Course Description

Effective editing is much more than choosing the right interviews, scenes or sound. Pacing… transitions… establishing story threads… motifs… understanding editing software capabilities… the use of special effects… the significance of integrating individual elements of sound, picture and narration are all ingredients for a successful editor/producer.

This 2 credit course is dedicated to the craft of editing long form video for news and documentary stories. The class meets every other week, the first session Thursday, September 7, 2017 (see Course Schedule).

The classroom will take on a town hall atmosphere to encourage student discussions that examine how editing impacts overall storytelling and journalistic integrity. Special attention is paid to how natural sound, special effects, music, sound effects, animation and metaphoric video (developing images that relate to the story when visuals are unavailable).

Students are given weekly editing assignments and work with material from their documentaries for these tasks. The exercises are designed so that students apply editing concepts and techniques learned in the classroom as well as their editing skills and knowledge. Evaluations are primarily based on the completion of the assignment. However, the cleanliness of the editing and improved individual edit skills each week are also factored. Completed edit assignments should be less than one minute in length. Please output as a QuickTime movie or post to an easily accessible web site (i.e., Vimeo or YouTube) so they can be screened and discussed in the classroom.

In the second half of the semester the class focuses on solving problems students confront during the edit of their documentaries. To that end, on Nov. 16th & 30th, each student will have a one-on-one, 30 minute editing conference with professor Spungen (see Schedule).

NOTE: this is NOT a “how-to-use editing software” class. All students are expected to have intermediate editing skills for this course. However, there will be discussions about various editing software available as well as demonstrations of basic non-linear editing theories and concepts.

There are no required texts for this course. There will be two required documentaries to screen for discussion (see Schedule). Students will write observations about specific editing techniques or styles which were used that impact storytelling and journalistic objectives of the documentary. (Observations should be emailed prior to the class discussion).

The FINAL assignment is to edit a 30 second trailer of your documentary which could be used for the NYU News & Doc Festival.

Unlike the edit assignments, editing proficiency is factored more significantly in the evaluation for this grade.
Final Grade:
Attendance, class participation  …40%
And written observations
Documentary editing assignments  …40%
Final - Trailer  …20%

Communication:
Email will be the primary communication tool used outside of the classroom. However, please be sure to monitor NYU Classes during the semester for class updates and advice.

David Spungen preferred email address – das@cbsnews.com

COURSE SCHEDULE  (subject to change)
Sept. 7th – first class session
Class Topics:
• student motivation and goals for their documentaries
• course expectations
• long form TV news magazines vs. documentaries …similarities/differences
• non-linear editing concepts
• editing terms

Editing Topic: Scene sets – developed thru sequences or montages

Edit assignment: Working with your documentary footage, edit together an opening sequence for your documentary. Emphasis should be given to natural sound and soundbites and editing images that will focus the viewer to where the documentary takes place. Clip must be under one minute in length.

Screening/Observation assignment: TBA

Sept. 21st – second class session
Class Topics:
• Review observations from screening documentary
• Continue discussion about non-linear editing
• Review & class discussion of scene set assignment
• Character Development critical importance to story telling

Editing Assignment: Who is this Character? Select NATS, SOTs and images from your documentary to help the audience understand and relate to the character’s personality.

Screening/Observation assignment: TBA
Oct. 5th – third class session
Class Topics:
- Review observations from screening documentary
- Review & class discussion of character development assignment
- Audio Editing, pacing projects and the importance of sound

Editing Assignment: Create a montage integrating scenes and characters through the use of sound. Only NAT sound, SOTs from characters, music or sound effects can be used. Make sure to demonstrate pacing techniques, good audio levels and an example of using sound for transitions.

Oct. 19th – fourth class session
Class Topics:
- Review & class discussion of “audio” edit assignments
- Openings - key to engaging the audience… how hook them without giving the entire drama away? Examples will be shown and discussed in class.
- Transitions – the importance of creating seamless transitions

Editing Assignment: Edit an open for your documentary. Draw on the scene set and character development assignments as the foundation. Create transitions to help advance the story line.

Nov. 2nd – fifth class session
Class Topics:
- Review & class discussion of “Opens” edit assignment
- Trailers and Sizzle/Pitch reels – creating to promote documentaries
- Examples shown in class

Editing Assignment: Prepare a 30 second verbal pitch about your documentary. Transcribe the “pitch” and email it to das@cbsnews.com.

Create a 3 to 5 minute clip reel that contains the elements you would use for a sizzle reel and/or trailer – best sound, best visuals, best pictures, best elements that you would use to represent your documentary. This assignment will not be evaluated, however it is meant to help students organize their material, making a Trailer easier to produce and edit.

Nov. 16th & Nov. 30th – sixth class session(s) (half the class attends each session)
One-to-one 30 minute screening sessions with each student for advice and consultation on documentaries. Students are free to discuss whatever they wish, but are encouraged to focus on sections giving them problems.

December 14th: week eight – final class
FINAL: Trailer assignment due