This class, working as a production team, will produce a 30-minute documentary film. Some semesters we pull this off. Some semesters we do not. The semesters where we don’t complete a film in the 14 weeks of the semester usually is the result of taking too long to decide what film we are going to attempt. My solution this coming semester is I’ve already picked a topic. Some background.

Five years ago the class did a film about Holocaust survivors living in Richmond. It was rich material with compelling stories. The film was OK, not great. I’ve put a link to that film in Box. You should have received an invitation to that Box folder. We are going to do that film only this time we’re going to do it better. I am motivated to have us do this film because recent polling that shows large swaths of the population – especially folks your age – don’t know about the Holocaust. We are going to educate people. What’s more, 2020 is the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. The news hook.

Here are the components of the proposed film: Interviews with survivors, lit and photographed for maximum intensity. Probably in most cases two-camera shoots. B roll from archives at the National Holocaust Memorial Museum and the National Archives, both in Washington, D.C. Some of that material is accessible online. Other material may require some of you to travel to D.C. to get copies. (There is money for that.) The Richmond Holocaust Memorial is also an excellent resource. We will need to identify scholars who can provide background.

One of the excellent parts of the previous film was music. One of the survivors played a haunting Polish lullaby on his flute, a melody that resonates with the survivors. The music department is on board to assemble a string quartet to expand on that music.

As for gear: We have all the toys we need. We have two Canon C100 video cameras. We have a good inventory of lenses, including an f1.4 85mm prime lens. We have all sorts of lights. We have wireless mics. We have a motorized camera slider (for subtle camera moves).

A word of caution: The workload in this class tends to be light early in the semester and quite heavy towards the end. Plan accordingly.
Early in the semester you will learn to use the broadcast quality Canon C100. Also early in the semester we will have a lighting lab in which you will learn the basics of three-point lighting for interviews.

Texts:
None

Attendance:
In many ways this class will be more like a seminar than a regular class. But you must attend each class. Class discussion will be a major component of this class.

Grades:
Unless it is obvious that some team member has not pulled his or her weight, each team will be graded as a whole. Filmmaking is a collaborative effort. Learning to work as a team is a major part of this class.

Screening:
My goal is for our film to air on WCVE, the public TV station in Richmond. And I expect we will screen the film, certainly on campus and perhaps at the Weinstein Jewish Community Center. If it’s good enough, maybe some film festivals. Who knows?