

Engl 497: Narrative, Oral History and New Media Technologies
Back From Iraq: The Veterans Stories Project
Spring 2009

Instructors: Nathan Tobey and Dr. Shirley Moody
Class Time: Tu/Th 2:30 - 3:45
Class Location: 320 Wagner Annex

Office Hours and Contact Info:

Moody - Tu 11:45-1:45 (28 Burrowes Bldg); Th 3:45 – 4:45 (at Wagner Annex)
Phone: 863-9584 E-mail: scm18@psu.edu
Tobey – by appointment
Phone: 863-6643 E-mail: net120@psu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this interdisciplinary, team-taught course, students learn the art and practice of oral history research, interviewing and video and web-based documentation. Examining a breadth of oral histories, students analyze storytelling and narrative techniques while considering the theoretical and practical implications of a variety of collection, documentation and dissemination practices. Students gain hands-on experience with the technologies of oral history and the pre- and post-production aspects of video and web-based documentation. By the end of the course, students will have: (1) conducted video-taped oral history interviews (potentially becoming part of WPSU-TV programming); (2) produced written work documenting their collected oral histories and providing feedback on their experiences; (3) utilized web 2.0 to create topic-driven clusters fostering community dialogue centered around the course theme.

COURSE THEME (SPRING 2009): The disproportionate number of Iraqi enlisted soldiers and veterans who will be returning to central Pennsylvania underscores the urgent need to institute a forum to capture these voices while encouraging a community-based dialogue that explores the diverse complexities of Iraq war experiences. The course is designed to empower the returning student-veterans to act as oral historians, interviewers and documentary filmmakers, chronicling the experiences of other Iraqi veterans. The course model embraces the premise that, given the appropriate framework and resources, those who have lived through this war are best suited to help others, who also lived through the war, tell their stories. The documentaries and web-based exchanges this course will produce have the potential to contribute a great deal to public awareness regarding both the personal impact of the war and the meaningful ways that citizens can utilize new technologies to gain voice and foster dialogue.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Michael Rabiger. *Directing the Documentary*, 4th edition (available at PSU bookstore)
- This American Life* ("The Devil In Me – Act One: And So We Meet Again" .\$.99 available for download @ http://www.thislife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?sched=1259)
- Portable hard drive (recommended for student purchase, but can be borrowed short term from Media Tech)
- Additional readings to be distributed

SYLLABUS

JAN

Week One

- Tu 13 Introduction to course and each other
Why oral history?
Why documentary film?
Why veterans interviewing veterans?
Why utilize Web 2.0?
- Th 15 POWER AND PURPOSE OF DOCUMENTARY FILM
In-class viewing: *The War Tapes* excerpts
Course Logistics
Rabiger, 3- top 13; 15

Week Two

- Tu 20 What makes a good story: Identifying the components
In-class viewing: *Hoop Dreams*; *Crumb*; *Homefront*; excerpts
Take home writing assignment: What do you bring to this topic? (to be shared in class and later via web blog)
Rabiger, 51-top of 54
Curran-Bernard 15-31
- Th 22 What makes a good story, con't
Curran-Bernard 44-46
***IRB Quiz assignment distributed – due 1/27**

Week Three

- Tu 27 Web 2.0 workshop (**meet at W315 Pattee Library**)
***Web 2.0 semester posting assignment distribute**
- Th 29 WHERE TO BEGIN: LOCATING YOUR STORY
What kind of story do you what to tell?
Rabiger, 119-138
Curran-Bernard 38-43, 47-60, 129-136
***Identifying and researching local veterans assignment distributed – due 2/12**

FEB

Week Four

Tu 3 How do you visualize a narrative text?
In-class activity: storyboarding the news
Foss, 4-9

Th 5 Characters you care about
In-class activity: *Story Corp.* vignettes

Week Five

Tu 10 LEARNING THE LANGUAGE TO TELL YOUR STORY: SCREENCRAFT
Composition/Exposure/Focus
In-class activity: sample vignettes analysis
Shot by Shot, 52-68
Rabiger, 143 - 157

Th 12 Composition and Continuity, cont.
Shot by Shot 68-82
Curran-Bernard 154
Release Review
*** Treatment Assignment Distributed – due 3/3**

Week Six

Tu 17 PREPRODUCTION
The preproduction checklist
Guest instructor: Chuck Ungar

Th 19 The Equipment
Media Tech Workshop
Meet at Media Tech in Wagner Annex
***Video Exercise distributed - due 3/5**

Week Seven

Tu 24 PRODUCTION
Workshop: Studio 204 - Intro to resources and Final Cut Pro
(meet at 206 Pollock Building)

Th 26 Developing your story ideas
Rabiger, 128-138
In-class activity: *This American Life* 340- “The Devil In Me”

MARCH

Week Eight

Tu 3 The Oral History Interview
In-class activity: Oral History Interview Analysis

Th 5 Conducting the Interview
In-class activity: Conducting practice interviews
****Distribute rough cut assignment - due 3/26***

Week Nine

Mar 9 - 13 **Spring Break – No Classes**

Week Ten

Tu 17 Sound and Music
Rabiger, 455 - 481

Th 19 Screening: *Land of Confusion*
Guest Lecturer: Jeremy Zerechak

Week Eleven

Tu 24 POSTPRODUCTION
Workshop: Advanced Final Cut Pro
Guest instructor: Chris Mauer
(location TBA)

Th 26 Editing Theory and Techniques
Curran-Bernard 193-210
Rabiger, 428-442
****In-class activity: Review rough cuts in class, discuss***

Week Twelve

Tu 31 Structure and Time Lecture
In-class activity: Review rough cuts in class/discuss
Curran-Bernard 61-86
Rabinger: 79-91, 421-427

April

Th 2 Narrating the documentary
In-class activity: Continue rough cut review
Rabiger, 443-454
Curran-Bernard, 211-232

Week Thirteen

Tu 7 In-class viewing: Vignettes

Th 9 In-class workshops: Discussing, critiquing, editing in process

Week Fourteen

Tues 14 In-class workshops: Discussing, critiquing, editing in process

Th 16 In-class workshops: Discussing, critiquing, editing in process

Week Fifteen

Tu 21 In class-viewing of final documentaries
****Final Projects Due In-Class**

Th 23 In class-viewing of final documentaries

Week Sixteen

Tu 28 In class-viewing of final documentaries

Thur 30 Public Screening

REQUIREMENT AND GRADING POLICY:

Class participation (including all writing assignments, quizzes, in-class activities, IRB quiz, surveys, etc) 20%

Preliminary Filming Assignment 10%

Rough Cut Assignment 10%

Web 2.0 Blog (15 entries) 15%

Project Proposal/Treatment 15%

Final 5 minute documentary 30%

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Active and engage class attendance is expected. If you are absent you should notify the instructors prior to class or in cases of emergency, you are responsible to notify the instructors within one class period of the day missed. It is your responsibility to find out what you missed and to make arrangements to make up any class work or assignments from the day/s you were absent.

NAMES AND PHONE NUMBERS/E-MAILS OF CLASSMATES:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

USEFUL NUMBERS/SITES:

University Learning Centers

Peer Tutoring

Counseling and Psychological Services

865-1841 or www.ulc.psu.edu

www.ulrc.psu.edu

863-0395 or www.sa.psu.edu/caps

DISABILITY ACCESS STATEMENT

"The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible" (from College of Liberal Arts, http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Deans_Area/Preparingyoursyllabus.shtml).

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

"Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanctions." (from College of Liberal Arts, http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Academic_Integrity/integrity_andyour_syllabi.shtml).

REVISED SYLLABUS SCHEDULE THROUGH END OF SEMESTER

Week Ten

Tu 17 *Land of Confusion*, in-class viewing
***Distribute rough cut assignment – due March 31**

Th 19 *Land of Confusion*, in-class viewing, con't
Guest Lecturer: Jeremy Zerechak

Week Eleven

Tu 24 POSTPRODUCTION
Workshop: Advanced Final Cut Pro
Guest instructor: Chris Mauer
(location TBA)

Th 26 Sound and Music
Rabiger, 455 – 481

Week Twelve

Tu 31 Editing Theory and Techniques
Curran-Bernard 193-210
Rabiger, 428-442
***In-class activity: Begin Rough Cut Review**

April

Th 2 Structure and Time
Curran-Bernard 61-86
Rabinger: 79-91, **421-427**
Continue Rough Cut Review

Week Thirteen

Tu 7 Narrating the documentary
Rabiger, 443-454
Curran-Bernard, 211-232
Continue Rough Cut Review

Th 9 In-class workshops: Discussing, critiquing, editing in process

Week Fourteen

Tues 14 Independent work day – No Class

Th 16 In-class workshops: Discussing, critiquing, editing in process

Week Fifteen

Tu 21 In class-viewing of final documentaries
****Final Projects Due In-Class**

Th 23 In class-viewing of final documentaries

Week Sixteen (we will conduct exit interviews during this final week)

Tu 28 In class-viewing of final documentaries

Thur 30 Public Screening – time and location TBA