

Project DP-4 Advanced Working Hypothesis Helper

Film Title _____

Project Define the dramatic essentials of an advanced documentary.

Goals are to define:

- A conviction that you hold and mean to express through a film topic
- The main characters, their agendas, and the obstacles they face
- The film's point of view
- Its structure and style
- Its emotional and intellectual impact
- Its theme and premise.

Steps

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. In life I believe that... (your life-principle concerning this subject) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. My film will show this in action by exploring... (situations) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. My central characters are... (their characteristics) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. What each wants to get, do, or accomplish is ... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. The main conflict in my film is between..... and | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. My film's POV, or its POV character, will be... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I expect my film's structure to be determined by... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. The subject and POV suggest a style that is... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. The theme my film explores is... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. The premise of my film is... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Ultimately I want my audience to feel... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. ...and to understand that.... | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Project DP-6 Advanced Proposal Helper

Project Compile intended dramatic contents ready for expansion into a proposal.

Goals are to

- Find something for each category, but nothing in more than one category
- Develop your ideas and intentions

Steps write a brief paragraph on each of the below:

- 1) **TOPIC AND EXPOSITION** Write a paragraph that includes,
 - a) Your film's *subject* (person, group, environment, social issue, etc).
 - b) *Expository information* (factual or other background information) so the reader can see the enclosed world into which you are going to take us.
- 2) **ACTION SEQUENCES.** Write a brief paragraph on each sequence that shows characters, an event, or an activity:
 - a) The sequence's start, expected action, and finish
 - b) What information or persuasion it contributes to the film.
 - c) The agendas or conflicts you expect it to evidence.
 - d) Any useful metaphors it will suggest.
 - e) Any special, symbolic or emblematic imagery it will contain.
 - f) What structures the events (especially through time).
 - g) What the sequence will contribute to the film as a whole.
- 3) **MAIN CHARACTERS.** Write about each main character, including:
 - a) The person's identity—name, relationship to others in film—and their qualities
 - b) What he or she contributes to your film's story
 - c) The metaphoric role this person occupies in relation to what else is in the film.
 - d) What this character wants to get or do in relation to the others or to the situation.
 - e) Any direct speech quotations that freshly and directly convey this person's essence
- 4) **CONFLICT.** What is being argued or worked out in this film? Define,
 - a) What conflict the characters know they are playing out.
 - b) What conflict you see them playing out (of which they may be quite unaware).
 - c) What other principles (of opinion, view, vision, and so on) you see at issue.
 - d) How, where, and when will one force confront the other in your film (the *confrontation*, which is very important).
 - e) Possible developments you see emerging from this or other confrontations.
- 5) **TO-CAMERA INTERVIEWS.** "Talking heads", though overused, make good safety coverage, and their tracks, if well-recorded, provide excellent voice-over narration or interior monologue. For each intended interviewee list:
 - a) Name, age, gender.
 - b) Job, profession, or role.
 - c) Metaphoric role in your film's dramatic structure.
 - d) Main elements that your interview will seek to establish.
- 6) **STYLE.** Shooting or editing style that might augment or counterpoint your film's

content. Comment on:

- a) Documentary genre you are using, and how this affects the film's style.
 - b) Point of view and how this affects shooting and editing styles.
 - c) Narration (if there is to be any, and by whom)
 - d) Lighting moods.
 - e) Visual and other rhythms.
 - f) Any intercutting or parallel storytelling.
 - g) Intended juxtaposition of like or unlike materials to create comparison, ironic tension, etc.
- 7) TONE. Describe the progression of moods of the film as you see them, and the film's prevailing tone.
- 8) STRUCTURE. Outline how you might structure your film. Consider:
- a) How will you handle the progression of time in the film?
 - b) How and through whom the story will be told?
 - c) What elements (process, journey, seasons?) might structure the film?
 - d) What will probably constitute the climactic sequence or "crisis" in your story?
 - e) Where in the intended structure the crisis might occur?
 - f) What else will become the resolution (or falling action) after the "crisis"
- 9) RESOLUTION. Film endings determine most of their final impact, so describe
- a) Your film's possible endings,
 - b) What meaning each would have for the audience.
- 10) SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE. What will this film,
- a) Say about the lives it portrays?
 - b) Suggest is the social significance of this?
- 11) YOUR MOTIVATION FOR MAKING THE FILM. What, in your background and interests, impels you to make the film? (This is your chance to argue that you have the energy, passion, and commitment to stay the course and make an outstanding film)
- 12) WHY GIVE A DAMN? You care about this, but how will you make your audience?
- 13) AUDIENCE KNOWLEDGE AND PREJUDICES. What are the expectations—right and wrong—of your audience? Your film must be in dialogue with these so it can extend, subvert, or endorse them. Complete the following:
- a) My intended audience is (don't write "Everyone!") _____
 - b) I can expect the audience to know _____ but not to know _____
 - c) Positive audience prejudices are _____ and negative ones are _____
 - d) Countervailing facts, ideas, and feelings my audience must experience are _____
- 14) THEMATIC PURPOSE The main idea the film imparts to its audience is. _____
- 15) PREMISE Your film's content and purpose summed up in a single sentence (such as you'd see in a TV listing)

DP-8 Dramatic Form Worksheet (for the film as a whole)

1. Structure (A well-structured story gives a sense of movement and purpose)

- a) **Hook.** How will you seize your audience's attention?
- b) **Contract** How will you signify the "contract" that suggests what the film is going to deal with?
- c) **Structure.** What will organize your sequences and drive your film forward from start to finish?
The steps of a process, event, or journey?
The emotional order of someone remembering?
The needs of a main character in a character-driven film?
A series of orchestrated contrasts?
A series of graduated moods?
Other _____?
- c) **Handling of Time.** How will you show the order and passage of time?
According to the original events' chronology?
As someone recalls the events?
According to a storytelling logic for telling the events (for instance showing a court case conclusion before reconstructing all the steps to get there)
Other _____?
- d) **Apex or Crisis.** Can you see a pivotal event, moment, scene, situation as your film's likely high point? (You may not, yet)

2. Change, growth, and resolution (A satisfying story reflects change and growth)

- a) Who has the potential for **change**?
Who or what is under pressure? Who or what might grow?
Who is taking risks?
Who or what needs to change? Can you legitimately help that growth (by positive intercession)?
Who or what is really stopping that change?
- b) **Confrontation**
How will your audience see the main, conflicting forces meet and collide?
How to ensure this happens onscreen?

<p>c) Resolution</p>	<p>What outcomes seem possible? Which is most likely? How could you handle each so that your film ends meaningfully?</p>
<p>3. Audience, Impact, Theme</p>	
<p>a) Target audience. Who in particular are you addressing?</p>	<p>A kind of person in the film? An authority or institution? A section of the public, and if so, which? Other _____?</p>
<p>b) My audience must feel...</p>	<p>What emotions must you awaken in your audience?</p>
<p>c) My audience must think about...</p>	<p>What issue, idea, contradiction, conflict, etc should your audience be left thinking about?</p>
<p>d) The theme of my film will be...</p>	<p>Recall your “In life I believe that...” statement and restate the theme your film will establish</p>

DP-1 Dramatic Content Helper

For each intended scene...

1. Who/What/When/Where/Why (Exposition)		Y
a) Who are the main characters?	Types, personalities, backgrounds each has? Who is the main character and why?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
b) What is their situation?	What is it, what led to it, where will it go next?	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) When is this happening	Era, season, month, time of day or night?	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Where is this taking place?	War-torn Sierra Leone or sleepy Nebraska; city or village; in a train, car, mansion or slum; kitchen or bedroom; upstairs or down?	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Why should anyone care?	What in your subject and approach ensures that your audience will give a damn?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Action and Character (Character is best developed through what people do)		
a) What is routine and characteristic ?	What's necessary and normal in this activity? How little can I show to render it concisely? What's especially revealing in each main character's actions of his/her/its temperament and nature?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
b) What is surprising or special ?	What's behind the surface or goes unnoticed by the casual onlooker?	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) What patterns lie in the situation?	What characteristic movement and cycles of repetition does the place or situation have (by people, traffic, machines, animals, natural phenomena, etc)? What obstructs or conflicts with these patterns?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Will and Conflict (Worthwhile drama depends on active, aspiring characters)		
a) Volition What's your main character trying to get, do, or accomplish?	In life generally? In this intended scene?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
b) Obstructions. What in general stops him/her/it?	Overall? In this likely scene?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict	What conflicts will occur in the film? What's the single, central conflict in my film?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
d) Strategies. How might he/she/it deal with each new obstruction?	By reflex and without thought? Creatively? In panic, surprise, disbelief, (you name it)?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
e) Resolution	What do you see as possible outcomes for the scene? Which is most likely? How will you go forward with shooting if a change becomes necessary?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

For the film as a whole...

4. Structure (A well-structured story gives a sense of movement and purpose)		
a) Hook.	How to immediately seize your audience's attention?	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you engage your audience?	How to signify the "contract" (what your film is going to deal with and how it will do this)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Momentum. What will structure your sequences and drive your film forward from beginning to its end?	The steps of a process, event, or journey?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The emotional order of memory? (in retrospect)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The needs of a character (character-driven movies)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A series of orchestrated contrasts?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A series of graduated moods?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other _____?	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Time. How will you order it?	According to the chronology of the original events?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	As someone remembers the events?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	According to a storytelling logic for telling the events (for instance showing a court case conclusion before reconstructing all the steps to get there)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other _____?	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Apex or Crisis.	Can you see a pivotal event, moment, scene, situation as your film's likely high point? (You may not)	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Change, growth, and resolution (A satisfying story reflects change and growth)		
a) Who has the potential for change?	Who or what is under pressure?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Who is taking risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Who or what needs to change?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Who or what is really stopping that change?	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Confrontation	How will your audience see the main, conflicting forces meet and collide?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How to ensure this happens onscreen?	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Growth	Who or what might grow?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Can you legitimately help that growth (by positive intercession)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What intercessionary temptations must you resist?	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Resolution	What outcomes seem possible?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Which is most likely?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How to handle each so your film ends meaningfully?	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Audience, Impact, Theme		
a) Target audience.	A kind of person in the film?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who in particular are you addressing? (Don't say "Everyone!")	An authority or institution?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A section of the public, and if so, which?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other _____?	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) My audience must feel...	What emotions must you awaken in your audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What emotions must you avoid awakening?	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) My audience must think about...	What issue, idea, contradiction, conflict, etc should your audience be left thinking about?	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) The theme of my film will be...	Recall your "In life I believe that..." statement and restate the theme your film will establish	<input type="checkbox"/>

DP-9 RECONSTRUCTION WORKSHEET

Reconstruction:

- What are you really trying to get across to the audience?
- Could you make your point another way and avoid reconstruction?
- What, from the audience's point of view, makes a reconstruction permissible?
- Are you implying that what you show is typical, or that it is particular and pivotal? (Typical is probably OK, but reconstructing a pivotal moment could backfire)
- Are you using the original participants, or actors playing them? Will the audience know this?
- What do the participants feel about reenacting something bygone?
- How should you cover the scene to avoid injecting histrionics?

Docudrama:

- What is the film's premise and why does it need to be a docudrama?
- Why not make a fiction film avowedly based on real events?
- How will you justify 'faking it' to the audience?
- What additional values will you put in play to justify taking so much control?

Mockumentary:

- Is the target of your satire (if that's what it is) some practice, custom, event etc? Or is it the documentary genre itself?
- If you are lampooning documentary (which can always use some house-cleaning), do you have enough knowledge, ideas, and material?
- How can your piece develop? (Many ideas for this form are one-liners, and not adequate for an extended piece)
- What is your purpose, if you mean to deceive your audience and then undeceive them?

PROJECT DP-10, CRITERIA FOR A GOOD PITCH							
		0	1	2	3	4	5
A	Situation: Clear and dramatically promising						
B	Characters: Clearly differentiated, inherently interesting						
C	POV character(s): Trying to get, do, or accomplish something tangible						
D	Stakes: Main character has a lot at stake						
E	Development and change in a main character seem likely						
F	Form: Inventive and cinematic, fits the subject						
G	Structure of the story is logical and organic to the events						
H	Style: Type of documentary is clear and appropriate						
I	Metaphor will be used productively in the film						
J	Socially critical attitude implied by the film toward its subject is evident and appropriate						
K	Commitment strongly demonstrated by filmmaker						
L	Strong audience appeal seems likely						