

Department: English

Course Name: Unfiltered: Exploring Documentary Film

Course Description:

This course explores the impact, ethics, and art of documentary filmmaking. Students will analyze a range of film styles, from participatory to investigative journalism, to learn how filmmakers find and research stories, shape narratives, and influence public perception. Through critical viewing, peer discussions, expert commentary, and written analysis, students will engage with key concepts such as objectivity, bias, storytelling techniques, and the nuances of visual rhetoric. The course will also address the evolving role of the genre in the age of AI.

Content:

Visual storytelling techniques
Ethical considerations (objectivity and bias) in documentary filmmaking and journalism
Interviewing and editing techniques
Visual editorial choices that shape the narrative
Scripting and Narration
Subject matter research and analysis

Skills:

Critical thinking
Interviewing skills
Technical writing/scripting
Visual Storytelling
Analytical writing
Visual analysis

Text and Materials:

Domestic and foreign documentary films
Sheila Curran Bernard, Documentary Storytelling, (5th Edition)
Bill Nichols with Jaimie Baron, Introduction to Documentary, (Indiana University Press, Fourth Edition)

Methods of Instruction:

Lecture
Group discussions
Expert commentary and reviews

Methods of Evaluation:

Submitting timely, complete and correct class assignments
Active participation in class discussions and collaborative exercises
Written analysis and quizzes