SHIFTING FOCUS: VIDEO PRODUCTION AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

OVERVIEW
Community organizers and activists have been making and using film and video since the Film and Photo League of the 1920’s. The power of the moving image to galvanize public opinion and shape the course of history has not been lost on the generations of social and political activists that have picked up the camera or sat behind an editing machine in the hope that they will produce something that will make a difference. Never has this been more true than today, when rapid decreases in the cost of equipment, the creation of increasingly easy-to-use editing programs, and the ability to distribute video via the internet have inspired literally thousands of people to take up their cameras and begin to document the work and the events they see going on around them.

The course will explore the role of media as an advocacy and/or community organizing tool, by asking what the role of documentary is in social change movements and what types of media actually help to create change. What audiences are targeted by these films? What do we want the impact of the film on these audiences to be? We want to explore the use of varying styles of documentary to observe, document, inform, and impact audiences emotionally, intellectually and politically.

In this course we will put these theoretical questions to the practical test of actually producing, in collaboration with community organizers, short pieces of “tactical media” that the organizers can then use in the course of the ongoing work of social change.

We will also be exploring questions around the topic of collaboration and community engagement. Under what conditions can genuine collaboration take place, and what practices can help foster it? How can one engage and collaborate across lines of difference such as race and class, in a process that moves beyond charity towards genuine solidarity?

GOALS
1. To learn the basics of video production from pre-production through post-production.

2. To learn how to work as a part of a team and collaborate with fellow students to produce meaningful work.
3. To understand basic communications strategy- why, when and in what form video can and should be used by community organizers to advance their work.

4. To understand better how to engage and collaborate across lines of difference.

EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING
In this class you will be asked to do a lot of work as a team, on your own time. The amount of time and effort that you put into project work, along with the quality of your participation in the class will be the critical factors comprising your grade. The most important things you can do are to show up to class prepared to participate in discussion and be a responsible and accountable collaborative partner. Here’s a guideline for how grading works in this class:

Attendance and Participation: 40%
Come to class, on time, prepared, and participate: The class meets only 13 times in a semester, so one absence is significant. Two is bad. Three is almost 25% of the class, which I would consider a lot of missed class. Also, our classes will be very full, moving from one exercise to another as we try to cover a lot of ground in limited time. It’s important that you show up on time. Three late arrivals (more than a few minutes) will count as one absence. So, show up on time and prepared to participate.
AND- Show and Tell: each of you will be asked to present to the class an example of video advocacy that you have discovered for yourself. This is wide open- anything that you find interesting, or moving, or funny. Good or bad, so long as it provides the class with material to discuss. The expectation is that your presentation and discussion of it will last 15-20 minutes, so try to keep things brief.

Papers: 25%
There will be significant written work for the class. Most of the written work will come in the form of response papers, which will be 2-4 page papers in response to assigned readings. These are due at the beginning of class, printed, double spaced. Late papers are graded accordingly. I have posted sample response papers on Blackboard to give you a sense of what I’m looking for. In addition you will write a 4-7 page reflection paper at the end of the semester, examining and evaluating your educational experience in the class and your performance in it.

Final Project- 35%
   Research, Proposal, and Treatment- 33%
   Footage- 33%
   Edit- 33%

Results matter, but so does process. In the end, the quality of the work that you do is what will make you proud of yourselves, and that’s what matters more than any grade.
But how you get there, the preparations you make and the process by which you make it all come together is something that I will pay attention to.

Finally, collaboration, collegiality and respect for one another are required. Students in one group may receive differing grades if it becomes clear that they are doing more or less work. I reserve the right to grade students separately from the rest of their group based on their contribution to the project.

Academic Integrity
You belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html)

FINAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND TIMELINE
Over the course of the semester, students will learn how video is and can be used as a tool of persuasion and advocacy in the advancement of a social or political goal. There is therefore in this course the very concrete goal of producing something that will be of use; something appropriate to screen in public and broadcast over public access cable.

Video Production: Each team will be required to produce video work in collaboration with an organization. The content of this piece will be entirely up to the teams and organizations involved, but will be arrived at over the course of the semester with the input and advice of the instructor and fellow students.

Community Organizing: This is not a straightforward documentary film production class. Although we will study the documentary film tradition, and much of what students will produce will be rooted in that tradition, what is being produced for this class will be for the purpose of organizing people to take action of some kind or another.

PROJECT DEADLINES
September 15th- Organization met

October 6th – Initial Video Proposal/Treatment

October 20th- Class presentations on projects

November 24th – Rough Cut Screenings

December 15th – Final Presentation/Screening at night
Bear in mind that, as this kind of work is bound to be less than predictable, a team may find itself shooting a lot of footage before proposals are due, or a team may find that they are not able to wrap shooting until later than called for. We will all try to remain flexible and open-minded throughout the process.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction, by Patricia Aufderheide

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

09/08/15 - Introductions and Overview
Define goals, discuss structure of course. Describe nature of collaborations/expectations and fill out questionnaire.
In-class reading of Pedagogy of the Oppressed followed by discussion
View previous student work, other examples of video advocacy and activism
Discuss GOLES
Asset Mapping and other introductions.

09/15/15 – Meeting GOLES, intro to the LES
Show and Tell at NYU
Face to Face with GOLES
Reading: Histories of LES (Selected)
Writing: Response Paper #1

09/22/15- What is Video Advocacy? & Camera Workshop- LAB
Show and Tell
Discussion of Readings
Discussion of Groups
Go over camera check out procedure
Short camera workshop
Go over video assignment- portrait of place
Reading: Aufderheide Text, Video for Change, Video Activist Handbook
Writing: Response Paper #2

09/29/15  -What is Collaboration? & Camera Workshop Part II- LAB
Show and Tell
Discussion of Readings
Watch “dailies”
Camera Workshop Part II
Decide on Groups.
Reading: Creeen Text, TBD
Writing: Response Paper #3
Collaboration: Vid Assignment 1- Portrait of Place
10/06/15 - What is Service Learning? - GOLES OFFICES
Discussion of Reading
Watch some “dailies”
Q and A on the gear
Explanation of Presentations
Reading: - Cress text, Rios text
Writing: Response Paper #4
Collaboration: Video Treatment Due

10/13/15 - NO CLASS

10/20/15 - Group Presentations on Projects
Show and Tell
Teams will have the opportunity to share what they are learning about outside the classroom with their fellow classmates. They will discuss the goals of their projects, any problems that are arising, and seek feedback and support from their classmates. They will share any stills or video that they have.
Reading- Directing the Documentary.
Writing- NONE
Collaboration- Prepare Presentations

10/27/15- Meerkat Media Collective- GOLES OFFICES
Show and Tell
Discussion of Readings
Visiting with Meerkat Media Collective
Meetings with GOLES Staff.
Reading: TBD
Collaboration: Shooting!

11/03/15-Introduction to Premiere Pro- LAB
Show and Tell
Premiere Pro 1- understanding the Premiere Pro Environment
Logging and Transferring
Collaboration: Shooting! Editing!

11/10/15 - Premiere Pro Lesson 2- LAB
Show and Tell
Project Management
Audio Syncing
Collaboration: Shooting and Editing

11/17/15- Premiere Pro Lesson 3- LAB
Show and Tell
Motion and Effects
Work on Ad Remix
Collaboration: SHooting and Editing

11/24/15- ROUGH CUT SCREENINGS

12/01/15- WORK DAY

12/08/15- WORK DAY

12/15/15- FINAL SCREENING