

EXAMPLE

Documentary Filmmaking – Elaboration Theory

Sequence:

Documentary filmmaking, specifically content creation, requires knowledge of many subjects and topics within those subjects, but the general production can be taught using a specific set of skills. Thinking visually, interviewing and connecting with people, planning production, using video cameras, framing shots and capturing action, and finally editing footage for a finished product. By mastering these fundamental skills, students can concentrate their efforts on content, and focus on creating professional products. Many times, students are so frozen by the technical skills needed, and cannot progress beyond them. Completion of this supplemental material will allow for more classroom time to focus on content and for hands-on use of the equipment.

Taking all of this into account, we will deliver the instruction using a procedural method. All of the instruction will be action oriented, and we will scaffold the complexity and actions, starting with the simplest of concepts, and moving to the more complex. In order to accomplish this, we will split instruction into three subsections.

Organize:

- 1) Pre-production (Forward Chaining)
 - a. Students will be able to identify viable subjects for short documentary films.
 - i. Successful elements will be identified by viewing short documentary film work and having students identify interesting characters and elements within those films. By starting with viewing completed, professional, work, students will begin to understand what a finished product should look like. This will enable them with a manageable and simple goal or finished product to strive for.
 - b. Students will be able to create shot lists, interview questions, and camera schematics for documentary productions. (Backwards Chaining)
 - i. Students will use the film viewed in the previous assignment to break down shots and sequences on paper.

By drawing out each sequence and shot location, they will develop an understanding of how a visual sequence is put together. This will help them understand the planning phases as well as give insight into the creative nature of planning their own video shoots.

- c. Students will be able to create storyboards showing scenes of the films they want to make. (General to Detailed Sequencing)
 - i. Much like the previous assignment, students will draw out simplified storyboards based on the short documentary viewed in class. This will provide them with the experience and insight into planning their own storyboards, but with the ability to work from someone else's completed film as a guide.
- 2) Production (Simple to Complex Sequencing)
- a. Students will be able to identify and use Master Scene shot selection, the 180 Degree Rule, and the Rule of Thirds.
 - i. After experiencing this type of analysis from a completed work, and after in-class demonstration from the instructor, students will know how to identify and use these technical skills and then will build towards using them in their own work.
 - b. Students will be able to identify the following terminology after completing in-class demonstrations and worksheets:
 - i. White balance
 - ii. Gain
 - iii. Iris/F-stop
 - iv. Depth of Field
- 3) Post-production (Simple to Complex Sequencing)
- a. Students will be able to organize footage in a non-linear editing system.
 - i. Starting out, students will learn by demonstration, the user interface and tools of a non-linear video editing system. They will have to go through all of the footage they've acquired and arrange it accordingly before moving forward with the edit.
 - b. Students will be able to create a rough and final cut of a short documentary film.
 - i. After learning the basics of the editing system and its controls, students will advance in difficulty and begin to compile different edits of their work. The instructor will guide them through a rough-cut, fine cut, and final edit of their piece. Each progression will require a check-in with the instructor and a screening to the rest of the class so they are not only able to edit the work but will be able to speak clearly about their process and where they are headed.

Enabling Objectives:

1. Students will be able to organize footage in a non-linear editing system.
2. Students will be able to create a rough and final cut of a short documentary film.

Summarization:

Within-Set

- Students will be asked to identify short documentary, or video work, they've watched in the past and identify the elements in the video that drew their attention or interest. Can students identify the areas of the video that work or don't work? By drawing on the lessons learned to this point, students should be able to have advanced discussion of the work.
- Students will be asked to break down essential production methods and processes needed for creating a short documentary film.
- Students will review and break down their own film ideas, choosing the best idea, and creating a plan for moving forward and producing their piece.

Synthesize:

- The instructor will demonstrate the components of a short documentary video by breaking down, shot by shot, the short video watched previously in class. The video will be broken down in video editing software and shown in its raw form and layers. This will also involve demonstration in thinking visually by breaking down the previous film and the types of topics that lead to interesting video work.
- The instructor will demonstrate the technical aspects of a camera:
 - Exposure
 - Lens Choice
 - White Balance
 - Gain
 - Shutter
 - Audio controls
 - Tripod Controls
 - Framing Shots
 - Capturing Action

- The instructor will break down the art of interviewing by actively interviewing students in the classroom about various topics.
- The instructor will take the students on a professional video shoot, showing them the camera and audio setup, interview techniques, as well as the acceptable ways of directing subjects in a documentary setting.
- The instructor will demonstrate to students how to string clips together with narration and music to create a video narrative.
- Students will reflection each stage of the documentary process, analyzing how their own interests and personalities can help direct the subject matter and final project.
- Students will reflect on both the ideological and technical decisions that had to be made during the process of creating their films. Students will be expected to identify which part of the process they identify most with and what they need to work on going forward.
- Students will compare their short film to professional work on both YouTube and Vimeo. It's important for them to realize that even though they're producing student work, once posted online for all to see, their work will be analyzed next to working professionals and other students.
- Students will be asked to reflect on what went as expected, and what changed during the production process. Did they make the film they intended? Did things go as expected or did they have to change stories or subjects part way through the film?
- Students will be asked to reflect on how these skills can be important or beneficial in other subject areas or classes outside of film and communication.

Analogy:

The instructor will compare aspects of creating short documentary film to other, similar, art forms, such as graphic novels, short stories and novels, and basic television shows. The instructor will attempt to tie together all aspects and foundations of visual storytelling, specifically by using graphic novels as an example. The same principles of screen direction, 180-degree rule, and general composition are the same across both genres, and using graphic novels will help identify and highlight the greater skills and patterns used in storytelling across all modes. This will also allow students for opportunity to apply their skills and make concoctions to the skills beyond filmmaking.

Cognitive-Strategy Activator:

Imbedded: Students will be using imbedded cognitive-strategy activators throughout the entire module. The use of storyboards, shot lists, and visual breakdowns will facilitate this.

Learner Control:

This instruction is designed for students to be able to slow down and spend more time on the sections that are most difficult to the individual. Visual learners will speed through the storyboard and shot list sections, while possibly having

trouble verbalizing the story path and structure of their piece. Verbal learners will have the opposite reaction. Allowing for more learner control will allow groups and students to move through the documentary creation process at the pace best suited for their needs.