reasoned points of view</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand</li> <li>- Clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand</li> <li>- Relevant points made to the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weak content, limited use of resources</li> <li>- Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources</li> <li>- Irrelevant points to the subject matter, no ability to interpret</li> </ul>

	<p>footage is at, and step towards its completion</p> <p>Content is compelling and rich</p> <p>Student takes in comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>	<p>grounded in insightful interpretation of existing work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Readiness to respond to peer opinion and other views initiated in class discussion</li> </ul>	<p>elaboration of ideas that sticks to the point, with clearly differentiated issues, ability to interpret opinions independently</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sufficient responses to peer comments to sustain a discussion</li> </ul>	<p>subject matter in question</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ability to respond to other statements and engage in class discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ability to respond to other comments in simple terms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- opinions</li> <li>- Fail to respond to other comments</li> </ul>
3. Final Screening discussions and Critique	<p>Creativity</p> <p>Form and Content</p> <p>Coherence / Research</p> <p>Technical ability (sound, picture, music integration)</p> <p>Personal Style</p> <p>Ability to deal with critique and feedback</p>	<p>Excellent short documentary in form and content</p> <p>Sound, Music and Picture quality is high</p> <p>Student has integrated lessons learned into a compelling documentary output</p> <p>Student takes in comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>	<p>Well done short documentary in form and content</p> <p>Sound, Music and Picture quality is well done</p> <p>Student has integrated lessons learned into a well done documentary output</p> <p>Readiness to respond to comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>	<p>Adequate short documentary in form and content</p> <p>Sound, Music and Picture quality is adequate</p> <p>Student has integrated lessons learned into a decent documentary output</p> <p>Ability to respond to comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>	<p>Weak short documentary in form and content</p> <p>Integration of Sound, Music and Picture quality is weak</p> <p>Student has moderately integrated lessons learned into a documentary output</p> <p>Weak ability to respond to comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>	<p>Failure to complete a short documentary</p> <p>Failure to integrate Sound, Music and Picture</p> <p>Failure to integrate lessons learned into a documentary output</p> <p>No ability to respond to comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>
4. Treatment and Paper Editing	<p>Creativity</p> <p>Personal style</p> <p>Clarity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work has articulation of personal styles and signature</li> <li>- Work shows important</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work is relatively complete and comprehensible</li> <li>- Limited ability to demonstrate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work is not affective at all</li> <li>- Marginal ability demonstrate the processes of thinking and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium</li> <li>- Fail to create</li> </ul>

	Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production</li> <li>- Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>issues that requires exploration</li> <li>- Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creative thinking or exploration</li> <li>- Fair adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creative exploration</li> <li>- Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration</li> <li>- No adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources</li> </ul>
5. Final Version Screening and Discussion	<p>Coherent documentary work</p> <p>Creative style</p> <p>Clear point of view</p> <p>Compelling subject matter</p> <p>Understanding of the medium</p> <p>Articulate discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature</li> <li>- Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production</li> <li>- Excellent reception from viewers and peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium</li> <li>- Ability to create work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration</li> <li>- Good reception from viewers and peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium</li> <li>- Limited ability to create work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration</li> <li>- Fair reception from viewers and peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium</li> <li>- Marginal ability to create work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration</li> <li>- Poor reception from viewers and peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium</li> <li>- Fail to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration</li> <li>- Very poor reception from viewers and peers</li> </ul>

Applicable to students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B)	Marginal (B-, C+, C)	Failure (F)
1. Production Plan	<p>Clear articulation of the steps for initiating production;</p> <p>Time management is well outlined;</p> <p>Production needs are well outlined;</p> <p>Project Feasibility;</p>	<p>Very clear articulation of the steps for pre-production;</p> <p>Production schedule well outlined;</p> <p>Project feasibility well evaluated;</p>	<p>Clear articulation of the steps for pre-production;</p> <p>Production schedule outlined;</p> <p>Project feasibility not evaluated;</p>	<p>Unclear articulation of the steps for pre-production;</p> <p>Production schedule outlined;</p> <p>Project feasibility not evaluated;</p>	<p>Fail to deliver any of the above.</p>
2. Shooting Report and Footage Presentation	<p>Footage is well shot with good sound and image quality</p> <p>Key concepts and scenes are starting to emerge in initial footage</p> <p>Student understands and can articulate the stage current footage is at, and step towards its completion</p> <p>Content is compelling and rich</p> <p>Student takes in comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>	<p>Rich content, excellent ability to interpret and integrate various resources</p> <p>Well defined and reasoned points of view grounded in insightful interpretation of existing work</p> <p>Readiness to respond to peer opinion and other views initiated in class discussion</p>	<p>Adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand</p> <p>Clear elaboration of ideas that sticks to the point, ability to interpret opinions independently</p> <p>Sufficient responses to peer comments to sustain a discussion</p>	<p>Adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand</p> <p>Relevant points made to the subject matter in question</p> <p>Ability to respond to other statements and engage in class discussion</p>	<p>Fail to make reasonable research and planning</p> <p>Fail to grasp structure necessary to execute documentary</p>
3. Final Screening discussions and Critique	<p>Creativity</p> <p>Form and Content</p> <p>Coherence / Research</p> <p>Technical ability (sound, picture, music integration)</p>	<p>Excellent short documentary in form and content</p> <p>Sound, Music and Picture quality is high</p> <p>Student has integrated</p>	<p>Well done short documentary in form and content</p> <p>Sound, Music and Picture quality is well done</p>	<p>Adequate short documentary in form and content</p> <p>Sound, Music and Picture quality is adequate</p>	<p>Failure to complete a short documentary</p> <p>Failure to integrate Sound, Music and Picture</p> <p>Failure to integrate</p>

	<p>Personal Style</p> <p>Ability to deal with critique and feedback</p>	<p>lessons learned into a compelling documentary output</p> <p>Student takes in comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>	<p>Student has integrated lessons learned into a well done documentary output</p> <p>Readiness to respond to comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>	<p>Student has integrated lessons learned into a decent documentary output</p> <p>Ability to respond to comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>	<p>lessons learned into a documentary output</p> <p>No ability to respond to comments from fellow classmates and tutor</p>
4. Treatment and Paper Editing	<p>Creativity</p> <p>Personal style</p> <p>Clarity</p> <p>Coherence</p>	<p>Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature</p> <p>Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production</p> <p>Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources</p>	<p>Work has articulation of personal styles and signature</p> <p>Work shows important issues that requires exploration</p> <p>Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources</p>	<p>Work is relatively complete and comprehensible</p> <p>Limited ability to demonstrate creative thinking or exploration</p> <p>Fair adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources</p>	<p>No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium</p> <p>Fail to create work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration</p> <p>No adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources</p>
5. Final Version Screening and Discussion	<p>Coherent documentary work</p> <p>Creative style</p> <p>Clear point of view</p> <p>Compelling subject matter</p> <p>Understanding of the medium</p> <p>Articulate discussion</p>	<p>Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature</p> <p>Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production</p> <p>Excellent reception from viewers and peers</p>	<p>Strong exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium</p> <p>Ability to create work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration</p> <p>Good reception from viewers and peers</p>	<p>Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium</p> <p>Limited ability to create work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration</p> <p>Fair reception from viewers and peers</p>	<p>No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium</p> <p>Fail to create project/work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration</p> <p>Very poor reception from viewers and peers</p>



### Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

#### 1. Keyword Syllabus

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

Interview Techniques, Cinema Verite, Documentary cinema, Treatment writing, Script Writing, Post-Production, Directing, Editing, Paper Editing, The art of reality, Non-Fiction filmmaking, Ethnography, Human Subjects, Socially engaged filmmaking, Point of View, Character-driven documentary, First-Person narrative, Ethics in filmmaking, Structure, Time and Space in Documentary Filmmaking, Talking-head interviews, Narration, Truth.

#### 2. Reading List

##### 2.1 Compulsory Readings

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1.	Eckhardt, Ned. <i>Documentary Filmmakers Handbook</i> . Jefferson: McFarland, 2012.
2.	Hewitt, John and Gustavo Vazquez. <i>Documentary Filmmaking: A Contemporary Film Guide</i> .
3.	Jollife, Genevieve. <i>The Documentary Film Makers Handbook</i> . NY: Continuum, 2006.
4.	Nichols, Bill. <i>Introduction to Documentary</i> . Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010

##### 2.2 Additional Readings

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Rabiger, Michael. <i>Directing the Documentary</i> .
2.	Rascoroli, Laura. <i>The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film</i> , Wallflower, London, 2009.
3.	Renov, Michael (ed), <i>The Subject of Documentary</i> , University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004.
4.	Roscoe, Jane and Hight, Craig, <i>Faking It: Mock- documentary and the subversion of factuality</i> , Manchester University Press, 2001.
5.	Russell, Catherine. <i>Experimental Ethnography: the Work of Film in the Age of Video</i> , Duke, Durham, 1999.
6.	Smaill, Belinda, <i>The Documentary: Politics, Emotion, Culture</i> , Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, 2010.
7.	Stubbs, Liz. <i>Documentary Filmmakers Speak</i> . New York: Allworth Press, 2012.
8.	Baker, Maxine. <i>Documentary in the Digital Age</i> . Oxford: Focal Press, 2006.
9.	Baddeley, W. Hugh. <i>The Technique of Documentary Film Production</i> . London: Focal Press, 1969.
10.	Turin, Svetla, Ezra Winton, (eds) <i>Screening Truth to Power: A reader on documentary activism</i> . Cinema Politica, 2014.
<b>Films:</b>	
1.	Cousins, Mark. 2011. <i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> .
2.	Wintonick, Peter. 2006. <i>Cinema Verite: Defining the Moment, the story of non-fiction film making</i> . National Film Board of Canada.
3.	Ferrari, Pepita. 2008. <i>Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary</i> . NFB/Mongrel Media.
4.	Heycock, David. <i>Paul Watson: Documentary Film Maker/ BBC Television Training</i> . Princeton: Films for the Humanities, 1993.