

COMM 339 Video Documentary Spring 2024

COURSE INFORMATION

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| Course Number & Section | COMM 339-20E |
| Class Time and Day | MONDAY: 7:00 p.m.- 9:30 p.m. (first class Jan. 22, 2024) |
| Room Number & Building | Corboy Law Center Room 710 |

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Name | Bob Hercules |
| Phone Number | 312-543-9042 |
| Email Address | rhercules@LUC.edu |
| Office Hours | By Appointment |
| Office Location | TBD |

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 January 22

Introduction of Course/Instructor/Students

What's your story? Definition of a documentary discuss various types. 3-P's!
Profiles, Places, Processes. Types of docs: verité, traditional, bios, reenactments, animated

Review Syllabus

Lecture and Discussion: The importance of story in documentaries

Provide list of documentaries to be screened outside the classroom.

Engaged Learning Assignment & Research: Civic Engagement Project Overview. Producing a video for not-for-profit organization

Show LISC video (2-minute profile of non-profit org)

Assignment – Finding Your Roots Exercise –Family photos/video with VO/sound; 1-2 min max. Write a rough script (due next week). Use 2 column format for script.

Watch Camera tutorial if available

Week 2 January 29

DUE –Find Your Roots Script, 1-2 pages

Discussion: Constructing a documentary. Story development. Character development. Discuss research techniques. ‘Casting for great subjects’

Watch in Class and Discuss: Deciding Vote, Link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sE0Hp5E6ojc>

Record audio for Finding Your Roots Assignment in class (bring hard drive, found footage to class)

Engaged Learning requirement - Preparing the treatment before the shoot.

Review Treatments. See examples in Sakai

Assign First Doc Review: Harlan County, USA **(via Kanopy)**

(Explain Kanopy system if needed)

Week 3 February – 5

DUE - First Doc Review. Harlan County, USA; Discuss film in class

Assign to watch before next class: “Bill T. Jones: A Good Man” **Link:** <https://vimeo.com/334441572> PW: Lincoln

Lecture: How to conduct an interview, with in-class examples

Work on Finding Your Roots in class, due next week

Assignment: Find non-profit organization to profile. Brainstorm ideas, Break into groups, develop themes

Week 4 February 12

Guest Lecture: D.P. Keith Walker: How he shot “A Good Man”: thinking about editing while shooting. Shooting coverage.

DUE - Video Assignment– Finding Your Roots. Watch in class and critique.

Lecture/Discussion: Directing “A Good Man”

Assign - Bring to class in two weeks 3 fully developed story ideas for Final Project.

Finish Group Treatment Civic Engagement project

Week 5. February 19

Guest Lecture: David Simpson editor of “A Good Man”

Editing Essentials. Pacing; sound/audio; organic transitions, cutting to music

Discussion: Archival Research

Assign Second Doc Review: “Titicut Follies” (Kanopy)

Week 6. February 26

Lecture/Discussion: Fundraising for docs: Pre-sales, grants, equity financing, crowd funding campaigns. How to create a pitch deck and sizzle reel. Who are likely investors?

Kickstarter link to Maya Angelou

film:https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/692700038/the-maya-angelou-documentary?ref=nav_search&result=project&term=Maya%20Angelou

Begin to identify Story Ideas for Your Final Project

Plan interviews/coverage for Non-profit project; search for news, archival footage

March 4 **SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS**

Week 8 March 11

Due – 2nd doc review “Titicut Follies”, Discuss in class

Assign – Present 3 fully developed story ideas for Final Project. Choose one to develop

Assign - Third Doc Review “I Am not Your Negro” (Kanopy).

In-class-Work on Civic Engagement project

Week 9 March 18

In-Class – Archival, Stock Footage Review for Non-profit and Final Project

DUE - Treatment for Final Project.

Watch- short Doc TBD

Due — 3rd doc review: “I Am not Your Negro”, discuss in class

Week 10 March 25

DUE - Review Non-profit footage/scenes

Assign - Fourth Doc Review: “Where Soldiers Come From” (Kanopy)

DISCUSS – Coverage footage for Final Project

Week 11, April 1

DUE - Non-profit project- rough-cut

Lecture/Discussion: Fundraising for docs: Pre-sales, grants, equity financing, crowd funding campaigns. How to create a pitch deck and sizzle reel.

Kickstarter link to Maya Angelou Film

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/692700038/the-maya-angelou-documentary?ref=nav_search&result=project&term=Maya%20Angelou

DUE—fourth doc review: “Where Soldiers Come From,” discuss in class

4 documentaries should have been screened and reviewed by this date.
More may be reviewed for extra credit

Week 12, April 8

Due: Final version of Non-Profit Doc, review in class and critique

Lecture/Discussion: Film festival goals/Impact screening plan, distribution, educational market

In Class editing on final project

Week 13, April 15

DUE - Rough-cut Final Project; in-class critique

In Class editing on final project

Week 14, April 22

Final Project DUE –This is a graded assignment

View Final Project in Class/critique

LAST DAY CLASS MEETS – We do not meet during Finals Week

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

COMM 339-20E is an advanced video production course designed to give students an introduction to researching, writing, directing, producing and distributing a

documentary film as well as exposure to various types of documentary styles and subject matter.

The course explores the documentary process from concept through development to production and post- production with the intention of completing multiple projects. Working as a group, students will co-produce a segment of a group-sourced documentary that will serve to fulfill the Engaged Learning component for this course. Working individually, students will produce an additional second 4 - 7-minute film of their choice. To complement the process, we will critically analyze a variety of documentary films.

In addition to completing several documentary assignments, students will learn about the narrative structure of non-fiction storytelling as they study and engage with the community and individuals.

During the course students will learn:

- What defines different genres of documentary
- How to write treatments/proposals to produce a documentary
- How to produce and direct a documentary
- How to shoot a documentary
- What goes into the post-production and distribution of a documentary
- How to design impact strategies for contemporary issues and attract audiences for important stories.

B. ASSIGNMENTS

1) Personal Roots project: Create a short 1-2 minute profile of yourself using original footage, voice over, family photos and music. The goal is to re-acquaint yourself with the documentary form. The project starts with a short treatment about how you will tell your story. This project must also include a **(b)** proposal, a **(c)** shooting script, and must be shot, edited, and then screened in class.

2) Doc reviews:

A lot can be learned by watching films, especially documentary films. We will watch several films, short and feature length, during class and outside of class, and these viewings will be discussed with the purpose of pointing out the different styles, modes, and techniques utilized by the filmmakers. Every film report should be 1-2 pages long and is worth **15 points** of your grade. Your **participation points (10%)** will be connected to these in-class viewing and the Doc Reports. EX: If you fail to deliver 2 of these reports, you will not be given 2 points associated to the reports, and you will also lose 3 participation points. If you deliver all reports with the quality expected from a Loyola student, you will guarantee all film report points as well as all your participation points (total 20 points). These reports are a very important element in the way I designed the class, therefore I will not accept late submissions.

3) Not-for-Profit short doc: (Service Learning credit)

The group project is intended to combine all your gathered skills. The production will function as it would in the “real world”:

(a) Each student will present a possible organization/theme to the rest of the class. The themes must follow these guidelines: **Service-learning** – In this course students will complete 25+ hours of community-based project connected to the content of the course. Course assignments and final projects synthesize classroom - and community - based learning. This engaged learning course offers students the opportunity to engage directly with and reflect on service and justice issues in the community. Students will produce a 3–5-minute video that will serve a Chicago non-profit organization they have partnered with. Each student will be required to submit a service-learning agreement, project delivery confirmation, as well as keep a record of time spent working on this project.

(b) The proposed ideas should reflect the access a student has, or has gained, with a community in Chicago. It should also follow the safety, legal, as well as ethical guidelines of this course. Out of the proposed projects, three will be selected based on the elements listed above as well as on the “likability of completion” of each idea selected.

(c) Groups will be formed, and projects assigned. From this point onwards, you will have a month to research, get permission, write the script and proposal, pre-produce, direct, edit, and present the film to class. You will also make it available to the community you worked with.

Grades will be assigned individually.

4) SHORT DOCUMENTARY (final project) (20 points) due on the last day of class

The short documentary film is yours to choose. You will make the film you want to make. The idea is that this project showcases the culmination of everything you’ve learned during this semester. It is designed to be your most personal project, the project you will have the most freedom creating, and the one that will display more advanced narrative techniques as well as your technical proficiency. This film, which will run **5-12 minutes** in length, is intended for film festivals and it will have to follow all legal practices of a professional production. This film will need to start being prepared in the very beginning of the semester if you want to create something worthwhile. When you present your service learning project on April 8th, all your efforts should be dedicated to the production of this film, which by then should be ready to be produced. You will need the help from your peers to complete this project with excellence. All films will be screened in their final version on April 22 at the latest. **No late films will be accepted and the grade of “0” will be given if the film is not screened at the scheduled date.**

C. POINTS PER ASSIGNMENT

| | Points—out of 100 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Documenting Your Roots Assignment | 10 |
| Treatments | |
| for Civic Engagement Project | 10 |
| for Personal Documentary | 10 |
| Civic Engagement Project | |
| Personal Role and Participation | 10 |
| Group Module | 20 |
| Documentary Film Reviews (4) | 15 |
| Short Documentary | 25 |

C. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Students will gain an understanding of the skills necessary to produce interesting and creative documentary films.
- Students will become skilled in executing all aspects of documentary production.
- Students will experience how to critically analyze contemporary documentary films and will engage in debate over content, style and subject matter.
- Students will fulfill Loyola Engaged Learning requirement.

Engaged Learning Requirement

To advance the mission of Loyola University Chicago and to “expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice, and faith,” the Engaged Learning requirement of the Core Curriculum is designed to support the mission by embedding opportunities in courses through the many different forms of experiential learning, helping students enhance their knowledge, skills, and values.

All undergraduate Loyola University Chicago students will be required to complete one three (3) credit course designated as Engaged Learning as part of their Core Curriculum.

Illegal Activity

Documenting with either audio or video, being present at an illegal activity or knowingly violation of any local, state, or federal laws related to the execution of any assignment will automatically exclude it from being accepted for a grade. In addition, the same exclusion applies if you learn after the fact that your actions were of an illegal nature.

D.TEXTBOOK AND SUPPLIES REQUIRED

No textbook required for this course. Readings on Sakai

Supplies

"AA" batteries

Lens Cleaning Tissue

Roll of Clear Medical Tape

Portable Hard Drives (1 recommended as a back-up drive) Mouse for personal computer editing.

The Canon cameras we are using this semester requires a Class 10 SDHC card. It is **recommended each student obtain at least 160 minutes of storage** in the form of multiple cards.

Should you currently have a drive that does not have a connection that is compatible with the school's MACs you may need to get an adapter or new drive. If you have a drive with a Firewire 400 or 800 connection this will not work with the computers without a cable that adapts to fit the port on the iMac computers. There is no book cost for this class so I recommend you purchase at least 1 TB drive.

The drives should meet the following specifications: Minimum USB 3.0 port. If you have an older drive with only Firewire, you will need to purchase a converter cable that converts Firewire to Thunderbolt (current port on iMacs). It works best to not have a drive that you have to plug into external AC power. Look for a drive that powers off the computer. With 4K, one TB is recommended but 500GB would work. Minimum 5400 RPM (7200 RPM recommended, especially for video/film concentrators). There are many different brands that will serve you will. Some brands to consider would be Toshiba, Maxtor, Seagate, Western

Digital and [Lacie](#). Many online and local retailers provide these kind of drives
Local stores such as Best Buy, Apple, OfficeMax, Office Depot, etc., are good places to consider a purchase as well.

When possible, come to class with your hard drive without any material on it. If the drive is brand new, we will format in class

E. Grading Plan

A, A- Indicates well-executed assignments and full understanding of the subject. The letter A is reserved for extraordinary distinction.

B+, B, B- Indicates a good comprehension of course requirements to include a good understanding of the skills needed to adequately function in this area of study.

C+, C, C- Indicates a basic comprehension of the course material and has met the requirements for completing assigned work and participating in class activities.

F. LOYOLA'S POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The faculty and administration of Loyola University Chicago wish to make it clear that the following acts are regarded as serious violations of personal honesty and the academic ideal that binds the university into a learning community:

Submitting as one's own:

- Material copied from a published source: print, internet, CD, audio, still photos, video, etc.
- Another person's unpublished work or examination material.
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper, shoot or edit a video for one's own benefit.
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper or video story.

Plagiarism on the part of a student in academic work or dishonest examination behavior will result minimally in the instructor assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. In addition, all instances of academic dishonesty must be reported to the chairperson of the department involved. The critical issue is to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy, legality and of intellectual honesty.

G. CAUSE FOR DEFICIENCIES

Attendance

Regular and on time attendance is essential for the educational process to work. Some of the assignments are group assignments. Loyola University expects all students to attend every scheduled class on time. Exceptions may be made for University sponsored or work related activities, illness, or valid emergency situations.

Since the class only meets once a week more than 2 unexcused absences will result in failure.

Late work or failure to complete assignment(s)

Any work turned in after the designated due date will receive a 10-point grade reduction for each week it is late unless documented illness. No work will be accepted after two weeks have passed from the due date and that assignment will receive a 0 or incomplete grade.

H. COURSE COMPONENT SPECIFICS

Students will be given multiple homework assignments to be completed outside the normal scheduled classroom. Some assignments may be conducted working with assigned partners. Students will do their best to coordinate times to work on each project at the same time.

Group participation

Some assignments may involve working in teams. This will require individuals to be responsible to their teammate(s) for meeting deadlines, be it to shoot an assignment or to edit an assignment. It's expected that these assignments are to be completed as a team. Inevitably, there are always individuals who show up late or not at all, and yet they expect the others in the group to "carry" the load for them. When this occurs and is brought to my attention, there will be a one-grade reduction for that assignment to the individual responsible for letting their team down. If this occurs on more than one occasion, a failing grade will be awarded to the student for that assignment.

I. SPECIAL NEEDS

Students are urged to contact me should they have questions concerning course materials and procedures. If you have a special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that arrangements can be made with the Services

for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SSWD website: <http://www.luc.edu/sswd/index.shtml>

J. LIABILITY ISSUES

Students will be instructed prior to their first assignment on the general nature of privacy, safety and trespassing laws. From time to time students may find themselves in a position where someone may not approve of them capturing their image. In cases such as this, it is best to honor the wishes of this person. Even though you may very well be within your rights to gather this information to include both audio and video, it would be best if students “walk away” from the situation before it escalates. And always, put your own safety and safety of your crew before other choices.

In the event something does occur, please do the following:

- Contact faculty advisor
- Contact the program head

K. EQUIPMENT USE

The School of Communication provides cameras, tripods, microphones, lighting and editing equipment that can be checked out from the Equipment Room in SOC 004 (OWL Lab).

This equipment passes through the hands of many students and in order to assure that the equipment remains in good working order, treat it like your own. **You** are financially responsible for all of the equipment you use and should treat it with great care. This kind of equipment is not indestructible and it is susceptible to various environmental situations such as a dirt, dust, rain, snow, water, and heat. Caution should be taken when transporting all equipment as this equipment is fragile and can easily be damaged. Be aware of your environment and where you are at all times. This type of equipment is popular with thieves and can easily be pilfered if you are not paying attention. Do not rely on others to be the one responsible for “watching” the equipment.

In the event something should happen, everyone in the group will be considered a responsible party.

Do not leave equipment in a parked vehicle where it can easily be stolen from the backseat. If you do have to leave equipment in your car, do so by placing in the trunk. But again, as a reminder, do not let the equipment roll around uncontrollably.

You may use your own equipment, but first clear this with me before any assignment.

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION - PRODUCTION FACILITIES

WATER TOWER CAMPUS SOC 51 E. PEARSON

Audio and Visual Production Coordinator: Paul Quinn - OWL Lab SOC 004 - 312.915.8830

FACILITY AND EQUIPMENT RULES

- Schedule all equipment use through The OWL LAB. Do not assume equipment is reserved unless you have confirmation from the OWL LAB. Equipment and use of facilities are available on a first come first serve basis anytime they are not being used for classes. We **strongly encourage** you to make a reservation well in advance for the use of equipment.
- To make a reservation, go to <https://equipmentloan.luc.edu>, enter your Loyola ID and password and click on "Owl Lab." You can find detailed instructions for using the reservation system if you click on the question mark at the top of the page. You will note that the Digital Media Lab in the Info Commons has some (but not all!) similar equipment; e.g. cameras. DML is good for back-up lighting or sound needs.
- You can also come to the lab as a walk-in, but equipment is available on a first come, first served basis. This means that the camera you need for your project due on Monday might be checked out. This is why it's always best to make a reservation in advance.
- When a student anticipates a problem with either showing up late to pick up the equipment or returning equipment late, they should contact Paul to explain the situation. Anyone more than 15 minutes late for equipment pick-up may forfeit the use of the

equipment at that time. Students who are repeatedly delinquent may lose their equipment privileges.

- Equipment must be signed out in room SOC 004 with authorized personnel. Students are responsible for returning equipment and materials in their original condition. Students must report immediately any damage or theft of equipment. Failure to do so may result in a suspension or loss of equipment privileges.
- Students may bring additional crew members, if needed, to the lab for production.
- There is no smoking in any lab space. No eating or drinking at any work/edit station.
- Students are responsible for careful handling of all equipment, and for abiding by all rules and regulations governing the use of the facility.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

- Find stories that *you* care about
- Come to class prepared
- Stay for the entire class period
- Be fully engaged in class
- Pay attention and take good notes
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Be resourceful
- Take the initiative to learn and succeed
- Communicate
- Make no excuses
- Don't wait until the last minute to do the assignment

INSTRUCTOR BIO

Bob Hercules is a Peabody and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker whose work has been seen widely on PBS, BBC, IFC, Netflix, Amazon, and in film festivals around the world. His 2016 film, **Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise** (co-directed by Rita Coburn), premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and went on to win 19 awards on three continents and a Peabody Award. The film was nominated for an NAACP Image Award and aired on both PBS' American Masters and BBC's Storyville series. In 2021 Hercules directed **Mikva! Democracy is a Verb** (a film about the legendary Congressman & Judge, Abner Mikva). The film aired on

PBS in 2020. In 2011 Hercules and Gordon Quinn made a film focusing on the intense creative process of choreographer Bill T. Jones entitled **A Good Man**. The film aired on PBS' American Masters and played at many international film festivals including IDFA, Silverdocs, Full Frame, and DOXA. Hercules also directed **Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance**. The film, narrated by Mandy Patinkin, premiered at the Dance on Camera Film Festival at Lincoln Center and aired on PBS' American Masters. His 2006 film, **Forgiving Dr. Mengele** played on PBS and won the Jury Award at the 2006 Slamdance Film Festival.

IMDb Link:

https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0378762/?ref_=nv_sr_srsq_0_tt_7_nm_1_q_Bob%2520Hercules