Step 1  **Select a Topic**

Choose a topic you want to explain. Your topic can be the explanation of a theory, a comparison of two theories, an expose’ of what is known about a phenomenon and why it is important to understand it. Above all, it should be something that fascinates you, and that you are interested in learning. Perhaps you want to explain game theory, or why learning is best when information is communicated with graphics. Maybe you want to explain the differences between two models of working memory and why one is better than the other, or how and why thinking about cognition as distributed has marked utility for the way people work together on big problems in organizations.

Step 2  **Do Background Reading**

Do the background reading to educate yourself on the topic you choose. Scour the scholarly literature for theoretical papers, and papers reporting empirical research. Read the papers so that you can build a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon at a deep enough level that you can explain it to others. Rarely does research have a point of view-- indeed, it should not have a point of view. Instead, it reports findings, and anchors those finding in a selection of articles that report their findings and the findings from other investigations. The aggregate of these papers form an epistemology (a base of knowledge that circumscribes the methods, validity, and scope of an area of scientific inquiry). Develop an understanding of the epistemology that defines your topic, deep enough to be able to explain it to the viewers of your documentary (as accurately as you can, relative to your reading).

Step 3  **Prepare Your Narration**

Prepare an outline of what you want to explain based on what you want your viewer to understand-- from the reading you did in step 2. From your outline, write your paper, but use a rhetorical structure that is either explicative or narrative-- that is, the underlying structure of your paper either explains the phenomenon, or it tells a story about the phenomenon. Don’t be shy about developing a point of view. A documentary generally always has a point of view. Take a perspective and explain your phenomenon, or tell the story about the phenomenon (e.g. the way it developed, how what is known about the phenomenon misses important elements or issues and does not address components that it should.) Just make certain that your viewpoint is based on evidence-- evidence that you can anchor to empirical research or statements made from theoretical papers. The goal of your paper is to: inform, teach, give perspective, and above all make your viewers think. For good models, watch a couple of episodes of *NOVA* or *FRONTLINE*.

Step 4  **Procure Your Visuals and Sounds**

Scour the Internet for visualizations-- or make your own. Visualizations can be infographics, diagrams, animations, pictures, schematics, maps-- any images that can bring the points of your narration to life (e.g. statistical trends, models of the way things work, etc.). Take video clips of relevant events-- clips of historical footage, or news clips (to illustrate a point); take videos for “establishing shots”-- shots that give context of place (a university building, students sitting on a bench, or a college classroom) or situation (a family talking over dinner). Take videos of *brief* interviews-- enough to make a point. Create an image containing the text of a brief quote from an article. Take brief recordings of relevant sounds-- chairs moving, Trinity Hall bells chiming, relevant sounds of a location.
Guidelines for Building a Film Documentary

Step 5  **Create Your Storyboard**

A storyboard is nothing more than a visual organizer that allows you to lay out the sequence of your visual material relative to your script. This organizer permits you to pre-visualize what your documentary will look like as a completed video. There are a number of free storyboard organizers on the Internet, (e.g. [http://www.printablepaper.net/category/storyboard](http://www.printablepaper.net/category/storyboard), [http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/page.cfm?id=23&cid=23&sublinkid=37](http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/page.cfm?id=23&cid=23&sublinkid=37), [https://www.howto.gov/sites/default/files/video-storyboard-template.pdf](https://www.howto.gov/sites/default/files/video-storyboard-template.pdf))

Step 6  **Audio Record Your Script**


Step 7  **Edit Your Material for Your Timeline**

Edit your material so that the material fits into your timeframe. You can extend frames for the amount of material you want to show, and for the duration you want to show it. You can also adjust the time of your transitions. When editing your material, listen to your script very carefully, and think about the time your viewer needs to cognitively process the information your script explains.

Step 8  **Place Your Shots and Images into Frames & Choose Your Transitions**

From your storyboard, create your frames in your video software. Perhaps the best and easiest software to use is iMovie-- a software application that comes standard on most MACs. Transitions are very important--they convey information about relationships between frames. Choose them wisely.

Steps 7 and 8 are accomplished using your video (movie) software. While the programs suggested to you on your syllabus are fairly intuitive, iMovie, for example, comes with a tutorial-- and of course, there are tutorials online.
Step 9  **Add Music**

Music can be added on an additional track to the voice recording of your script. Music influences emotional arousal and valence. It also has the capacity to focus attention by providing emphasis. Choose your music clips carefully-- or leave music out all together. It is your call. Again, consider watching an episode of *NOVA* or *FRONTLINE* to see how music can be used in a documentary.

Step 10  **Add Credits and Know Copyright Infringement**

It is possible that you will be using material that is copyrighted. And, unless you get permission to use copyrighted material, it is illegal to do so. Therefore, use your material carefully. The same goes for music. On the other hand, the documentaries you create are for class purposes only-- exclusively for education. They are not for publication or dissemination outside of class-- on the Internet or otherwise. Therefore, some material or pieces of material may be exempt according to the Fair Use Exemption. It is essential that you familiarize yourself with copyright law as it pertains to the material you use. If you have questions, consult Carson Medley, in the graduate office. His on campus extension is: 5392. His email is: cmedley@csuchico.edu.

Credits should be added under Crew and Research. Under Crew identify the people by name who helped you, in addition to their role. Under Research, list your references, in APA style.

Step 11  **Render Project**

When the documentary is completely assembled in the video (movie) software, it will need to be rendered. Make certain that is completely assembled before rendering because rendering takes a long time. Your video should not exceed 20 minutes. When it is complete, either drop it into a protected Dropbox file for which I have access, or find a big thumbdrive and download it there.