



University of
New Haven

The Documentary Experience

SECTION I: Course Overview

Course Code: FLM385BCN

Subject Area(s): Film Studies

Prerequisites: None

Language of Instruction: English

Required Supplies: Any device(s) capable of recording video, photography, and sound

Total Contact Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces creative documentary as a form of storytelling suitable for media communication, qualitative research, and cross-cultural understanding, without overlooking its potential for personal expression and self-exploration. Its multiplicity of reality-based methodologies provides endless possibilities to shed light on contemporary societal issues through compelling stories.

In this hands-on course, students will create short documentary pieces. Students are free to use any equipment that allows them to record, edit, and mix different media. Their documentary content will be a sensory exploration of reality, focused on any elements of the local culture and society. This can include such topics as families and individuals; social and political issues; and economic and cultural practices. Students will experiment with the different stages of creating a non-fictional work, while reflecting on the processes of representation through discussion of key historical moments within the evolution of documentary practice. A wide array of non-fiction works from around the globe – with a special emphasis on European, Spanish, and Catalan documentaries – will also illuminate students' own storytelling.

Class time will include lectures, technical workshops, case studies, critical review of student work, and carefully designed fieldwork. Students are encouraged to analyze their own work and the work of others in a collaborative learning environment of constructive criticism, in which cross-cultural skills, creativity, and critical thinking will be crucial.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Apply documentary techniques and methodologies for cultural and personal research.
- Analyze visual language in the production stages of creating a documentary piece.
- Employ technical vocabulary in arguments about documentary films.
- Produce short, culturally-reflective documentary pieces.
- Test your intercultural competency to understand how your own culture shapes your experience.

SECTION II: Instructor & Course Details

INSTRUCTOR DETAILS

Name:	TBA
Contact Information:	TBA
Term:	SEMESTER

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This class will meet once weekly for 150 minutes each session. All students are expected to arrive on time and prepared for the day's class session.

CEA enforces a mandatory attendance policy. You are therefore expected to attend all regularly scheduled class sessions, including any field trips, site visits, guest lectures, etc. that are assigned by the instructor. The table below shows the number of class sessions you may miss before receiving a grade penalty.

ALLOWED ABSENCES – SEMESTERS		
Courses Meeting X day(s) Per Week	Allowed Absence(s)	Automatic Failing Grade at X th Absence
Courses meeting 1 day(s) per week	1 Absence	4 th Absence

For every additional absence beyond the allowed number, your final course grade will drop down to the subsequent letter grade (ex: A+ to A). As a student, you should understand that the grade penalties will apply if you are marked absent due to tardiness or leaving class early. In the table below, you will find the grade penalty associated with each excessive absence up to and including automatic course failure.

ATTENDANCE DOCKING PENALTIES				
Absence	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
Penalty	No Penalty	0.5 Grade Docked	1 Grade Docked	Automatic Failure
HIGHEST POSSIBLE GRADE AFTER ATTENDANCE PENALTIES				
Grade	A+	A	A-	F

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CEA does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. As such, no documentation is required for missing class. Similarly, excessive absences, and the grade penalty associated with each, will not be excused even if you are able to provide documentation that shows the absence was beyond your control. You should therefore only miss class when truly needed as illness or other unavoidable factors may force you to miss a class session later on in the term.

GRADING & ASSESSMENT

The instructor will assess your progress towards the above-listed learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted and will count towards your final grade. The following section (Assessment Overview) will provide further details for each.

Class Participation	10%
Assignments 1-5	45%
Fieldwork 1-5	15%
Midterm Paper	10%
Final Project	20%

The instructor will calculate your course grades using the CEA Grading Scale shown below. As a CEA student, you should understand that credit transfer decisions—including earned grades for courses taken abroad—are ultimately made by your home institution.

CEA GRADING SCALE			
Letter Grade	Numerical Grade	Percentage Range	Quality Points
A+	9.70 – 10.0	97.0 – 100%	4.00
A	9.40 – 9.69	94.0 – 96.9%	4.00
A-	9.00 – 9.39	90.0 – 93.9%	3.70
B+	8.70 – 8.99	87.0 – 89.9%	3.30
B	8.40 – 8.69	84.0 – 86.9%	3.00
B-	8.00 – 8.39	80.0 – 83.9%	2.70
C+	7.70 – 7.99	77.0 – 79.9%	2.30
C	7.40 – 7.69	74.0 – 76.9%	2.00
C-	7.00 – 7.39	70.0 – 73.9%	1.70
D	6.00 – 6.99	60.0 – 69.9%	1.00
F	0.00 – 5.99	0.00 – 59.9%	0.00
W	Withdrawal	N/A	0.00
INC	Incomplete	N/A	0.00

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Your course instructor will provide further details and instructions during class time.

Class Participation (10%): Student participation is mandatory for all courses taken at a CEA Study Center. The instructor will use the rubric below when determining your participation grade. All students should

understand that attendance and punctuality are expected and will not count positively toward the participation grade.

CLASS PARTICIPATION GRADING RUBRIC	
Student Participation Level	Grade
You make major & original contributions that spark discussion, offering critical comments clearly based on readings, research, & theoretical course topics.	A+ (10.0 – 9.70)
You make significant contributions that demonstrate insight as well as knowledge of required readings & independent research.	A/A- (9.69 – 9.00)
You participate voluntarily and make useful contributions that are usually based upon some reflection and familiarity with required readings.	B+/B (8.99 – 8.40)
You make voluntary but infrequent comments that generally reiterate the basic points of the required readings.	B-/C+ (8.39 – 7.70)
You make limited comments only when prompted and do not initiate debate or show a clear awareness of the importance of the readings.	C/C- (7.69 – 7.00)
You very rarely make comments and resist engagement with the subject. You are not prepared for class and/or discussion of course readings.	D (6.99 – 6.00)
You make irrelevant and tangential comments disruptive to class discussion. You are consistently unprepared for class and/or discussion of the course readings.	F (5.99 – 0.00)

Assignment 1-5 (45%): You are expected to complete five creative documentary assignments on a subject and method selected by the instructor. The guidelines will be indicated in class. You are expected to submit these assignments on the dates selected by the instructor. The first assignment will count 5% of the final grades and the rest of the assignments will count 10% each.

Fieldwork 1-5 (15%): You are expected to complete a reflection page for each one of the five documentary field activities (whether based on image, sound, or written word). In this reflection you will analyze the language used (visual, written, etc.) in the production stages of creating a documentary piece. The guidelines will be indicated in class. You are expected to submit these exercises on the dates selected by the instructor.

Midterm Paper (10%): You are expected to write a research paper on a subject related to documentary. In this research paper you should employ technical vocabulary in arguments about documentary films. You should include a bibliography indicating the sources of your information. The guidelines will be indicated in class. You are expected to submit this paper on the date selected by the instructor.

Final Project (20%): You are expected to design and produce a final documentary project on a theme of your choice and to present it to class using any mediums at your disposal. This documentary project should reflect your intercultural competency. The length and guidelines for this project will be discussed in class. You are expected to present this project on the date selected by the instructor.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CEA courses are designed to include a variety of experiential learning activities that will take you out of the classroom and allow you to explore your local, host city, as well as bring the local community into the classroom. These activities may include field studies, guest lectures and/or activities offered through our Academically Integrated Cultural Activities Program (AICAP).

Field Studies

- **Field study 1:** Observation + Writing Exercise
- **Field study 2:** Perception + Sound Exercise
- **Field study 3:** Storytelling Exercise
- **Field study 4:** Interview Exercise
- **Field study 5:** Personal Essay Exercise

Guest Lectures

- **Guest speaker session:** City portraits in documentary

AICAP Activities

The AICAP activities selected for this course were chosen for their relevance to the course's learning objectives. While these activities may not be mandatory, you are highly encouraged to attend. Please check the Forms of Assessment section to find out if AICAP activities are related to any specific form of assessment.

- The list will vary depending on the offer. AICAP activities are not mandatory for this course. However, some of them may provide very interesting subject material for your documentary work. Therefore, you are encouraged to participate in at least two of them.

REQUIRED READINGS

Reading assignments for this course will come from the required text(s) and/or the selected reading(s) listed below. All required readings—whether assigned from the text or assigned as a selected reading—must be completed according to the due date assigned by the course instructor.

- I. SELECTED READING(S):** The selected readings for this course are listed below. You will not need to purchase these readings; the instructor will provide these selected readings to you in class (either in paper or electronic format).

Aufderheide, P. *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, 1-25pp.

Benjamin, W., & Eiland, H. "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century." *The Arcades Project*, The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Pr., 2002, pp. 14–26.

Kalow, N. *Visual Storytelling: The Digital Video Documentary*, Durham: Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, 2011, 5-11, 16- 22, 26-34pp.

Lopate, P. *In Search of the Centaur: The Essay-Film*, The Theepenny Review, N° 48 (Winter), 1992, 19-22pp.

Mruck, K. & Breuer, F. *Subjectivity and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research*, Historical Social Research, Vol. 28, N° 3 (105), 2003, 189-212pp.

Nichols, B. *Introduction to Documentary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, 1-19pp.

Nichols, B. *Representing Reality*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, 32-75, 165-199pp.

Pink, S. Mobilising Visual Ethnography: Making Routes, Making Place and Making Images, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 9(3), Art. 36, 2008. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0803362>

Russell, C. "Autoethnography: Journeys of the Self," *Experimental Ethnography*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, 275-314pp.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

The recommended reading(s) and/or text(s) for this course are below. These recommended readings are not mandatory, but they will assist you with research and understanding course content.

Lindroos, K. Non-Linear Narrative as a Form of Political Action: Viewing Chris Marker's Film *Sans Soleil*, <https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/6c3225f7-41e8-42f2-8fd0-45ecf8ef75de.pdf>

REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED FILMS

A selection of sequences from important documentary films will be projected during some of the sessions. This is an abbreviated list that only includes some of the films that will be discussed in class:

- *The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2013)
- *Amsterdam Global Village* (Johan van der Keuken, 1996)
- *Berlin, A Symphony of a Metropolis* (Walter Ruttmann, 1927)
- *Chronicle of a Summer* (Jean Rouch & Edgar Morin, 1960)
- *Cravan vs Cravan* (Isaki Lacuesta, 2002)
- *El Milagro de Candeal* (Fernando Trueba, 2003)
- *El Sol del Membrillo* (V́ctor Erice, 1992)
- *En Construcción* (José Luis Guerín, 2001)
- *The Fog of War* (Errol Morris, 2003)
- *The Gleaners and I* (Agnès Varda, 2002)
- *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2006)
- *Koyaanisqatsi* (Godfrey Reggio, 1982)
- *Las Hurdes. Tierra sin Pan.* (Luis Buñuel, 1933)
- *The Man with the Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929)
- *Monos como Becky* (Joaquim Jordà, 1999)
- *Nanook of the North* (Robert J. Flaherty, 1922)
- *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955)
- *Sans Soleil* (Chris Marker, 1983)
- *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In order to ensure you success abroad, CEA has provided the academic resources listed below. In addition to these resources, each CEA Study Center provides students with a physical library and study areas for group work. The Academic Affairs Office at each CEA Study Center also compiles a bank of detailed information regarding libraries, documentation centers, research institutes, and archival materials located in the host city.

- **UNH Online Library:** As a CEA student, you will be given access to the online library of CEA's School of Record, the University of New Haven (UNH). You can use this online library to access databases and additional resources while performing research abroad. You may access the UNH online

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library [here](#) or through your MyCEA Account. You must comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.

- **CEAClassroom – Moodle:** CEA instructors use Moodle, an interactive virtual learning environment. This web-based platform provides you with constant and direct access to the course syllabus, daily schedule of class lectures and assignments, non-textbook required readings, and additional resources. Moodle includes the normal array of forums, up-loadable and downloadable databases, wikis, and related academic support designed for helping you achieve the learning objectives listed in this syllabus.

During the first week of class, CEA academic staff and/or faculty will help you navigate through the many functions and resources Moodle provides. While you may print a hard copy version of the syllabus, you should always check Moodle for the most up-to-date information regarding this course. The instructor will use Moodle to make announcements and updates to the course and/or syllabus. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have access to all Moodle materials and that you monitor Moodle on a daily basis in case there are any changes made to course assignments or scheduling.

To access Moodle: Please log-in to your MyCEA account using your normal username and password. Click on the “While You’re Abroad Tab” and make sure you are under the “Academics” sub-menu. There you will see a link above your schedule that says “View Online Courses” select this link to be taken to your Moodle environment.

- **Online Reference & Research Tools:** The course instructor has identified the resources below to assist you with understanding course topics. You are encouraged to explore these and other avenues of research including the databases available via the UNH online library.

<https://transom.org/2014/brief-history-of-documentary-forms/>

<https://momofilmfest.com/guide-to-filming-a-documentary-on-a-smartphone/>

<https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-sound-magazine/greatest-docs>

COURSE CALENDAR
The Documentary Experience

SESSION	TOPICS	ACTIVITY	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
1	<p>Course Introduction: General Presentations, Review Syllabus</p> <p>The Documentary Genre: Definition, Classification, Fiction v Nonfiction, Documentary & Social Research</p>	<p>Course Overview</p> <p>Lecture & Discussion</p>	<p>Nichols, B., <i>Representing Reality</i>, pp. 32-75</p> <p>Aufderheide, P., <i>Documentary Film</i>, pp. 1-25</p>
2	<p>Film Analysis 1: Observation & Description</p> <p>Fieldwork 1: Observation + Writing Exercise</p>	<p>Screening & Discussion</p> <p>Field Study</p>	<p>A selection of sequences from the origins of documentary films</p> <p>Outdoor Activity</p>
3	<p>Critique 1: Review of Assignment & Fieldwork</p> <p>The Documentary & The City: Reality/Truth, Sensory Methodologies, The City Documentary: Urban Symphonies</p>	<p>Analysis & Feedback</p> <p>Guest Speaker session: City portraits in documentary</p>	<p>Submit Assignment 1 (Text + Photos)</p> <p>Pink, S., <i>Mobilising Visual Ethnography</i></p> <p>Benjamin, W., <i>Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century</i> pp. 14-26</p>
4	<p>Film Analysis 2: Perception & the Senses</p> <p>Fieldwork 2: Perception + Sound Exercise</p>	<p>Screening & Discussion</p> <p>Field Study</p>	<p>A selection of sequences from “urban symphony” documentary films</p> <p>Outdoor Activity</p>
5	<p>Critique 2: Review of Assignment & Fieldwork</p> <p>The Documentary Discourse: Image/Representation, Film Language and Storytelling, Stages of Film Production</p>	<p>Analysis & Feedback</p> <p>Lecture & Discussion</p>	<p>Submit Assignment 2 (Sounds + Photos)</p> <p>Nichols, B., <i>Introduction to Documentary</i>, pp. 1-19</p> <p>Kalow, N., <i>Visual Storytelling</i>, pp. 5-11</p>
6	<p>Film Analysis 3: Visual Language & Storytelling</p> <p>Fieldwork 3: Storytelling Exercise</p>	<p>Screening & Discussion</p> <p>Field Study</p>	<p>A selection of sequences from different documentary films with powerful storytelling</p> <p>Outdoor Activity</p>
7	<p>Critique 3: Review of Assignment & Fieldwork</p> <p>The Documentary & The Other: Representing the Other: Portraits & Interviews,</p>	<p>Analysis & Feedback</p> <p>Lecture & Discussion</p>	<p>Submit Assignment 3 (Photo Series)</p> <p>Nichols, B., <i>Representing Reality</i>, pp. 165-199</p> <p>Kalow, N., <i>Visual Storytelling</i>, pp. 16-22</p>

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	Interaction with local people		
MIDTERM PAPER DUE Submit Midterm Paper as PDF file + a signed hard copy of the CEA cover page			
8	Film Analysis 4: Portraits & Interviews Fieldwork 4: Interview Exercise	Screening & Discussion Field Study	A selection of interview sequences from different documentary films Outdoor Activity
9	Critique 4: Review of Assignment & Fieldwork The Documentary & The Self: Objectivity/Subjectivity/Reflexivity, Authorship, Essays Films & Experimental Forms	Analysis & Feedback Lecture & Discussion	Submit Assignment 4 (Sound Recordings) Lopate, P., <i>In Search of the Centaur: The Essay-Film</i> pp. 19-22 Mruck, K. & Breuer, F., <i>Subjectivity and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research</i> , pp. 189-212 Russell, C., <i>Autoethnography: Journeys of the Self</i> pp. 275-314
10	Film Analysis 5: Essays & Experiments Fieldwork 5: Personal Essay Exercise	Screening & Discussion Field Study	A selection of essayistic and experimental documentary film sequences Outdoor Activity
11	Critique 5: Review of Assignment & Fieldwork Guest Lecture: Producing a Documentary Film	Analysis & Feedback Guest Speaker	Submit Assignment 5 (Video) Kalow, N., <i>Visual Storytelling</i> , pp. 26-34
12	Production Lab: Production & Editing	Work on Final Projects	Practical work on the completion of short documentary pieces
13	Production Lab: Production & Editing	Work on Final Projects	Practical work on the completion of short documentary pieces Submit Final Project
14 & 15	FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS		

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SECTION III: CEA Academic Policies

The policies listed in this section outline general expectations for CEA students. You should carefully review these policies to ensure success in your courses and during your time abroad. Furthermore, as a participant in the CEA program, you are expected to review and understand all CEA Student Policies, including the academic policies outlined on our website. CEA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. For the most up to date policies, please review the policies on our website.

Class & Instructor Policies can be found [here](#)

General Academic Policies can be found [here](#)