

# HOT DOCS

## A COOL DOCUMENTARY FILM about Hot-Button Issues & Interesting Ideas

For this film you will be creating a **SHORT "HOT" DOC** about an **IMPORTANT ISSUE** or **SIGNIFICANT IDEA**. Your focus for the film should be on **HOW** that issue/idea is evidenced in the lives and/or works of **THREE+ DIFFERENT PEOPLE**. Below are the conceptual and technical guidelines that you should be shooting for with this project.

### Conceptual Guidelines:

- A. SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE and a STRONG STORY IDEA.** The issue or idea you choose should be **socially significant**. This doesn't mean that it has to be altogether-nothing-but-serious,... but rather, that it should **MATTER** to a wide demographic of people, and should perhaps even be a new or innovative perspective on a topic which connects the **local→global**. Not all stories are created equal. **Focus on finding and developing an interesting story!**
- B. OFF-CAMPUS non-SMC.** This IS an **OFF-CAMPUS** film. No exceptions. While the initial issue or idea for your film may have stemmed from courses, concepts, or other ideas and people which you've encountered at SMC, the people you interview and the footage that you gather for this film should decidedly **NOT** come from SMC.
- C. ENGAGING VISUALS + ILLUSTRATIVE FOOTAGE.** This is **NOT** a "talking heads" film. It needs to be more interestingly crafted in how it is shot and edited. So while you may obviously have short interview sections, you will also need to provide a fuller visual/audio "portrait" of the three+ people you profile → shadowing, ride-alongs, at work/play, motivated B-roll, etc.
- D. HIGH PRODUCTION VALUE.** This project should be a **high production value** film and approximately **7-10 minutes in length**. Excellent footage and audio throughout.
- E. COLLABORATIVE.** This is a group project. You will need to work in groups of 2 people in which **ALL** members of the group share in each aspect of the production (concept, script, storyboard, shooting, editing, etc.)

### TECHNICAL Guidelines: Your film should include ALL of the following:

- 1. You should have a creative and stylized look/aesthetic to the film.** It should be **compelling** to a **Vimeo audience!**
- 2. It should be an interesting, well-conceived, and PROVOCATIVE STORY STRUCTURE** replete with a strong story DEVELOPMENT/PROGRESSION, chapters, segues, focal points, interesting character details, and a strong intro hook.
- 3. VOICE-OVER.** You should include a voice-over for your film produced by you. At minimum, this VO should book-end your film. The VO should be scripted and performed for the ear.
- 4. Excellent shot composition, interesting camera angles AND multiple types of shots** (establishing shots, close-ups, over-the-shoulder, extreme-close-ups) and shot angles (Close-ups, Over the Shoulder shots, high angle shots, low angle shots, etc.) **ALL** of your shots need to be connected to and/or motivated by the story you are trying to tell.
- 5. It should have EXCELLENT camera footage throughout the entire film! NO** shaky camera movements. **NO** motorzooming. **NO** fuzzy or out of focus shots, badly lit scenes, etc. If it's not good, either shoot it again (multiple takes) or don't use it. Period.
- 6. AUDIO** should be **crystal clean** throughout the entire film—natural sound, interviews, sound FX.
- 7. Aesthetically Stylized Montage Sequences.** You should develop at least two well-edited montage **sequences** which engage the viewer and propel the story.
- 8. You should include historical or archive footage** as part of your story. This footage should not just be "tossed in" but rather connected in a meaningful way.
- 9. Titles/Graphics.** The introductory and ending titles should be professionally stylized. Same goes for any intertitles or lower 3rds.

Obviously, the content and technical issues will vary depending on which type of film you choose. However, weaving together a final film which shows the **best of your capabilities** should be the focus of your attention for this project.

### DEADLINES/DUE DATES:

✓ Due TUES, APRIL 17<sup>th</sup>: **TWO THINGS DUE: (A) 1-2-page FILM Treatment (single-spaced)**, replete with **ENGAGING OVERVIEW**, idea/issue description, names/contacts and rationale for your **ACTORS**, locations, and your cinematic structure and/or approach for telling this story as a short film or TV piece; **(B) A comprehensive SHOT LIST** which delineates the story progression.

✓ Due TUES, APRIL 24<sup>th</sup>: — One **INTERVIEW** rough cut.

🔥 **DUE Tues, MAY 1<sup>ST</sup> COMPLETE PROJECT (2 Versions - Master + Web/Mobile)**

# PURE FICTION

## *A Stylized Short FICTION Film with Awesome Acting and Cool Dialogue*

For this film you will be creating a **SHORT FICTION FILM**. It should showcase an **EXCELLENT SCRIPT, DIALOGUE, FILMING, EDITS and ACTING**. It should have ACTs and Turning points to drive the **DRAMA**. Think about (and watch) some of the best of television today—**Thrones, Waco, The Americans, Broadchurch, This is Us, Homeland, The Good Wife, Handmaid's Tale, Humans, etc.**

### **Conceptual Guidelines:**

- F. STRONG STORY IDEA.** The film that you create or idea you choose should be a **good televisual or cinematic story**. This means that it needs to be conceived with ALL of the important elements which we expect from excellent films or TV programs. Multiple camera angles, lighting, multiple audio threads, plot progression, etc. **This IS NOT a roommate film about a weekend party.**
- G. Good locations!** Find good locations (preferably off-campus) where you can control lighting, sound, backgrounds, etc. This should not be a "dorm" or "townhouse" film. Get creative with your locations.
- H. ENGAGING VISUALS + ILLUSTRATIVE FOOTAGE.** This is **NOT** a "talking heads" film. Nor should it be a MUSIC VIDEO. It needs to be SCRIPTED with at least TWO actors. Your job is to DIRECT those actors to get the BEST performances that you can for the camera.
- I. HIGH PRODUCTION VALUE.** This project should be a **high production value** film and approximately **7-10 minutes in length**. Excellent footage and audio throughout.
- J. COLLABORATIVE.** This is a group project. You will need to work in groups of 2 people in which **ALL** members of the group share in each aspect of the production (concept, script, storyboard, shooting, editing, etc.)

### **TECHNICAL Guidelines:** Your film should include **ALL** of the following:

1. You should have a **creative and stylized look/aesthetic to the film**. It should be **compelling** to a **Vimeo audience!**
2. It should be an **interesting, well-conceived, and PROVOCATIVE STORY STRUCTURE** replete with a strong story DEVELOPMENT/PROGRESSION, chapters, segues, focal points, interesting character details, and a strong intro hook.
3. **VOICE-OVER.** You should include a voice-over for your film produced by you. At minimum, this VO should book-end your film. The VO should be scripted and performed for the ear.
4. **Excellent shot composition, interesting camera angles AND multiple types of shots** (establishing shots, close-ups, over-the-shoulder, extreme-close-ups) and shot angles (Close-ups, Over the Shoulder shots, high angle shots, low angle shots, etc.) **ALL** of your shots need to be connected to and/or motivated by the story you are trying to tell.
5. It should have **EXCELLENT camera footage throughout the entire film!** **NO** shaky camera movements. **NO** motorzooming. **NO** fuzzy or out of focus shots, badly lit scenes, etc. If it's not good, either shoot it again (multiple takes) or don't use it. Period.
6. **AUDIO** should be **crystal clean** throughout the entire film—natural sound, interviews, sound FX.
7. **Aesthetically Stylized Montage Sequences.** You should develop at least two well-edited montage **sequences** which engage the viewer and propel the story.
8. You should include **historical or archive footage** as part of your story. This footage should not just be "tossed in" but rather connected in a meaningful way.
9. **Titles/Graphics.** The introductory and ending titles should be professionally stylized. Same goes for any intertitles or lower 3rds.

Obviously, the content and technical issues will vary depending on which type of film you choose. However, weaving together a final film which shows the **best of your capabilities** should be the focus of your attention for this project.

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☑ Due TUES, APRIL 24<sup>th</sup>: — One SEQ/SCENE rough cut.

🔥 **DUE Tues, MAY 1<sup>ST</sup> COMPLETE PROJECT (2 Versions - Master + Web/Mobile)**