VPA 495
Special Topics: Digital Life Stories Project
Spring 2004
2 Units
Professor Stephanie Johnson
(by consent of instructor)
Department of Visual and Public Art

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Students will work as mentors to teen mothers and help them create digital life stories. This is a partnership project among the Reciprocal University for the Arts Project, the Department of Visual and Public Art, and Watsonville Community School, a CSUMB service learning site.

Students will learn the process of creating digital life stories. Personal narratives (oral histories and life stories) will be condensed into a short script and recorded as a voice track. The process also involves selection, scanning, and creative production of visuals (still photographs, video, creative drawings or clip art), and addition of a music track to run underneath. Using a multimedia program like I-Movie, voice, visuals and music are mixed into a digital Quicktime movie that can be played on any computer or projected on a screen. A community artist, Jenny Angelacos, will work with the students weekly, teaching the basic skills and overseeing the work. Lourdes Portillo, whose documentary film Senorita Extraviada won a Special Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival, will join the class periodically to provide feedback and help with writing the scripts.

The teen moms will work in pairs with the university students to tell their stories, design their scripts, produce digital images and audio scores in lab settings on campus.

University students and the teen moms may make presentations of the digital stories on campus, in other regional teen pregnancy programs, and at district administration meetings to impact policy changes.

The media project will:
• Address intergenerational family narratives of the young mothers, their children and their own parents
• Provide mentoring and models for the young mothers through campus and community activities
• Produce digital stories and images that can be used as a model in the region for other teen programs and to affect changes in policy at the level of the school district

COURSE OUTCOMES:

Students will learn skills of producing digital life stories. Assessment is built into this learning experience, which can be used to demonstrate fulfillment of the following Major Learning Outcomes (MLO) for Visual and Public Art:

Students will learn to do research, define community and audience and its issues, and develop community-sensitive work practices (MLO No. 2). Students will learn to collaborate within the context of the class, and within the community and will display community-organizing strategies within an arts project (MLO No. 3). Students will obtain production skills pertaining to the production, public distribution and presentation of artwork (MLO Nos. 4 and 6)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

• Participation: All students will be required to participate in class and community sessions, and contribute actively in the community project.
• Work collaboratively: All students must work cooperatively and reciprocally with the community partner (Watsonville Community School), class instructors, and RUAP project coordinator.
• Meet project deadlines: schedules and deadlines must be met.

NOTE:
Students will meet with the girls several times at Watsonville Community School, but most of the work will take place in the digital lab in Building 71. To offset the cost of transportation, students will receive a small stipend.

Sessions will be held on Wednesday afternoons. Time to be announced. One or two all-day training sessions will be held on Fridays early in the semester.