

COM4305: CURRENT AFFAIRS DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION

Effective Term

Semester A 2024/25

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Current Affairs Documentary Production

Subject Code

COM - Media and Communication

Course Number

4305

Academic Unit

Media and Communication (COM)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

EN4529 Video Production Method III

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course aims to teach students the practice of documentary production of current affairs, and allow them to learn advanced television journalism in a critical and analytical context. It will equip the students with the knowledge, skills and social analytical capacity in producing documentaries of current affairs. The course will focus on how to identify and select a topic of current affairs for presentation in a documentary, how a documentary addresses various issues of current affairs through investigation and analysis, and how to produce a documentary of current affairs with relevant facts and effective visual images. Students will learn about a range of genres of documentaries of current affairs including those involving investigative journalism. This course will also analyse the power of documentary and its potential to address issues of social significance.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Identify a topic of current affairs, analyse issues involved, and develop it into a storyboard for a documentary	20	x	x	x
2	Construct the key elements and the structure of the documentary, and generate a working plan to gather information and conduct interviews	30	x	x	x
3	Evaluate key ethical and legal issues and obligations associated with television news reporting and documentary production	10	x	x	x
4	Write documentary scripts in line with the professional standard of media industry	10	x	x	x
5	Produce a documentary of current affairs with professional quality suitable for broadcast through a media outlet	30	x	x	x

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.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

	LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Students will engage in formal lectures to gain in-depth knowledge about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The nature of current affairs and issues in different social areas and at local, national and international levels - The process of topic initiation and structural development of a documentary on current affairs - The development of a working plan and the procedures of setting up interviews - Narrative structures and documentary script writing - Ethical and legal issues involved in covering news about current affairs 	1, 2, 3, 4	4 weeks
2	Demonstration & Workshop	Students will engage in demonstrations, workshops, and tutorials to extend their understanding and skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video sequences and their use in documentaries on current affairs - Role of voice-over and interview outline - Editing techniques and visual effects 	1, 2, 4, 5	4 weeks
3	Exercises and assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will analyze television news programs and documentaries on current affairs - Students will produce a professional-quality documentary on current affairs 	1, 2, 4, 5	4 weeks

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks (e.g. Parameter for GenAI use)
1	Develop and analyze documentaries	1, 2, 3	20	Develop and analyze documentaries of current affairs based on 1. Newsworthiness of the topic for a documentary of current affairs 2. Story-telling nature of the storyboard 3. Appropriateness of informative sources 4. Feasibility of the work plan and shooting schedule
2	Class and home exercises	2, 4, 5	30	Class and home exercises on documentary production 1. Technical skills for documentary production 2. Documentary script writing 3. Working with team members in the field
3	Produce a documentary	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	50	Produce a documentary of current affair with 1. Newsworthiness 2. Appropriate information sources 3. Efficient interviews 4. Effective images and sound 5. Script complementary to the visuals 6. Narration that is clear, and its rhythm and pace meets programme requirements 7. Sound technical performance

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Documentary review

Criterion

Understanding social affairs and documentary industry and learn from classical films

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

High

Good (B+, B, B-)

Significant

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Moderate

Marginal (D)

Basic

Failure (F)

Not even reaching marginal levels

Assessment Task

Proposal and reflection

Criterion

Ability for self-directed learning to understand the principles of documentary topics and methodology

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

High

Good (B+, B, B-)

Significant

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Moderate

Marginal (D)

Basic

Failure (F)

Not even reaching marginal levels

Assessment Task

Documentary production write-up

Criterion

Capacity for practicing comprehensive knowledge for the students major in communication

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

High

Good (B+, B, B-)

Significant

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Moderate

Marginal (D)

Basic

Failure (F)

Not even reaching marginal levels

Additional Information for AR

Specific grading criteria for selected assessment tasks/activities are as follows:

Current Affairs Documentary Television Project:

- Appropriateness and originality of approach, structure and methods
- Engage with a contemporary documentary through textural and contextual analysis
- Make links between the chosen documentary and the relevant issues
- Develop a clear and well supported argument that indicates a familiarity with issues and debates in documentary

Grading criteria for assignments involving writing (20% of each assignment)

- Accuracy = 5 points
- Conciseness = 5 points
- Expression = 5 points
- Grammar and style = 5 points

Weighting of the different criteria and other details will be given to the students during the class.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Television news, current affairs, documentary, interview, storyboard, newsworthiness, video production, documentary production, social issues, visual story-telling.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Sheila Curran Bernard, (2007). Documentary storytelling: Making stronger and more dramatic nonfiction films (2nd ed.). Focal Press. Jolliffe, G., & Zinnes, A. (2006). The documentary film makers handbook (1st ed.). New York; London: Continuum.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Anthony Q., (2007). The shut up and shoot documentary guide: A down & dirty DV production. Focal Press.
2	Beattie, K. (2004). Documentary screens: non-fiction film and television. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
3	Bernard, S. C. (2004). Documentary storytelling for film and videomakers. Amsterdam; Boston; London: Elsevier/ Focal Press.
4	Chapman, J. (2007). Documentary in practice: filmmakers and production choices. Cambridge: Polity.
5	Graber, Doris A., (2000). Media power in politics (4th ed.). Congressional Quarterly.
6	Maxine Baker, (2005). Documentary in the digital age. Focal Press.
7	Parenti, Michael (1993). Inventing reality: The politics of the news media (2nd ed.). Bedford/St. Martin' s.
8	Thompson, R., & Malone, C. (2004). The broadcast journalism handbook: a television news survival guide. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
9	Zalbertus, A., & Rosenblum, M. (2004). Video journalism: the digital revolution. Berlin: Uni-Edition.