

## DOCNOMADS Lisbon | 2023-2025

### **Documentary Skills**

#### *An Introduction to Filmmaking Practices*

### **TEAM FILM EXERCISE**

#### ***Point of View***

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- Point of View: a miniature filmic “story” with no words, in a complete sequence of scenes.
- Cinematic exercise on subjective point of view and filmic narrative representation.
- Length: 3 to 5 minutes
- Groups of two students (see assigned pairs in “DSK Film Exercise – Assigned Teams”)

### **OBJECTIVES**

Each assigned team of students is required to produce a narrative sequence of scenes structurally articulated in editing in terms of narrative progression, and linked according to a common point of view concept that should be recognizable by the viewers.

This exercise will be an opportunity to explore several filmmaking matters approached in the preceding classes, while emphasizing pure cinematic premises of representation by connecting visual and aural aspects that you'll select to shoot in view to convey particular meaning to observed events in the ordinary everyday.

The exercise aims for you to develop the ability of thinking how to conceive and shoot scenes taken from the unbounded real life you observe, which can act in film as significant moments condensed in bounded frames of time, space and action.

- *How can I represent in film what I understand from what I see?*
- *Which moments and actions should I isolate in the flow of real time?*
- *How to capture and link real-life situations to be broadly perceived as meaningful?*
- *What should be visible, and what should stay off-screen in the whole representation of a scene?*

### **TOPIC**

“Labor scenes in the everyday” is the guiding topic for your exploration of meaningful scenes, reflecting something universally related to the human condition, to represent in a film sequence that builds a complete narrative sense according to a specific point of view that should be recognizable by the audience (i.e. what you intend to convey as the overarching meaning).

Although the understanding of “labor” can be taken in a conceptual broader logic, the film exercise should aim to represent a whole sense of a *story* in just a short sequence of scenes that nevertheless can give us the understanding of something particular in relation to the portrayed people’s circumstances filtered by the way you see them, so from your subjective gaze and insight.

## **SUBJECT**

The focus of the film exercise must be delimited to ONE specific place and, preferentially, using one referential character. The subject must be what happens in that place, either as activities of a single person or of a small group of people you observed, about which you find something particular and compelling to represent throughout a sequence of scenes.

Shooting has to be circumscribed to that relatively enclosed space (e.g. a store, a workshop, a park, a house, etc.), with the camera being able to be positioned anywhere inside and outside, but never moving away from there to other places, such as “following” the referential character (or any other somehow related to the action in there).

The prevalence of a central character in the place is intended to give a pivotal focus to actions and events occurring in there, even if (s)he is passive sometimes. Moreover, at times (s)he can be shown alone, or interacting with others, or even the place can sometimes be shown without a character. But in the whole of the film sequence, the character must be perceived as somehow the “center” (or the reference) of the actions happening in the place, at least as you see and want to represent them in the film. Therefore, it shouldn’t be a film exercise just about the place as “space” or as “landscape”.

## **LOCATIONS**

Research and fieldwork of the film exercise has to be done in your close surroundings in order to make easier your regular observation of the people, place and situation/s that will suggest you the subject and focus of the filmic project.

You should do an extensive scouting as earlier as possible and let the reality you’ll encounter to inspire fresh ideas to approach it creatively. Regular visiting of potential places is advised to notice steady patterns and unexpected ones, and also to foster closer contacts with locals in situations you want to film.

Nevertheless, the realization of the exercise is not mainly dependent of sustained verbal communication with local people, by which spoken language could be a barrier, thus facilitating this first experience of researching and filming in foreign territory.

## **APPROACH**

Select scenes from situations evolving in different occasions at the same place. The objective is to find a point of view of representation about the way you see what is happening there, in order to convey a certain sense of “storytelling”. So, not simply recording a process, but otherwise, conveying some sort of narrative or dramatic implications in relation to what we’ll see and hear.

Pay attention to cycles in relation to events unfolding in time; to motivations that can be inferred from the behavior of the referential character. Aim to explore what actions occurring can visually convey of significant; what to depict in the scenes that can add dramaturgic value. Look for means of giving meaning to atmosphere, and to silences.

A theme or a dramatic premise should be chosen to work as the underlying meaningful element that will ensure the cohesion of the whole sequence.

The filmmakers' point of view towards the depicted, as a subjective interpretation of the observed reality, should reverberate in every scene embedded in both narrative and formal decisions.

## **FORM AND STYLE**

You may consider any suitable style in filming, namely by using static or moving camera, and any type of framing size, although all cinematic options should be conceptually justified.

However, you're required to only use the observational mode (no filmed interaction with people).

Moreover, **words** (either in voice over narration, or in people talking) **cannot be used**.

Meaning that people may talk in scenes, but their speech should not be relevant in terms of "text" to be followed by the audience as a foremost element in which the representation relies.

The editing of the scenes should only make use of the cutting feature. No dissolves, no curtains, nor other video effects.

It's not intended a "silent movie" neither to use sound as merely accessory to the images. Sound is important in its counterpart role along with the images, so you should try to use the expressive potential of the sound dimension to help the "telling of the story".

For the soundscape's design you're required to use mainly recorded ambient and sync sound, although enhanced in post-production. You may use additional sounds to heighten the sense intended to convey, or using it as counterpoint to images, or even other justified purpose.

But music is not allowed. Neither you can insert a title.

## **STRUCTURE**

Although each scene has to work expressively by itself in terms of imparting some perceivable meaning in relation to what is depicted, its singularity should be enlarged and complemented through the linear articulation in time of the whole sequence of scenes.

So, the editing of each scene should be carefully considered in terms of its significance and contribution to the whole.

Moreover, preceding and succeeding scenes within the sequence have to be planned in order to create a sense of progression that builds one upon another from beginning to end.

## TEAM

Assigned pairs will work collaboratively in all steps of the exercise's implementation:

- Exploring their close environments and searching for possibilities of subjects during fieldwork;
- Contributing to the discussion of ideas to approach a given subject;
- Developing a conceptual and formal working proposal;
- Presenting the proposal to the class;
- Filming and editing the exercise sequences.

However, the team may choose to occasionally distribute complementary roles, namely during the filming and editing stages of the exercise.

## PROPOSALS PRESENTATION

Each team of students will present orally (pitch) their working proposal on **October 4<sup>th</sup>**, within a limited time slot (up to 6 minutes). Feedback from the class will be required.

**NOTE:** each of the presentations must include, either in the beginning or in the end (you choose), a synopsis of 1 to 3 lines that encapsulates the essentials of your project.

In that very short form you must try your best to answer any of these questions: which is your point of view? OR which is your angle of approach to the subject? OR what you intend viewers to understand and/or to feel by watching the sequence?

Below you'll find guidelines commonly used to pitch the main ideas of a film project in up to 6 minutes:

1. **PREMISE / CONCEPT:** Start by highlighting what's the project about, presenting just an overall idea with which audience can get in tune quickly.  
**Show** one single image from fieldwork that can better represent the way you see the subject (literally or metaphorically).
2. **SUBJECT AND POINT OF VIEW:** Introduce the chosen subject and explain which key situations / activities / actions / settings you found particularly significant or intriguing amidst the whole you observed on location, and **why**.  
Address only the relevant contextual info to understand that "particular world" to where audience will be brought in through your intended exploration.
3. **APPROACH:** Summarize the main situations / activities / actions within the subject's approach that you want to focus in to bring forward to the audience.  
Emphasize **what** of most significant you want to **show** or **question** in representing them.

4. REPRESENTATION: Show five photos taken during fieldwork to illuminate **what we'll see and how** (scenes framing and its sequencing in linear time), like a trailer.  
  
Preferably you should order these visual samples in a sequence that emulates the visual articulation of the key scenes that you'll shoot for the film exercise.  
  
Add a few notes about what we'll **hear** during the progression of the scenes (your main ideas for the soundscape design).
5. THEME: Identify the theme/s or main dramatic premise that underlies your approach and point of view towards the chosen subject.
6. MOTIVATION: Explain why you think this particular subject interest you and attracts you to film it.

### SCREENINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first screening will be held on **October 10<sup>th</sup>**, aiming to subsequent revision of the exercises (re-shoot and/or re-edit). Each team presentation will be followed by analysis and discussion. Other instructors will participate in this session.

A second screening of the revised exercises will take place in the last session of **October 17<sup>th</sup>**, followed by class discussion and the course instructor's final feedback.

### PRODUCING AND DELIVERING THE EXERCISE

To produce the exercise you may use the school's equipment and/or your own.

In the shooting places you are advised to only use the existing ambient light, although additional practical lights may be improvised on the spot as necessary.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> DELIVERY

For the first presentation of the exercise assemble the sequence of scenes in the editing timeline.

Export an MP4 or MOV file **no bigger than 1 GB** in HD 1920x1080 using H.264 codec.

Identify the exported file with the exercise's ID, your names and date (e.g. *DSK\_Point of View\_(team first names)\_10 OCT 2023*)

Then upload the files until Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> October (11pm) to the GoogleDrive folder here:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DmnEH-LnFUC3\\_e8jf4uBMIUMSfqV8oNr?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DmnEH-LnFUC3_e8jf4uBMIUMSfqV8oNr?usp=sharing)

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> DELIVERY

For the final presentation of the revised exercise export the updated sequence following the specs mentioned above.

Don't forget to update the presentation date in the exported file with the exercise's ID, your names and date (e.g. *DSK\_Point of View\_(team first names)\_17 OCT 2023*)

Then upload the file until Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> October (11pm) to the GoogleDrive folder here:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DmnEH-LnFUC3\\_e8jf4uBMIUMSfqV8oNr?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DmnEH-LnFUC3_e8jf4uBMIUMSfqV8oNr?usp=sharing)

### **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

- Recognizable film concept.
- Conveyance of a meaningful point of view.
- Narrative progression and coherence
- Dramaturgic value
- Expressive use of cinematic language.

The evaluation and marks in regard to your performance in this film exercise will also consider:

As team assessment:

- How the pitch demonstrated a committed research and development of the project.
- How the learning progress of the team is patent in the film's updates from one screening to the following (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> deliveries).
- How the produced film conforms to the objectives and requirements of the exercise.
- How the team was able to cooperate in the tasks in order to find a common project and co-jointly produce the film exercise.

As individual assessment:

- How the participation of each student in the class discussions contributed qualitatively to appraise and comment on the work of their classmates.

OBS: Other instances of assessment, as defined in the general norms for the practical courses in the semester, will apply to deliberate your final mark in this practical course (see page 9 in "DN-Lisbon\_Semester Organization and Norms to Students\_2023").