

DocNomads
Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Documentary Film Directing
ECTS FILE

DOC NOMADS EMJMD		
Course unit: Documentary Film-directing (III)		Duration: 3 semesters
Semester's Name: Sound and Signature		Semester: 3rd
Contact hours: 100	Individual working hours: 125	ECTS: 9
Type: Theory & Practice		Graded by: Permanent Evaluation and Assignment
<p>Lecturer: Christina Stuhlberger, Kwinten Van Laethem, Nina de Vroome Teachers involved: Several guest speakers will be invited, but the entire course is supervised and graded by the lecturer (Christina Stuhlberger) and the assistant lecturers (Kwinten van Laethem and Nina de Vroome).</p>		
<p>Syllabus of the semester: Course unit contents</p> <p>The aim of the course is to broaden the theoretical and practical knowledge of the narrative potential of sound in documentary filmmaking and to help the students to develop their personal signature as filmmakers.</p> <p>Sound: Students investigate the often-overlooked role of sound in documentary filmmaking and its narrative and propelling force. Along the semester, the students create a documentary film in which the use of sound precedes the use of image. Building on field recordings in Brussels the students are required to use sound as the groundwork of their films. Students investigate what stories sounds tell us and how can they set a story in motion. What do sounds tell us about the world we are living in?</p> <p>Signature: Students develop personal ways of storytelling by investigating the narrative potential of sound. Students deconstruct the sounds they recorded and formulate questions which will set their film work in motion. They will make their film in relation and dialogue with the city of Brussels.</p>		
<p>Objective of the course unit: Objectives. Knowledge, abilities, and skills to be acquired</p> <p>The exercise sharpens the senses and the understanding of the use of sound in documentary filmmaking. The students should be able to demonstrate that they are able to create a personal, inventive, and critical film work. Students engage in a dialogue with peers and tutors about their work and are capable of articulating creative choices and decisions in the making of their film.</p>		
<p>Teaching methodologies and assessment: Planned learning activities, teaching methods and assessment methods and criteria</p>		

The course sets out with in-depth technical training to familiarize the students with the equipment available to realize their course project. Advanced technical understanding and practical skills regarding recorders, microphones, cameras etc will facilitate creative expression throughout this and subsequent assignments. Teachers integrate application exercises with artistic discussions in relation to the presented techniques with the aim to foster a holistic approach to filmmaking that considers the expressive impact of technical choices. In the introduction class of the course work assignment, we will discuss films, artwork and texts that exemplify the creative potential of sound in film.

The course work assignment consists of a sound-centred portrait of a previously unknown person without relying on narration. Limiting the choice of characters to strangers encourages engagement with Brussels and unfamiliar surroundings. We consider this beneficial to auditive explorations and the development of social skills vital for documentary filmmaking. The work process is structured into different stages that are closely supervised through bi-weekly peer-to-peer sessions during which students present their results and discuss progress, choices, and upcoming steps with teachers and peers.

Work stages:

1. Recording and editing of a soundscape based on a characterizing element, e.g. space, emotion, physicality connected to the portrayed character (no video, no spoken words, no music).
2. Further development of the soundscape complemented by preliminary visuals (no spoken words, no music).
3. Final development of the film (both sound and image) including text and music to the extent required to complete the portrait.

Requirements:

- Use of a-sync sound, asymmetric sound must be present in the film.
- Portraiture as vehicle to develop a perspective on the world.
- Narrative must be driven as much by the sound as the image.
- Film should be between 6 - 15 minutes (credits included).

Assessment:

- Process (research, developing a reflective attitude, engaging in a dialogue with both peers and tutors).
- Conformity with the exercise's main premises.
- Mastering techniques and skills to develop and present a personal creation.
- Using the camera as a tool to develop a mise-en-scene that expresses an appropriate and original approach to the subject.
- The use of sound and image editing to create a cinematic structure that conveys a signature as an author.
- To be present in all activities and meetings in a timely manner.

At the end of the semester, students will present their completed works in front of a jury comprised of the designated lecturers of this course. The final grade derives in equal parts from

- 1: the quality of the completed work and
- 2: the student's progress made in the course of the semester.

The latter also takes into account their ability to master techniques to develop and present an audiovisual creation, their compliance with the exercise's main premise and adherence to the teaching schedule, the quality of the student's contributions to the group discussions and their supportiveness of fellow student's projects.

Students are required to attend and actively participate in all classes and related activities. In accordance with the student agreement, unmotivated absences may lead to a lower grade. The grade may be significantly reduced if you miss classes or do not participate during the classes.

In principle, the classes take place on campus. Individual consultations can be organised online. In case of a COVID surge, online classes will be organised. On campus teaching will be organised according to the applicable COVID-19 regulations. No online alternatives are provided for classes organized on campus. Excursions and visits will be organised according to the COVID-19 regulations at the time of the event.

Main bibliography and films:

Recommended or required reading/seeing

- This will be introduced at the beginning of the course.