



## JRNL 4344/5344 Documentary Production

### PROFESSOR

Dr. Kathleen M. Ryan

### OFFICE

Armory 1B35

### OFFICE HOURS

Wednesday 10:30-11:30 am  
or by appointment

### EMAIL

kathleen.ryan@colorado.edu

### PHONE

303-735-2940

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## Syllabus, Spring 2020

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### WELCOME TO THE REAL (REEL) WORLD

*The salient question might not be, “What is a documentary?” — an abstract, theoretical approach to a form that is grounded in the concrete facts of life. Instead it might make sense to ask what (or whom) a given documentary is for? Is it a goad to awareness, an incitement to action, a spur to further thought? A window? A mirror? The more you think about it, the less obvious the truth appears to be.*

A. O. Scott, *New York Times*, 10/13/2010

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**JOUR 4344/5344** introduces graduate and undergraduate students to journalistic-based narrative non-fiction storytelling. The emphasis will be on quality and compelling interactive non-fiction storytelling.

This spring, you'll act as the staff of an in-house production company, working on an interactive documentary project, or i-doc, over the course of the term.

Over the next 16 weeks, you'll have the chance to:

- Learn what qualities “good” documentaries share
  - Understand what qualifies a project as an “interactive” documentary, and how that relates to/differs from the traditional documentary (television or film)
  - Identify compelling stories and “good” talkers
  - Direct/produce/edit/design a multi-platform documentary on deadline
  - Develop a script, budget and detailed treatment for a documentary project
  - Analyze stories for what went right and what went wrong
  - Learn about ethics and fair use guidelines for documentary filmmakers
  - Develop advanced writing and editing skills for post-production
  - Learn where to look for funding so you can produce your project
  - Learn which film festivals are good and which ones are scams
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## Course Information

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### MEETING TIMES

Wednesday, 3-5:30 p.m.

Armory 206A

\*Note: the schedule is designed to provide ample time for production during class time.

### MATERIALS

Kelly Anderson and Martin Lucas with Mick Hurbis-Cherrier (2016). *Documentary Voice & Vision: A Creative Approach to Non-Fiction Media Production*. New York/London: Focal Press. (required).

Anthony Q. Artis (2007). *The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide* (2nd edition). Waltham, MA: Focal Press. (recommended, all students)

You will also need to purchase HD cards for production purposes. You can borrow cameras, lights, microphones and other equipment from the JMC.

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## Course Production Options

Students will select one of two options to create an i-doc during the term. In one, students will work with (and update) previously-shot material. In the other, students will develop and produce their own project, working either independently or in small teams. In both cases you will be working with the immersive platform Racontr for online production.

### OPTION 1: COLORADO FLOODS, SEVEN YEARS LATER

This student-driven project initially began in Spring, 2014, where a team of Documentary Production students developed a series of stories about the impacts of the floods that devastated the Front Range in September 2013, and later funded by JMC to transition to a feature length film. The story was further updated in Fall 2015, where students followed up on the recovery in the town of Evans and completed, but did not release, a 60-minute film. In this project you will use the materials gathered for these two films, updating as needed, to create an interactive documentary about the floods, the recovery in the various communities, and if things have changed for Colorado. New shooting and interviews will be necessary for this project, as will design of the immersive platform..As part of the project you will identify film festivals to enter the project and (if the deadline is suitable) submit the entries. This option is ideal for students who want to work as part of a production team on an established feature-length project, polishing it for festival and online release.

### OPTION 2: TBD PROJECT

In this option, you (working either independently or in a small team) will complete pre- and post-production for a new interactive documentary short. This option is ideal for students who have a clear idea as to a documentary topic and who are experienced in shooting and editing.

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# Course Assignments

The course assignments are designed to prepare you for both production of your interactive film as well as submission of the film to a festival or other type of screening event.

## DOCUMENTARY LOG LINE & PITCH

During Week Three all students will pitch their plan for Option 1 or Option 2, described above. The pitch should include a one-line short summary (known as a “log line”), and a one paragraph summary of the story, format, and key characters (250 words or less). You’ll post the pitch on Canvas and present it in class for feedback from your fellow students. If you are selecting Option 2, you should pitch a project that takes 8-10 minutes to complete.

But the end of class, we will determine the projects and teams for the term, based upon interest in and viability of the projects.

*Due: January 29th*

**5% of Final Grade.**

## TREATMENT, STORYBOARD & PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

Using guidelines provided and working in your assigned teams, as appropriate, flesh out the pitch idea.

Your treatment should show evidence of research (i.e. how well do you know your story/topic?). It should be between 2-3 pages single spaced, and should give an idea of the story and the artistic approach you will take. Include:

- A 1-2 sentence “elevator pitch” or log line
- A synopsis of the film
- A description of your main characters and/or sources, including names and contact information
- Potential b-roll, archival footage, photographs, and graphics to help you translate your story from page to screen
- Option 1: How are you incorporating what has been shot previously and what are your plans to update the story?
- Option 2: What has been done on the subject in the past and how your i-doc will differ?

In other words, be sure to answer what is your story and why should we care? This should be a compelling case for the importance of your story and your approach.

Your storyboard should use Twine (<http://twinery.org/>) to rough out how *at this point in time* you envision the format and links in the immersive project. We will do a tutorial of Twine in class, but it’s fairly simple to use. *I expect this will change as you move through the production process, especially for students working on Option 2.*

Your shooting/production schedule (1-2 pages) will outline your plan to complete the i-doc within the class schedule. Remember to include course days dedicated to production. Some things to keep in mind:

- Allow time for set-up and break down for interviews (at least one hour extra to your interview time).
- Don't underestimate the time for interviews. I've found that for a long-format piece, my interviews tend to last a minimum of 30 minutes and often go longer, especially if it's an emotional subject matter.
- Don't forget that you may want to get b-roll of the interviewee before or after the interview. Allow time for that.
- Don't shoot everyone in the same location.
- Shoot on the 10 to 1 ratio for b-roll. In other words, if you're doing an 8-minute i-doc, you'll need at least 80 minutes of b-roll. Maybe more.
- Don't forget to allow travel time to the destination in the shooting schedule and to allow for the unexpected (flat tires) or the expected (lunch).

While you shouldn't necessarily quote the reading directly, your treatment, budget, and shooting schedule should demonstrate an awareness of the issues and considerations outlined in the book.

*You'll be graded out of the following 100 point scale:*

- Log Line - 10 points
- Treatment - 35 points
- Storyboard - 35 points
- Shooting Schedule - 10 points
- Incorporation of Class Feedback - 10 points

*Treatment, Storyboard and Shooting Schedule: Due February 12th.*

**15% of final grade.**

## **SCRIPT AND REVISED STORYBOARD**

All video elements of an i-doc should be scripted and all story links and elements should be storyboarded. Scripts can be written in word processing documents and storyboards should be revised in Twine.

A script sample has been provided on the course Canvas page. Use a two-column format and estimate roughly 2 minutes per page. The script will use timecode and b-roll descriptions in the left column and should include interviews, narration, and natural sound.

Think about creative ways to tell your story and know that your approach may change during the editing process - perhaps you need to use narration or can eliminate it because your characters are so compelling, perhaps you'll determine that certain scenes are either useless or need more development after your initial screening. This is all normal.

You will use the revised storyboard to test planned elements for usability and functionality.

*Script and Revised Storyboard: Due March 18th.*

**20% of final grade.**

## **ROUGH EDIT**

Your rough edit of your i-doc will be judged on the following matrix:

- **Storytelling:** Does the film use natural sound, interviews, narrative (optional), graphics, and images to tell a compelling story?
- **Aesthetics:** Does the audio and visual aesthetic style make sense for the i-doc genre?
- **Technical Quality:** Is the audio and video of a professional quality (i.e. easily understandable, properly white balanced, etc.)?
- **Creativity:** Do you approach the subject in a creative and interesting way?
- **On-time production:** Was the edit ready by the deadline for in-class presentation and feedback?

The Rough Edit is graded out of a score of 100, with each element weighted equally.

*Rough Edit: Due April 22nd at the start of class*

**15% of final grade.**

## **FINAL PROJECT**

You will present your film at the Documentary Film Festival during the final exam period. A revised log line, summary, a final script, production team bios, and 2-5 photos/posters for the project should also be a part of your final package, uploaded to Canvas. It will be graded out of a score of 200 points, as outlined below.

Your log line should be revised to reflect your final film. 10 points

Your summary should be 2-3 paragraphs summarizing the subject of the film, its uniqueness, and what the story is. Be sure to include a projected film festival and general release. 20 points

Your final script should reflect changes made to your edit script during editing. Helpful hint: keep a laptop open while editing and do those changes during the editing process. If a Twine storyboard is useful here, please use it as well. 25 points

Team bios should be short (2-3 sentences) bios about every person in your production team. If you are working on the flood project, be sure to include bios of all students who worked on past versions of the film. 20 points

Film festivals want production photos and a poster for your film. Design samples are available on Canvas. 25 points

While you shouldn't necessarily quote the reading directly, your treatment, budget, and shooting schedule should demonstrate an awareness of the issues and considerations outlined in the book.

Your i-doc (100 points) will be judged on the following categories:

- **Rough Edit Revisions:** Did you address or incorporate issues raised by your fellow students? 5 points
- **Storytelling:** Does the i-doc use natural sound, interviews, narrative (optional), graphics, and images to tell a compelling story? 15 points
- **Aesthetics:** Does the audio and visual aesthetic style make sense for the i-doc genre? 25 points
- **Technical Quality:** Is the audio, video and graphic elements of a professional quality (i.e. easily understandable, properly white balanced, no unintentional black or jump cuts in the edit, etc.)? 25 points
- **Creativity:** Does the story approach the subject in a creative and interesting way? 20 points
- **Did you identify on Canvas potential film festivals for the project?** 5 points
- **On-time production:** Was the edit published on Racontr and a link uploaded to Canvas by the deadline? 5 points

*Final Film: Due May 4th, 10pm.*

**25% of final grade.**

## PEER EVALUATIONS

You are expected two peer evaluations per term as anonymous surveys

- Midterm Peer Work Assessment due March 20th
- Final Peer Work Assessment due May 4th

Survey evaluations are graded on a scale of 0 (terrible) to 30 (excellent).

**10% of Final Grade.**

## PARTICIPATION

Course participation is essential. Traditional students are expected to attend class and participate in discussions. The course is designed to give you plenty of time for workshops and team work scheduling (Wednesday are for the most part dedicated to lab sessions to allow you to coordinate shooting schedules and/or meet with your professor to discuss your project). I will also be in my office during any lab sessions for drop in consultations.

If you are sick, please don't attend class. You can miss one class without an excuse, but any additional missed classes will need either a doctor's note or some other proof of illness. Please discuss any CU sanctioned events that may conflict with your attendance at least two weeks before the event (earlier is preferred).

Two unexcused absences will decrease your grade by one grade. Five unexcused absences and you will fail the course. *FAILING TO SHOW UP FOR A SCHEDULED SHOOT OR EDIT SESSION, IN OR OUTSIDE OF SCHEDULED COURSE TIME, COUNTS AS AN ABSENCE AND WILL BE FACTORED INTO YOUR GRADE.*

**5% of Final Grade.**

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## Notes About Production

JOUR 4344/5344 will be conducted as a professional production facility and students are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior:

- Regular on-time attendance.
  - Contribution of viable story ideas for production.
  - Flexibility. Stories are unpredictable and may not happen on a planned schedule.
  - Good time management skills. That way, you can get your stories completed on deadline, and your other classes won't suffer.
  - Communication/discussion of story development (including problems) with the instructor and your project teammates. This is a policy similar to that you will encounter in many workplaces and will be strictly enforced.
  - Grace under deadline pressure
  - Observance of production deadlines. If you can't make a deadline because of production problems, let me know **WHEN THE PROBLEM FIRST ARISES**. Don't wait until the last minute.
  - Integrity in reporting and editing. Staged or false information will be treated as an academic conduct violation. For more on our rules of conduct, examine the University of Colorado code on academic honesty: <http://studentlife.colorado.edu/resources/academic-honesty/>
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## Course Calendar

This calendar is tentative and subject to change based upon availability of guest speakers.

<b>Week 1</b>	January 15th	Introduction & Fundamentals What is an i-doc and what makes documentaries "work"? View: <i>Bear 71, Prison Valley</i> Read: Introduction
<b>Week 2</b>	January 22nd	Planning Your Project, Shooting & Editing Review Read: Chapters 1, 7-8, 17
<b>Week 3</b>	January 29th	Pitch Session Read: Chapters 2-3, 20 Due: Pitch
<b>Week 4</b>	February 5th	Work Day (Treatment, Storyboard & Production Schedule) Group Treatment meetings outside of class time in lieu of class Read: Chapters 4, 6, 16

<b>Week 5</b>	February 12th	Shooting, Lighting & Project Design Read: Chapters 9-12 Due: Treatment, Storyboard & Production Schedule
<b>Week 6</b>	February 19th	Production Day I will be available on Zoom for drop-in consultations on Tuesday, February 18th from 3-5pm (link sent to class via email when meeting opens)  I will be available in my office for drop-in consultations on Monday, February 24th from 2-3pm
<b>Week 7</b>	February 26th	The Art of the Interview Read: Chapters 13-15
<b>Week 8</b>	March 4th	Legal & Ethical Issues Read: Chapters 5, 16 & 23
<b>Week 9</b>	March 11th	RacontR Workshop I
<b>Week 10</b>	March 18th	Documentary Structures View: Excerpts from <i>Pin Up! The Movie</i> and <i>Homefront Heroines: The WAVES of World War II</i> Read: Chapters 18-19 Due: Script and Revised Storyboard
	March 20th	Due: Midterm Peer Evaluations
<b>Week 11</b>	Spring Break	No Class
<b>Week 12</b>	April 1st	Production Meetings Meetings in lieu of class
<b>Week 13</b>	April 8th	Racontr/Edit Workshop II Read: Chapters 21-22
<b>Week 14</b>	April 15th	Rough Edit Screening Due: Rough Edit
<b>Week 15</b>	April 22nd	Edit Day I am available in the Armory 206A for questions and feedback
<b>Week 16</b>	April 29th May 4th	Fine Edits Workshop Due: Final i-Doc published and link posted on Canvas; Final Peer Evaluations all due by 10pm

## Grading

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In production, teamwork is essential. A borderline grade may hinge on the presence or absence of a cooperative attitude. The instructor's own observations will be aided by peer evaluations.



The other major factor is the quality of a student's work, including pre-production research, thoroughness, accuracy, and shooting/editing/design excellence. You are expected to contribute to conversations in class about films made by your fellow students.

Grading will be weighted to reflect the percentages listed above. Individual grades will be available on the Canvas site.

### GRADE DISTRIBUTION

95-100%	A
90-94.9%	A-
87-89.9%	B+
84-86.9%	B
80-83.9%	B-
77-79.9%	C+
74-76.9%	C
70-73.9%	C-
67-69.9%	D+
64-66.9%	D
60-63.9%	D-
Below 60%	F

## A Commitment and Invitation from Our College

CMCI strives to be a community whose excellence depends on diversity, equity, and inclusion. We aim to understand and challenge systems of privilege and disadvantage in higher education, such as those based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability. We seek to reach across social and political divides and to make space for voices historically underrepresented in higher education and marginalized in society. In other words, diversity is not just a future reality for which we try to prepare students. It is a priority we want to put into practice here, now, and together, in order to foster places of learning where all members can thrive.

Our question for you is, *how are we doing?* Please contact the CMCI diversity team (email [Karen Ashcraft](mailto:Karen.Ashcraft) or visit the [CMCI Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Staff](#) page):

- if you need support or other resources but don't know where to turn
- if any aspect of your educational experience with CMCI does not reflect the commitment expressed here, or if you want to share a positive instance of this commitment in action
- if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas related to diversity

We want to hear from you so that we can do better, and to support you however we can!

For full details of the University policies, [click here](#).

## University of Colorado Policies

## **ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

## **CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. 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. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

## **HONOR CODE**

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu), 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office Website](#).

## **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND/OR RELATED RETALIATION**

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct intimate partner abuse (including dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment

and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

## **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. You are allowed four absences in this class for any reason without penalty. This is designed to accommodate any religious holidays that happen during the term (as well as short term illnesses). If a temporary disability due to illness or accident means that you will go over your allotted absences and prevent you from using your allotted absences for religious observances, you should consult the [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

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