

Visual legal advocacy is argumentation on film produced by a lawyer on behalf of an individual or group client. It ranges from full length feature films to short works done on behalf of personal injury clients pursuing arbitration or settlement of their claims to death row inmates seeking clemency. This seminar will begin with an overview of the mechanics of producing an advocacy documentary and the critical analysis of various forms of visual legal advocacy. Thereafter, the students will be divided into small groups to produce a piece of visual legal advocacy on behalf of a client. The actual shooting and editing will be done by the filmmaker(s) assigned to the group, although the subject and the student producers can arrange to do elements of production themselves. Each group will have a limited budget within which to work. The pieces may be video clemency petitions for formerly incarcerated persons interested in obtaining pardons so as to expunge their criminal records or victim impact statements for the survivors of gun violence and human rights violations. The students will be responsible for working with the client, consulting with her or his lawyer if she or he has one, obtaining her or his story, and assessing her/his needs and wishes for the video; amassing all relevant visual evidence; preparing a shooting script; preparing all necessary legal documents; coordinating production with the cinematographer assigned to the group; writing an editing script; overseeing the editing and critical screening of rough cuts; and working out a plan for distribution of the final film. Students who have taken or are taking Documentaries & the Law, the Sunday Pre-Production and Production Management Seminar, or Advanced Torts: Cultural Conflict and the Intentional Torts or who have a background in film or video production are encouraged to enroll.