

DOCNOMADS Lisbon | 2023-2025

Documentary Skills | Directing in the Field | Documentary Film Directing

SEMESTER FILM EXERCISES OVERVIEW

*Film gives us the bodies of those we have filmed; yet those same bodies dissipate or are transformed before our eyes. I want to try to gasp the sense of this – if not to find the person among phantoms, then perhaps to find some reasons for my puzzlement. If Images lie, why are they so palpable of the life between us? I want to look sometimes sidelong, at the **spaces between the filmmaker and the subject**: of imagery and language, of memory and feeling. These are spaces charged with ambiguity, but are they not also the spaces in which consciousness is created?*

David MacDougall, "The Space Between", in Transcultural Cinema

This is the first semester of DOCNOMADS mobile school. From the previous experiences in the program we know that students have to deal with a lot of new feelings and expectations in particular at this entry level of the study.

Since you do not know each other well, you'll be in the process of building a group, exploring common interests and sharing ideas. In a way, all of you will be trying to find a place in a sort of "new life".

You all come from very distinct cultural backgrounds, technical skills and levels of professional experience. All those differences are part of the beauty of the DocNomads program, but also the biggest challenge in this master course.

Students will work in unfamiliar territory, where the lack of language understanding and cultural differences will always be present in their way of interpreting reality.

In order to take advantage of that inevitable situation you'll work in practical exercises that are designed to experiment, to analyse, and to reflect on the possibilities and the limits of relationship and "distance" between you and your subject/character, among other key aspects in documentary filmmaking, through which you should find a way to express your own creative identity.

The screening of the exercises, and the following commenting and open discussions among all class are a very important part of this process, so we count on each of you to be participative.

This will be a very intensive semester, thus students should be aware that it would be required rigorous planning and time management to fulfil the assigned tasks.

MAIN FILM EXERCISES

During the semester, students will be assigned three main film exercises which aim to provide a continual practice on documentary filmmaking.

In those major film exercises students will be progressively applying learned techniques and aesthetics, while exploring aspects related to cinematic issues, to various modes of approach in filming, to the relation between filmmaker and subjects, to reflexivity as an ethical position, to identification of the dramatic potential of reality subjects, and to build consistent narratives.

There will be two preliminary exercises in which students will team in groups of two, sharing all technical tasks and aesthetical decisions:

- **Exercise # 01: Sequence of scenes “Point of View” (3 to 5 minutes).**
- **Exercise # 02: Collaborative doc “Time Lines” (7 to 10 minutes).**

The final exercise will be individual, although classmates should help each other in the shooting tasks:

- **Exercise # 03: Short doc “People and Conflict” (10 to 15 minutes).**

The first exercise (“Point of View”) will be supervised by Victor Candeias.

The second exercise (“Time Lines”), held during fieldwork on location, will be guided and supervised by Margarida Cardoso and Tiago Hespanha.

For the third and final exercise (“People and Conflict”) the class will be divided in three groups, each group to an assigned mentor (Margarida Cardoso or Tiago Hespanha or Victor Candeias) with whom they should consult regularly.

METHODOLOGY

Since the beginning of the semester students are aware of the guidelines for all the practical work, including the schedule for each stage of its execution.

The supervisors will assign the students’ pairs for the group exercises #01 and #02, and as well the coached groups for the individual exercise #03.

For each assigned exercise mentors are available to guide students since the early stage of research and fieldwork, as necessary. Students are advised to regularly consult with the assigned mentor about the progress (or not...) of their research, project development and production steps.

However, solely the students will perform the research work and contacts in the field.

Students who may need some help from a Portuguese speaker during fieldwork should ask to their mentors. The school can’t provide regular assistance by local speakers, although we’ll try to find some incidental help that may be needed to language translation during the post step in the final exercise.

Students may use the school’s equipment and/or their own. Since the schools’ equipment available for DocNomads is limited, students should strictly follow the planning of the shared equipment assigned for each exercise by the course director.

The exercises' guidelines, including the restriction of shooting days and film duration must be taken in mind while choosing projects and subjects (namely its location and availability) during the preparatory stages of research and development.

Due to the intensive schedule of practical work during the semester, students should strictly observe the schedule for all steps of the projects' implementation, not just the exercises' delivery deadlines.

All exercises will be watched in class for students to receive feedback and advice that should lead to improvements. Upon conclusion of the first two exercises, students may subsequently upgrade their work provided that this will not hinder the accomplishment of the final exercise #03.

However, these first exercises should not be re-shot, nor its original project premises be radically altered in re-editing. The final versions of upgraded exercises #01 and #02 should then be delivered until **15th of November** to the supplied folders in GDrive.

For the case of exercise #03, all footage required to watch in class, such as clips of edited work-in-progress, first and final cuts, should be brought to class in a portable disk. Make sure that these media files conform to play in VLC or QuickTime players.

MASTER FILES

Finalized exercises required to upload to GDrive should be exported according to DocNomads technical specifications, and always identified with the exercise's title, delivery date and author/s name/s (see assignments guidelines).

The inclusion of title + end credits, plus the DocNomads logo animation, is only due for the final semester exercise #03, unless you receive a different instruction from the course director.

For archival purposes, a non-subtitled version (international master) of the film Exercise #03 is recommended.

ASSESSMENT

In general, your assessment in regard to the main film exercises will take into account:

- The development, improvement and outcomes along all stages of the film exercises, in compliance with the objectives and requirements of each task (see exercises guidelines).
- The commitment of the students to show progress in learning by applying the acquired knowledge and skills in their evolving work.
- The integration of feedback received by the instructors in the improvement of their work.
- Commitment to the quality presentation of project ideas, on-going works and finalized exercises.
- Compliance with deadlines.
- Qualitative participation in class discussions.