

It is very important that the idea for a documentary that you are presenting be clear, well-argued, and manageable in scope. You are trying to convince people to help you obtain scarce and valuable resources [money, time, equipment, airtime] to produce your piece. A written proposal will both help you develop your understanding of “what your film is about,” and provide a valuable tool for helping you obtain the resources you need, as well as helping you organize your production process:

Here are some rough guidelines.

#### I. Things to Include in Your Proposal:

- A. A clear, simple statement of your subject and a title. NB: Not just a topic, but a take on the topic, remember.
- B. Background on your subject. Why important.
- C. Rationale. Why do a project about it? Why interesting.
- D. Who and Where? List some possible locations, and some of your potential interview subjects.
- E. In a related vein - describe a sequence a viewer might see in your completed piece.

Some things you might also add:

- F. Stylistic approach/ production values.
- G. How your piece will differ from others on the subject?
- H. Why you? What is your personal interest in, commitment to the subject, value added?
- I. What audience do you hope to reach with this piece?
- J. Supporting materials - graphics, maps, newspaper articles.

#### II. Questions to Ask Yourself:

- A. Why is this a good subject for a documentary?
- B. Will this be a project which will be appropriate for school-based production? Will other people be able to share the work, as well as your interest in the project?
- C. Is it doable? Will you be able to get access to the people and locations you need to?
- D. How many shooting days? How much editing?

Some things you might add:

Why you? What is your personal interest in or commitment to the subject?  
What kind of stylistic approach will you take? Why is that approach appropriate?  
How will your piece differ from others on the topic?  
What audience do you hope to reach?  
What supporting materials do you have/need?  
Ethical issues. Who am I blaming? Exploiting?

#### PROPOSAL PRESENTATION

You will present your proposal on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of class. This should be a professional presentation, made to other creative professionals. You may use slides, material you've shot, etc, to give the class a solid and succinct (under 10 min.) presentation that will give an overview of the project you're hoping to do. Be convincing. You will have another ten minutes for people to ask questions and offer suggestions.