In the fall of 2014, the Film and Video Studies program included a new course called Roles of Video in Research. The class introduced eleven Purdue film students, ranging from juniors to seniors, to documentary filmmaking for the first time. The transition from scripted filmmaking to non-scripted filmmaking created a major challenge for the students in the class.

“There are two main objectives for students to take away from this course,” Bobby Chastain, the course’s instructor, states. “One is for the students to experience working with a real-world client. The other is for students to work on one project and develop it in terms of quality and story.”

The real-world clients were the authors and professors of the various articles that had been published in the 2014 issue of the *Journal of Purdue Undergraduate Research (JPUR)*. Six articles from volume 4 were selected by Chastain and Purdue University Press for the students of the class.

The students were asked to create a four-to-seven-minute video abstract that translated the content of the articles into an engaging, informative, and intelligible portal for readers. Students were required to create proper lighting and film the interviewees in an appropriate setting. Additionally, the students needed to include footage that would accompany the story, such as a reenactment of the research process.

The difficulty of non-scripted filmmaking lies in creating a story out of A roll, which is the interview footage, and B roll, which is the transitional or alternative footage. This process is most strenuous during post-production. It is analogous to creating a puzzle while blindfolded and then solving that puzzle. In addition, the course required the students to use different video editing software—Adobe Premiere Pro CC—from the typical software used in other film production courses, Avid Media Composer. The reason for using Premiere for this class is because in the film industry, documentary films are mainly edited in Premiere, while Avid Media Composer is used for fictional or narrative films.

Students encountered five stages of production that led to the final product. The stages of production must be done in order because each stage leads to the other.

First, the students were split into groups of two. They extensively studied the articles they were assigned in JPUR. The students met with the undergraduate authors and worked with them to develop questions that gave the audience an easy understanding of the research depicted within the articles. The number of questions varied as each
article differed. Some articles are more scientific than oth-
ers, therefore, more questions are required to get a more in-
depth and easy-to-understand video abstract for the viewer.

Second, students went location scouting. The location for
the interview needed to be in a professional setting that also
was appropriate for the story. Location scouting was dif-
ficult for some students because they had to shoot in places
off of Purdue’s campus to accommodate their article’s story.

Third, the students created their own shooting schedule
that conformed with their clients’ timeline.

The fourth stage of production included shooting the foot-
age for both A roll and B roll. Some groups left campus in
order to find their appropriate subjects. One group needed
a mother and her baby to film for the “Infants’ Speech Seg-
mentation” article. Adam Krueger, a film and video studies
major in his senior year, said, “Finding a mother and child
willing to be in the video took a lot of searching.” Another
group needed to find sheep to film for “Determining the
Role of DNTTIP1,” so they sought out a local pasture.

The final and fifth stage was comprised of post-production,
which is the editing stage that took place in a computer lab.

Adam Krueger described the class as a “very positive
experience.” Krueger went on to say, “I was really glad we
were given this opportunity to work with a professional
journal. This gave us real-world experience instead of just
working in the classroom. I learned how to keep myself on
track while going through the whole process, start to fin-
ish, of creating a professional, corporate-style video.”

Students were not only taught the technical aspects of doc-
umentary filmmaking, such as composition of the inter-
viewee shot and lighting techniques, but also the etiquette
of conducting a professional interview. For example, when
students experienced technical difficulties, such as the
camera or audio recording device running out of battery
life, they would inform the interviewee of the issue and
speak with him or her as they resolved it.

Having an interesting and easy-to-understand story was one
of the most important parts of the completed product. In
one case, a group’s rough cut was seven minutes long and
included two stories, one about the article in general and
one about a specific detail of the article. After viewing the
rough cut, Chastain recommended that the group remove
the detailed part even though it was interesting. This was
done to make the piece shorter with a stronger single story
that would not derail the main point of the article.

At the end of the semester, the final six videos were pub-
lished on the JPUR website. Film and video are essen-
tial tools in the field of education. Through this course,
students learned the opportunities available to documen-
tary producers, who can be utilized by academic entities to
create visual abstracts. Because of the visual nature of film
and video, the research can be understood clearly, easily,
and can help translate it for a broader audience.

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