EDITING THE DOCUMENTARY
Instructor: Peter Thompson
Spring 2008
Revised 20080115

Course Information

Document Date/Semester	Spring, 2008
Course Number and Title	24-4403-01
Class Time and Day	Tuesday, 6:00PM
Classroom Building and Room Number	1104 South Wabash, room 611
Additional facilities, if applicable	N/A
Film Department Website	www.filmatcolumbia.com
College Name and Address	Columbia College Chicago 600 S. Michigan Ave. Chicago IL 60605
Course Coordinator	Vanessa Newell

Instructor Information

Name	Peter Thompson
Department Phone	312 344-7593
Studio Phone	773 404-2002
Fax Number	773 975-6662
Email Address	peterchicagomediaworks@hotmail.com
Office Hours	Main Campus building, room 1106, Thursdays from 9-1 pm. Telephone my studio (773 404-2002) to make an appointment for the time you would like (from 5 minutes to 1 hour).
Office Location	600 S. Michigan Ave., room 1106
Mailbox Location	600 S. Michigan Ave., room 1200

Required Texts and Materials

Class website	http://www.chicagomediaworks.com
Text	GRAMMAR OF THE EDIT by Roy Thompson (if you're thinking "kickback"—Roy's no relation, *unfortunately*). This book is available in the CC Bookstore.
Supplies/Materials	(None needed—everything is supplied).
Bibliography, supplemental and suggested readings	All essential handouts for this course are on my website: http://www.chicagomediaworks.com. Once on the site, navigate to "Instructional Works", then to "Editing the Documentary" and then to the desired document. All documents are downloadable.
Course Fee	$180

Course description

This course provides documentary editing experience in three areas: 1) developing information-handling systems to deal with large amounts of film material, 2) acquiring the means to apply ideas about that material in order to develop a comprehensive authorial approach, and 3) using digital video editing equipment for each student to edit their own interpretations of three typical types of documentary footage: ethnographic, political and sociological.

Course rationale
This course is required for editing majors for two reasons: they are often the hardest to edit, and they are often the first type of film that an editor is hired to edit.

Prerequisites
You will need modest expertise in montage theory and in video editing. A working knowledge of the computer productivity software taught in the Foundations of Computer Applications class (required for graduation) is helpful, but not required.

Learning Objectives
PRACTICAL
• Know the post-production documentary process, including how to work with a director, decisions in setting up an editing studio, and major financial categories.
• Know how to edit a single camera documentary scene as if it were shot with two cameras, (including how to edit motivated cutaways).
• Know how to deal with enormous quantites of documentary material and to view and log rushes. In terms of logging: the differences between simple, complex and developing shots and how to log them (XCU, BCU, CU, MCU, MS, MLS, LS, VLS, XLS, pan, tilt, zoom in/out).
• Know how to use a computer to make transcriptions, two-column documentary scripts, and paper edits.
• Know how to make a documentary proposal and treatment.
• Know main issues of voice-over narration, subtitles and intertitles.

HISTORY & THEORY
• Know the names of the four documentary styles, their characteristics and canons of belief, and the names of at least two documentaries embodying each style.
• Know how the evolution in the methodology of ethnographic films influenced the history of documentary, and the names of at least five ethnographic films embodying that evolution.
• Know the contents of four essays by Sergei Eisenstein ("The Unexpected", "A Statement", "The Cinematic Principle and the Ideogram", "Methods of Montage") and their relevancy in editing.
 • Know the differences between the two major types of content metaphors (Pudovkin's "associational montage" and Eisenstein's "collision montage") and the major types of editing metaphors (duration and placement, rhythm, framing, kinetic, aural, optical) and their relevancy in editing.

Whew! And this is just the beginning…. So:

Taking good notes is essential—without them you will have difficulty learning.

You must work and participate actively in all discussions. Graduate students should lead the way. You should be organized, able to work for long periods alone, and enjoy the process of creating scenes experimentally with time devoted to building and rebuilding them. You will need to devote 6-10 hours per week to work outside class.

Grading policy and evaluation procedures

Credit hours:	3
Grading scale:	**GRADES:** Grades are based on the quality of your work, your ability as a professional-in-training to meet each deadline, and your ability to work responsibly and creatively with editing problems and issues. Grades are awarded as follows: **Assignments and Quizzes**: You will be graded at each deadline: F if you miss it; D, C, B, or A for quality of work if you meet it. (50% of grade).

	Final Edits: F for each project if you are absent for your final presentation in each of the final projects or have no completed work; D, C, B, or A for quality and originality of work completed within the semester. (50% of grade). **Graduate Student Grading:** Graduate students in the Columbia College Chicago MFA Film program will be held to a higher standard for all assignments, quizzes and final edits. Graduate Students are required to write an additional 5 page paper relating to the editing and structure of a documentary film. Please submit a proposal no later than Week 5. Paper will be due the last day of class.
Requirements and assignments:	Assignments and quizzes are listed in the syllabus. You should keep this document as well as your returned assignments, quizzes and examinations because it is your responsibility to know these written policies and your performance to date. The grade sheet will always be open and by my lecture notes; you may freely consult your grades to date at any time. Projects may be edited on the Avid systems at Columbia and presented on that system. However, if you find it more convenient to edit in your own studio, you may digitize the rushes and present your edits on VHS or DVD. LAST PROJECT: I fully and enthusiastically support the editing of your own documentary project as a creative substitute for one of the major class projects as we proceed further into the semester. If you have such a project, please contact me to discuss its scope and its present state. Please note that the major shooting for your project must already be *completed before you begin to edit,* and a DVD, Quicktime or VHS dub of the rushes or selects must be submitted to me for approval prior to my signing off on any editing project.
Standards and proportions used:	**Grading Scale:** **I** An Incomplete Grade (I) can only be issued for an undergraduate student who has met one of the following criteria: The student has successfully completed all course requirements to date but is faced with unexpected circumstances during the final weeks of the semester resulting in the inability to complete course requirements by the end of the semester. The student must have, in the instructor's estimation, the ability to complete missed course requirements outside of class and by the end of the eighth week of the following semester. The instructor must agree to evaluate the student's work and replace the Incomplete grade before the end of the following semester. An agreement specifying work to be completed and a due date must be signed by both instructor and student and approved by the Department Chair. The instructor is responsible for obtaining the final evaluation and submitting a letter grade to replace the Incomplete by the eighth week of the following semester. An agreement specifying the need for the final evaluation from the external

	supervisor must be signed by both instructor and approved by the Department Chair. **F** If you are absent from your final presentation(s); incomplete course requirements and absences above the course allotment. **D** Sub-standard work**.** **C** Work of average quality and with average participation. **B** Assignments presented on time, regular attendance, good participation, and steady significant efforts throughout. Many students receive this grade. **A** "B" requirements, along with outstanding participation and work. A small number of students normally receive this grade. (100-95%=A; 94-90%= A- ; 89-86% = B+ ; 85-83%= B ; 82-80%= B – ; 79-76% = C+ ; 75-73%= C ; 72-70%= C – ; 69-66% = D+ ; 65-63%= D ; 62-60%= D – ; 59% and Below = F)
Return student work	(NA)

Classroom policies

Academic Integrity:	Students at Columbia College Chicago enjoy significant freedom of artistic expression and are encouraged to stretch their scholarly and artistic boundaries. However, the College prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty. For present purposes, "academic dishonesty" is understood as the appropriation and representation of another's work as one's own, whether such appropriation includes all or part of the other's work or whether it comprises all or part of what is represented as one's own work (plagiarism). Appropriate citation avoids this form of dishonesty. In addition, "academic dishonesty" includes cheating in any form, the falsification of academic documents of the falsification of works or references for the use in class or other academic circumstances. When such dishonesty is discovered, the consequences to the student can be severe. The video and audio components and all materials used in this class are the exclusive property of the copyright holder(s). You are prohibited from using the work materials, your work, or any other attributes of the class for any other purpose other than to gain experience in the field of film and video postproduction audio without the express permission of the copyright holder(s). You may not repackage or distribute your work in any current method or process yet to be established, nor to exhibit, nor to post, display, upload, download or file transfer to or from any site on or to the Internet World Wide Web. Courtesy must be observed at all times in my classroom. Please read the academic policies of this college. I will follow those policies in any instance of academic dishonesty.
Attendance policy:	The Film/Video Department attendance policy allows for two

		absences. **Following Columbia College Chicago policy, the fourth absence results in an automatic "F" in the course.**
Absences:		We will move quickly in this course. It is my experience that if a student misses a single class within the first six weeks, it is difficult to catch up. Two missed classes are very difficult to overcome. Because of this, there are no excused absences (with the exceptions of jury duty, jail or military duty). Please plan ahead for an unplanned absence by obtaining the email and telephone number of a fellow student and in order to contact them for notes and work due if you are forced to be absent—especially since this syllabus will be changing from week to week in response to your needs and learning pace (see Syllabus, below).
Tardiness:		Tardiness is unacceptable because it disrupts learning. Arriving 15 minutes after the scheduled starting time for the class will be considered a late arrival. Two late arrivals will result in one absence. Leaving fifteen minutes before the end of class will be considered an early exit. Two early exits will result in one absence.
Late work and makeup assignments:		You will be graded at each deadline--and, like any professional deadline, if you miss it you MAY NOT make it up unless you have previously arranged it with me. Late assignments without previous arrangement will not be graded. You may always, however, hand in a late assignment for feedback, only. F for the assignment if you miss it; D, C, B, or A for quality of work if you meet it.

Conaway Center Statement

"Students with disabilities are requested to present their Columbia accommodation letters to their instructor at the beginning of the semester so that accommodations can be arranged in a timely manner by the College, the department or the faculty member, as appropriate. Students with disabilities who do not have accommodation letters should visit the office of Services for Students with Disabilities in room 520 of the Congress building (312.344.8134/V or 312.360.0767/TTY). It is incumbent upon the student to know their responsibilities in this regard."

Course calendar

Please note that individual class sessions are subject to change. They will be in response to the pace of your learning. The choice of readings and documentary films will also be in response to your needs and are therefore not yet totally listed in the syllabus. I will make every effort to keep you informed of changes in the schedule. Some items may change at my discretion, but the overall workload will not.

WEEK ONE— January 29

Syllabus
    Discussion: Questionaire, Genesis of class, Texts, Documentary editing issues and organization, Post-production overview, Dealing with directors, Editor's notebook, Assigning students' documentaries, final project, first project (Maya Project #1).
Handouts:
- Questionnaire
- Download Syllabus http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/
- Download Chronology of Documentary and Ethnographic Styles http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2instructworks/3editing_doc/3editing_docfilmstyles.html
- Download Setting up a Documentary Office (http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2instructworks/3editing_doc/3editing_docetcetera.html

- Download Editor's Log
  http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2instructworks/3editing_doc/3editing_docetcetera.html
- Download Maya footage background information (transcripts of 5 scenes, drawings, etc):
  http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2mediawks/3media_shaman/shamanpage.html
- Download Maya Project Instructions and Maya Project Log
  http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2instructworks/3editing_doc/3editing_doctranscripts.html
- VHS dupe tape of Maya Projects #1 and 2.

View: Documentary sampler: four main styles of documentary film.

To do:

- Read Syllabus. Sign contract at the end of the syllabus and bring to Week Two.
- Modify the "Editor's Log" for your own use.
- Purchase and complete the reading of GRAMMAR OF THE EDIT by Week Four. Quiz on Week Four.
- Set up your documentary office.
- Print out "Chronology of Documentary and Ethnographic Styles" and bring to all classes.
- View VHS dupe tape of Ethnographic Project #1 (Maya shaman healing at altar). Read Director's instructions in the Maya footage background information document (see above). In brief: It was a single camera shoot. Edit it so that the scene seems shot by two cameras; make all cutaways motivated; be faithful to the spirit of the entire event and the relative lengths of each part. Cut for total length of 5-6 minutes. Rough cut due Week Two.

WEEK TWO— February 5
Due: Statement of Understanding, ROUGH CUT of Ethnographic Project #1.
Lecture:

        Intro to facilities, groundrules, passwords
        Screening student documentaries
        Fundamental issues of the Documentary Genre
                (Grierson tradition up to Cinema Verité)
        Maya Project #1 rough cuts

Discussion:

        Footage impressions, working around poor documentary footage, review and check logs, establish footage chronology and list of characters, working with a director, ethnographic issues.

Critiques of rough cuts.
View: History of Ethnographic Films, part 1
To do: Second rough cut of Ethnographic Project #1. Due Week Three.

WEEK THREE— February 12
DUE: SECOND ROUGH CUT of Ethnograhic Project #1
Critiques of rough cuts
Fundamental issues of the Documentary Genre
Editing single camera footage as if it were shot by two cameras, Director's instructions.
View: Screening students' documentaries
        History of Ethnographic Films, part 2
To do:

- Fine cut of Ethnographic Project #1 due Week Four.
- View VHS dupe tape of Ethnographic Project #2.

WEEK FOUR— February 19
DUE: FINE CUT of Ethnographic Project #1
Quiz on GRAMMAR OF THE EDIT
Critiques of fine cuts
View: Screening students' documentaries
	History of Ethnographic Films, part 3 (Vertov, Rouch, Asch)

Handouts:
- Peter Thompson, "Ethnographic Cinematography"
  http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2instructworks/3editing_doc/3editingdoccinematography.html
- Peter Thompson, "Quick! Before They're Gone: Notes on Subtitles and Intertitles
  http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2instructworks/3editing_doc/3editing_docsubtitles.html

To do:
- Read Peter Thompson, "Quick! Read Before They're Gone: Notes on Subtitles and Intertitles"
- View rushes of Ethnograhic Project #2.
- Read Editor's Instructions and Log for Ethnographic Project #2. Edit rough cut of Ethnographic Project #2. Due Week Five. Finecut due Week Six.

WEEK FIVE – February 26
DUE: ROUGH CUT of Ethnographic Project #2
Lecture: History of Ethnographic Films, part 2
	Discussion: ethnographic issues, subtitling and intertitling documentary films,
	Innovations in Documentary Film: Dziga Vertov, Jean Rouch and the Methodology of
	Ethnographic Film
View:	Rough cuts.
	Screening students' documentaries
	Bad ethnographic films and what they teach us
	The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 1
To do:
- Continue editing Ethnographic Project #2. Fine cut due Week Six.

WEEK SIX -- March 4
DUE: FINE CUT of Ethnographic Project #2
View:	Fine cuts. Students' documentaries
	The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 3
Discussion:
	For Interview Project ("Threads"): Footage impressions, working around poor
	documentary footage, review and check logs, establish footage chronology and list of
	characters, discuss use of transcripts and transcript format, use of computer for
	transcripts, purpose of Premise and POV, logging, Edward Dymtryk's "Rules of Editing",
	working with transcripts and logs, working with bad coverage.
	The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 2
To do:
- Read Edward Dymtryk's "Rules of Editing".
- Download and read Editor's Instructions and Transcripts for Interview Project ("Threads")

from
- • View VHS dupe tape of Interview Project ("Threads"). Rough cut due Week Seven.

WEEK SEVEN -- March 11
DUE: ROUGH CUT of Interview Project ("Threads")
Discussion:
　　　The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 3
View: Screening students' documentaries
To do: Fine cut of Interview Project ("Threads") due Week Eight.

WEEK EIGHT -- March 18
DUE: FINE CUT of Interview Project ("Threads")
Discussion: Skarbakka project.
View: Screening students' documentaries
　　The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 4
To do:
- •Download and read Editor's Instructions as well as the Dub Log for Contemporary Issues Project ("Skarbakka") from
- •View VHS dupe tape of Contemporary Issues Project ("Skarbakka"). Rough cut due Week Nine.

WEEK NINE – April 1
DUE: ROUGH CUT of Contemporary Artist Project ("Skarbakka")
In class:
　　　Writing voice-over narration.
View: Screening students' documentaries
　　　The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 5 (Cinema Verite and Direct Cinema, "Chronicle of a Summer")
To do:
- • Read my notes on Eisenstein's montage theories

WEEK TEN -- April 8
DUE: FINE CUT of Contemporary Artist Project ("Skarbakka")
In class:
　　　Eisenstein's montage theories
　　　Writing narration,
View: Screening students' documentaries
　　　The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 6 (Cinema Verité and Direct Cinema, "Titticut Follies")
To do:
- •Download and read Editor's Instructions and Transcripts for Socio-Cultural Project from

s.html
- View VHS dupe tape of Socio-Cultural Project. Rough cut due Week Twelve.

WEEK ELEVEN -- April 15
In class:

> Footage impressions, working around poor documentary footage, review and check logs, establish footage chronology and list of characters, discuss use of transcripts and transcript format, use of computer for transcripts, purpose of Premise and POV, logging, Edward Dymtryk's "Rules of Editing", working with transcripts and logs, working with bad coverage.
> Computer as documentary production tool, paper edits.
> > Paper edit examples: "Apocalypse Now ".

View: Screening students' documentaries
> The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 7 (Direct Address with Interview)

To do:
- Study transcripts, Identify action sequences.
- Read the sample Premise and POV
  http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2instructworks/3editing_doc/3editing_doctranscripts.html
- Download "Editing diagnosis template"
  (http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2instructworks/3editing_doc/3editing_docetcetera.html
- Read Documentary Proposal Guide and Documentary Development Process:
  http://www.chicagomediaworks.com/2instructworks/3editing_doc/3editing_docetcetera.html
- Type your own Premise and Treatment, print out and bring to class on Week Twelve.
- Make paper edit of film based upon premise and treatment. Bring paper edit cards to Week Twelve.

WEEK TWELVE -- April 22
DUE: Paper edit, Premise and Treatment of Socio-cultural Project
Discussion:

> Socio-Cultural Project: Footage impressions, working around poor documentary footage, review and check logs, establish footage chronology and list of characters, discuss use of transcripts and transcript format, use of computer for transcripts, purpose of Premise and POV, logging.

View: Screening students' documentaries
> The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 8 (Direct Address with Interview)

To do: continue editing toward a fine cut.
- Type your own Premise and Treatment for this film, print out and bring to class on Week Thirteen.
- Make paper edit of film based upon premise and treatment. Bring paper edit cards to Week Thirteen.
- Assembly edit of Socio-cultural project.

WEEK THIRTEEN -- April 29
DUE: Rough cut of Socio-cultural Project, Typed Premise and Treatment, paper edit cards.
View: Screening students' documentaries
> The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 9 (Cinematic Essay)

Post production audio issues, Music in Doc films; response to issues;
To do: Continue editing towards fine cut of Socio-cultural project.
        Student evaluations are now filled out on-line via Oasis. Students are highly
        encouraged to fill out evaluations beginning in Week 13

WEEK FOURTEEN -- May 6
DUE: Rough cut of Socio-cultural Project, Typed Premise and Treatment, paper edit cards.
View: Screening students' documentaries
        The Chronology of Documentary Films, part 10 (Cinematic Essay)
To do: Fine Cut of Socio-cultural Project due Week Fifteen

WEEK FIFTEEN -- May 13
DUE: FINE CUT of Socio-Cultural Project.

PETER'S RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON EDITING:

David Bell, GETTING THE BEST SCORE FOR YOUR FILM: A FILMMAKER'S GUIDE TO MUSIC SCORING, Silman-James Press, 1994.

Noel Burch, THEORY OF FILM PRACTICE, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981. paperback

Ken Dancyger, THE TECHNIQUE OF FILM AND VIDEO EDITING: THEORY AND PRACTICE, Focal Press, Boston, 1997.

Edward Dmytryk, ON FILM EDITING: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF FILM CONSTRUCTION, Focal Press, 1984.

Norman Hollyn, THE FILM EDITING ROOM HANDBOOK: HOW TO MANAGE THE NEAR CHAOS OF THE CUTTING ROOM, Lone Eagle Publishing, Los Angeles, 1999.

Vincent LoBrutto, SELECTED TAKES: FILM EDITORS ON EDITING, Praeger, NY, 1991.

Walter Murch, IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE: A PERSPECTIVE ON FILM EDITING, Silman-James Press, Los Angeles, 1995. pb.

Gabriella Oldham, FIRST CUT: CONVERSATIONS WITH FILM EDITORS, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1992.

Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar, THE TECHNIQUE OF FILM EDITING, New York, Hastings House, 1968. (out of print: find in used bookstores).

Ralph Rosenblum and Robert Karen, WHEN THE SHOOTING STOPS...THE CUTTING BEGINS, Penguin Books, 1980.

Roy Thompson, GRAMMAR OF THE EDIT, Focal Press, 1997.

PETER'S RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON DOCUMENTARY ISSUES:

Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor, CROSS-CULTURAL FILMMAKING:
A HANDBOOK FOR MAKING DOCUMENTARY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMS AND VIDEOS,
University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1997.

Robert Coles, DOING DOCUMENTARY WORK, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Peter Loizos, INNOVATION IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM: FROM INNOCENCE TO SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS 1955-1985, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993.

David MacDougall, TRANSCULTURAL CINEMA, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1998.

Sharon R. Sherman, DOCUMENTING OURSELVES: FILM, VIDEO AND CULTURE, University Press of Kentucky, 1998.

Alan Rosenthal, editor. NEW CHALLENGES FOR DOCUMENTARY, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1988.

Charles Warren, editor. BEYOND DOCUMENT: ESSAYS ON NONFICTION FILM, Wesleyan University Press, 1996.

(Please sign, date, remove the following from the syllabus, and return to Peter at the Week Two class session):

Student's Understanding

I the undersigned, have read the syllabus for the Editing the Documentary class and understand the Attendance and Grading Policy and what will be expected of me during the course.   All editing elements created by the me are the sole responsibility of me. Neither Columbia College Chicago nor any of its agents or employees assume responsibility or guarantee or warranty the storage devices utilized throughout the course of the class. My digital class materials and the backup of my materials are my sole responsibility. Media Storage of documentary elements will not be provided after the end of the semester. The sequence and content of individual class sections are subject to change.

NAME (PRINT)_____

SIGN _____

DATE_____