

MA Documentary Film



Phillip Reed

Level: Postgraduate

Study mode: Full-time

Duration: One year (45 weeks)

Start date: January

Application: Directly through the LCC Postgraduate Admissions Office

Course description

MA Documentary Film offers a broad grounding in the art, ideas, theory and practice of Documentary Film-making.

The course provides opportunities to create films emerging from your passions, from investigation or activist films through to the traditions of verite and observational filming or approaches that embrace documentary film as a fine-art practice in galleries. The Course Director has extensive experience in documentary film-making — over 30 films for BBC TV, Channel 4, the British Council and for art galleries. The MA weaves industry experience with academic insight across the field of documentary production. We focus on your creative and academic development to nurture documentary ideas which you'll study and make culminating in you directing your own film.

Whilst exploring the great traditions of international documentary film, the course offers modern documentary production facilities which include training in shooting and directing on high-definition cameras and editing in final cut pro. Practice is integrated with theory so that film-making is held within the context of critical and conceptual thinking about the history and practice of documentary film.

Teaching is led by practising documentary film-makers and academics including award-winning directors on the teaching team.

Graduates go on to documentary film production in broadcast and independent environments, including placements at major documentary film festivals, commissions in 2011 from major broadcasters and in-house contracts with BBC Television.

Today there is an explosion of interest in documentary film production. The digital revolution has brought new ways of organizing production, exhibition and distribution of documentary films in the broadcast, independent and web-2 media. Career progression in documentary film is significantly enhanced by developing skills as a producer, director, camera operator, sound-recorder or editor. We offer a broad grounding in the entire documentary film production process in each of these roles including practice and guidance to pitch and compete for funding and commissions. At the heart of MA Documentary Film are strong ideas — yours — explored critically in a supportive environment which enables thinking, writing, reflection alongside making your films, from identifying characters, stories and locations to shooting and editing with visual style.

Working in teams, you will produce a short film project in the first term, In term two you will have more room to explore your own ideas and create a 'taster tape' as part of a pitch for the main film, which you make in Phase 3.

The major MA project follows in Term 3 during which you will make a short documentary film (15–20 minutes). Production work is interwoven with academic study. The MA draws on strengths of research and critical evaluation which are assessed in essays.

Some may choose this course in order to pursue further academic studies in film for example in developing research ideas for MPhil and PhD studies in the context of practice-based understanding of film. LCC has several PhD candidates in film and there will be opportunities to develop further postgraduate interests.

You will be part of the College's flourishing postgraduate and research community, offering you further opportunities for academic exchange and for cross-discipline and College-wide activities. Within the College there are a dynamic range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the specialist areas of photography, journalism, interactive multimedia, film and television, documentary research, sound design, screenwriting and media and cultural studies, in addition to photojournalism and documentary photography.

Course structure

- Documentary: Process & practice
- Documentary: History & theory (1)
- Documentary: Group film project, including training in camerawork (on Sony EX1 cameras), Sound recording & FCP editing
- Documentary: History & theory (2)
- Making individually shot, directed & edited 'taster film, 5-6 mins)
- Ethics & Legal Issues including investigative journalism and documentary art
- Major Project: Individually supervised, you will make a full (15-20 mins) documentary film as part of your graduation submission.

- Work placement. During the summer break, students are encouraged to undertake a documentary work placement e.g. at a production company or film festival.

FAQs

How do I apply?

Home/EU students should apply directly through the College's Postgraduate Admissions Office. Download an application form from the LCC website at: http://www.lcc.arts.ac.uk/docs/2007_2008_app_form.pdf

and send it to:

The Postgraduate Admissions Office, Room WG03, London College of Communication, Elephant and Castle, London SE1 6SB, UK.

International/non-UK/EU students should apply via the LCC International Office.

Download an application form from the LCC website at:

<http://www.lcc.arts.ac.uk/international-students/international-applications/>

and send it to:

The International Office, Room WG03, London College of Communication, Elephant and Castle, London SE1 6SB, UK.

Is there a deadline for applications?

Preferably by the end of October but later applications are considered.

What are the standard admission requirements?

You should have a keen interest in documentary films and a keen desire to make your own documentary films. A portfolio is not essential but many applicants send links to documentary work they have already made. You should know what kinds of documentary interest you and why you have an ambition to deepen your involvement in documentary film study and production. A first degree is desirable but not essential, as equivalent professional experience can be considered.

An awareness of and interest in current developments in documentary film is expected. Knowledge of film and media history and theory is not a requirement but we expect candidates to be interested in studying such questions.

Do I need to produce a portfolio? If so, what should it contain?

Your application should be accompanied by an original documentary film idea. This is very much a way for us to assess your understanding of the documentary form so unfortunately we will be unable to advise you on its content. You are encouraged to submit a short showreel of existing documentary film production work with a clear note of your role in each production.

Will I need to attend an interview?

Yes. You will be advised of your interview details once your application has been processed.

Are the requirements different for international students and EU students from outside the UK?

Applicants whose first language is not English must demonstrate their competence in English to IELTS Level 7.0 or demonstrate an equivalent level of achievement.

Students from overseas should contact Vicky Gavulic in the International Office.

Tel: +44 (0) 207 514 8138. Email: v.gavulic@lcc.arts.ac.uk

How long is the course?

One year full-time.

When does the course start and finish? When are the vacation periods?

The course starts in January. Over the summer period (August/September) there are no group classes but you normally work on your main film idea, including shooting and editing. Students typically choose to do a work placement in this time too.

How much time would I be expected to spend in college?

Two days per week, although there are phases of the course during which you will be in College every day.

Where is the course taught?

At LCC, Elephant & Castle.

What kind of projects does the course involve?

Typically, you will be involved in researching, writing, pitching, shooting and directing in order to produce your films. You will also write academic essays, give presentations and undertake work experience as part of your elective units.

How will the work be assessed?

Through your produced films including research dossiers, plus essays, reflective writing and your contributions to filming and producing documentaries.

What are the facilities like?

The LCC campus is well equipped with a large library and information centre with open access computer facilities, DVDs and videos. There is an advice and information centre, exhibition galleries, lecture theatres, studios, laboratories, teaching areas, a shop, refectory, coffee bar and student bar. There is also an Enterprise Centre for Creative Arts, which provides information, events and advice on becoming self-employed in the creative industries.

What equipment will I be expected to have?

It would be helpful if you have access to a video camera (even a basic camcorder) and Final Cut Pro (editing software) on your laptop.

Will I be expected to have any prior knowledge of particular software or any other technical skills?

No but learning Final Cut Pro and basic camera camerawork is very helpful and strengthens your experience of the course.

What kind of people should I expect to meet on the course?

The course recruits people who are committed to documentary films or take their current practice of documentary film to a deeper level. Some go on to work as camera/sound recordists, researchers, producers or directors of documentaries in the broadcast or other sectors. Other people take the course to enhance their employability in different sectors. It will also be of interest to people who want to study documentary films from a more academic perspective, perhaps proceeding to MPhil or PhD study.

Who teaches on the course?

Teachers include a mix of academic and industry professionals with significant broadcast and academic experience. In the last year, teaching has been delivered by Gavin McFayden (Director of the Centre for Investigative Journalism); Nancy Platt (documentary maker); Roy Davies (former editor of *Timewatch* and scriptwriter); Peter

Matthews and Chris Sams (experienced lecturers in film theory); plus Course Director Pratap Rughani (Senior Lecturer with extensive experience in teaching documentary film-maker with over 30 credits for BBC TV, Channel 4 and The British Council).

Specialist lecturers are drawn from the film and broadcast industries and include media lawyers, independent producers and artists. This programme of guest speakers enhances students' understanding of the industry and has led to contracts and commissions. Recent speakers include Peter Kosminsky, Andrew Gilligan, Molly Dineen (a former LCC student), Kim Longinotto and Jane and Louise Wilson.

What are the distinctive features of the course?

The course combines academic study and practical film-making training, taught by a mixture of academics specialising in film and media, with documentary film-makers and investigative journalists.

What do students do when they leave?

Students go on a range of production and academic research and film-making options. Alumni have gone on to research and associate producer contracts and commissions for their ideas in broadcast and independent sectors. Much depends on individual focus and aspiration.

What do students say about the course?

Graduating student Iris Wakulenko, writes: "One of the aims of our course is to provide students with the skills to go into the very competitive field of creative industries. Practitioners, to have a chance at all to get into work, must be multi-skilled, and practical film-making makes the course a much more attractive proposition to prospective students.

"Completing a collaborative documentary film project in Japan not only gave me a film credit but gave me a wonderful opportunity to extend the learning process with my fellow students - in particular how to undertake a co-production, how to work with other cultures, and how to negotiate with three other organisations, two of which are in Japan. It was really invaluable, I got so much from it.

"The academic and intellectual study of documentary coalesced, for me, when we did our film workshops and went into production. The theory informed the practice and the practice informed the theory."

How much does it cost?

For information about fees visit the University website at <http://www.arts.ac.uk/pg-fees.htm> or call the Postgraduate Admissions Office on +44 (0) 20 7514 6000, press option 3.

Where can I get more information?

For administrative and enrolment matters, please contact the Postgraduate Admissions Office on +44 (0) 20 7514 6400, email: pgadmissions@lcc.arts.ac.uk or visit the website at: www.lcc.arts.ac.uk

Contact the Course Director, Pratap Rughani, email: p.rughani@lcc.arts.ac.uk