

DOCUMENTARY PROJECTS

681

Spring 2023 W 4:00-6:45 CA283

"There were two things I wanted to do.
I wanted to show the things that had to be corrected.
I wanted to show the things that had to be appreciated."

— LEWIS HINE

It is a tremendous privilege to be able to share people's lives and tell their stories. With this privilege comes a responsibility for fairness, accuracy, anti-racism, commitment and hard work. In documentary storytelling, one can choose to serve self or to serve community. My hope is that you will choose the latter.

Welcome to Documentary Projects. In this course we will seek to strengthen your foundation of technical and journalistic skills, and help guide you into leveraging the power of visual storytelling to engage and affect your community.

Many photographs simply state fact as the photographer recorded it. Within this class we will create photographs – not just photographs but *idea photographs* – that tell stories, photographs that educate and reach into the social conscience. Not every documentary story uncovers social problems, however. Many documentary stories celebrate things that are right within a society or reveal unknown cultural and societal gems.

Effective documentary storytelling is impossible without a commitment on the part of the storyteller to become involved and spend enough time to get beyond the surface. If you only want to tell surface-level stories, this is not the class for you. Genuine life moments are KEY elements of documentary storytelling. The "parachute" approach, projecting an incomplete and stereotypical understanding of a given subject, is sadly prevalent in today's media. The antidote is time and an unselfish commitment to truth – and this is what it will take to succeed in this class.

LONG-TERM PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY / DOCUMENTARY VIDEO

This will be an experience in [Slow Journalism](#). The heart and soul of this class will be a longterm documentary video or photographic essay. This project will involve: Research, Bias awareness/reflection, Access, Storytelling and Final Presentation.

You must focus on the visual storytelling, and you may present your project as a documentary short film or photographic story/essay. Ask yourself: "What is the best way to tell the story?" The key is INTENTION. We'll talk more about this in class.

→ We will stress the vital elements of compelling storytelling: Character, conflict, dramatic tension, unfolding action, and resolution. **No conflict = no story.**

The theme of the project is open. I advise you to look inward and think about two questions:

What breaks your heart? What makes you come alive?

PROFESSOR: CHAD HEARTWOOD
OFFICE: CA 211
chadheartwood@unc.edu
[Overburden Documentary](#)
[Farmsteaders Documentary](#)

♦ OFFICE HOURS:
Tuesday - 1:30-4:00

♦ Please try and meet with me during office hours, but if you cannot I will be happy to schedule an appointment.

♦ Required Text:
[What We See: Women and Non-binary Perspectives Through the Lens](#) (Note: This book is not released until March. I'll keep you updated.)

♦ GRADE BREAKDOWN:
Your final grade will be determined out of a 1000 point scale:

Final Doc Project - 300
Weekly shoots - 400
(worth 50 points each)
Proposal & Roadmap - 100
Beyond the Box Assign - 200

Grade scale:
A = 95-100% / A- = 90-94.9%
B+ = 87-89.9% / B = 83-86.9%
B- = 80-82.9% / C+ = 77-79.9%
C = 73-76.9% / C- = 70-72.9%
D+ = 67-69% / D = 60-66%
F = less than 60%

♦ This syllabus is flexible.
Be prepared for change.

♦ ATTENDANCE is vital to the success of this class. There will be demonstrations that cannot be redone.

BE ON TIME.

♦ IMPORTANT DATES:
MLK DAY - 01/16
SPRING BREAK - 03/13-17
LDOC - 04/28
FINAL EXAM - 05/04 7 PM

The answers to these questions can lead you to a project that matters - to you and to your audience.

If you want direction, I'll offer this: challenge a stereotype. Research and define that stereotype, and then create a documentary project that disrupts that stereotype.

To quote a Mother Jones article, [*This Is What's Missing From Journalism Right Now*](#), "the most important ingredient in investigative reporting is not brilliance, writing flair, or deep familiarity with the subject (though those all help). It's something much simpler—time." And, unlike any other course you've had in our program, you have time. Make the most of it.

I want you to think critically, act creatively and create a story that connects with the audience in a compelling and unique way.

Weekly shoots: You will be turning in weekly shoots (stills or video scenes) worth 50 points each. You will turn in a folder of your entire shoot that must total at least 500 frames each week or equivalent video footage - scenes, interviews, etc. You will present every frame in class in the order you made the images. Video storytellers will create rough scene assemblies each week. We will critique, not the single image, but your approach, style, visual variety and how well you worked each situation.

Beyond the Box Assignments

In the first few weeks of the semester, I will give you conceptual assignments to get the creativity flowing. Take risks! *Note:* Waiting to the last minute does not count as taking a risk.

Story Share

Each week a student will present one strong short doc (photo or video) and share with the class at the beginning of the class. I will share a sign up sheet to determine the schedule. Find something inspiring that relates to your project.

Guest Speakers

We will host at least two professionals in our class this semester: Oscar-nominated filmmaker, Sophia Nahli Allison, and Vietnamese-American documentary photographer and Women Photograph founder, Daniella Zalcmán. When we host guest speakers I do expect the utmost professionalism from you. I hope you realize this is not just opportunity to learn from them, but also to make connections in the professional world.

Expectations

I expect you to take risks. True growth occurs when we learn from the risks we take. **Do not mistake complacency for risk-taking.** Risk-taking is the relentless pushing of the boundaries, forcing yourself out of your comfort zone and exceeding expectations. Complacency is waiting to the last minute, and accepting less than your potential allows.

I am here as your guide. I'm here to push you. My goal is to create an environment in which your potential can explode. However, even though I may open the doors, it is YOU who must walk through. Take ownership, yet be open, be a humble learner.

As your teacher in this capstone course, I do have some core journalistic expectations. Here they are:

- 1) I expect you to create content that is technically advanced. By this point in your training, your technical skills should be nearly intuitive. I expect images to be in focus (with rare exception), exposed well and toned correctly.
- 2) I expect images and footage to communicate and connect.

- 3) I expect you to be striving to make images and footage that contain one, or preferably all, of the key elements of a successful photograph: **MOMENT, LIGHT, COMPOSITION.**
- 4) I expect you to think creatively and independently when approaching any assignment/project, and I expect content to reflect this creative and independent thinking.
- 5) I expect professionalism in all areas including presentation, ethics and caption writing.
- 6) **NO STAGING** (except portraits or illustrations that we talk through). This is a documentary class and we are following the most strict ethical guidelines. Staged photographs or video clips will be failed. If you ask someone to do something, then you are probably crossing the ethical line.

Grade Determination

- 1) Assignments and/or shoots are due at the very minute class begins!
- 2) Any assignment not turned in will receive zero points, this includes weekly shoots. You get two freebies.
- 3) The critical elements that must be included in any assignment: Are you pushing yourself? Are you spending the time? Does this communicate to the viewer?
- 4) Content (story significance, access, character(s), concept/plan, execution, narrative/script, flow, storytelling, edit, captions)
- 5) Aesthetic (creativity, motion, mood, composition, light, graphics, color)
- 6) Technical (execution, sound, exposure, polish, presentation)

Work will be due every week on Wednesday. Work must be turned in on the server and ready for review by 4 pm.

Grade Breakdown

Your final grade will be determined out of a 1000 point scale:

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Beyond the Box Assignments - 200

Grade Scale

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D+ = 67-69% / D = 60-66%
F = less than 60%

"The human species thinks in metaphors and learns through stories."

MARY CATHERINE BATESON ←

Required Equipment and Supplies

You will need a digital 35mm HD/SLR camera with manual controls and interchangeable lenses. If you checkout from the school, realize you are responsible for any lost, damaged, or stolen equipment, and your access to gear is, unfortunately, more limited.

The Equipment Room is located in the Park Library, 2d floor of Carroll Hall. Students must book their own gear through Connect2: <https://equipmentroom.mj.unc.edu/>. Link to our instruction manuals for the gear we lend: <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/equipment-room/instruction-manuals>.

You need your own SD cards - as large as possible. Also you need TWO HARD DRIVES for your personal archive, video and Premiere projects. One is for backup. I suggest you get at least 1TB drives. Please talk to me if you need guidance on this. There are no bad questions. Please ask.

Storytelling is Problem Solving

Be prepared for challenges, and plan your time well. You can expect cancellations. If you wait until the last minute and your story cancels, this is usually avoidable by starting early and building in time to re-schedule. Learning to take a proactive approach to planning and problem solving is an important part of this class, and your future career.

You will be faced with many challenges in the field – in this class and beyond. It will be up to you in each moment to make it a learning opportunity. Nothing worth anything is easy. Be prepared and realize the one thing you can control is your attitude.

Attendance Policy

University Policy:

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

Authorized University activities

Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)

Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Class Policy:

Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview or club activity), instructors determine their own approach to missed classes and make-up assessments and assignments.

In journalism the rewards are great, but the demands are high. It is critical that you attend every class. You CANNOT miss a class in order to shoot an assignment. You must be in class to present your work for critique. Turning in an assignment on the server does not count as a turn-in. Part of your completion of the assignment is the critique. You will be allowed 2 unexcused absences; after that 2 percentage points will be deducted from your FINAL GRADE. If your semester average is 91% and you miss 3 classes, your final average would be 89%. Etcetera. Use your 2 wisely. Please communicate with me if circumstances arise that require you to miss class.

Please communicate with me early about potential absences. Please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University approved absence.

Inclusive and Accepting Space

First of all, everyone is welcome here. Bigotry and sexism are not welcome here. We may have difficult discussions in this class, and as that happens I want everyone to be mindful of the power of words and how they can impact others. Simply, be thoughtful of others and be aware of your own privilege.

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. My preferred pronouns are he/him/his.

ARS

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

Diversity

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on prohibiting harrasment and discrimination. In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

ACEJMC

The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more here:

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on:

- *understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- *demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- *think critically, creatively and independently;
- *write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- *critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- *apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

Honor Code

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean C. A. Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Syllabus Changes

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

DOCUMENTARY PROJECTS SCHEDULE



Class	Topics
01 - JAN 11 W	<p>Topics: Conflict, Finding Ideas What breaks your heart? What makes you come alive? Sample Projects Review syllabus 1-on-1 meetings</p> <p>ASSIGN: Beyond the Box Assignment #1 (Cause and Effect - Draw cause out of hat and photograph effect) ASSIGN: Idea Pictures for Discussion ASSIGN: 50 Ideas</p>
02 - JAN 18 W	<p>DUE: Beyond the Box Assignment #1 (Cause and Effect) DUE: Idea Pictures + Discussion DUE: 50 Ideas</p> <p>TOPICS: Discuss 50 Ideas Project Roadmaps Archival Video</p> <p>ASSIGN: Beyond the Box Assignment #2 (Public Domain Video) ASSIGN: Project Ideas V2 ASSIGN: Project Roadmaps</p>
03 - JAN 25 W	<p>DUE: Beyond the Box Assignment #2 (Public Domain Video) DUE: Project Ideas V2</p> <p>TOPICS: Discuss Project Ideas V2 Proposals</p> <p>ASSIGN: Final Project Proposals ASSIGN: Shoot 1</p>
04 - FEB 01 W	<p>DUE: Project Roadmaps</p> <p>TOPICS: 1619 Project Intro The Image Deconstructed presentation</p>
05 - FEB 08 W	<p>DUE: Final Project Proposals DUE: Shoot 1</p> <p>TOPICS: The Depictive Level</p>
06 - FEB 15 W	<p>DUE: Shoot 2 DUE: 1619 Project Discussion</p> <p>ASSIGN: Sophia Nahli Allison film + bio research</p>
07 - FEB 22 W	<p>DUE: Shoot 3</p> <p><i>Guest Speaker: Sophia Nahli Allison</i></p>
08 - MAR 01 W	<p>DUE: Shoot 4</p> <p>TOPICS: Murch presentation</p>
09 - MAR 08 W	<p>DUE: MIDWAY REVIEW (Shoot 5)</p> <p>ASSIGN: Legacy of Western Colonization readings</p>

10 - MAR 15 W	SPRING BREAK
11 - MAR 22 W	DUE: Shoot 6 TOPICS: Readings Discussion / Shoot Review
12 - MAR 29 W	DUE: Shoot 7 TOPICS: Shoot Review ASSIGN: <i>Daniella Zalcman work</i> + bio research
13 - APRIL 05 W	DUE: Shoot 8 TOPICS: Shoot Review
14 - APRIL 12 W	DUE: Shoot 9 TOPICS: Shoot Review <i>Guest Speaker: Daniella Zalcman</i>
15 - APRIL 19 W	DUE: Rough Cut V1 (Shoot 10)
16 - APRIL 26 W	DUE: Rough Cut V2
17 - FINAL	MAY 4 - 7 PM Final Project DUE