

# FILM 447: DOCUMENTARY TECHNIQUES

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

Department of Film

Spring 2022

Time(s):

Class Location :

Office Location:

Office Hours:

Phone:

Faculty Email:

## Course Description

This class is a hands-on production workshop where students will learn the basic principles of writing, producing, directing, shooting and editing a short documentary film.

*\*This semester, we will be partnering with Broadway in the Hood to create a short documentary. We have been gifted a budget of \$5000.*

## Course Prerequisite(s):

FILM 100.

## Learning Outcomes/Course Objectives:

1. Knowledge. Identify: By the end of the course students will be able to demonstrate fundamental skills in the techniques of documentary filmmaking including writing, producing, directing, interviewing, shooting and editing a non-fiction film.
2. Comprehension. Communicate: By the end of the course students will be able to tell a non-fiction story using HD video and non-linear editing.
3. Application. Execution: During the course students will be taught how to write a non-fiction script, create a budget, handle permits and release forms, interview a documentary subject, shoot verité= footage, record sound, edit via a non-linear editing system, and structure a documentary film.
4. Analysis. Analyze: During the course students will be taught how to critique and discuss assignments using professional documentary filmmaking terminology. As well as how to learn from critiques and make corrections to their own work.
5. Synthesis. Edit: During the course the students will use the above skills to write, produce, direct, shoot and edit a series of exercises culminating in a short 5-minute documentary film.

6. Evaluation. Discern: During this course the student will become familiar the history of documentaries and different modes of documentary film. Differentiate between the processes for pre-production, production and post-production. Be able to discuss in detail the work of renown documentarians including Auguste & Louis Lumiere, Robert Flaherty, Leni Riefenstahl, Dziga Vertov, Robert Drew, Albert and David Maysles, Frederick Wiseman, Barbara Kopple, Errol Morris and Michael Moore, amongst others.

## Required Text

*Directing the Documentary* by Michael Rabiger.

## Attendance Policy

Attendance is required. **Three unexcused absences** will result in a failing grade. Documentation to excuse absences is due on the first class after the absence. **Three tardies will constitute an unexcused absence.**

## Grading

40% Participation  
60% Projects

## Grading Scale

A	95 – 100
A-	90 – 94
B+	87 – 89
B	84 – 86
B-	80 – 83
C+	77 – 79
C	74 – 76
C-	70 – 73
D+	67 – 69
D	64 – 66
D-	60 – 63
F	00 - 59

# UNLV Policies

## Public Health Directives

Face coverings are mandatory for all faculty and students in the classroom. Students must follow all active UNLV public health directives while enrolled in this class. UNLV public health directives are found at [Health Requirements for Returning to Campus](#), <https://www.unlv.edu/coronavirus/health-requirements>. Students who do not comply with these directives may be asked to leave the classroom. Refusal to follow the guidelines may result in further disciplinary action according to the [UNLV Student Conduct Code](#), [https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page\\_files/27/StudentConduct-Code.pdf](https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/StudentConduct-Code.pdf), including being administratively withdrawn from the course.

## Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the University community. We all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy, and are encouraged to always take the ethical path whenever faced with choices. Students enrolling at UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's educational mission. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person, from the Internet or any other source without proper citation of the source(s). See the [Student Conduct Code](#), <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

## Auditing a Course

Auditing a course allows a student to continue attending the lectures and/or laboratories and discussion sessions associated with the course, but the student will not earn a grade for any component of the course. Students who audit a course receive the same educational experience as students taking the course for a grade, but will be excused from exams, assessments, and other evaluative measures that serve the primary purpose of assigning a grade.

## Classroom Conduct

Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in class and in the libraries in ways that do not interfere with the rights of other students to learn, or of instructors to teach. Use of devices such as cellular phones and pagers, or other potentially disruptive activities are only permitted with the prior explicit consent of the instructor. Students are specifically prohibited to record classes without instructor authorization, including online/remote classes (either audio only, or video and audio). The instructor may rescind permission at any time during the class. If a student does not comply with established requirements or obstructs the functioning of the class, the instructor may initiate an administrative withdrawal of the student from the course.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic forced some instruction to be delivered remotely starting in Spring 2020, numerous students have asked instructors to record their synchronous classes, so

that they can access them at their convenience. Instructors who agree to record their classes (audio only, or video and audio) should inform students in advance. Recorded lectures may not be broadly released to anyone, but made available exclusively to those students enrolled in the class during the particular academic term. Recorded lectures must be stored securely, and are subject to the Nevada System of Higher Education's Records Retention Policy, meaning that the recordings can only be deleted 120 days after the end of class (i.e., after grades are posted). Once this requirement is met, the recordings should be deleted. Class recordings are protected from disclosure, as they are deemed part of an educational record under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

## **Copyright**

The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with, and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you, nor assume any responsibility for student or employee violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional [copyright policy information](#) is available at <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

## **Disability Resource Center (DRC)**

The [UNLV Disability Resource Center](#) (Student Services Complex, SSC-A, Room 143, <https://www.unlv.edu/drc>, telephone 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. Students who believe that they may need academic accommodations due to a permanent disability, temporary or permanent medical need, or academic support due to pregnancy are encouraged to contact the DRC as early as possible in the academic term. A Disabilities Specialist will discuss what options may be available to you. Students who are already registered with the DRC should request their accommodations online each semester, and make an appointment to discuss their accommodations with their instructors.

## **Final Examinations**

The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur on the date and at the time specified in the Final Exam schedule. The Final Exam schedule is typically available at the start of the semester, and the classroom locations are available approximately one month before the end of the semester. See the [Final Exam Schedule](#), <https://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

## **Identity Verification in Online Courses**

All UNLV students must use their Campus-issued ACE ID and password to log in to WebCampus-Canvas.

UNLV students enrolled in online or hybrid courses are expected to read and adhere to the [Student Academic Misconduct Policy](#), <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/misconduct/policy>, which states that “acting or attempting to act as a substitute for another, or using or attempting to

use a substitute, in any academic evaluation or assignment” is a form of academic misconduct. Intentionally sharing ACE login credentials with another person may be considered an attempt to use a substitute, and could result in investigation and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Academic Misconduct Policy.

UNLV students enrolled in online courses are also expected to read and adhere to the [Acceptable Use of Computing and Information Technology Resources Policy](#), <https://www.it.unlv.edu/policies/acceptable-use-computing-and-information-technology-resources-policy>, which prohibits sharing university accounts with other persons without authorization.

To the greatest extent possible, all graded assignments and assessments in UNLV online courses should be hosted in WebCampus-Canvas or another UNLV-managed platform that requires ACE login credentials for access.

## **Incomplete Grades**

The grade of “I” (Incomplete) may be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session, but cannot complete the last part of the course for reason(s) beyond the student’s control and acceptable to the instructor, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. For undergraduate courses, the incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester. Graduate students receiving “I” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the period indicated, a grade of “F” will be recorded, and the student’s GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete grade do not register for the course, but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the “I” grade.

## **Library Resources**

Librarians are available to consult with students on research needs, including developing research topics, finding information, and evaluating sources. To make an appointment with a subject expert for this class, please visit the [Libraries’ Research Consultation](#) website, <https://guides.library.unlv.edu/appointments/librarian>. You can also [ask the library staff](#) questions via chat and text message at <https://ask.library.unlv.edu/>.

## **Missed Classwork**

Any student missing class, quizzes, examinations, or any other class or laboratory work because of observance of religious holidays will be given an opportunity during that semester to make up the missed work. The make-up opportunity will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for Fall and Spring courses (except for modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for Summer and modular courses, of their intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit the Missed Classwork policy, under Registration Policies, on the

[Academic Policies](https://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=8271&hl=) webpage,  
<https://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=8271&hl=>.

In accordance with the policy approved by the Faculty Senate regarding missed class time and assignments, students who represent UNLV in any official extracurricular activity will also have the opportunity to make up assignments, provided that the student submits official written notification to the instructor no less than one week prior to the missed class(es).

The spirit and intent of the policy for missed classwork is to offer fair and equitable assessment opportunities to all students, including those representing the University in extracurricular activities. Instructors should consider, for example, that in courses which offer a “Drop one” option for the lowest assignment, quiz, or exam, assigning the student a grade of zero for an excused absence for extracurricular activity is both contrary to the intent of the Faculty Senate’s policy, and an infringement on the student’s right to complete all work for the course.

This policy will not apply in the event that completing the assignment or administering the examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the University that could be reasonably avoided. There should be a good faith effort by both the instructor and the student to agree to a reasonable resolution. When disagreements regarding this policy arise, decisions can be appealed to the Department Chair/School Director, College/School Dean, and/or the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee.

For purposes of definition, extracurricular activities may include, but are not limited to academic recruitment activities, competitive intercollegiate athletics, fine arts activities, liberal arts competitions, science and engineering competitions, and any other event or activity sanctioned by a College/School Dean, and/or by the Executive Vice President and Provost.

## **Rebelmail**

Rebelmail is UNLV’s official email system for students and by University policy, instructors and staff should only send emails to students’ Rebelmail accounts. Rebelmail is one of the primary ways in which students receive official University communications, information about deadlines, major Campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the University. Sending emails within WebCampus-Canvas is also acceptable.

## **Tutoring and Coaching**

The Academic Success Center (ASC), at the Claude I. Howard Building, provides tutoring, academic success coaching, and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, please visit the [ASC website](https://www.unlv.edu/asc), <https://www.unlv.edu/asc>, or call 702-895-3177. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of SSC A, Room 254. Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library, and on the second floor of the College of Engineering building (TBE A 207).

## **UNLV Writing Center**

One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the [Writing Center](https://writingcenter.unlv.edu/), <https://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>, located in the Central Desert Complex, Building 3, Room 301 (CDC 3–301). Walk-in consultations are sometimes available, but students with appointments receive priority assistance. Students may make appointments in person or by calling the Center, telephone 702-895-3908. Students are requested to bring to their appointments their Rebel ID Card, a copy of the instructions for their assignment, and two copies of any writing they have completed on their assignment.

## **Diversity Statement**

As an institution of higher learning, UNLV represents a rich diversity of human beings among its faculty, staff, and students, and is committed to aspiring to maintain a Campus environment that values that diversity. Accordingly, the University supports understanding and appreciation of all members of its community, regardless of race, sex, age, color, national origin, ethnicity, creed, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, genetic information, veteran status, or political affiliation. Please see [University Statements and Compliance](https://www.unlv.edu/about/statements-compliance), <https://www.unlv.edu/about/statements-compliance>.

A successful learning experience requires mutual respect and trust between the students and the instructor. Accordingly, the instructor asks that students be willing to listen to one another's points of view, acknowledging that there may be disagreements, keep discussion and comments on topic, and use first person, positive language when expressing their perspectives.

## **Health and Safety**

As we conduct classes both in person and online in Spring 2022, [our first priority is your health and safety](#). We will be following guidelines established by NSHE and UNLV. If you have questions or concerns regarding any practices in class, reach out to your instructor and/or check with the Department of Film: (702) 895-3547, [unlvfilm@unlv.edu](mailto:unlvfilm@unlv.edu).

## **Screening Content**

Some of the screenings included in this course may contain sexually explicit, violent, and/or disturbing material, all of which will be discussed in an intellectually responsible manner. Such material will be flagged in advance of individual screenings, and alternative assignments will be provided for students who request them.

## Course Agenda/Schedule

### Module 1

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 20th**

Module 1 Items:	Details:
Topic:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Overview</b> of the course: grading policies, attendance, projects and the final exam.</li> <li>• What is a documentary film? What are the origins of documentary? What are documentary modes? Show examples.</li> <li>• <b>Guest Speaker:</b> Torrey Russell, Broadway in the Hood's founder, will visit us to provide background on the project and walk us through what they would like us to create for them. Students can ask questions.</li> </ul>
Activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Watch clips:</b> <u>A Train Arrives At The Station</u> (Lumiere Brothers), <u>Nanook of the North</u> (Robert Flaherty), <u>Man with a Movie Camera</u> (Dziga Vertov), <u>Triumph of the Will</u> (Leni Riefenstahl), <u>Bowling for Columbine</u> (Michael Moore), and <u>Supersize Me</u> (Morgan Spurlock).</li> <li>• <b>Watch film created in this class previously:</b> <u>Windsor Park: The Sinking Streets</u>.</li> </ul>
Assignment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase <u>Directing the Documentary</u> (Seventh Edition) by Michael Rabiger.</li> <li>• <b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapters 1-3.</li> </ul>

### Module 2

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 27th**

Module 2 Items:	Details:
Topic:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positions Overview:</b> Review the positions available to the class and what their responsibilities include.</li> <li>• <b>Positions include:</b> Writer, Director of Photography, Sound Recordist, Segment Producers, Archivist, Editors, Music Supervisor, and Sound Designer.</li> </ul>
Activity:	Provide example of professional cover letter, resume and reel. Also discuss IMDB.

<b>Module 2 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Assignment:	<b>PROJECT 1:</b> Each student must create a cover letter, resume and reel to submit for the position of their choice. Please also indicate your second and third choices.

**Module 3****THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD**

<b>Module 3 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	<b>Pre-Production:</b> Developing Your Story Ideas. Researching. Creating a treatment. Drafting a budget.
Activity:	Review Powder Ridge Treatment.
Assignment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapters 6-7</li> <li>• <b>PROJECT 2:</b> Write a 1-2 page written proposal outlining the documentary you envision to shoot. (The client will select the proposal to be put into production.)</li> </ul>

**Module 4****THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH**

<b>Module 4 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	Writing the Non-Fiction Script. Two column format. Write then Shoot versus Shoot then Write approaches.
Activity:	Review sample scripts.
Assignment:	<b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapter 8.

**Module 5****THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH**

<b>Module 5 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	Casting and the Pre-Interview. Selecting the right documentary subject. How to put your subject at ease.
Activity:	<b>Watch clips:</b> American Movie (Chris Smith) and Crumb (Terry Zwigoff).
Assignment:	<b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapter 26.

**Module 6****THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH**

<b>Module 6 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	Hiring the Crew. Overview of crew positions.
Assignment:	<b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapters 13.

**Module 7****THURSDAY, MARCH 3RD**

<b>Module 7 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	<b>Production:</b> How to shoot A-Roll AKA The Interview. Creating the interview questions. Getting what you need from your subject on set. OTFs (on the fly interviews). Errol Morris and the Interrotron.
Activity:	<b>Watch clips:</b> <u>The Thin Blue Line</u> (Errol Morris).
Assignment:	<b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapter 9.

**Module 8****THURSDAY, MARCH 10th**

<b>Module 8 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	<b>Production continued:</b> How to shoot B-Roll. How to shoot a verité scene with one camera.
Activity:	<b>Watch clips:</b> <u>Grey Gardens</u> (Albert & David Maysles) and <u>Harlan County USA</u> (Barbara Kopple).
Assignment:	<b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapter 10 & 28.

**THURSDAY MARCH 17 NO CLASS SPRING BREAK!****Module 9****THURSDAY, MARCH 24th**

<b>Module 9 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	<b>Production continued:</b> Shooting recreations and the importance of archival footage.
Activity:	<b>Watch clips:</b> <u>Man on Wire</u> (James Marsh) and <u>Sherman's March</u> (Ross McElwee).
Assignment:	<b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapter 14.

**Module 10****THURSDAY, MARCH 31st.**

<b>Module 10 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	<b>Post Production:</b> Transcribing tapes and the paper edit. The edit from assembly to fine cut. How to structure your documentary without a script.
Activity:	<b>Watch clips:</b> <u>Hoop Dreams</u> (Steve James) and <u>Tupac Resurrection</u> (Lauren Lazin).
Assignment:	<b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapter 34.

**Module 11****THURSDAY, APRIL 7h**

<b>Module 11 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	<b>Post Production continued:</b> Sound design and composing a score. Spotting session. Temp track. Mock ups. Music cues. Working with a sound designer, composer and music supervisor. How to use music to create emotional impact.
Activity:	<b>Watch clips:</b> <u>Hospital</u> (Frederick Wiseman) and <u>Gimme Shelter</u> (Albert & David Maysles).
Assignment:	<b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapter 16.

**Module 12****THURSDAY, APRIL 14th.**

<b>Module 12 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	<b>Post Production continued:</b> Legal matters: Story rights, release forms, location permits, music rights and licensing archival materials.
Activity:	Visit the Law Library to look at legal templates.

**Module 13****THURSDAY, APRIL 21ST**

<b>Module 13 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	<b>Post Production continued:</b> Films festivals, distribution and marketing. Funding and grants.
Assignment:	<b>Read:</b> Rabiger Chapters 36-37.

**Module 14****THURSDAY, APRIL 28th**

<b>Module 14 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	<b>Life After Film School:</b> How to get work in the non-fiction world. Education. Internships. Networking. Job sites.
Assignment:	

**Module 15****THURSDAY, MAY 5th**

<b>Module 15 Items:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
Topic:	Present Rough Cut to Client and Class
Assignment:	

**Module 16****THURSDAY, MAY 12th**

Module 16 Topic/Activity	Present Final Cut to Client and Class
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## PROJECTS

### PROJECT 1 (EVERYONE)

**Due Date: 1/27**

**RESUME:** Each student must create a cover letter, resume and reel to submit for the position of their choice. Please also indicate your second and third choices.

### PROJECT 2 (EVERYONE)

**Due Date: 2/3**

**PROPOSAL:** Write a 1-2 page written proposal outlining the documentary you envision to shoot. (The client will select the proposal to be put into production.)

### PROJECT 3 (WRITERS)

**Due Date: 3/10**

- Perform research on the topic
- Write a 15 page script based off of selected proposal. You must include voiceover, a-roll and b-roll. Use two column format.

### PROJECT 4 (SEGMENT PRODUCERS)

**Due Date: 3/24**

- Perform background research on the interview subjects.
- Pre-interview subjects on the phone.
- Write up at least 20 interview questions per subject.
- Schedule shoots and conduct interviews in the field.

### PROJECT 5 (DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

**Due Date: 4/7**

- Conceive a look for the piece. Provide visual examples.
- Light and shoot all interviews and b-roll.

### PROJECT 6 (SOUND RECORDISTS)

**Due Date: 4/7**

Record sound on location for interviews and b-roll.

**PROJECT 7 (EDITORS)****Due Date: 5/12**

- Edit dailies according to the script.
- Deliver a rough cut and a final cut with one round of changes/notes from client.

**PROJECT 8 (ARCHIVISTS)****Due Date: 5/12**

- Create a list of pertinent materials and archival footage needed for this project (photos, home movies, newspaper clippings, news footage, old movie clips, graphics, animation, etc...)
- Locate footage, acquire footage and place on shared drive.
- License footage if necessary.

**PROJECT 9 (MUSIC SUPERVISORS)****Due Date: 5/12**

- Find and license music for the piece.
- Work with a composer to create an original score.

**PROJECT 10 (SOUND DESIGNERS)****Due Date: 5/12**

- Record voice over with voice over actor
- Clean up sound
- Add sound effects if necessary