
COURSE SYLLABUS

(Spring, 2013)

Life History and Documentary Approaches to Inquiry

EDP 396K (Honors) (Unique # 10315)/LAH350 (Unique # 30140)

Ricardo C. Ainslie, Ph.D.

T-Th 11:00 - 12:30, SZB 439B

OFFICE HOURS: Tues. 10-11, Thurs. 10-11, SZB 262D
email: rainslie@austin.utexas.edu

January 15 - Introduction and Course Overview
[life history/documentary/ethnographic research]

January 17 – Life History and Documentary work as Method
Becker, H. “The epistemology of Qualitative Research”
In: Emerson (Ed.) Contemporary Field Research (2001)
Prospect Heights (IL):Waveland (pp 317-330)
Geertz, C. (1973). “Thick description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”
(pp 3-32) The Interpretation of Cultures. New York:Basic Books.
Maass, P. (2011) “The Toppling” *The New Yorker*, January 20, 2011

*****PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE *****

January 22 – Examples and discussion re documentary projects/work

*****PROJECT TEAMS ASSIGNED*****

January 24 – Filming, lighting, sound: Part I

January 29 - Filming, lighting, sound: Part II

January 31 - Filming, lighting, sound: Part III

February 5 - Interviewing & equipment practice run
Class will break up into triads and go to TARA rooms
practice interviewing, filming, lighting, sound

February 7 – Individual Project Consultations

February 12 – Individual Project Consultations

February 14 – Ethical Issues ##

Hampe, B. (1977) “Ethics in making Documentary” In: Making
documentary films and reality videos: a practical guide to planning,

filming, and editing documentaries of real events. New York:Holt,
77-89.

Malcom J. (1990) *The Journalist and the Murderer*.
New York:Vintage, 3-65.

February 19 – Impact and Intervention in Documentary Work

Hempstead, Texas work. Documentary Film: “Crossover” (Part II)

Ainslie & Brabeck (2003). “Race Murder and Community Trauma:

Psychoanalysis and Ethnography in Exploring the Impact of the
Killing of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas. *Psychoanalysis, Culture,
and Society*, Vol 8(1), 2003.

February 21 - Relational Processes in Life History/Documentary work##

Robert Emerson, (1983). Contemporary Field Research: A Collection of
Readings. Prospect Heights:Waveland Press, Inc.

Introduction pp 173- 189

Wax chapter pp 191-202

Johnson chapter pp 203-215

February 26 – Project Sketches & Interviews*

*Each team will present an overview of their project (concept & plan)

As well as a segment from a sample interview

February 28 – Project Sketches & Interviews*

*Each team will present an overview of their project (concept & plan)

As well as a segment from a sample interview

March 5 - Project Sketches & Interviews*

*Each team will present an overview of their project (concept & plan)

As well as a segment from a sample interview

March 7 - Project Sketches & Interviews*

*Each team will present an overview of their project (concept & plan)

As well as a segment from a sample interview

MARCH 12-16 SPRING BREAK

March 19 – iMovie2*- Part I

Workshop on the software we will use to edit projects

*The class will meet in the Mac lab in SZB 439B

March 21 - iMovie2 - Part II*

Workshop on the software we will use to edit projects

*The class will meet in the Mac lab in SZB 439B

March 26 – iMovie2 - Part III*

Workshop on the software we will use to edit projects

*The class will meet in the Mac lab in SZB 439B

March 28 – Key Concepts in Editing

Class Handout, illustrations

April 2 – Documentary Illustrations

April 4 – Individual Project Consultations

April 9 - Individual Project Consultations

April 11- The importance of “Characters” & Narrative
[Class Examples]

April 16 - The Importance of Transitions
[Class Examples]

April 18 - Last-minute Problem Solving on projects:
Open Class discussion issues/problems/concerns
Developing Project Trailers [Class Examples]

April 23 – May 2 Class Projects***

*** Class projects will be presented during these weeks. Each project group is responsible for disseminating an appropriate reading that addresses a key conceptual issue that is at the heart of the project. The relationship between the reading and the project will form part of the basis for class discussion.

Course Grading and Requirements

Your grade for the course will be based on the following:

Project Proposal 10%
Project Sketch & Interviews 20%
Class Project 50%
Class Attendance, participation, Collaboration Rating 20%

PROJECT PROPOSAL (10% of course grade)*

*This assignment is due on January 24th.

Many foundations and granting sources invite potential applicants to submit an initial letter describing the project for which they are seeking support. You are asked to write a proposal that attempts to “sell” a project idea. Your proposal should be as compelling as possible, but also realistic and practical. The project description should include the following four elements (consider these headings for your proposal):

- 1) “The Project”: a clear description of the event, topic, or setting that would be the focus of the life-history/documentary project
- 2) “Rationale”: a description of why this is an important or worthwhile topic to address, including a conceptual or theoretical rationale for the project
- 3) “Implementation”: a step-by-step description of how the project will be implemented
- 4) “Special Requirements”: description of any special requirements that would need to be met in order to carry this project out

Length: two pages (double-spaced) **MAXIMUM**.

I will review the proposals and select 6-8 of them for this semester’s class projects. Once selected, these will be posted on Blackboard where you’ll be asked to rank them in order of your top three choices. I will then form the semester’s project teams. I will make every effort to assign you to one of your three selections (although I cannot guarantee that the numbers will work out this way). Along with your rankings you may include any special reasons for being assigned to a given project (such as expertise with the topic, access to people or settings that form its subject matter, etc.).

Portion of Course Grade: 10%*

*Note: Selection of a proposal to be one of the class projects will have no bearing on your grade on this assignment. For example, a good, workable idea may not be adequately proposed, whereas a non-selected idea may be proposed effectively.

PROJECT SKETCH AND INTERVIEWS (20% of course grade)

Between February 28 and March 8 each team will present a sketch of their respective projects to the class. Presentations should be 30 minutes in length. These should be concise, clear presentations explaining the aims of each project, the conceptual rationale driving the project, and the status of the project in terms of its implementation. Clips from at least two different interviews should be included as part of the presentation. The selected interview clips should capture the key ideas engaged by the project, or illustrate problems with which the team is struggling in terms of implementation (for these presentations, 10 minutes of interview material is optimal). Think of these presentations as an opportunity for the class to consult on your project.

CLASS PROJECT (50% of Course Grade)

The most important component of this course involves the development of a 18-minute life-history/documentary class project. Early on in the semester the class will be formed into project teams organized around the selected Project Proposals. These teams will consist of 2-3 people. Occasionally, solo projects may be feasible depending on the character of the project and your ability to implement it. The class will receive some instruction on interviewing, filming, and editing, as well as on-campus resources that will be available to you for your projects (video cameras, editing facilities, etc.). I will meet with each of the teams for individual project consultations periodically throughout the semester.

I view the proposals that form the basis for the class projects as just that: proposals. I anticipate that key ideas will evolve and change as they benefit from further reflection by the team. Each project's shape will also be altered as it is put into play in the "real world". In other words, once teams have been established, it is likely that the projects will undergo a natural evolution. For this reason, the final project, as presented in class later in the semester, may be a distant relative of the project originally proposed.

These are to be *collaborative* efforts in terms of the evolving concept of the project as well as in terms of the work required. In other words, the selection of a Project Proposal as the organizing idea for a team's project is *not* intended to confer the role of Director upon its author. All members of a team are expected to contribute to the evolving ideas about the project and to take turns interviewing, filming, logging, etc. I will attempt to assess that everyone on each team is doing their part.

It is ESSENTIAL that you not underestimate the amount of time it will take to develop, implement, and edit your project. Editing, in particular, ALWAYS takes much more time

than you anticipate. You will need to begin your projects early and work on them consistently. You will also need to plan ahead so that equipment and editing facilities are reserved. Remember that there are multiple projects going on at the same time and everyone will be in need of the same equipment and facilities. For this same reason, please be considerate of others: don't reserve time or equipment that you don't need.

On the day that your project is presented in class, your team will be required to turn in a DVD copy of the project.

Because this is a collaborative effort, team members will receive the same grade for the project unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise (such as inadequate participation by a team member).

CLASS DISCUSSION, ATTENDANCE, AND PARTICIPATION

(20% of Course Grade)

It is important that you come to every class (on time) and that you participate actively in discussions. **If you are unable to attend a class, you need to notify me in advance via e-mail** and indicate the reason for your absence. I will take off points from your course grade unless you have a medical excuse. **Team Collaboration Rating:** Toward the end of the semester I will ask members of each team to rate the participation and collaboration of fellow team members. If a team member has failed to do their part on the team project I will take points off of their grade.