

Taylor Whitesel • New Media Production

I just want to start off by saying that I have never learned more in a single semester out of all my time here than I did this time around. And I think a big part of that was because it was very Laissez-faire process. There really wasn't much navigation. Both my advisors, Santiago and Gregg kind of just told us to figure everything out on our own. And while it was a little bit of a push into the deep end, it's such a great representation of what the real world is like and I wouldn't trade this experience for anything. I knew, even before I knew what I wanted my content to be, that I was going to do a film for my senior project. which was definitely a change since for the majority of my college career I wasn't doing anything really in the video production field. New Media majors unfortunately don't really study film that much which is a damn shame because it's a field that I have been interested in ever since I was a kid. I have been editing and producing content on and off for about 11 years. However, for the most part, all of it has been DIY. Everything I had learned had been from either the internet or me just messing around with stuff and figuring it out on my own. That's why the whole DIY process that this senior project offered was a lot of fun for me. It was obviously a lot of work, but I took so much away from it. It wasn't long before the end of last semester when I figured out that I wanted to do a documentary for my senior project. Of what exactly, I was still blank on, but nevertheless, I was still excited about the process, and I started to keep my ears open on different topics that I could best adapt a film on. It wasn't until my roommate and I were talking one day and he mentioned he was trying to put together a documentary on the Gentrification process currently ongoing in the West/Downtown Tampa area. At first, I was a little hesitant, because I didn't really know too much about the topic. Honestly, I had never really heard of the term before he mentioned it to me. But I realized that it was something that was happening all around me and was right in front of my eyes the whole time, and I never questioned it once.

The amount of construction I see around this city on a daily basis should be put in a record book because it's that unreal. Roads are constantly being blocked off, stores are being boarded up, and peoples' perceptions of the city are always changing. Tampa is in a state of serious evolution and we're right in the middle of it not questioning it one bit on who is being positively and negatively affected. I think that's why I decided to take on this topic. Yeah, I might not know much about it, but I'm sure a lot of other people my age doesn't either and a documentary could act as the perfect outlet to spread awareness and education about it in a creative way and I was so excited to start. Now, don't get me wrong, at the beginning of the pre-production process, I was pretty intimidated. It's a hell of a lot easier to just say that you want to film a documentary then actually taking the time to sit down and take into consideration all of the steps and tasks that must go into something like this. Keep in mind, I had never really made a proper film before.

The only film classes I had taken were an Intro and a post-production class. There was so much else that I had yet to learn and I was planning on shoving years and years worth of experience into one single semester. So, you could say I was a little nervous. However, I knew had to have a game plan and did as best as I could to organize a game plan. For those who have never made a documentary or any film for that matter, it's very similar to doing a puzzle. At first, everything is scattered around in your head and it's the film maker's job on taking it one step at a time to organize each and every idea and then piece them together until you have a finished piece of artwork.

So, the first step was to put lay all of my ideas for a plot down on paper. Obviously, the film didn't really follow this outline exactly, but there's definitely bits and pieces that were re-organized and put together in the final product. And, this brainstorming session gave me a way better idea on what I wanted to film and where I wanted to go with this project.