

MDOCS

JOHN B. MOORE DOCUMENTARY STUDIES COLLABORATIVE



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News of Note

[Director's Note: March, 2016](#)

April is the coolest month. Storytellers' Institute plans are springing, field trips and documentarian visits blooming, and summer and fall classes are open for registration.

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[2016 Storytellers' Institute: Walking the Line](#)

MDOCS announces its 2016 Storytellers' Institute Fellows and Skidmore Scholars. Check out the packed schedule of public documentary events that are free and open to the public addressing the Institute theme of the shady border between fact and fiction in documentary work that will take place during the Institute, a 5-week artist residency hosted by MDOCS on the Skidmore campus.

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[MDOCS 2016 Fall Course List](#)

First day of registration is April 5! Check out MDOCS Documentary Studies classes for Fall 2016.

[Read More...](#)



[SSMP Highlight: Skidmore Retiree Project](#)

This semester students in Interview 101 recorded oral histories of retired Skidmore faculty, staff, and/or alumni to add to the Skidmore-Saratoga Memory Project archive. For many of them, this was their first experience interviewing, read more about their experiences.

[Read More...](#)



[Doc on Campus: Dave DeSario documents Temp Workers' Issues](#)

In late March, the Principles of Documentary class hosted New York City activist and documentary filmmaker Dave DeSario to speak about his creative process in making "A Day's Work," a film about the controversial and often hidden topic of safety for "temporary" workers.

[Read More...](#)



[Doc off Campus: Youth FX](#)

It's always inspiring to learn about documentary work happening in the surrounding Capital Region. Learn more about a talented group of high schoolers, Youth FX, who are producing high-quality films that screen at film festivals around the nation.

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[Faculty Spotlight: Rik Scarce on Video Ethnography and Barefoot Running](#)

Prof. Rik Scarce's life changed when he learned that he might never run again. Instead of getting discouraged, this Sociology professor learned an alternative approach and is now making a documentary film about it.

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[MDOCS Picks: "Serial" Reflections](#)

Hear MDOCS' audio faculty member views on the popular "Serial" podcast and if it's a big reason for the rise in podcast popularity.

[Read More...](#)



Upcoming

Events

- **April 5, 7 p.m.**, Payne Room, Tang Museum - [Is This A Lynching Photo?: Forgotten Archives Of White Supremacist Violence](#), Brian Murphy (MFS)
- **April 6, 6:30 p.m.**, Davis Auditorium - ["Marwencol" screening and Q&A with Jeff Malmberg](#) (EN, MDOCS, Art, Project Vis)
- **April 7, 7 p.m.**, Davis Auditorium - They Will Have to Kill Us First: Malian Music in Exile, Q&A with director Johanna Schwartz (Project Vis)
- **April 8, 1:30-2:30 p.m.** - Discussion with Johanna Schwarz — Interested in learning more? [RSVP via email](#)
- **April 11, 8 p.m.**, Filene - [Coming out in Sports: Conversation with Kate Fagan and Kristin Russo](#) (Show Your Sport)
- **April 14-16** - [States of Incarceration Launch, NYC](#)
- **April 15-23** - [Memories of a Penitent Heart at The Tribeca Film Festival](#), by Cecilia Aldarondo
- **April 20, 6:30 p.m.**, Emerson Auditorium - Video Projects Student Showcase
- **April 29, 8 p.m.-midnight** - [Tang Art Party](#) - (Contemporary Time-Based Media presenting interactive media installations and Intro to Audio live on air via FM transmitter 2-5:30 p.m.)

Courses

- Fall course registration opens April 5 - [check out MDOCS' Fall course listing](#).



SKIDMORE
C O L L E G E

CREATIVE THOUGHT MATTERS

Skidmore College • 815 North Broadway • Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Main Phone Number: 518-580-5000

Director's Note: March, 2016

April 4, 2016

April is the coolest month.

Despite today's snow suggesting we're headed back into winter, there's plenty of springing around campus.

The MDOCS Summer 2016 Storytellers' Institute fellows -- 4 Institute Fellows, 2 Skidmore Faculty Scholars and 8 Skidmore Student Scholars -- are looking forward to June on campus. Planning for Fact and Fiction: Walking the Line is well underway with amazing public programming set for our keynote Point of Departure (June 2) and Festosium (June 9-12). Summer classes -- including DS classes on essay film and audio doc -- are open to students from Skidmore and beyond.



Registration starts April 5 for fall 2016 classes. MDOCS offerings include our first crew-based film production course and a virtual reality workshop, as well as media projects for the Salmagundi Journal with editor Marc Woodworth and a Public Service Announcement video-production course to support campus and community programs.

Plus, several programs hosting amazing doc events on campus in the next week -- from Media & Film Studies' keynote speaker re-examining lynching photos to visiting film documentarians Jeff Malmberg (Marwencol) and alum Joanna Schwartz '96 (They Will Have to Kill Us First: Malian Music in Exile) to media figures Kate Fagan and Kristin Russo on Monday to talk about coming out in organized sports.

Beyond campus, there's also a lot of doc to be thrilled about in the Capital District. The Saratoga Film Forum (<http://www.saratogafilmforum.org/>) launches a revised monthly programming structure, offering documentary films on Thursdays, Foreign Films on Fridays and Indie Features on Saturdays. YouthFX and the Carey Institute for Global Good launch NextDoc (<http://www.youthfx.org/nextdoc/>), a 4-day residency for emerging college-aged visual documentary storytellers (late application deadline is April 4), and Saint Rose's film school is looking forward to this year's 15 Minutes Max film festival -- start thinking about your submissions! (<https://15minmax.wordpress.com/>)

And down in the Big Apple. Skidmore heads down to NYC for two amazing events. On April 14/15, Eric Morser's Public History class joins partners from 19 other programs in the New School's Humanities Action Lab (HAL) for a conference inaugurating the States of Incarceration exhibit (<http://humanitiesactionlab.org/states-of-incarceration-national-launch-conference/>). The History Department, MDOCS, and Project Vis sponsored the team which studied Mount MacGregor, a recently closed Wilton, NY facility-- they interviewed former inmates and others who participated in a rehabilitation program, visited the site, and designed one section of the exhibit.

Plus, English Professor Cecilia Aldarondo's debut documentary film, *Memories of a Penitent Heart*, premieres at Tribeca Film Festival next week. MDOCS, Media and Film Studies and English students and faculty are headed to the city on April 23 to see the film and meet with Tribeca filmmakers. Festival, here we come!



Cuba Travel Seminar: How Was Cuba?
(<https://howwascuba.wordpress.com/>)

As to what we were up to in March? The supposedly cruelest month not only brought 70 degree sunny days, but also student interviews of retirees for the Skidmore-Saratoga Memory Project, a multi-media exhibition by students from the January 2016 travel seminar to Cuba in Case Gallery, a visit by YouthFX directors to campus, and visits by documentarian filmmakers and activists Dave DeSario (*A Day's Work*) and Khader Abu Seif (*Oriented*) engaging topics from workers' rights in the United States to activism for gay rights and Palestinian-Israeli relations. Plus, local documentary filmmaker Charlie Samuels organized a focus group screening of his work-in-progress for students, staff and area residents with an assist from Sam Mark '16 and Ron Taylor (DS, Media Services), helping us appreciate about the many stages of a documentary project.



Charlie Samuels Focus Group Screening

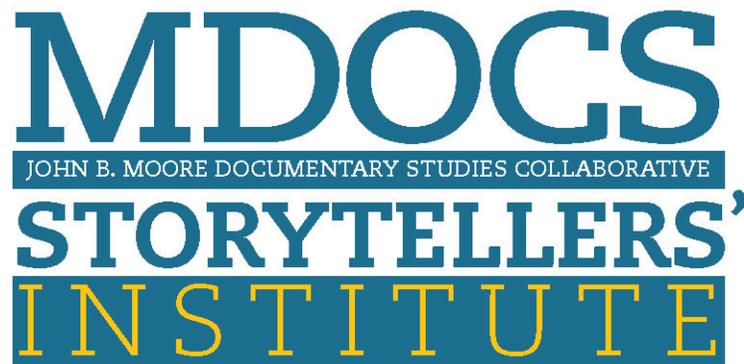
Finally, I had the opportunity to serve as a jury member on the Saratoga Film Forum's first short film competition, Winter Shorts. Not only did I meet some amazing area filmmakers aged 15-23, but was also thrilled to join fellow judges in awarding best picture to Dorothea Trufelman, '16 for her reflection on turning twenty, "[Twentysomething.](https://vimeo.com/93190918)" (<https://vimeo.com/93190918>)

What's next? Among other things, MDOCS is brainstorming options to develop for a student-run documentary festival here at Skidmore (not just film, of course!) next year - look for more on that in the coming weeks.

Jordana Dym, Director

2016 Storytellers' Institute: Walking the Line

April 4, 2016



Although snow is falling in Saratoga Springs in early April, it's only two months until MDOCS kicks off the summer 2016 Storytellers' Institute, Walking the Line: Fact and Fiction, the second annual 5-week documentary program hosted by Skidmore College's John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative (MDOCS).

From May 31 to July 1, 2016, the Institute offers a hybrid creative-academic experience that brings together documentary professionals and Skidmore students and faculty for five weeks of lively and thought-provoking conversation, production and inspiration. Activities are anchored in the annual theme, which this year considers the sometimes-permeable boundaries between fact and fiction in documentary work. The line between what makes a creative work "fact" or "fiction" has been challenged in many ways throughout the years in the documentary world. While documentary works rely on real people and events, "characters" and "scenes" often engage because of the way they interpret and represent reality in order to evoke emotion and passion in their audience.

In addition to the residency, MDOCS offers summer courses and the Institute will host several public events: Point of Departure (June 2), a Festosium (June 9-12), and exhibitions and events in the Spring Street Gallery in downtown Saratoga Springs connect Institute participants and visitors with the community.

PUBLIC EVENTS

In addition the Institute also offers evening and weekend events open to the public free of charge. MDOCS invites the Capital District community and our colleagues to engage in lively and thought-provoking conversation, workshops and inspiration.

Point of Departure: Adapting Reality for Stage and Screen

The schedule kicks off on June 2 with Point of Departure, an evening in two parts. We open with a dialogue between filmmaker/photographer Chip Duncan, Broadway producer Dan Markley, and actor/prodcuer Jonathan Burkhart, co-founder and president

of the Nantucket Film Festival and the inspiration for a character in *Rent*. After an opening reception, we conclude the evening with a screening of *A Quest for Meaning: Myth, Imagination and Faith in the Literature of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien* followed by a moderated Q&A with filmmaker Duncan.

Festosium

From June 9-12, the Storytellers' Institute is pleased to inaugurate a "Festosium" weekend at Skidmore College's Tang Teaching Museum, June 9-12. This 4-day blend of festival and symposium offers the community a glance into the world of the Institute Fellows and Skidmore Scholars, and a rich array of screenings, panel discussions, gallery tours, and virtual reality experiences which grapple with the questions of when, where, and why or how to draw a line between reality and representation in documentary work.

MDOCS' inaugural Festosium puts filmmakers, audio documentarians, visual artists, multimedia designers, and virtual reality creators in conversation over a weekend of recent documentary work that investigates what separates (or unites) fact and fiction, truth and imagination. Programming Guest Curators Jeff Daniel Silva (film) and Anne Hepperman (audio) have invited nationally and internationally based sound and film storytellers Martin Johnson (Serendipity Podcast), Kaitlin Prest (the Heart Podcast), Stephanie Spray (Manakamana, 2014), Maxim Pozdorovkin (Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer, 2013), Nicolás Pereda (Summer of Goliath, 2010). Marc Beaudet and Loïc Suty of Turbulent (Montréal, Canada) bring their virtual reality approach to evidence-based storytelling, including *The Unknown Photographer*, which was showcased at Sundance Film Festival, to the conversation. The Festosium also engages with the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum exhibition *Borrowed Light*, which offers a blend of documentary and art photography from the xxx Collection.

Institute Downtown @ Spring Street Gallery

From June 15 - June 29, the Spring Street Gallery in downtown Saratoga Springs will host Institute and Skidmore Fellows' documentary work and events. A collective exhibit will address the theme of Fact and Fiction through visual works and video clips. Join us for the exhibit opening and community reception.

PARTICIPANTS

This year's Institute Fellows and 10 Skidmore Scholars are accomplished storytellers drawing on evidence-based documentary practices in film, audio, exhibition, archiving, and multimedia.

Institute Fellows Aggie Bazaz, Amanda Dawn-Christie, Jake Nussbaum, Courtney Read-Eaton, Amanda, and come to Skidmore from 3 US states (Pennsylvania, New York, and North Carolina) and 1 Canadian province (New Brunswick) bringing the skills and tools from their work at collegiate institutions, art centers, and independent radio stations. Projects topics span from the revealing of a family's untold oral history and greater discovery of long-hidden secrets in an African diaspora's lost past to a film exploring the parallels of two seemingly disparate cultural struggles for survival to a multimedia book,

exhibit and interactive recreation that searches for the un-marred facts of the events leading up to the night Trayvon Martin was killed and finally to a project exploring the end of Canadian short-wave radio as told by mysteriously "talking" household appliances in a series of films and multimedia exhibits. These documentary artists will all challenge the moral questions behind telling a research-based, fact-driven story when removing ones' past experience, perspective and individual lens is seemingly impossible. Can a story's "truth" be more deeply understood when the line between fact and fiction is blurred? May we be left forever skeptical of the source from which we gain our information and determine what we believe to be "true?"

Summer faculty and affiliate fellows Jonna McKone, a 2015 Institute Fellow (<http://jonnamckone.com/>) and Eileen McAdam, of the Sound and Story Project of the Hudson Valley (<http://www.soundandstory.org/>), will offer 5-week courses in The Essay Film and Intro to Audio Documentary open to undergraduate college students.

Skidmore faculty scholars Rik Scarce (Sociology) and Erika Schielke (Biology) will advance documentary film and podcast projects. Skidmore student scholars Colleen Craven, Jen Davies, Maryam DeWitt, Emma Foley, Eleanor Green, Emma Lanier, Dan Plumer, and Emily Rizzo are advancing documentary projects in film, sound and multimedia on topics from the deeper understanding gained through intersectional study of the Civil Rights Movement to addressing racial tension in a Skidmore Intergroup Relations class to intimate stories of loss of virginity to a film that aims to bring to life the voice of a lost mother.

They will be supported by the MDOCS Institute team -- MDOCS director Jordana Dym, Mellon Fellow Nicky Tavares, Visiting Assistant Professor Adam Tinkle, and Program coordinator Jesse Wakeman.

Institute screenings, performances and presentations are free and open to the public. For more details on locations and times on all of the above, please visit skidmore.edu/MDOCS.

MDOCS 2016 Fall Course List

April 4, 2016

In Fall '16, MDOCS will offer a range of courses designed to support beginners to committed documentary media makers. There are courses for someone interested in adding basic production skills to apply to current course work and more intensive project-based courses for students looking to further challenge themselves in the art of documentary.

Production Fundamentals

- DS 113A: Interviewing (1 cr)
- DS 116A: Virtual Reality (1 cr)
- DS202A: Workshop: Public Service Announcement Videos (1 credit)

Documentary Studies

- DS 201: Principles of Documentary (3 cr)
- EN 228/DS 202A: Salmagundi Workshop for Archive-Based Media Stories (4 cr)
- DS 251C: Intro to Audio Documentary (3 cr)
- DS 251D: Documentary Film Production (4 cr)
- DS 251B: Storytelling for the Screen I (2 cr)
- DS 302C: From Story to Screen: Film Crew Production (3 cr)
- DS 351C: Advanced Audio/Multimedia Doc (3 cr)
- DS 302A: Video Projects (1 cr)

MDOCS continues to support all skill levels coming from different disciplinary backgrounds. The gateway course, Principles of Documentary taught by MDOCS Director Jordana Dym, offers an introduction to approaches and ethics of documentary storytelling by exploring documentary work across sound, still and moving image, and other multimedia practices.

For students interested in building basic multimedia production skills, MDOCS offers Interviewing 101, taught by co-founder of the Sound & Story Project Eileen McAdam; Storytelling for the Screen I with screenwriter Nicole Coady; and a workshop with Jordana Dym and Eli Ruben, '16, in which students will develop basic video production skills by producing public service announcements for College or community programs.

Students will find exciting new multi-faceted courses that combine a solid research discipline with video production skills. The Salmagundi Workshop for Archive-Based Media Stories, co-listed with English and taught by Marc Woodworth and Ron Taylor, is a hands-on workshop dedicated to creating and developing media content inspired by Salmagundi Magazine, the independent international quarterly housed at Skidmore.

For a first time offering, filmmaker and Mellon Fellow Nicky Tavares brings Video and Virtual Reality, a workshop delving into the rapidly evolving landscape of virtual reality

from its early beginnings in the 1960s, to its resurgence in the 1990s, to today. In this brand new course students will create two original immersive projects: one individual photography project, and one group video project.

MDOCS is keeping up with students eager to further develop their skills by offering some more advanced production courses such as Documentary Film Production, a 4 credit course taught by Nicky Tavares that focuses on the critical and technical skills involved in the production of non-fiction video. Basic shooting and editing techniques will be covered as well as an introduction to a wide range of production methods and creative strategies that encourage exploration in all aspects of the medium. Eileen McAdam will also offer Intro to Audio Documentary,

In addition, MDOCS now brings two advanced production courses for skilled students to enhance their knowledge and tackle more sophisticated projects. Audio creator Adam Tinkle brings Advanced Audio and Multimedia Doc welcomes students already adept in one or more digital editing platforms to produce a series of their own large-scale audio-centric documentary projects. In these projects, students use the basic toolkit of audio/radio documentary (field recording, interviewing, narration), and extend its expressive potential through integration with cutting-edge multimedia. Students will design and realize projects that include audio, video, digital and multi-media pieces for presentation online.

Finally, for students advancing projects across the curriculum who seek individual support with the media element of their work, MDOCS offers Video Projects, taught for a second time by filmmaker and Media Services specialist Ron Taylor.

Also new this semester is MDOCS' first crew-based production course From Story to Screen taught by Nicole Coady and Vickie Riley, which allows advanced production students to register as a position on a 3-5 person production crew (writer, cinematographer, sound designer), and create a collaborative 5 -10 minute research-based film.

All Documentary Studies courses and cross-listings count towards Skidmore College's new Minor in Media and Film Studies.

Registration opens **APRIL 5!** For additional class details, and related offerings in other programs, see MDOCS' full listing of **Fall 2016 classes**.
(http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/courses/2016_fall_classes.php)

SSMP highlight: Skidmore Retiree Project

March 31, 2016

This spring Sue Bender, Professor emerita of Anthropology, taught Interview 101, a half-semester course dedicated to the basics of interviewing and to adding to the archive of Skidmore retiree oral histories that is part of MDOCS' Skidmore-Saratoga Memory Project (SSMP).



The course assigned each student to interview a retired Skidmore faculty or staff member and create an audio recording of their personal history and to take or provide a portrait photograph to add to the SSMP online archive.

As should any seasoned interviewer, students also prepared by doing background research. For this project, they focused on Skidmore history during the time their interviewees would have worked on campus. For many, this was the first formal interview of someone "on record," so to develop each interviewing technique, each one also conducted a pre-interview with Skidmore community members who knew their interviewees well.

In addition to developing research and interview skills, the class learned how to use audio equipment to record a conversation clearly and precisely, receiving training on basic audio recording and interviewing techniques with audio documentarian Eileen McAdam of the Sound and Story Project of the Hudson Valley.

After the interview, each student edited their forty-minute interview to improve sound quality and created a full-length transcription. Each completed interview will be added to the Skidmore Saratoga Memory Project which archives oral histories of influential members of both the Skidmore and Saratoga communities.

I sat down with some of the students to discuss their experience...

"I think it's really crucial to any bigger entity's history to look at personal narratives."

Liv Fidler interviewed retired faculty member Joanna Zangrando (American Studies, Women's Studies, and Education), listen to a clip of her talking about the development of Skidmore's Feminist Discussion Group.



(<http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2016/media/033116-SSMP-Liv-Joanna.wav>)

Learn more about Liv's experience in Interview 101 and her take on oral history.
(<http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2016/media/033116-SSMP-Liv.wav>)

— Liv Fidler '19 is an anticipated American studies major and media & film studies minor.



"...it is important to talk to people who were here [at Skidmore] years before because you get to appreciate and perhaps contribute more to the school because you're going to take a little bit more care of it."

Renato interviewed retired staff member Leo Geoffrion (Information Technology). Listen to a clip of him talking about the start of the Academic Computing program.
(<http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2016/media/033116-SSMP-Renato-Leo.wav>)

Hear more about Renato's experience and the skills he gained from Interview 101.
(<http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2016/media/033116-SSMP-Renato.wav>)

— Renato Dornelas '18 studies international affairs and media studies.

"I saw interviewing 101 and I thought that that's an amazing skill to have..."

Maria interviewed Chrisana Joseph, who started working at Skidmore in 1987. Hear more about her experience starting out as a secretary and progressing to an administrative coordinator on larger projects.
(<http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2016/media/033116-SSMP-Maria-Chrisana.wav>)



Maria joined MDOCS in her last semester at Skidmore. Learn more about what attracted her to the program. (<http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2016/media/033116-SSMP-Maria.wav>)

— Maria Mayböck '16 studies International Affairs and Spanish.



"If you're an interviewer, rather than just being in a conversation with somebody, you learn to listen so much better."

Emily interviewed recent retiree John Anzalone (French) who was convinced to delay his retirement in order to become the principal investigator for the grant proposal that created Project VIS, Media & Film Studies, and MDOCS.

(<http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2016/media/033116-SSMP-Emily-John.wav>)

Before Interview 101 Emily had never heard of the term "oral history;" learn more about her first experience recording one.

(<http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/news/2016/media/033116-SSMP-Emily.wav>)

—Emily Meagher '18 studies international affairs.

To listen to full-length interviews of the Skidmore Retiree Project, visit the Skidmore Saratoga Memory Project, Retiree archive. (<http://ssmp.skidmore.edu/>)

- Rebecca Stern '16

Doc on Campus: Dave DeSario Documents Temp Workers' Issues

April 4, 2016

Skidmore's Principles of Documentary class had the pleasure of hosting Dave DeSario, the producer behind *A Day's Work* and founder of the Alliance for the American Temporary Workforce, this March. *A Day's Work*, the first documentary from DeSario and director David M Garcia, illuminates worker's risk in the temporary staffing industry. The film tells the poignant story of 21-year-old Day Davis, who was killed 90 minutes into his first shift as a temporary employee, through the perspective of Day's mother and 17-year-old sister. The family's vivid account of Day's incident raises awareness for the thousands of temporary employees killed annually. Dave DeSario's visit to MDOCS helped students better understand the work that goes toward producing a documentary film before and after principal photography.

DeSario focused his presentation on both making and finding an audience for the film from trailers to film festivals. First, he introduced the film's official trailer, a short summary of the temporary staffing industry that introduces Day Davis' story. DeSario stressed the trailer's importance as a marketing and fundraising tool. By distributing the trailer through popular social media and other easily accessible channels DeSario was able to build awareness for the project and attract potential financial backers, who supported the final stage of production: the editing, insuring, and release of the film. DeSario counseled that a large part of releasing the film was strategically picking film festival submissions. He identified several festivals to fit his target audience including the Workers Unite! Film Festival and the Reel Work May Day Labor Film. He described reception for *A Day's Work* as overwhelmingly positive. Since DeSario was in the Capital Region to screen the film for NENYCOSH (NorthEast New York Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health) at the Albany Law School, it appears to be successfully generating awareness of temporary workers issues.



DeSario presenting the issues raised in *A Day's Work* in Principles of Documentary

During a question and answer session, DeSario fielded questions about: the filmmaking process, the use of security footage and news broadcasts, and the legal obligations of a documentarian. He noted that a majority of the primary budget for the film was spent on renting high quality camera equipment; DeSario drew a correlation between the visual quality of a film and its validity as a documentary. He also discussed the planning portion of pre-production and how it contributes to content. He gave as an example that prior to principal photography, he identified familiar documentary film elements – such as interviews with news experts, news footage and security footage showing the incident that killed Day—as fundamental to both telling his story and the film’s credibility. Once the film was complete DeSario faced a new set of problems. First he scrutinized every element of the film to make sure it didn’t included words relating to race or politics which might limit audience identification with the underlying issue (it’s someone else’s story) and to maximize the impact of Day’s story. The final step DeSario took before releasing the film was insuring the film and having it vetted by a team of lawyers. DeSario drew on several fair use laws and publicly accessible records in the film to ensure it wasn’t breaking any copyright laws nor susceptible to lawsuit. DeSario exposed students to a first hand account of the documentary making process and the many of the planning steps outside of filming and researching the subject.



Film Still from "A Day's Work" shows a selfie taken by main subject of the film Day Davis of his first day on the job as a temporary worker and the day he was killed.

A Day's Work is screening across the country for the next several months including showings at UMASS Amherst on April 19th and at the AFL-CIO Central Labor Council in Massena NY on April 30th. The film’s official website is TempFilm.com while Dave DeSario and the Alliance for the American Temporary Workforce can be reached at TemporaryEmployees.org.

- Augustus Svikhart, '16 (Management and Business Major; Computer Science Minor)

Doc off Campus: Youth FX

March 28, 2016



David Salmon (Student Filmmaker), Darian Henry (Program Assistant), Bhawin Suchak (Program Director), Imani Peterkin (Student Filmmaker) at their film screening on campus.

Youth FX is comprised of talented high school students from Albany who learn to make creative short documentaries with the help of professional mentors. Their collaborative work has earned them recognition at some well-known film festivals, including Woodstock and Sundance. During a recent campus visit, I joined them for a discussion over lunch in LI 113, the MDOCS/Project VIS Lab.



As we munched on the delicious chicken satay and sweet salad, we talked about how the program got started. The program started off small with a couple of students only during the summer. Over the years, Youth FX gradually became a competitive program for Albany high school students. Seeing the members interact with each other, there is no question why their short films are intriguing and pleasing to watch. Their strong and family-like collaboration and connecting ideas are apparent in their films.

That collaboration is important to what makes Youth Fx a unique program. The program founder/mentor, Bhawin Suchak, creates a productive and safe space for students to test out their creativity. Many participate not just for one summer, but for several summers and now year-long programs.

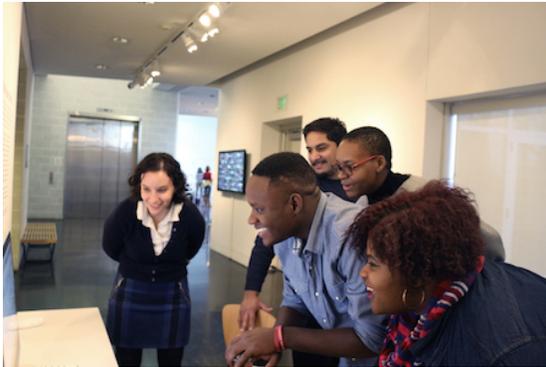
"Our conversation with the Youth FX filmmakers was a moving example of how passion and collaboration contribute to the making of wonderful films. I appreciated how the representatives from Youth FX who came to Skidmore were encouraging and thoughtful in their feedback to our own ideas for documentary projects. I highly encourage those interested in grassroots arts programs to take a look at Youth FX's films."

– Rachel Castellano, '16

The best part is seeing their collective creativity on the screen. As we finished our last bite of salad, Skidmore and Youth FX students shared notes on our favorite film documentaries. These included, *(T)ERROR* (which screened at Skidmore last fall) and *Meet the Patels*. I wouldn't be surprised to see one of their films on the big screen one day.

– Annie Kornaranok, '19

YouthFX director Bhawin Suchak, Assistant Director Darian Henry, and filmmakers Imani Peterkin and David Salmon visited campus on March 1. The award winning crew showcased recent work in Principles of Documentary, met with students over lunch, toured the Borrowed Light exhibition at the Tang Teaching Museum, and screened some of their award-winning short documentary and narrative films in the evening. Catch an encore screening of 2016 films at the Spectrum on April 6.



While on campus, the Youth FX team visited exhibits 'Borrowed Light' and 'No Place to Hide' at the Tang Teaching Museum.

Faculty Spotlight: Rik Scarce on Video Ethnography and Barefoot Running

April 4, 2016

A familiar face to the Skidmore campus but a new one to the MDOCS program, Professor of Sociology Rik Scarce sat down to discuss his summer plans with the Storytellers' Institute, in which he will be a Faculty Scholar, his long-time passion for Video Ethnography, and his expansive research into the unique world of minimalist/barefoot running.



An interdisciplinary education is something that Skidmore (and MDOCS) embraces with open arms. Professor Scarce, who is currently teaching classes on Social Theories of the Environment as well as Video Ethnography, has crafted a diverse career integrating perspectives on sustainability and social structures with both the written word and the captured image. Although the larger academic world likes to claim sociology as a statistic-heavy science, Prof. Scarce still maintains a creative influence in the research he does both on and off campus. As far as his documentary background goes, Prof. Scarce reflects upon his early entry into the photography world.

"I had been doing photography since I was in 9th grade, and worked as a reporter for a small-town paper that had superb artistic taste. Working with those editors really helped my photography. It's overblown to call it a photo-journalistic background, but I have my own version of that. And then after a few years, when I first heard about something called 'visual sociology,' I thought about how cool that would be. Well, I took my camera out during my PhD work, I took some photographs, I took the photograph for the front cover of the book that was created out of my dissertation. So, I've been able to incorporate photography in my research."



Starting this semester, Prof. Scarce has split off a specific chunk of his Visual Sociology curriculum to teach a new course, Video Ethnography.

"Anthropologists have been wonderful about photography and video for a long, long time. Early on, sociology had an emphasis on the visual as well. It was law. Now, many of us understand sociology much more broadly, and we also are recognizing that there's simply no way you can study contemporary society and ignore the visual. In every society, the visual is incredibly important. But no society has ever been bombarded with the diversity and complexity of visual images than ours has. So for sociology to ignore the visual, it borders on criminal."

These thoughts in mind, Prof. Scarce has taken on the personal responsibility of paving the way for the emerging Media and Film Studies Minor. Since originally sitting on the committee that helped to form the program, he has gone on to collaborate with multiple students who share his interdisciplinary interests.

"The college has really been behind me in terms of my interests, so it's really been wonderful to give back by sitting on the Media and Film Studies Minor committee, and to work alongside some wonderful colleagues. We'll finally be opening the doors for students. This is an utterly remarkable time for faculty and students who are interested in the visual to be here. It's a moment of incredible opportunity and creativity. I'm getting wonderful student help, and then providing them with opportunities to get involved in their own way. It's a wonderful feeling, knowing that you're facilitating some of these interdisciplinary actions and collaborations."



MDOCS' summer Storytellers' Institute brings together documentarians from a variety of disciplines (Prof. Scarce being one of them) to collaborate in an open academic setting. The topic of his project, minimalist and barefoot running, is something that will certainly catch audience attention, although it's not a topic that very many people may be familiar with. Much of Prof. Scarce's new film is devoted to both explaining the phenomenon and its benefits, and sharing his discovery of barefoot running.

"Barefoot is literally like it sounds, people who run with no shoes on. And then minimalist running--A true minimalist shoe is one where the height of the heel and the height at the ball of the foot is identical. It's also a shoe that's incredibly flexible. Years ago, I had long ago given up the notion that I would ever run. The former athletic trainer at Skidmore, when I once went to him with injuries, once looked at me and said 'You have the worst biomechanics of any human being I've ever seen in my life.' He didn't say anything any other athletic trainer wouldn't have said at that time. He was operating under the mindset that shoes can cure what's wrong with the foot. And for biomechanically damaged people like me, there was no hope. I was going to keep being injured. Flash forward to 2012, I'm looking for new orthotics, and I can't find them at a reasonable price. So, I started looking for alternatives. I stumbled across this one podiatrist's website, who was discussing this new 'barefoot and minimalist revolution.' And I decided I would give it a try. What gradually happened was that I learned how to run the correct way, and in the correct footwear, footwear that doesn't control or cushion. It doesn't attempt to correct the body's natural movement. So we've been sold a bill of goods, essentially, by the running shoe manufacturers. One of the cool observations that's come up during my interviews was a podiatrist who said that you don't need arch support. If you think about it architecturally, if you support an arch, it collapses. You don't support an arch, you let an arch do its thing. So, revelations like that keep popping up. But that's how it started, I wanted new orthotics but I wasn't going to pay for them."



Film still from "Sustaining This Place: Creating a New Hudson Region Landscape"

One of my earlier projects was a film and a book on sustainability in the Hudson River region [Sustaining This Place] (<http://www.sustainingthisplace.net/>). I envisioned that project being a bridge to my research future, shifting from written materials to film. And so that's been incredibly important to me, that opportunity to make a smooth transition. So now the current film I'm working on is about minimalist and barefoot running. At this point, what I've chosen to feature is a mix between myself, a brand new minimalist runner, and an extremely experienced one, one of the top marathoners in the United States. So in terms of telling a story, I think that'll be the core, but I've also spoken with scientists, podiatrists, MD's, and a ton of different runners from wildly different backgrounds. And so how do I weave their varied stories and sources of information into this story--I haven't worked that out yet.

To be here and to be with a group of students and far more experienced documentarians (than I) on my film, seeing what they're doing, hearing their ideas, putting my work out there and having it critiqued, is really just the most wonderful opportunity. So I'm really looking forward to doing more documentary work with students than I already have. There are plenty of things about my film that I haven't figured out yet. It's gonna work out, and one of the reasons why I know it's going to work out is because of the team that's going to be here in June, that I'll have to lean on. I'm going to take away a lot more from Storytellers than I'll have to give, I can promise you that."

- Written by Sam Grant, '18

MDOCS Picks: "Serial" Reflections

March 31, 2016

Each month 'MDOCS Picks' features responses from its faculty about current documentary work, allowing us to learn more about emerging trends from those who help create them.

This month I spoke to two MDOCS audio documentary instructors, Adam Tinkle and Eileen McAdam, and Jesse Wakeman, MDOCS Program Coordinator, to get the insider's scoop on the ground-breaking podcast *Serial*...

The New York Times claimed *Serial* [Season 1] to be the "most popular podcast in the history of its form." Receiving high accolades such as the Peabody award, Season 1 (2014) averaged 1.5 million listeners an episode, an unprecedented amount. Season 2 has surpassed that record with 3.1 million downloads in its first week, and 5 million listeners on Pandora alone.

Although this milestone represents a peak in podcast popularity, the Pew Research Center conducted research that found the audience for the medium has actually grown steadily since 2013.

At a point where new podcasts pop up every day, rich with content and exploration...

"What do you attribute *Serial's* popularity to and what effect do you think *Serial* will have on podcasts and audio documentary as a growing medium?"



"I am a devoted *Serial* listener; even though I don't find Season 2 nearly as gripping as Season 1, I still relish the opportunity to go deeper, each week, into a story whose complexities seem to offer limitless potential for exploration. I suppose, now that I think about it, that the appeal is somewhat like that of HBO's *The Wire* (which, of course, though based on research, is a fiction).

Briefer texts may give you a feeling for some topic or character, but perhaps only in a long series can you feel like you're coming to know a whole world. And what's more, it's an important world--a world that, as educated Americans, we sense that we ought to know more about. To feel that I am experiencing the texture of these worlds (the criminal justice system, the war in Afghanistan), to learn some of their ins and outs-- it honestly makes me feel like a more informed citizen. I know that might sound a bit overblown, but it's clearly something the entire public media ecology plays on.

With their investigative, social issue-driven editorial bend, shows like *This American Life* explicitly play to a desire to delve deeper into the nitty-gritty, and often

ugly, mechanics of our society. Yet framed--as they usually are on the news--as isolated data points and un-contextualized madness, few among us can bear to keep our attention on such matters long enough to make sense of the complex underlying dynamics.

The spoonful of sugar that such audio programs use (and which *The Wire* used) to make the medicine go down is an extraordinary facility with story structure. Using the techniques of fictional narrative (relatable characters, vivid conflicts, etc.), they make it much easier to care.

I have no idea if my personal reaction to *Serial* has anything to do with its widespread popularity, but I have a hunch that others feel something like this strange combination of familiar pleasure (the same story week after week) and the (potentially specious or self-deluding) sense of social responsibility that makes it something like the opposite of the proverbial "guilty pleasure." Podcasts feel like virtuous pleasure--stories that we can feel good about bingeing on." - *Adam Tinkle*

Adam Tinkle creates, teaches and writes about music, sound, media, and performance. At the center of Adam's work are strategies for artistic engagement, interactivity, and pedagogy that draw on experimental music. Before moving to Skidmore in 2014, he was a founding broadcaster on KNSJ 89.1FM, San Diego's first community radio station, where he led community workshops on radio-making and produced a weekly crowd-sourced music and documentary program. This semester Adam is teaching *Intro to Audio Doc (DS 251D)*, *Storytellers' Prep (DS 302A)*, and *Intro to Media Studies (MF-220)*.

"Sarah Koenig is an outstanding journalist and a masterful storyteller. She brings a depth of research and integrity to her work that is not seen in some newer podcasts that are blurring the lines between fact and fiction. I think *Serial's* effect has already been realized. Podcasting began way before *Serial*, but *Serial's* popularity brought the medium to the attention of a much bigger audience very quickly. But in an age when people want to access information when they want it and how they want it, podcasting would have naturally grown anyway. It just might have taken longer." - *Eileen McAdam*



Eileen McAdam co-founded the *Sound and Story Project* in 2006, whose mission is to share the stories of everyday people in the Hudson Valley. She is the recipient of three *New York Council on the Arts individual artists awards* and is currently working on a long format audio documentary about life inside the *Bedford Hills Correctional Facility*, the only maximum security prison for women in New York State. This semester she is teaching *Radio (Podcast) Storytelling (DS 251B)*, and in summer session 1 (5/31-7/1) *Intro to Audio Doc (251D)*.



"I vividly remember the day I stumbled upon *Serial*'s pilot episode while clicking through *This American Life*'s episode archive. Already an avid podcast listener, *Serial* introduced to me a whole new definition of "addiction," and closed the gap between series television and radio storytelling. It's conversational narration, classic cliff-hanger episodic format and gripping subject matter have made difficult topics accessible to a wide range of audiences. People are fascinated with analyzing the human psyche and trying to understand why we do what we do. Starting with a story that picks apart the brain of a convicted murderer while analyzing the process of the criminal justice system was a heck of a way to kick off a series.

Season 2 has taken on a different type of story, but equally compelling to the point where I often find myself replaying episodes to make sure I've sucked up every minute detail (not to mention the storyline can be hard to unravel at times). Looking into the actions of a POW and controversial story while telling the story of America's involvement with the war in Afghanistan is a bold step in another direction and has me on the edge of my seat and checking my Podcast App for that little red dot indicating a new episode.

Serial can't be attributed to my personal initial attraction to podcasts, but there is less of a "guilt" factor in dedicating 45 min of my time to listening to something that's not just entertaining, but also educational. Every story has two sides, or three, or more, and I trust *Serial* to present a variety of voices and perspectives while slowly uncovering a bigger message about our society. I hope that its impact encourages more audio doc podcasts to tell the stories that are uncomfortable, challenging and complicated and continues to lead them in the direction of long-form investigative journalism. " - *Jesse Wakeman*

Jesse Wakeman is a documentary filmmaker whose work began at the award-winning Moxie Institute Film Studio + Lab in San Francisco, CA. She joined the MDOCS staff in the fall of 2015 as the Project Coordinator and continues her exploration of the power of non-fiction storytelling.

- Rebecca Stern '16