

MDOCS - JOHN B. MOORE DOCUMENTARY STUDIES COLLABORATIVE

Program Overview

The John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative (MDOCS), embeds documentary within the intellectual and cultural life of Skidmore and Saratoga Springs. MDOCS models an expansive approach to the nonfiction arts, asking how varied forms of storytelling can enhance our capacities for mutual understanding, innovative artistry, public engagement, and social impact.

It offers a variety of theory- and skill-based courses, spanning many documentary mediums (filmmaking, audio, archives, exhibitions, photography, writing, emerging technologies, etc.), maintains an enhanced production/post-production workspace (DOCLab), and hosts and supports numerous events presenting documentary work and practice.

Unusual for an academic program, MDOCS also engages deeply with non-Skidmore communities, primarily through the Storytellers' Institute, a summer residency program that brings together students and working artists, and the Co-creation Initiative, a fund and support structure for community partners who wish to collaborate on nonfiction projects with members of the Skidmore community.

The program was founded in 2014, thanks to an endowment from Moore family members Jim and Sue Towne, under the leadership of inaugural Director Jordana Dym (2014-2018) and Mellon Fellow Nicky Tavares.

Director of the Documentary Studies Collaborative: Adam Tinkle

Assistant Director and Lecturer: Jesse O'Connell

Director of the Storytellers' Institute: Sarah Friedland

Documentarian in Community Co-Creation and Lecturer: Angela Beallor

Program Coordinator: Andrea Casey

Current Teaching Faculty

MDOCS/Media and Film Studies: Adam Tinkle

MDOCS: Sarah Friedland

Tang Teaching Museum: Ian Berry

Lecturers: Angela Beallor, Angus McCullough, Olivia McKee, Jesse O'Connell, Emily Vallee, Nicole Van Slyke

Storytelling Toolkit

DS 110 - Storytelling Toolkit: Video

Credits: 1-2

Fundamentals of storytelling. Any storyteller, whether evidence-based or creative, needs a toolkit of skills to present a story. These skill-up classes offer students an introduction to basic production and/or post-production skills used in evidence-based or creative storytelling. Students will either bring existing content and apply the new skill, or work with project materials supplied by the faculty member.

Note(s): Not for liberal arts credit.

DS 111 - Storytelling Toolkit: Audio

Credits: 1-2

Fundamentals of storytelling. Any storyteller, whether evidence-based or creative, needs a toolkit of skills to present a story. These skill-up classes offer students an introduction to basic production and/or post-production skills used in evidence-based or creative storytelling. Students will either bring existing content and apply the new skill, or work with project materials supplied by the faculty member.

Note(s): Not for liberal arts credit.

DS 112 - Storytelling Toolkit: Photography

Credits: 1-2

Fundamentals of storytelling. Any storyteller, whether evidence-based or creative, needs a toolkit of skills to present a story. These skill-up classes offer students an introduction to basic production and/or post-production skills used in evidence-based or creative storytelling. Students will either bring existing content and apply the new skill, or work with project materials supplied by the faculty member.

Note(s): Not for liberal arts credit.

DS 113 - Storytelling Toolkit: Interviewing

Credits: 1-2

Fundamentals of storytelling. Any storyteller, whether evidence-based or creative, needs a toolkit of skills to present a story. These skill-up classes offer students an introduction to basic production and/or post-production skills used in evidence-based or creative storytelling. Students will either bring existing content and apply the new skill, or work with project materials supplied by the faculty member.

Note(s): Not for liberal arts credit.

DS 114 - Storytelling Toolkit: Exhibition

Credits: 1-2

Fundamentals of storytelling. Any storyteller, whether evidence-based or creative, needs a toolkit of skills to present a story. These skill-up classes offer students an introduction to basic production and/or post-production skills used in evidence-based or creative storytelling. Students will either bring existing content and apply the new skill, or work with project materials supplied by the faculty member.

Note(s): Not for liberal arts credit.

DS 115 - Storytelling Toolkit: Web Design

Credits: 1-2

Fundamentals of storytelling. Any storyteller, whether evidence-based or creative, needs a toolkit of skills to present a story. These skill-up classes offer students an introduction to basic production and/or post-production skills used in evidence-based or creative storytelling. Students will either bring existing content and apply the new skill, or work with project materials supplied by the faculty member.

Note(s): Not for liberal arts credit.

DS 116 - Storytelling Toolkit: Mapping

Credits: 1-2

Presentation of geographic spatial information begins with maps made following good design. What makes a good map design in terms of color composition, scale, and density of information? How does one present multiple scales and time series? Good design is only the beginning. Once content is mapped, how and with what media can the visual information be best presented? This course will explore map design and appropriate use of increasingly complex presentation strategies starting with PowerPoint, followed by Google map engines and embedded internet applications and culminating with ArcGIS Online driven story mapping. Students with prior GIS experience will be able to create their own map data, while those uninitiated in GIS will be able to use existing data sets to achieve powerful and appropriate visualizations. The course allows for those with significant presentations at the end of the semester, such as capstone projects, to apply visualization and presentation methods gained in this course in those projects.

Note(s): Not for liberal arts credit.**DS 119 - Storytelling Toolkit: Topics**

Credits: 1-2

Fundamentals of storytelling. Any storyteller, whether evidence-based or creative, needs a toolkit of skills to present a story. These skill-up classes offer students an introduction to basic production and/or post-production skills used in evidence-based or creative storytelling. Students will either bring existing content and apply the new skill, or work with project materials supplied by the faculty member.

Note(s): The course on a different topic may be repeated for credit. Not for liberal arts credit.**DS 201 - Principles of Documentary**

Credits: 3

An introduction to local, national, and global documentary traditions in film, sound, photography, exhibition and multimedia, through readings, screenings, classroom discussion, and engagement with practitioners. Students will engage with theoretical and practical issues related to documentary work, including critical analysis of existing work and of the distinct ethical and aesthetic concerns associated with developing and telling stories that matter. The course emphasizes how the narrative, analytical, and structural frames of audio, visual, and written media shape the work, its audience, and impact. Rather than focusing on the production of a documentary in any one form, students get a hands-on experience of various media, and an overview of technical aspects, to help them prepare for extended work in one or more documentary media.

Note(s): Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.**DS 202 - Documentary Studies Workshop**

Credits: 1-4

A topical workshop or lab/studio experience sponsored through documentary studies. DS 202 may be linked to a regular course offered or as a freestanding academic experience.

Prerequisites: As determined by the instructor and the Documentary Studies Advisory Board, and may include concurrent enrollment in a concurrent course, or completion of a prerequisite course. *Prerequisites/ Corequisites DS 202/302 designation will depend on whether the workshop requires advanced documentary skills of students. Thus it may be possible for a faculty member to offer a 300-level class, but add a 200-level DS workshop to introduce relevant documentary assignments or tasks, or offer a 200-level class that does more advanced documentary work, requiring a 300-level workshop.*

Note(s): Not for liberal arts credit.**DS 205 - Participation, Co-creation, Social Practice**

Credits: 3

An exploration of participatory approaches to documentary, performance, and artistic creation within the wider landscape of socially-engaged art or Social Practice Art. The socially-engaged or participatory art methodologies enlist non-artists as collaborators alongside professional artists, question the line that divides these two categories, and critique exclusivity and elitism within art itself. In both studying and creating Social Practice Art, student will consider questions such as How is access to the means of cultural production related to agency and power? How does art articulate or create community? What is or should be the place of creativity in the lives of individuals and societies?

Prerequisites: SSP 100.**Note(s):** Fulfills Bridge Experience requirement.**DS 208 - Preserving Black Foodways**

Credits: 4

A multimedia exploration of Black foodways and traditions, structured around a blend of traditional seminar content and hands-on, community based cultural preservation. We will focus primarily on culinary expressions that are unique to the U.S. and shaped by its specific history, conditions and lived experiences, recognizing that the history and presentation of African American cuisine is as varied and boundless as the Diaspora itself. Students will participate in an ongoing effort to create a community archive through field trips and hands-on experience, conducting interviews with community members, visiting regional sites of relevance, and documenting cooking demonstrations. We will explore the many places Black foodways manifest in visual art, literature, autobiographies and historical documents. We will consider how the migration and displacement of Black people—both voluntary and forced—have influenced culinary traditions and food preparation methods. Through interviews, demonstrations, archival material, audio/video media, and oral histories students will pay special attention to cultural histories and customs that are revealed through food conversations. Students will examine how place impacts and influences traditional recipes by identifying unique ingredients based on the landscape, ingredients used out of practicality and availability and by exploring the stories behind substitutions based on personal preference. Through experiential learning students will practice basic methods of documentation and production techniques while collaboratively contributing to the preservation of these cultural practices.

Prerequisites: SSP 100.**Note(s):** Fulfills Bridge Experience requirement.**DS 210 - Introduction to Audio Documentary**

Credits: 3

An introduction to the technologies, tools, and skills of creating audio documentaries. Working individually and in small production teams, students will produce original sound works for radio broadcast and podcast and listen to and critically analyze examples in the medium. Students will also learn to research and report a story, observe ethical guidelines and legal norms of permissions, and apply different methods of sculpting an audio experience, telling stories, and representing reality. The course assumes no prior knowledge of audio technologies.

Note(s): Fulfills Artistic Inquiry requirement.

DS 220 - Intro to Documentary Filmmaking

Credits: 4

A hands-on introduction to making documentary films, grounded in critical viewing and debate. The world is full of stories waiting to be told. Yet what makes a story worth telling, who ought to tell it, and how one should tell it - these are some of the most crucial questions any documentarian must answer. From initial concept through to the final edit, this course will ask students to grapple with this process of documentary development, in order to acquire a robust set of practices from which to tell the stories of the world around us.

Note(s): Fulfills Artistic Inquiry requirement.**DS 230 - Public Science Communication**

Credits: 1

Partner with a local organization to communicate science to the general public. Project format will vary and will be determined by the partner organization; examples include (but are not limited to) educational signage, a webpage, or a podcast. Students will analyze example works to evaluate how language and design contribute to successful public science communication. They will translate scientific information into clear and understandable text or narration, and will identify or create appropriate images or video to convey their message. They will collaborate with the partner organization as they develop their project, ensuring that the final product meets the organization's goals. There may be one required weekend field trip. The course is repeatable for credit with a different project.

DS 251 - Topics in Documentary Studies

Credits: 1-4

Typically organized courses covering methods, approaches and issues within documentary studies at the intermediate level. The specific approaches to be explored will vary from course to course, but all topics courses will engage both theory and practice.

Note(s): May be repeated with a different topic for credit.**DS 302 - Advanced Documentary Studies Workshop**

Credits: 1-4

An advanced topical workshop or lab/studio experience sponsored through documentary studies. DS 302 may be linked to a regular course offered or as a free-standing academic experience.

Prerequisites: As determined by the instructor and the Documentary Studies Advisory Board, and may include concurrent enrollment in a concurrent course or completion of a prerequisite course.

Note(s): DS 202/302 designation will depend on whether the workshop requires advanced documentary skills of students. Thus it may be possible for a faculty member to offer a 300-level class, but add a 200-level DS workshop to introduce relevant documentary assignments or tasks, or offer a 200-level class that does more advanced documentary work, requiring a 300-level workshop.

DS 351 - Advanced Documentary Studies Workshop

Credits: 1-4

Typically organized courses covering methods, approaches, and issues within documentary studies at the advanced level. The specific approaches to be explored will vary from course to course, but all topics courses will engage both theory and practice.

Note(s): May be repeated with a different topic for credit.**DS 371 - Independent Study in Documentary Studies**

Credits: 1-4

An opportunity for qualified students to pursue independent study or research in Documentary Studies under the supervision of an appropriate faculty member. The written study proposal must be approved by the MDOCS director.

Prerequisites: Previous study related to the area of the internship experience.

DS 381 - Skidmore-Saratoga Memory Project Practicum

Credits: 1-4

An opportunity to work on the Skidmore-Saratoga Memory Project with a faculty member and/or documentarian. Students will gain practical experience in documentary research, writing, production or post-production. This course is intended for those interested in applying and enhancing skills acquired in Documentary Studies workshops or courses, or within their majors, while advancing the projects supported by MDOCS and/or Skidmore College faculty. Permission of instructor is required.

Prerequisites: As determined by the instructor and the Documentary Studies Advisory Board.

Corequisites: DS 202/302 and DS 381 are not interchangeable. In DS 202/302, the DS workshops, students may be building skills with course materials or working on distinct projects, with work to be complete within that semester. In DS 381, the Memory Practicum, students will collaborate on a pre-designated project, which might be creating a film for a community partner, helping a local institution design a commemoration of a landmark event, or to create an exhibit in a nearby museum. The practicum will allow faculty and students to collaborate on projects which might extend beyond the scope of a single semester.

DS 399 - Professional Internship in Documentary Studies

Credits: 1-4

Professional opportunity for advanced students whose curricular foundations and cocurricular experience have prepared them for more autonomous professional work related to documentary studies. With faculty sponsorship and the director's approval, students may extend their educational experience into such areas as filmmaking, sound recording, exhibition, archives, and other professional areas.

Prerequisites: Previous study related to the area of the internship experience.

Note(s): Not for liberal arts credit.**AAMF 323 - Law and Ethics for Storytelling in Media**

Credits: 4

The study of how filmmakers and documentarians, authors and artists, musicians, makers, marketers and storytellers protect their ideas, expressive works, and creative endeavors from being copied or stolen by others, especially in the digital age. Students will consider the legal and ethical issues these individuals confront as they produce their creative projects, particularly creations which incorporate other media content. Employing interdisciplinary methods and approaches, students will explore the legal, ethical, and practical issues involved in varying media production forms (video/film, photography, music/audio, documentary, web and exhibit-based narratives, etc.) for fiction and non-fiction storytelling. Students will develop approaches which synthesize underlying policies and best practices in order to challenge assumptions at the intersection of storytelling, business, art, law and creative expression.

AHDS 324 - The Artist Interview

Credits: 3

An exploration of the artist interview as a form of original art historical research. Students will learn how oral histories can function in a museum collection archive. Working in teams, students will closely examine and research artworks in the Tang Museum collection, prepare questions for the artists, and create videotaped interviews. Students will learn different methodological approaches to the interview and consider such questions as: how does editing play a role in making meaning; who defines the meaning of an artwork; and is the artist always the best source about his or her own work?

Prerequisites: *One art history course.*

Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PHDS 217 - Film Truth

Credits: 4

An interdisciplinary investigation of the possibility of truth and objectivity in documentary film. Students will examine the history of documentary practice and theory, including topics such as mimetic theory, narrative realism, scientific truth, juridical truth, institutional truth, film truth, direct cinema, self-reflexive cinema, and constructivism. The course will integrate methods from philosophy, aesthetics, and film studies.

Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement.