

**RTA 957 – 011 TUESDAY Documentary Production Fall 2014**

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***About the Course***

**Classes held in:** RCC 201

**Class Time:** Tuesday, 3:00pm – 6:00pm

**Office Hours:** By appointment

***Course Description and Goals***

The goal of this production course is to help students develop an understanding of and appreciation for the documentary genre. In addition to lectures and screenings, students participate in discussion groups and presentations, as well as produce an original, 10-15 minute documentary that includes a transmedia plan. By the end of term, students will have developed basic competency in documentary pre-production, production and post-production practices, acquired an introductory understanding of business and marketing strategies, analyzed some documentary sub-genres and become familiar with key theoretical and ethical issues associated with documentary.

During the first weeks of class, the course will explore the origins of documentary and documentary genres, providing background and context for the production experience. During this time, the course will also examine best practices on how to develop documentary story ideas, outlines, conduct research, etc., within a transmedia environment. Students will then begin production of their documentary projects, meeting regularly with the instructor and continuing to hone their theoretical, aesthetic and business knowledge through further lectures, occasional guest speakers, screenings and discussion groups.

The **first assignment** is a documentary **de-construct/analysis due Week 4**. Using the online template provided, students deconstruct a selected doc in a specific genre and then participate in a group presentation/discussion in class.

The **second and major assignment** of the term is the production of a **10-15 minute documentary** with deliverables, **due Week 5** (pitch/outline/research), **Week 8** (production package) and **Week 13** (completed project). The documentary may be on any topic, subject to instructor approval, and of any genre or media format provided it can be reasonably executed by the end of term. You will work in a team

with three or four other students to develop and produce a production over the course of the semester. At that point the work will be screened on the final day of classes.

The **third and final assignment** is a **transmedia proposal and class presentation** also **due Week 13**, detailing how your produced documentary will be developed across other media platforms. For example, your transmedia proposal might include a strategy for building an online profile by linking to related sites and social networks or a plan to create a website that incorporates additional content, interviews, stills, streaming, text, games and interactive quizzes. Your presentation might include crowd sourcing strategies or describe potential marketing platforms such as DVD, television, print and online promotions on Twitter or Facebook, etc. Finally, your presentation should clearly explain how each of these media strategies not only supports your project but will be economically feasible and maintainable.

**Important: Assignment two and three are BOTH due on Week 13**

**Attendance is required to keep all projects on track and is worth an additional 10%**

## **Workload**

This course requires effective organizational skills, personal discipline and a team-oriented approach. **It is critically important that deadlines for each step in the production process are met.**

Never underestimate the amount of time you may need to create an original documentary or, conversely, the amount of satisfaction you can derive from producing an original, engaging and well-crafted production!

**IF:**

- your story/strategy isn't coming together
- you can't get access or permission to shoot
- a shoot date falls through
- equipment isn't available or breaks down
- you need more time for ANY reason then...

***Contact your instructor and technical support staff immediately. Deadlines can only be altered if groups advise the instructor/staff member well in advance. At the end of the day, it remains up to you and your team to meet all course requirements.***

## **Teamwork**

Creating a documentary, like most media production, is a collaborative effort with each member of the group making their own unique contribution. The most effective and successful teams SHARE responsibility and function as partners in the project.

As soon as you have formed a group, develop a schedule for regular meetings and a master list of names and contact information to share.

## **Communication**

Blackboard will be used to:

- Post your grades
- Post announcements and information
- Post course material and assignments
- E-mail

## Important notes:

Notes are required for more than one class absence.

Students who are late will be required to write a special one-page assignment

Students are reminded to adhere to all relevant program and University policies and in particular the Student Code of Academic Conduct.

Each group is required to update the class and the instructor on the status of their project at certain points during the term (see week-by-weeks below). These updates will form a part of regularly scheduled classes. In the event that these hours are insufficient to accommodate the number of groups (should student enrolment be high in a given term), additional mutually convenient hours may be scheduled at the instructor's discretion. Punctuality and preparation are **essential**.

## Course Week-by-Weeks

### WEEK ONE September 2

- Introduction and overview of assignments
- Lecture/discussion: What is a Documentary?
- Documentary genres overview
- **Group selection, exchange contact info**

### WEEK TWO September 9

- Samples of previous work
- Lecture: From topic to story: developing a successful doc
- Evolution of the Documentary
- **Breakouts to develop deconstructs (Week 4) and written doc proposals/ pitches (Week 5)**

### WEEK THREE September 16

- Lecture: Developing the story
- Loglines, Outlines and Pitches
- Breakout assignment: Loglines

### WEEK FOUR September 23

- **Due: deconstruct oral presentations/Q&A**
- Lecture: Treatments and script formats
- Breakout groups

### WEEK FIVE September 30

- **Due: Class pitch presentations for 10-15 min. doc/critiques**
- Screening: TBA

### WEEK SIX October 7

- Lecture: Pre-production planning
- Overview of camera and audio resources
- Conducting documentary interviews and shooting sequences
- Breakouts

### WEEK SEVEN October 14 (READING WEEK – NO CLASSES)

### WEEK EIGHT October 21

- **Due: Production package: Includes treatment, script breakdown sheets, call sheets, shot list, location approvals, permits, interview questions (where applicable) THIS MATERIAL MUST BE COMPLETED AND APPROVED BEFORE SHOOTING CAN START**
- Business of Docs: contracts, funding, marketing
- Breakouts

### WEEK NINE October 28

- Screening TBA
- Breakout

#### **WEEK TEN November 4**

- Documentary Post production:
- Music, effects, mixing, graphics
- Guest speaker TBA

#### **WEEK ELEVEN November 11**

- Groups share progress reports and screen samples of raw/edited footage followed by discussion/Q&A/critique
- Trans-media review

#### **WEEK TWELVE November 18**

Instructor consults with groups on a project-by-project basis in edit suites

#### **WEEK THIRTEEN November 25**

- ***Due: Screening of final projects and trans-media oral presentations\****

*\*Bring your doc, ready to play in digital format. Oral presentations of project and trans-media proposal should be kept to 10 minutes in length*

#### ***Evaluation:***

1. Deconstruct/presentation	10
2. 10-15 minute story:	
Pitch/story outline and research	15
Pre-production package	15
Finished project	25
Peer evaluation	10
Subtotal:	(65)
3. Transmedia presentation	15
4. Attendance/participation	10

**Total:** 100 marks

Note: Graduate students taking this course are required to write an additional P/F reflective paper which is posted online under Blackboard assignments

#### ***Recommended Reading:***

**Creative Documentary: Theory and Practice, Wilma De Jong, Pearson Publications, U.K. 2011**  
**Collecting Visible Evidence, Jane M. Gaines & Michael Renov, University of Minnesota Press, 1999**

#### ***General Information regarding all RTA Courses:***

##### **Student Codes of Conduct**

All students are required to adhere to all relevant University policies, such as the Student Code of **Non-Academic Conduct** (see <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol61.pdf>) Code of **Academic Conduct** (see: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf>).

##### **The Ryerson University Undergraduate Course Calendar**

This is your resource for all information relating to academia, including curriculum, course descriptions, significant dates (including last date to drop a course without academic penalty), academic standings, the Student Code of Academic & Non-Academic Conduct, etc.

The Ryerson University Undergraduate Course Calendar is available online at <http://www.ryerson.ca/undergraduate/calendars/>.

### **The RTA Student Handbook site**

The RTA Student Handbook site at <http://www.ryerson.ca/rta/handbook/> is full of useful information, including course outlines for most courses in RTA, advice on which courses to take, downloadable forms (including release forms, TV plans & paperwork, etc), information about scholarships, advice on doing great assignments, and more.

### **Blackboard Course Website**

Blackboard is an online course tool which may include an online discussion board, course documents such as the syllabus and lecture notes, announcements, an area where your grades are posted, etc. If your professor has set up a Blackboard site for this course, you'll find it at <http://my.ryerson.ca>.

### **Ryerson Student Email Account**

The School of Radio and Television Arts will often send you important information by email (e.g. scholarship information, reminders of important dates, notification of meetings and/or events, internship opportunities and job postings, etc.). Correspondence from RTA and from your professors will be sent **ONLY** to your Ryerson email account. **It is your obligation to ensure that you activate your account and check it regularly, or have it forwarded to an account you check regularly.** Please use your Ryerson account for sending emails to your professors, as there is less chance your email will get filtered into a Junk Mail folder that way.

For information on how to activate and use your Ryerson account:

- go to [www.ryerson.ca/ccs](http://www.ryerson.ca/ccs)
- enter the Student site
- click "Email" on the services menu.

### **Notice to Students with Disabilities**

Students with any disability (e.g. learning, medical, physical, sensory), illness, or a condition that requires academic adaptations should discuss the situation with the professor and/or contact the Access Centre, POD 61, 416-979-5290 (TDD/TTY: 416-979-5274); or visit their website at <http://www.ryerson.ca/accesscentre>.

### **Written Assignments**

All written assignments are expected to be properly formatted and cited using MLA style (unless otherwise indicated by your professor). Guides and references for using MLA style can be found through the Ryerson University Library as well as the Writing Centre. See <http://www.library.ryerson.ca/subjects/style/mla.html>

### **English as a Second Language**

Ryerson University offers support to students who may require improvement in their overall English language communication skills. Please visit **English Language Support** at [www.ryerson.ca/studentservices/els/](http://www.ryerson.ca/studentservices/els/)

### **Accommodation of Student Religious Observance**

At the start of the term, students who have religious observance obligations which will lead to absences from campus or academic activities during the semester should download the "Student Declaration of Religious Observance" form from <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/reobservforminstr.pdf>. Present a copy of the form to the professor **within the first two weeks of classes**. The professor and student will then consult to reach an agreement on a reasonable means to address the situation.

### **The Learning Success Centre**

The Learning Success Centre (<http://www.ryerson.ca/learningsuccess>) helps students make the transition to university learning, develop sound learning strategies, and achieve their academic potential by providing professional services in both traditional and virtual learning environments. The Learning Success Centre offers free workshops for students such as:

- Time Management
- Learning from Lectures
- Preparing for Tests
- Writing Exams
- Dealing with Performance & Test Anxiety

- Writing a University Essay
- Delivering Effective Presentations

### **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is defined by the University as “claiming the words, ideas, artistry, drawings, images or data of another person as if they were your own.” (Student Code of Academic Conduct, Ryerson University 2006, p.2). According to the Code, plagiarism includes:

- copying another person’s work (including information found on the Internet and unpublished materials) without appropriate referencing;
- presenting someone else’s work, opinions or theories as if they are your own;
- presenting another’s substantial compositional changes to an assignment as your own;
- working collaboratively without permission of the instructor on an assignment, and then submitting it as if it was created solely by you; or
- submitting the same work, for credit, in two or more courses without the prior written permission of the instructor(s). (Student Code of Academic Conduct, Ryerson University, 2006, p. 2.)

Usually one associates plagiarism with written works but it can include any work such as photographs/artwork, Internet materials, video, audio, and digital media. **The University penalties for plagiarism can be severe, ranging from getting zero on the assignment up to, in cases of prior academic dishonesty, suspension or expulsion.** Please note that you may be required to submit some or all of your written assignments to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). Students who do not want their work submitted to this plagiarism detection service must, by the end of the second week of class, consult with the instructor to make alternate arrangements.

### **Useful links to help you understand and avoid plagiarism:**

Ryerson’s Academic Integrity web site: <http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/>

Student Code of Academic Conduct policy: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf>

### **Cheating:**

Cheating is defined by Ryerson University as:

- using materials or aids not expressly allowed by the instructor in an examination or test;
  - copying another person’s answer(s) to an examination or test question; copying another person’s answers to individually assigned projects;
  - consulting with another person or unauthorized materials outside of an examination room during the examination period (e.g. discussing an exam or consulting materials during an emergency evacuation or when permitted to use a washroom);
  - improperly submitting an answer to a test or examination question completed, in whole or part, outside the examination room unless specifically permitted by the examination format;
  - resubmitting altered test or examination work after it has already been evaluated;
  - presenting falsified or fabricated material, including research results; or
  - improperly obtaining, through deceit, theft, bribery, collusion or otherwise, access to examination paper(s) or set of questions, or other confidential information.
- (Student Code of Academic Conduct, Ryerson University, 2006, p. 2)

**The University penalties for cheating can be severe, ranging from getting zero on the assignment or test up to, in cases of prior academic dishonesty, suspension or expulsion.**