

# **HPSC0066 Science and Film Production**

## **Course Syllabus**

Term Two 2019 / 2020 session | Samantha Harrie| s.harrie@ucl.ac.uk

### **Course Information**

This module focuses on documentary film production for science. It aims to build visual storytelling and documentary narrative techniques to tell the multilayered stories of science disciplines. It is a primarily practical course, offering skills in scriptwriting, production (filming, lighting, sound recording, interview technique, presentation, narrative, documentary and docudrama genres) and post-production (film and sound editing) and team work / communication. The module also establishes a social, cultural and intellectual context for production and offers a strong critical foundation for the effective realisation of production work.

The module will be delivered via two-hour seminar/practical class per week, with a strong focus on documentary narrative film making in small groups, through practical pre-production, production, and post-production processes, the module has an integral emphasis on team-work, creative collaboration and communication.

Please note that The film production shoot and edit process are, by nature, work intensive and will require students to work independently outside of the stated seminar times below. Approximately for a non-consecutive 2 / 3 day shoot period and a 2 / 4 day edit period.

### **Basic course information**

Course website:	
Moodle Web site:	
Assessment:	Group Film (5 minutes minimum - 10 minutes maximum, at course tutors discretion) 80% Treatment (1000 words) 20%
Timetable:	
Prerequisites:	None.
Required texts:	
Course tutor(s):	Samantha Harrie
Contact:	s.harrie@ucl.ac.uk
Web:	
Office location:	Department of Science and Technology Studies, 22 Gordon Square, Room B14

## Schedule

<b>UCL Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
	1 Introduction to Module & The 'ABC' of Visual Language. ( <i>Everyone</i> is a film maker.)	15/01/2020	Practical Group Activity.
	2 Camera Kit Workshop & The Art of Framing / Interview / Narration & 'B' Roll	22/01/2020	Practical Group Activity.
	3 Finding Your Story - Script to Screen: Documentary Pre-Production Workshop. Scriptwriting and planning for your shoot.	29/01/2020	Seminar / Practical Group Activity.
	4 The Politics of Telling Stories	05/02/2020	Discussion Seminar.
	5 Pitch Week: Presentation of group film ideas	12/02/2020	Practical Group Activity: Groups will present their film treatments for review and feedback. Not assessed.
	<b>READING WEEK / SHOOT PREP</b>  <b>SCRIPT DRAFT 1 AND SCHEDULE DUE BY END OF WEEK FRI 8<sup>TH</sup> NOV – BY EMAIL TO ME</b>	19/02/2020	
	6 The Art of Editing: Picture / Sound / Narration / Music  <b>What is a Treatment?</b> <b>Final Treatments discussion</b> <b>DEADLINE: 30/03/2020 5pm</b>	26/02/2020	Seminar / Practical Group Activity.  <b>SHOOT WEEK 1: Group Film shoots begin. Tutor shoot visit TBA.</b>
	7 Shoot Surgery: Each filming group has 121 sessions to review footage /get feedback / troubleshoot problems.	04/03/2020	Group activity.  <b>SHOOT WEEK 2: Group Film shoots conclude. Tutor shoot visit TBA.</b>
	9 Edit Surgery 1: Each filming group has 121 sessions to review footage / get feedback / troubleshoot problems	11/03/2020	Group activity.  <b>EDIT WEEK 1: Group Film Edits begin.</b>
	10 Edit Surgery 2: Each filming group has 121 sessions to review footage / get feedback / troubleshoot problems	18/03/2020	Group activity.  <b>EDIT WEEK 2: Group Film Edits begin.</b>

	12 Final Film Screenings	25/03/2020	Each production team will screen their finished films with an accompanying presentation. This <b>will be assessed</b> by the first and second markers.
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## Assessments

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### Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit / length	Deadline for Tutors to provide Feedback
Treatment	Treatment for a film or television programme that engages with science.	30/03/2020 5pm	1000	30/04/2020
Film	Group Film (6 mins minimum - 10 mins max length, at tutors discretion)	23/03/2020 10am	10mins	30/04/2020

## Assignments

### Treatment

You will be required to write a 1000 'treatment' - a proposal for a film or TV programme that engages with science. The treatment will be in the style of a 'pitch' document, that might be submitted to a broadcaster for consideration to be made. We will look at examples of real treatments, submitted to broadcasters for science films and subsequently produced.

The treatment can be any original idea for a film or TV programme that engages an audience in science; be it, practical, societal or theoretical. You must include: storytelling, audience appeal, the critical theory of the science behind the story and contemporary contextualization in the manner learned in the module.

Please feel free to talk to me about ideas / thoughts for your proposed treatment.

### Film

You will create a film on a topic based in science. Film topic suggestions will be discussed in class however the genre is your choice. The duration must be 10 minutes, inclusive.

Groups: You will be assigned to a group by the module tutor.

This project will be assessed based on the submitted film. All students within the group will receive the same mark. This is because groupwork also requires skill development in project

management, cooperation, communication, and teamwork. This is meant to reflect real-world work experiences.

Two items must be submitted as the 'film':

- 1. The script. This must be uploaded via Moodle.
- 2. The film. This must be uploaded via YouTube. Both must be uploaded by the time stated in the deadline information.

Criteria for assessment will relate to all element of film pre-production, production, and postproduction. Also, your ability to work as a group / team, will be assessed. Specific criteria for assessment will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle.

**Each team will screen its finished film and each member of the team will give a two-minute presentation on the making of the film and his/her role in the production. The films and presentations will be marked by first and second markers.**

In general, films will be assessed based on the following criteria for assessment. Specific guidance will be offered in class.

**Specific Criteria for Assessment for this Module:**

**Treatment**

Your treatment should be 1000 words long and will be assessed against the general criteria for assessment as set out in the STS Student Handbook. An added emphasis will be placed on the following specific criteria:

**The Story:**

**Log -Line:**

- Please provide a 'logline' that encapsulates the essence of the science story your treatment / programme will tell.

**Story Structure:**

- Explain how this science story be communicated in a clear, concise, way. With an introduction, argument / theory, conclusion and / or a three-act structure.
- Clarity of science storytelling within the document and audience appeal of the treatment. Ask yourself: 'Is this a film I would like to watch?'

**The Science behind the story:**

**Research Skills:**

- The Treatment makes use of appropriate and relevant primary scientific sources.
- It provides evidence of the student's ability to evaluate primary sources and to critically select information.

**Critical analysis:**

- The treatment demonstrates the ability to critically engage with primary material and secondary sources for the purpose of writing a treatment for a programme.

**Methodological awareness:**

- The treatment demonstrates the ability to choose appropriate methods depending on the aims of the treatment.

**Visual Style:**

- Clear and creative explanation of the genre of the film / visual style of filming (I.e. observational documentary / docu-drama / presenter led documentary / ‘reality’ science).
- Key Filming points / scenes.
- Key visual references that add to the narrative and our understanding of the science story being told. These can be within the text or as separate visual references.

**Research references / Bibliography:**

- The bibliography demonstrates an authentic intellectual engagement with a reasonable range of secondary sources relevant to the topic and the argument.

**Something Extra:**

- This can be an originality of idea, originality or excellence in storytelling, Visual style or all of the above.

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Expectation</u></b>
<b>Script</b>	A well-written script that flows naturally and carries the story.
<b>Editing</b>	Editing that complements the genre, whether documentary, drama, presenter-led, etc. Any visual anomalies between shots should be corrected at the editing stage.
<b>Sound</b>	Sound that brings the movie to life. Music and live action sound levels will rise and fall appropriately with the visual content and also convey the emotive qualities of the movie.
<b>Narration/voiceover</b>	Good, clear, well enunciated narration. The narrator’s voice should match the style of production, for example, ‘newsy’, ‘mysterious’, ‘confident’ etc. It should carry the story and should not be the dominant feature of the production. Good narration is ‘easy listening’. The use of more than one narrator, for example, a male and female voice can be very effective and powerful but should match the genre.
<b>Performance</b>	Performance, as in drama or drama documentary that reflects the script.
<b>Presentation</b>	Presenters who appear comfortable, confident and fluent in front of the camera and put the audience at ease. Use of a presenter can be a very effective way of linking movie scenes. Presenters can also interview expert witnesses.

<b>Cinematography</b>	Camera work that interprets the script, and is creative, visually exciting, emotive, and lit in a way appropriate to the mood of the action.
<b>Direction</b>	Direction that interprets the script sensitively and intelligently. A good director visualises the script and plans shooting accordingly.
<b>Visual effects</b>	Visual effects that complement the genre and are not being used for the sake of 'effect'. Library film footage, still images, graphics, captions, and other 'bought in' material should fit naturally into the production as if they were shot to order.
<b>Overall creativity</b>	Overall creativity (often termed production design) that demonstrates production planning so that the whole movie comes together as a structured and well-designed piece.

## Aims & objectives

### Aims:

The module aims to give students an understanding of how science is represented and communicated in film, television and other media platforms, and practical skills to produce their own programmes.

### Objectives:

#### Primary learning objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Critically engage with representations of science in cinema and television;
- Understand elements of social, cultural and intellectual context for production;
- Apply critical tools for the effective realization of production;
- Be able to produce – from concept to YouTube – a short film which engages with a science topic.

#### Secondary learning objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate research and writing skills appropriate to year 3 STS modules;
- Demonstrate the ability to work in teams as well as independently;
- Demonstrate time and project management, working to tight deadlines, and with initiative.

### ***Reading list***

You will be expected to read more widely during the research for your film and treatment. A selection of books is listed below covering film production, science, visual arts and film.

## **Best General Introductions:**

### Visual Arts and Film.

- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (BBC / Penguin 1973)
- Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Penguin 1973 / 2013)
- Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Silman-James Press, 2005).
- Michael Ondaatje, *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Film Editing*, (Bloomsbury, 2012.)

### Film Production Literature

- Steven Ascher & Edward Pincus, *The filmmaker's handbook: a comprehensive guide for the digital age* (PLUME, 2013). [?](#)
- Max Thurlow and Clifford Thurlow, *Making short films* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

### Science and Film

- Vincent Campbell, *Science, Entertainment and Television Documentary* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)
- Tim Boon, *Films of fact: a history of science documentary on film and television* (Columbia University Press, 2008).
- David A Kirby, *Lab coats in Hollywood: science, scientists, and cinema* (MIT Press, 2011).
- Sydney Perkowitz, *Hollywood science: movies, science and the end of the world* (Columbia University Press, 2010).
- Jaap Willems and Winfried Gopfert, *Science and the Power of TV* (VU University Press & Da Vinci Institute, 2006).
- Declan Fahy, *New Celebrity Scientists: Out of the Lab and Into the Limelight* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).