DCPR 1800(302): Introduction to Non-Fiction Film Production

Fall 2025, M (online) & W (in person) 1 pm Lab W 3 pm (starting 8/27)
Instructor: Jenny Mackenzie, Ph.D.
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Course Description

This course introduces professional video production techniques for non-fiction digital cinema projects, covering production processes such as working with subjects, crafting stories, filming techniques, lighting, production management, and basic post-production. Students will produce a short non-fiction (documentary) project through the complete pre-production, production, and post-production process.

Course Outcome: By semester's end, you should be able to independently create a short non-fiction film.

Skills & Competencies:

- Plan and organize a non-fiction film production
- Develop a cinematic, engaging story for an audience
- Write quality interview questions
- Set up and shoot professional-looking interviews with camera, sound, and lighting
- Capture quality audio using lavalier and shotgun microphones
- Shoot and edit effective B-roll to support your story
- Deliver a short documentary or corporate video in the correct format using basic non-linear editing software

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Class Policies

- **Communication:** Use Canvas Inbox for emails or Teams for messages. I check both frequently.
- **Attendance & Participation:** Active participation is essential. This is a hands-on course, so presence, collaboration, and preparation are expected. Occasional absences for illness or emergencies are understandable; communicate with me and review missed content promptly.
- **Canvas & Announcements:** Check regularly. The schedule may shift.

- **Assignment Submission:** Submit work via Canvas unless otherwise noted. Most video assignments will be shared as unlisted YouTube links.
- **Late Work:** 10% deducted per day late. Extra credit opportunities are available to offset unexpected life events.
- **Equipment Practice:** If you have less prior experience, spend extra practice time with your gear.
- **Required Purchases:**
  - A few films via Amazon/iTunes or Sundance tickets
  - External hard drive (≥1 TB, USB 3.0 minimum, formatted for Mac compatibility)
- **Professionalism:** Network with peers, attend Cineskype and Film Club events, and maintain a respectful, inclusive classroom environment.
- **Camera Use in Class:** During online sessions, keep your camera on to foster engagement.

Course Structure

The semester centers on a **semester-long film project**, with smaller assignments building toward it.

Module 1: Interview & B-Roll Montage

- Conduct a 20+ minute interview and transcribe it for a "paper edit"
- Create a 3–5 minute edited interview with a clear story arc and supporting visuals
- Shoot and edit a 10–12 shot observational B-roll sequence

Module 2: How-To Video

- Produce a short instructional video demonstrating a process or skill, using composition, exposure, angles, and editing to tell the story visually

Module 3: Final Documentary Project

- Pitch proposal (Treatment)
- Produce and edit a short documentary (≤6 minutes)
- Submit final cut and a PDF production book (proposal, schedule, releases, etc.)

In-Class Group Gear Assignments

- Camera & audio setup basics
- Interview framing and three-point lighting
- Exteriors & transition shots
- "How to Peel a Clementine"

- News Anchor Shoot

Fall 2025 Schedule

Week 1

- **Wed Aug 20 1pm (In Person – DX):** Welcome, syllabus, expectations. Assignment #1: Upload photo to Canvas. Assignment #2: Self-introduction selfie video. Lecture: Making Pretty Pictures Part 1 – cinematic storytelling, light, framing, tone. Intro to camera & sound gear.
- NO LAB

Week 2 *(Lab starts)*

- **Mon Aug 25 (Synchronous Online – Teams):** Storytelling structure. Screening: *Joe's Violin* & *Meet Me at the Stairs*.
- **Wed Aug 27 (Lab 3 pm, Class 1-2:40 pm, In Person – DX):** Screening: Joe's Violin/Meet me at the stairs. Camera basics, shot composition, and practice exercises.

Week 3

- **Mon Sept 1:** Labor Day – No Class
- **Wed Sept 3 (Lab + Class – DX):** Three-point lighting, interview framing, focus work.

Week 4

- **Mon Sept 8 (Synchronous Online):** Making Pretty Pictures Part 2 – conducting interviews.
- **Wed Sept 10 (Lab + Class – DX):** Mock interviews and Camera setups. Group assignment. Screening: *Walk, Run, Cha-cha*.

Week 5

- **Mon Sept 15 (Synchronous Online):** Review exterior shots, interview tips, pre-production planning.
- **Wed Sept 17 (Lab + Class – DX):** . Screenings: *Inocente* & *Listen, watch mock interviews, shooting exteriors.*

Sun Sept 21: Module 1.1 Due – Interview & Transcript

Week 6

- **Mon Sept 22 (Synchronous Online):** Shot listing for observational scenes.

- **Wed Sept 24 (Lab + Class – DX):** "How to Peel a Clementine" group assignment, watch interview assignments, and shooting exteriors.

Sun Sept 28: Module 1.2 Due – B-roll Montage

Week 7

- **Mon Sept 29 (Synchronous Online):** Editing fundamentals. Discussion of *Inocente* & *Listen*.
- **Wed Oct 1 (Lab + Class – DX):** News Anchor Shoot, watch B roll Motanges

Sun Oct 5: Module 2.1 Due – How-To Video

Week 8

- **Mon Oct 6 (Synchronous Online):** Critique How-To Videos.
- **Wed Oct 8 (In Person – DX):** Continue critiques. LAB starts at 10:30am

Week 9

- **Mon Oct 13 (Synchronous Online):** Film proposals and pitches.
- **Wed Oct 15 (Synchronous Online):** Film proposals and pitches continued.

Week 10

- **Mon Oct 20 (Synchronous Online):** Final doc overview. Post-production stages. Screening: *Transmormon*.
- **Wed Oct 22 (In Person – DX):** Wrap interviews and pickups for assembly cut.

Week 11

- **Mon Oct 27 (Synchronous Online):** Guest lecture (TBA, joint section).
- **Wed Oct 29 (Lab + Class – DX):** Shooting day – final assets due.

Week 12

- **Mon Nov 3 (Synchronous Online):** Sound mixing & color correction.
- **Wed Nov 5 (Lab + Class – DX):** Music in documentaries, final consultations.

Week 13

- **Mon Nov 10 (Synchronous Online):** Rough cuts due – critique session.
- **Wed Nov 12 (In Person – DX):** Rough cut feedback continued.

Nov 17 & 19: Thanksgiving Break – No Classes

Week 14

- **Sun Nov 23: Final films & production books due**
- **Mon Nov 24 (In Person – DX):** Fine cut critique session.
- **Wed Nov 26 (In Person – DX):** Final review & wrap-up.

Final Exam: Mon Dec 1 (Synchronous Online – Teams)

Course Policies & Expectations

Communication

- Use **Canvas Inbox** for email and **Teams** for quick messages.
- I check both frequently; expect a reply within 24–48 hours on weekdays.

Attendance & Participation

- This is a **hands-on** course. Attendance, engagement, and collaboration are essential.
- Life happens—illnesses, emergencies, or family events are understandable—but communicate with me promptly and review missed material.
- Extra credit opportunities are built in to help offset occasional absences.

Assignment Submission

- All assignments must be submitted via **Canvas**.
- Video submissions: upload as **unlisted YouTube links** so no login is required.
- Late work: **–10% per day late** unless prior arrangements are made.
- In the film industry, deadlines matter—plan ahead to avoid last-minute tech problems.

Canvas & Announcements

- Check Canvas **calendar** and **announcements** regularly.
- Due dates or meeting formats (online/in person) may shift; updates will always be posted.

Required Materials

- **No textbook required**.
- You will need:
    - External hard drive (≥1 TB, USB 3.0 minimum, Mac-compatible)
    - A few streaming rentals/purchases or Sundance tickets
- Test all gear before leaving equipment checkout. You are responsible for lost/damaged items.

Equipment

- You may use your own DSLR/mirrorless camera or check out gear from **DGM Equipment Checkout**, Fulton Library, or the DGM Audio Studio.
- Department computers and labs have **Adobe Premiere Pro**, **DaVinci Resolve**, and **Microsoft 365**.
- You also have free access to **Adobe Creative Cloud** and **LinkedIn Learning** tutorials—use them.

Professional Conduct

- Respect everyone's identity, pronouns, and name pronunciation.
- Create inclusive, accurate, and sensitive portrayals in your projects.
- Maintain confidentiality when classmates or guests share personal information.
- Collaboration is a professional skill—network, communicate clearly, and meet commitments.

Academic Integrity & AI

- Plagiarism or cheating:
  - 1st offense = F for the assignment (no redo)
  - 2nd offense = F for the course + report to Chair/Advising
- AI tools are not a substitute for your creativity.
- If you use AI, cite it and ensure it's accurate, ethical, and original.

Health & Safety

- If you're sick (flu, COVID, etc.), stay home but stay engaged.
- Because we share film equipment, consider masking if you've been exposed to illness.
- In Hollywood, many crews still mask on set—think of this as part of professional practice.

Weather & Schedule Changes

- Utah weather can affect meeting formats.
- Check email and Canvas before class for snow-day adjustments.
- Like any film shoot, schedules may shift—stay flexible and informed.

Support & Resources

- **Accessibility:** Contact UVU's Office of Accessibility Services (LC 312, 801-863-8747, nicole.hemmingsen@uvu.edu).
- **Mental Health:**
  - Student Health Services (SC 221, 801-863-8876)
  - UVU Thrive mental health services
  - 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Asking for help is a sign of strength—your well-being comes first.