

Student's Name

*Documentary Studies*

Self-Determined Major Proposal

Cumulative GPA: 3.0 or higher GPA

Advisors: Adam Tinkle, Rik Scarce

Phone number

date of submission

## *Rationale*

cinematography and overall visual scheme, it is essential that I study art in order to maximize the aesthetic value of my film products (elective courses will help me understand and evaluate aesthetic concerns of other media, such as the audio documentary). An understanding of color and composition will add to my ability to create and take note of visually appealing pieces.

Arguably the most important aspect of a documentary is the subject matter. Documentary media can focus on any topic, from environmental to political, but this major is constructed in order to inform me about social and cultural subject matter. Courses from the Sociology Department will familiarize me with the methodology for the study of society, also prompting me to develop research and writing skills, which are essential to the pre-production phase of media making. Courses on visual sociology and video ethnography will allow me to more deeply understand the social mechanisms which I will be discussing through documentary, while also informing me of the history of the documentary practice through a sociological lens.

Taken in conjunction with art and documentary studies courses, I will begin to formulate and understand the links between aesthetics, shooting and editing techniques, and subject matter, and hone the messages that my pieces will portray. For example, the combination of instruction in Digital Foundations, Documentary Storytelling, and Sociological Perspectives might prompt me to make a short film on wealth inequality in the U.S. aided by graphics I also design. Questions of ethics raised in Law and Ethics for Media and Socially Engaged Documentary Arts might prompt me to embark on a community-driven, collaborative style project during my Independent Study in Documentary Studies. A genre of photography discussed in Photography I could combine with inspiration from a film viewed in Video Ethnography to inform both the subject matter and style of my capstone project. Courses in the major intersect and inform one another, combining to form an approach which will result in thoughtful, relevant, and artistic



the art form of filmmaking with practices of journalism and sociology. It would not be sufficient to study documentary film from solely technical or solely theoretical standpoints, as my preparation would be insufficient in terms of aesthetic or content. The cohesive course of study involved only in a major would be able to provide me with a full grasp on all the academic and artistic elements which combine to form documentary as a field and industry.

(2.2b) Specialized resources necessary for a completion of the Documentary Studies major include media production equipment: microphones, tripods, cameras, lights, and light reflectors. Skidmore's Media Services, MDOCS, and Skidmore Academic Technologies are already in possession of necessary equipment. Editing software such as Adobe Premiere, ProTools, and Photoshop are available on computers in the Scribner Library and DocLab. These resources will be utilized during the production of projects for specific courses and during the completion of the capstone project for the major.

### ***Course List***

The courses which will make up the major in Documentary Studies are as follows:

MF 101: Introduction to Media and Film, 3 credits

SO 101: Sociological Perspectives, 3 credits

AR 136: Digital Foundations, 4 credits

DS 251: Documentary Storytelling, 3 credits

AR 229: Photography I, 4 credits

AR 330: Photography II, 4 credits

SO 229: Visual Sociology, 4 credits

SO 307: Video Ethnography, 4 credits

DS 251C: Socially Engaged Documentary Arts, 3 credits

MF 351 C: Law and Ethics for Media, 3 credits

DS 371: Independent Study in Documentary Studies, 2 credits

DS 210: Introduction to Audio Documentary, 3 credits

ID 351A: SDM Prep Seminar, 1 credit and ID 372, 3 or 4 credits

CT"358" "CT"42;" "CT"529

\*Because the DS Department does not offer a 101 class, the foundational course from the Media and Film Studies Department has been substituted in place of a DS 101 course, creating a sequence from 100 to 300 level.

***Elective Courses***

I propose several elective courses related to but not included in the major core of courses:

AH 251D: Cine Latino, 4 credits

PL 225: Politics and News Media, 3 Credits

AR 358 Digital Media: Animation, 4 credits

MU 307: Music and Society, 3 Credits

***Semester Outline***

	London FYE Program	
	Cine Latino	
	Digital Media: Animation	

	Politics and News Media	Music and Society
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***Course Descriptions and Rationales***

1. MF 101: Introduction to Media and Film Studies

Credits: 4

An interdisciplinary introduction to the questions re: Human dilemmas in the context of an increasingly



dilemmas specific to the medium while also giving me concrete skills, such as editing on Adobe Premiere and pitching stories. This course will also help me develop my own personal voice in filmmaking, which

to potential employers and collaborators. This course will allow me to have a substantial, professional quality audio documentary project in my portfolio in addition to a film project.

#### 5. AR 136: Digital Foundations

Credits: 4

A survey of aesthetic and technological best practices in visual communication today. Students will study the basic functions and integral properties of Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, as well as After Effects or other video software while learning the principles of design. Vector and raster imaging techniques, scanning, printing, and font and file management are introduced through a series of demonstrations/projects that build upon each other. Through projects and critiques, students will work to make a visual voice that is distinctive and original. No digital experience necessary.

Documentary filmmaking requires a set of technical skills including, but not limited to, filming, font design, color correction, image manipulation, and animation. AR 136 will introduce skills and softwares essential to the post-production stage of filmmaking, and will allow me to acquire confidence and skills necessary to make a professional piece of work, while also allowing me to develop my own distinct voice. Because of its introductory nature it is included under foundation.

#### 6. AR 229: Photography I

Credits: 4

### 7. AR 330: Photography II

Credits: 4

A continuation of problems of visual expression and techniques encountered in beginning photography. Students explore advanced digital image manipulation; investigate digital portfolio presentations; as well as refine traditional print aesthetics.

This course will deepen concepts from AR 229, completing the sequence of classes within the Art Department. It will allow me to further explore the image as a means of creative expression, and develop a personal aesthetic to distinguish my work, further developing technical skills which qualify it as a methodology course.

### 8. SO 101: Sociological Perspectives

Credits: 3

The basic concepts and principles of major sociological perspectives. Attention is given to how these perspectives have been developed and used by social scientists to explain social phenomena. Recommended as an introduction to the discipline.

This course will introduce me to the major theories and perspectives in sociology. It will form the basis of the sociology sequence within the major and will allow me to begin to understand the social phenomena that will make up the content and subject matter of my films and the films that I will study.

### 9. SO 229: Visual Sociology

Credits: 4

An introduction to visual sociology as both an analytical tool for more deeply understanding the visual in society and as a means of conveying the results of sociological research. Students will develop the theoretical and conceptual tools necessary to ask more critical questions of the visual world around them and, by producing a sociological documentary of their own, the technical skills to communicate in visual media. No prior experience with videography is required.


This course will connect my introductory understanding of sociology more closely to the field of documentary by considering questions specifically about visual culture. It will not only allow me to understand visual culture, but will equip me with the necessary tools in translating sociological research into documentary film, which is also why it is included as a methodology course.

### 10. SO 307: Video Ethnography

Credits: 4



interdisciplinary course at Skidmore, must carefully define a plan of study, and must enlist the guidance of one or more faculty as appropriate. Proposals for ID 371 are reviewed by the chair(s) of the sponsoring faculty member's home department or interdisciplinary program; or in the case of students with an



In this course I will complete the final project for the Self Determined Major using skills and