

367 SAMPLE SYLLABUS

English 367.03 • Film in the U.S. Experience: Composing Digital Documentaries

Class meets:

Instructor:

My office:

Office hours:

Course Description and Objectives

English 367.03 is a second-level composition course. Sometimes when people use the word “composition” they mean only writing with paper and pen or by typing text into a computer. In this class, not only will we employ the term in this way, but also we will use it to describe the process of creating digital documentaries. We will use digital documentary to develop our skills for analytical thinking, reading, and composing. We will view and create documentaries. Our tools will include the study of rhetorical and narrative strategies and methods of close reading/listening/viewing. You will learn how to demonstrate critical thinking through the composition of written texts and digital documentaries (video and audio). We will practice analysis across a variety of texts, including essays, audio compositions, websites, photographs, and digital video documentaries. We will learn to identify connections between these texts, and we will produce compositions that engage our own and others’ perceptions.

This course uses various documentaries and texts about documentary as its area of inquiry. As a class, we will concern ourselves specifically with how the documentary form helps us understand “the U.S. experience.” In other words, how do documentaries reflect and create U.S. identities and relationships? How do we think about the U.S. experience as a result of viewing and reading documentaries? In this class, we will seek to understand *how* documentary directors tell narratives and the effects of such strategies on their audiences. Furthermore, we will ask how documentaries help us understand constructions of identity (including disability, race, nationality, gender, sexuality, class, and religion).

General Education Curriculum General Description and Objectives

English 367.03 fulfills the second half of the GEC requirement “Category 1: Writing and Related Skills.”

Goals/Rationale: The purpose of courses in this category is to develop students’ skills in writing, reading, critical thinking, and oral expression.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students apply basic skills in expository writing.
2. Students demonstrate critical thinking through written and oral expression.
3. Students retrieve and use written information analytically and effectively.

English 367.03 fulfills “Category 6.A: Diversity Experiences: Social Diversity in the United States.”

Goals/Rationale: The purpose of courses in this category is to foster an understanding of the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students describe the roles of such categories as race, gender, class, ethnicity, and religion in the institutions and cultures of the United States.
2. Students recognize the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values.

Required Texts

These texts are available at SBX or at online retailers like Amazon.com. All other texts are available at <http://carmen.osu.edu>. You must bring the assigned texts for the day with you to class.

Abel, Jessica and Ira Glass. *Radio: An Illustrated Guide*. Chicago: W B E Z Alliance, 1999. ISBN: 0967967104. \$3.95.

Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 2001. ISBN: 0253214696. \$19.95. (Available used on Amazon.)

Warren, Frank. *PostSecret: Extraordinary Confessions from Ordinary Lives*. William Morrow, 2005. ISBN: 0060899190. \$26.95 (Available for \$17.79 on Amazon.)

Optional Texts

Capturing the Friedmans. Dir. Andrew Jarecki. 2003.

Grizzly Man. Dir. and written by Werner Herzog. 2005.

King Gimp. Dir. Susan Hannah Hadary and William A. Whiteford. Written by Dan Keplinger. 1999.

Sound and Fury. Dir. Josh Aronson. 2000.

Course Policies

Attendance is essential to the success of this class. Therefore, each unexcused absence after two will result in the lowering of your final grade by one-third of a letter grade. Excused absences with accompanying documentation, such as those for severe illness (as in the doctor will not allow you to attend class), family tragedy, religious observance, or travel for inter-collegiate athletics, will not affect your grade. In all instances, the student is responsible for any information or assignments given out in class, so make sure you obtain a few of your classmates' contact information. **Five unexcused absences will result in failure for the course.** Tardiness is disruptive to the classroom environment and prevents you from fully participating and assimilating the information and materials discussed in class. Two late arrivals or early departures will equal one unexcused absence.

Special note about computers: *You are only allowed to use computers in the classroom when and as directed by me. At all other times, your attention should be directed towards me and/or your fellow students. You will be asked to leave class (and subsequently will be counted absent)*

if you show disrespect by ignoring this policy. No instant messaging or e-mailing in class.

Plagiarism is expressly prohibited by the Code of Student Conduct and can result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct and failure for the course. At no point during the composition process should the work of others be presented as your own. According to the Code of Student Conduct, academic misconduct includes “submitting plagiarized work for an academic requirement. Plagiarism is the representation of another’s work or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas.” For more information, consult the Code of Student Conduct:

http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp

Late work: Student work must be submitted on time. All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of the class period in which they are due.

Preparing Essays: You are expected to follow the Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines for format and citations. Your papers should be typed in black ink with a readable 12-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, and carefully edited and proofread. Please refer to the grammar and MLA handbook of your choice as needed.

Class Cancellation Policy: In the unlikely event of an emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note on department letterhead be placed on the door.

Resources

The OSU Writing Center invites all members of the OSU community to discuss their writing with a trained consultant at the Writing Center. Please visit www.cstw.org to make an appointment or have an online tutorial.

The Ombudsman of the Writing Programs, Dr. Matthew Cariello, mediates conflicts between teachers and students in English 367. You can contact him at 292-5778 or cariello.1@osu.edu. Spring 2008 office hours in Denney Hall 412 are Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday 1:30-3:00 PM, but other times are available by appointment. All conversations with the Ombudsman are strictly confidential.

Disability Services: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Course Requirements

You must complete all assignments in order to pass the course.

Participation: 15%

You must come to class prepared to discuss all reading assignments and student drafts for that day, reading carefully and critically in order to participate in a meaningful class conversation. Excellent participation means participating productively and respectfully, including during group-led discussion and in-class writing assignments. Active listening and questioning are essential to showing evidence of your engagement with the course materials.

Summaries (500 words each): 20% total

Be sure to summarize both form and content. Explain the *how* and the *what* of the text in relation to its purpose and significance. Skills: reading/viewing/listening comprehension, ability to paraphrase, accurate summary of the text's main points and its formal qualities, ability to move from description to interpretation. You must utilize correct grammar and diction.

Reviews (500 words each): 20% total

In these writing assignments, you will demonstrate your understanding of the text under review. Skills: reading/viewing/listening comprehension, ability to paraphrase, accurate summary of the text's main points, ability to move from description to interpretation and from interpretation to judgment. You must utilize correct grammar and diction.

Audio Documentary: 20% total

In this assignment, you will demonstrate your ability to interview and construct a narrative with sound. You will present your work to your classmates. Your presentation skills are a part of the grade for this assignment. You will also be responsible for keeping an Audio Production Journal and turning it in several times. Your Production Journal is a part of the grade for this assignment.

Video Documentary: 25%

In this assignment, you will demonstrate your ability to interview and construct a narrative with visual images and sound. You will present your work to your classmates. Your presentation skills are a part of the grade for this assignment. You will also be responsible for keeping a Video Production Journal and turning it in several times. Your Production Journal is a part of the grade for this assignment.

Daily Schedule (Subject to Change)

Day One: Tuesday, March 25 – Introduction to the course, introductions to each other

Introduction to course syllabus and course objectives

In-class writing: "If I could document anything, I would document _____."

Introductions to each other

Writing assigned: 500 words: Review of *This American Life* Episode #329

Day Two: Thursday, March 27 – Critical reading, critical thinking

Reading Due: Chapter 1 of *Introduction to Documentary* (on Carmen)

Writing Due: "My Dream Job"

In-class discussion: discussion of Chapter 1

In-class screening: *Sound and Fury*. Dir. Josh Aronson. 2000. (80 minutes)

Day Three: Tuesday, April 1 – Visual rhetoric

Reading Due: Chapter 2 and Chapter 8 of *Introduction to Documentary*
Writing Due: 500 words: Summary of *Sound and Fury*
In-class discussion: *Sound and Fury*

Day Four: Thursday, April 3 – Introduction to Audio: The Anecdote

Reading Due: *TAL* Episode #329
Writing Due: 500 words: Review of *TAL* Episode #329

Day Five: Tuesday, April 8 – Audio

Reading Due: Chapter 3 and 4 of *Introduction to Documentary*
Writing Due: 500 words: Summary of Chapter 3 and 4 of *Introduction to Documentary*

Day Six: Thursday, April 10 – Video

Reading Due: Chapter 5 and 6 of *Introduction to Documentary*
In-class screening: *Capturing the Friedmans*. Dir. Andrew Jarecki. 2003. (107 minutes)

Day Seven: Tuesday, April 15 – Composing Narrative

Reading Due: *Radio: An Illustrated Guide*
Writing Due: 500 words: Review of *Capturing the Friedmans*

Day Eight: Thursday, April 17 – The documentary argument

Writing Due: Final Draft of Review of *TAL* Episode #329
In-class screening: *King Gimp*. Dir. Susan Hannah Hadary and William A. Whiteford.
Written by Dan Keplinger. 1999. (40 minutes)

Day Nine: Tuesday, April 22 – Audio Workshop

Reading Due: Chapter 7 of *Introduction to Documentary*
Writing Due: Summary of Chapter 7 of *Introduction to Documentary*

Day Ten: Thursday, April 24 – Audio and Video

Writing Due: Audio Production Journal
Mid-quarter evaluations
In-class screening: *Grizzly Man*. Dir. and written by Werner Herzog. 2005. (103 minutes)

Day Eleven: Tuesday, April 29 – Audio Workshop

Writing Due: Review of *Grizzly Man*

Day Twelve: Thursday, May 1 – No class: You will be working on your Audio Documentary

Day Thirteen: Tuesday, May 6 – Audio Documentary Presentations

Writing Due: Audio Production Journal

Day Fourteen: Thursday, May 8 – Video Discussion

Writing Due: 500 words: Review of *PostSecret*

Day Fifteen: Tuesday, May 13 – Style and audience

Video Production Workshop

Writing Due: 500 words: Essay about one Postcard from *PostSecret*

Day Sixteen: Thursday, May 15 – Video Production Discussion

Day Seventeen: Tuesday, May 20 – Video Production

Writing Due: Video Production Journal

Day Eighteen: Thursday, May 22 – Video Production

Writing Due: Video Production Journal

Day Nineteen: Tuesday, May 27 – Video Production

Writing Due: Video Production Journal

Day Twenty: Thursday, May 29 – Wrapping up

Evaluations

Finals Week: Tuesday, June 3, 3:30-5:18 pm: Presentations. Final Video Production Journal Due.