**Policy Advocacy and Video for Social Change**

Winter, AY 2023-2024

**Instructor**

Kate Coyer, Visiting Professor, DPP & Senior Research Fellow, Democracy Institute

**Time and Location**

Thursday, 17:40-19:20

Course level: MA

Course credit: 2 credits (4 ECTS)

**Course Description**

A workshop-style course in which students examine of the use of video in policy advocacy campaigns, culminating in the production of a short advocacy video working in small groups.

Video plays an ever-increasing role in policy advocacy. It’s not easy to be heard in a sea of information and messages--this is why video, when used wisely, can be an invaluable ally in advocacy work. Advocacy video can convey knowledge on social issues, capture personal stories and experiences, document rights violations, and provide meaningful spaces for marginalized voices to shed light on the real-world impact of public policies. By using the power of visual media, video advocacy is an important tool for raising awareness and building movements.

In this course, we will explore a range of advocacy video strategies and approaches. We will watch advocacy video shorts to examine their effectiveness and consider their impact, audience, and outreach, as well as different means of amplification including the strategic use of social media, traditional press and community outlets. Student’s final project will be to produce a short advocacy video that communicates a message, moves an audience, and ultimately seeks to effect change on a given issue.

Class sessions will be a mix of lecture and discussion. We will spend much of the class time viewing and analyzing a range of advocacy videos and case studies. In addition, there will be introductory practical sessions, and sessions where students critique each other’s video projects at each stage of completion.

No prior experience in video production is required or expected. Students will use the tools currently at their disposal, such as mobile phones and free, online editing software. Students familiar with the CEU camera and Media Lab can use these resources, but this is not required. All students can come to open lab sessions for support, or for an orientation on Premiere Pro if of interest to learn. The intention of this class is to enable students to create short, impactful advocacy videos the basic technical skills and most accessible tools.

**Learning Outcomes**  
Upon course completion, students will be able to:

* Articulate and understand the role video can play in policy advocacy;
* Become familiar with different uses and forms of advocacy video through viewing examples and case studies;
* Analyze and evaluate different advocacy video tactics, strategies, campaigns, and modes of dissemination;
* Assess the impact and effectiveness of different advocacy videos and articulate fundamental ethical issues around privacy and safety;
* Gain familiarity and/or further experience in using mobile phones for filming and producing short, impactful video work;
* Create and apply a deliberate structure and style to a short advocacy video, which will be refined throughout the semester;
* Effectively collaborate in a small group to produce a short advocacy video;
* Offer constructive critique in a workshop setting, both as a work-in-progress, and a final version.

**Course Requirements and Assessment.** Each assignment is a necessary step towards successful completion of the advocacy video.

1. **Final Film (50% of the final grade)** 2-4 minute advocacy video. Students will complete the project working in groups of 2 or 3, which they form by the second week of the semester.  The division of labor is up to the individual team, but all members must contribute to the project in equal measure.

Advocacy videos will be assessed on the degree to which they successfully convey a clear message; the degree to which there is a deliberate structure, theme, point of view, and style; the degree to which the overall work is refined through each stage of the process, from pitch through rough cut to final cut, based on peer and instructor feedback; and the degree to which the video successfully supports its intended overall advocacy objective.

1. **Video Advocacy Proposal and Pitch (20%)** 3-4 pages. This proposal includes: a brief synopsis of the advocacy video; a statement of purpose (why this issue); advocacy strategy; intended outcome and target audience(s); outreach and dissemination; a treatment of the content of the video; a shooting schedule and a budget.  The proposal can be presented in bullet point/easy to view visual format. The pitch is an in-class presentation of the concept and objective of the advocacy video.
2. **Practical Exercise (10%)** Students complete one short interviewing exercise in groups outside of class time, exploring and developing skills discussed in class.  These will be viewed and critiqued in class, time permitting.
3. **Final Reflection and Self-evaluation (10%)** 2 pages. The reflection can cover a variety of topics, including the group’s approach to the film, how that changed throughout the process, and how that initial vision is reflected in the final work.  The self-evaluation should cover what you learned through the process of making the film, the successes of your group, the failures, and what you would now do differently based on what you’ve learned through this process.
4. **Participation in critiques and class discussions (10%)**This course is a workshop, and thus requires the active participation and contribution of all members to class discussions, but especially for critiques of student work. Each member has a responsibility to offer feedback in a constructive manner, and will be evaluated on the degree to which they do.  Each filmmaker has the responsibility to listen and note that feedback, and to incorporate it into their creative process.  The filmmaker may not speak while their film is being critiqued, until the end of the critique, when they may ask questions, and they must take notes during their critique. As part of the participation grade, students are required to complete assigned readings and viewings and demonstrate familiarity with them in class.

**Course Text**  
There are three primary handbooks for the course that readings will draw from: 

Gregory, Sam. 2005. *Video for Change: A Guide for Advocacy and Activism*. Pluto Press: a PDF link can be found on the course website.

Video for Change <http://v4c.org/resources>

The Impact Guide and Field Kit [https://impactguide.org/](https://impactguide.org/introduction/welcome/)

Additional resources that might be of interest:

Witness <https://witness.org/resources/>

**Course Schedule**

Details will be available on the course e-learning site, including the complete list of advocacy videos for each class session. It will be updated throughout the semester in advance of each class as new campaigns emerge.

**Week 1**

**Course introduction: What is advocacy video? How can video meaningfully address policy advocacy and social change?**

The examples we will view in this first class address environmental issues, but each take very different approaches. Which of these do you respond to? What kind of change are each of these videos looking to achieve? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What are some differences in style, approach, and audience? What are they asking us to do?

**READ:** Video for Change Impact Toolkit sections 1) What is Video for Change? <https://toolkit.video4change.org/what-is-video-for-change/>

**Week 2**

**Filming & Camera Workshop**In this session, students will be introduced to the basics of filming an advocacy video for editing. This includes technical aspects of filming with smart phones, as well as fundamentals of documentary filming and interviewing.

READ: Sam Gregory, Gillian Caldwell, Ronit Avni and Thomas Harding, *Video for Change: A Guide for Advocacy and Activism,*pp. 1-20; 50-65

DUE: Project group list

**Week 3**

**Editing Workshop**

In this session, students will be introduced to basic editing using home editing software, in addition to the fundamentals of editing for documentary and advocacy video.

**READ**: Sam Gregory, Gillian Caldwell, Ronit Avni and Thomas Harding, *Video for Change: A Guide for Advocacy and Activism,*pp. 70-112

**Week 4**

**Building campaigns and finding your audience**

What makes a successful campaign and how can advocacy video help support existing work and/or lead new initiatives? In this session, we will address the fundamentals of building and developing an advocacy campaign and how video can be a part of broader campaigns and movements. We will pay specific attention to both *determining* your audience and *finding* your audience, impact and distribution, and social media outreach.

**WATCH & READ the following case studies:** As you read the impact assessments and watch the films for each of these campaigns, consider the different audiences each are trying to reach and the different approaches and styles. Pay particular attention to whose voice is centered in each story, who has the power in each case, and what the Ask is of us as viewers. Consider if you think the videos live up to the stated goals and intended impacts.

1)Quipu: Calls for Justice   
2)Period. End of Sentence   
3) Anglican Church and LGBT Awareness  
4)Forced evictions- Evict them in 5 Easy Steps, and People before Profit

Video 4 Change Toolkit, “Values & Methods” <https://toolkit.video4change.org/>

**Week 5  
In-class Presentations of Advocacy Video Proposals: Teams deliver pitches in class and receive feedback**

**Week 6**

**Making an impact through advocacy video and storytelling**

Think about campaigns you are familiar with or have participated in. We will look at different styles of advocacy video, and start to connect filmmaking style with desired outcomes, audiences, and impacts. There is a lot of pressure from funders to measure impact. Some of our work can have demonstrable impact in the short term, while other advocacy initiatives are more about building long term awareness. Either way, often the most impactful advocacy videos are those that manage to make personal the policy. This week, we will analyze advocacy videos specifically to consider their ability to craft a story in a short format.

**READ:** Impact Field Guide and Toolkit Chapter Introduction and Planning; Making and Moving Shorts and Impact in Action <https://impactguide.org/impact-in-action/equipping-for-impact/>

**Week 7**

**The power of witnessing: documenting human rights violations**In this session, we will consider the role of visual evidence in exposing injustice. What is the power of witnessing and documenting? How can visual evidence be used in courts and human rights tribunals? And, as Sandra Ristovska puts it, what does it mean to turn the act of seeing each other into a practice of human rights? And what does it mean for the power of witnessing in policy advocacy? This is not an easy subject, but it’s an important one. With the ubiquity of smart phones, visual evidence from everyday people, in addition to that filmed by advocacy groups, will continue to play important – and complicated – roles.

**READ**  
Sandra Ristovska (2021) <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/of-trauma-testimony-and-the-power-of-human-rights-voices/?fbclid=IwAR32OYRitbK2HnmHlrYz4wHKOYnlux59ijmkvGo65OjVMrHtDILW1MKZ75A>

"Expose Human Rights Abuses, Not the People Who Survive Them" <https://blog.witness.org/2017/04/expose-human-rights-abuses-not-people-survive/>

**Week 8**

**Viral videos and social media: Can Tik Tok be a platform for activism?**

This week, we will look at examples created to be viral moments, whether by design or accident, and other creative uses of video advocacy on TikTok and Instagram.

**READ:**    
TikTok is Shaping Politics: But How?    
[https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/28/style/tiktok-teen-politics-gen-z.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/28/style/tiktok-teen-politics-gen-z.html )Tinder, TikTok and more: Online activists are finding creative new ways to say Black Lives Matters <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/06/12/tiktok-tinder-twitter-bts-black-lives-matter/>  
ALS Ice Bucket Challenge Phenomenon <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/viral-marketing-the-als-ice-bucket-challenge>  
North Korean You Tubers Not What You Think <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/04/asia/north-korea-youtuber-yumi-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>

**Week 9**

**Combatting mis and disinformation through advocacy video, and the importance of authenticity**

In this session, we will look at different initiatives using advocacy video to combat and counter mis and disinformation. This session also offers us the opportunity to consider some ethical issues and the importance of truth and authenticity in advocacy video.

**READ:**   
“YouTube to add labels to some health videos amid misinformation backlash”<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/07/19/youtube-labeling-some-health-videos-amid-misinformation-backlash.html>   
“YouTube to remove misinformation videos about all vaccines”   
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/sep/29/youtube-to-remove-misinformation-videos-about-all-vaccines>“Rumble mixes cat videos with misinformation…” <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/rand-paul-rumble-conservative-youtube-1277997/>Deep Fakes: is this video even real?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OqFY_2JE1c>Short videos by young Cambodians promote fight against COVID 19 disinformation  
<https://globalvoices.org/2020/12/31/short-videos-by-young-cambodians-promote-fight-against-covid-19-disinformation/>

**Week 10**

**Safety, Security & Ethics in Advocacy Video**

**Individual Meetings on Rough Cuts**

**Week 11**

**Rough Cut Screening and Critique**

DUE: Rough Cuts

**Week 12**

**Fine Cut Screening and Critique**

DUE: Fine Cuts

**Final cut of film due April 20**