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Student films debut on the big screen

Documentaries look at local people and events as part of Hope College class project

By ZAC ANDERSON

Some student filmmakers will have a brief chance to flirt with big-screen glory this week.

Students in Hope College's documentary film making class are showing off their semester's work today and Thursday at the Knickerbocker Theatre.



Six of the programs, which are each between eight and 24 minutes long, will be shown at the theater today from noon to 1:30 p.m. Another five will be shown Thursday from noon to 1:30 p.m. Admission is free.

The prospect of having her documentary about a Hope professor's experiences in the U.S. Marines transferred from the computer screen to the silver screen evoked a mixture of excitement and dread in junior Sarah Hartman.

"It's intimidating and it makes me a bit nervous," Hartman said. "But I think looking at it on the big screen will give me a whole new perspective on the process of film making and I'm actually kind of excited."

Hope communications professor David Schock said he hoped that screening the films would evoke a sense of pride and accomplishment in his students.

"I hope this is validation for them," Schock said. "That what they have learned and what they have taught themselves is valid."

In addition, since the films focus on interesting people, places and events in the community they should be a treat for local history enthusiasts, Schock said.

Hope junior Sarah Schlusler just hopes her movie about a 19th-century pioneer woman in Holland is an accurate portrayal of her subject's life and character. Schlusler spent hours poring through the diary of Arvilla Almira Smith, the first white woman to settle in what would become Holland, and used the book to create an image of Smith and her life on film.

"I worried a lot about whether I was getting it right," Schlusler said. "I really struggled with trying to portray her personality accurately."

Schock said the students were often their own worst critics. Many of the documentaries are interesting and moving, he said.

"We've laughed and we've cried," Schock said. "And the reason we cried isn't because they're bad, it's because they've been telling stories that matter."