

DOCUMENTARY AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL FILMMAKING

4 JULY - 22 JULY, 2011

Detailed course description:

Course rationale

Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in anthropological filmmaking in the academia and the documentary world. With visual media playing an increasingly central role in the modern world, the textual bias of the social sciences came under increasing pressure. Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in anthropological filmmaking in the academia and the documentary film world. With visual media playing an increasingly central role in the modern world, the textual bias of the social sciences came under increasing pressure. Challenging this state of affairs, visual anthropology and filmmaking showed how visuality provides new and creative means for understanding and representing social life. The visual has become a primary tool for teaching, documenting, analyzing social phenomena but also communicating and engaging with broader audiences. Universities around the world introduced courses or graduate programs in visual anthropology or ethnographic filmmaking which became indispensable tools for any social scientist considering ethnographic research. Central-Eastern Europe had its share of enthusiasm but the development of this field in the region was not consistent and its professionalization lagged behind. This summer course answers thus a concrete professional need, offering a combined practical and theoretical training to young researchers and junior faculty from the region interested in using film in their research and teaching. It enables them to use film more consciously and creatively in order to gain a new perspective in their approach to the world and learn to convey their ideas in a new language.

Brief overview of the course

The three-week course is split into three blocks of five teaching days. During days 1-5 students will have a theoretical and historical introduction into visuality and film in anthropology. They will do hands-on camera exercises on camera technique, sequence and narrative structure, good sound and interview technique. A selection of their exercises will be edited so they understand how to shoot for the edit. They will write and redraft a film proposal and budget the film that they intend to make. They will become aware of the ethical, financial, legal, and stylistic issues involved in representing other people and cultures. By viewing a variety of socially relevant films, they will experience different genres and discover an approach relevant to their own filming style. Thus they will be ready to go out during the first weekend and shoot their own films in teams of two.

During the second week participants will work on one of CEU's Final Cut Pro Studio editing workstation. In an interactive and hands-on environment they will be guided through the basic skills of film editing. Participants will learn the functions and tricks of the trade of editing digital video; how to organise footage, assemble a story, create editing transitions, effects, and colour corrections, lay narration and work with audio. At the end of the second week they will have a rough cut of their film project and the possibility to film pick-up footage for the last week's finecut editing. In parallel with the editing sessions students will be exposed to different styles of film followed by discussions with invited filmmakers during masterclasses. Three more sessions in a seminar format (based on required readings) will address critical issues related to the veracity of the

visual record, knowledge production, objective camera vs. subjective voice in filmmaking, reflexivity, ethics and aesthetics in the process of visual representation.

During the last five days students will edit their films to a finely crafted standard with tutors supervising and mentoring them throughout. They will finally output this to DVD in preparation for the public screening. They will learn about the academic field and the documentary market and how to find an audience and distribute their films. The final roundtable and the public screening will bring together participants and tutors with other film professionals (festival organizers, documentary film producers and filmmakers).

Course format

The course combines a practical, hands-on camera training with a series of theoretical sessions and masterclasses. Prior to the course students will be exposed to a series of films, which they will be able to watch on a dedicated web channel of the university. The practical course will develop progressively during the three weeks, taking students through all stages of ethnographic filmmaking. It will consist of class demonstrations and exercises, exercises on location, appraisal of exercises, tutoring and film screenings with explanations. Practical sessions require individual, team and group work with and without supervision. Theoretical sessions combine different formats: lectures and seminars on the basis of required readings and films, film screenings followed by discussions and masterclasses with invited filmmakers. The course ends with a public screening of films prepared by SUN students during the three weeks.

Evaluation and outcomes

The practical training presupposes constant appraisal and feedback: every exercise is evaluated individually by the tutors and students have the possibility to redo the exercise at any point. Moreover all the tutors' notes and exercises are offered on a DVD at the end for future reference. By the end of the course students will be confident filmmakers having completed a short film of their own creation. They will also acquire the know-how for teaching visual anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking at both theoretical and practical level.