

Call for Papers

**Ethics in Documentary Filmmaking (30 – 31 October 2024, IDFF Ji.hlava)
Third Annual Academic-Professional Conference**

Accountability for Topic

Dear Colleagues,

Filmmakers, producers, institutions and critics raise themes that resonate with society. Values, goals, and ideologies are manifested at different levels of decision-making regarding what to make films about. At each stage of this process, obstacles, constraints and structural conditions emerge that affect the public discussion of the problems of our world. In this year's conference on documentary ethics, we will focus on the various ethical dilemmas involved in deciding on the subjects of documentary films, both at the individual level of filmmakers and in the institutional environment of production and media or in relation to political and economic power. The conference will open up the theme of accountability for selecting, shaping and promoting topics that contribute to our collective, public reflection on a world of crises, uncertainties and risks.

We invite you to participate in an academic panel in the form of a 15-minute paper followed by a discussion. Participation is free; no conference fee will be charged. The conference papers will be published online in multimedia proceedings and in the form of a book published by the Palacký University academic publishing house in Olomouc.

Applications should be emailed to etika@ji-hlava.cz by 14 July 2024, and any questions can be sent to the same address. You will receive a notification of acceptance by 1 September 2024. **Please send an abstract for your paper, your name and the institution you represent.**

Researchers and educators from all areas of academia for which the topic is relevant - from both art and science institutions - are invited to apply. We therefore welcome not only sociologists, media and film theorists, historians, political scientists or cultural anthropologists but also all academics from schools focused on the practical instruction of filmmaking and the arts.

Topics, filmmakers and institutions

- How are topics for documentary films created?
- Which places in our public debate remain silent and who is responsible for them?
- Who are the critical gatekeeping actors, i.e. to what extent are filmmakers at the mercy of powerful agenda-setting actors (media, politicians, non-profit sector, business) and to what extent are they able to push their own agendas?
- Which institutional routines are key in shaping issues?

- To what extent can filmmakers be independent of setting a public agenda from their position as power players in the media?
- Are they only responsive to fashionable trends, or can they subversively bring in the voices of the voiceless?
- What is the relationship between documentary film and journalism in its power and ability to raise issues?
- What role do individual actors, industries and institutions play here?

We will look at these questions from two perspectives while devoting separate sessions to each one of them the course of the two-day conference:

1. **The individual production level** - learners, creators, makers and independent producers (from scriptwriting, story editing and directing to sound, camera or editing) stand at the beginning of the process. How do they perceive their accountability for the topics of the production? To what extent do they determine these topics themselves, and to what extent do they follow the demands of the public, the media, and the productions? What themes do they pursue, and what are successful practices? Where are the ethical boundaries for the choice of topics? Where does the social responsibility of creative work begin and end? Is there censorship in Central Europe?
2. **The institutional level** - television, video-on-demand platforms, producers, distributors, film schools - all of these and many others are involved in deciding what topics enter the public debate. The media sets the agenda, and documentary film responds to it or participates directly in forming it. Where does the accountability of industry representatives in shaping the public debate begin and end? How do economic or political considerations enter the process of finding and shaping topics? Who are the powerful actors that influence the construction of topics in Central Europe? How is the influence of technology, especially the emergence of digital platforms, transforming thematic pluralism?

On these two levels, we will not only reflect on the initial ethical question of the accountability of individual actors towards themselves and their creative visions and towards the public and institutions, but we will also look for ways in which the specific environment of documentary filmmaking touches upon ethical issues explored in media theory, sociology and philosophy, such as agenda setting, gatekeeping, the public sphere, institutional routines, propaganda, the spiral of silence, mainstreaming, the avalanche effect, the knowledge gap, resonance, epistemic justice, postcolonialism, new theories of censorship, etc.

The conference will once again bring together the academic, industrial and professional spheres, with a particular emphasis on the Central European context and its specific problems related to the post-transformation reality of the film industries in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. Last year, we opened up this Central European context, and we want to develop the conference further by involving more students and the young generation and opening up a new space for both the sharing of production experiences and the creative confrontation of different perspectives on the ethical boundaries of finding and creating topics for public debate. We are therefore strengthening our emphasis

on collaboration with universities and the involvement of learners in the whole programme, as well as creating a safe space for sharing and articulating attitudes and experiences.

Conference Board:

Organizers:

Tereza Swadoschová, Inspiration Forum, Jihlava IDFF

Jan Motal, Associate Professor, Center for Media Ethics and Dialogue, Masaryk University

Veronika Verešová, Center for Media Ethics and Dialogue, Masaryk University

Academic Partners:

Iveta Jansová, Assistant Professor, Head of the Department of Media Studies and Journalism, Masaryk University

Andrea Slováková, Director, Film Theorist and Ex-dean of FAMU

Emma Marková, Film Director, Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín