

DC 204 The Art of Documentary

Spring 2019

Section 601; Class # 35969

Units: 4

Mondays: 1:30 PM - 4:45 PM

14 E Jackson, Room 801, Loop Campus

03/30/2019 - 06/14/2019

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Course Description

Are documentaries an art form? Absolutely! This course explores the variety of styles and concerns that shape documentaries. Students will learn the evolution of unique voices and influences in documentary. The course will examine the broad range of documentary practices from the earliest actualities to contemporary documentary media through weekly screenings. From early "verite" masters such as Frederick Wiseman and D.A. Pennebaker to more recent films that blur the line between fiction and nonfiction, the course will explore the aesthetics and modes of the nonfiction film. By exposing students to the best in recent documentary cinema, the course seeks to familiarize students with -- and inspire them through -- the creative possibilities of the form.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will understand the key aspects of the craft of documentaries, including how editing, cinematography, and sound.
- Students will be able to evaluate the basic artistic and formal elements that go into the making of documentary films.
- Students will grasp the history of documentaries and the differences in documentary forms and genres.
- Students will be able to apply this knowledge to the creation of their own documentary work.
- Students will gain insights into the ethical and business issues related to nonfiction practice and the industry.

Required Reading:

Crafting Truth: Documentary Form and Meaning (Spence, Navarro, 2011)

See articles and online links week to week.

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

1. Response Papers (2) (20%)

Students will write two response papers during the term, which reflect on both the week's screened film and the assigned readings. (2-3 pages.)

2. Midterm Assignment (25%)

The mid-term assignment will be provided later. (5 pages.)

3. Final Project (35%)

Information on the final project will be provided separately. (6-8 pages.)

4. Discussions/Participation/Attendance (20%)

Students are expected to attend every class and be in class on time. Three tardies will be treated as an absence. The college-wide policy permits no more than two absences per semester for this course. If you have three unexcused absences, you will fail the course.

Changes to Syllabus

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be thoroughly addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email.

Online Course Evaluations

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. Students complete the evaluation online in [CampusConnect](#).

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Whenever your work incorporates someone else's research, images, words, or ideas, you must properly identify the source. Proper citation gives credit where it is due and enables your readers to locate sources and pursue lines of inquiry raised by your paper. Students who do not comply will be penalized. This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>.

Academic Policies

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the [University Academic Calendar](#). Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: <http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All

discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at:

csd@depaul.edu.

Lewis Center 1420, 25 East Jackson Blvd.

Phone number: (312) 362-8002; TTY: (773)325.7296

Schedule of Classes:

Week 1 (4/1): Introduction

Clips: *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (Lumiere Bros, 1896), *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1922), *Coal Face* (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1935), *Land Without Bread* (Luis Bunuel, 1933), *Primary* (Drew, Leacock, Pennebaker, 1960)

Reading: *Crafting Truth*: "Introduction"; "What's Real Gets More Creative," by Larry Rohter (*New York Times*, March 14, 2014)

STYLE AND AESTHETICS

Week 2 (4/8): Editing

Screening: *Man With a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929)

Clips: *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955); *Titicut Follies* (Frederick Wiseman, 1969); *Bowling for Columbine* (Michael Moore, 2002)

Readings: *Crafting Truth*: Ch. 7, "Editing"

CLASS FIELDTRIP: DOC10 at the Davis Theater (April 11-14)

Week 3 (4/15): Cinematography

Screening: *Cameraperson* (Kirsten Johnson, 2016)

Clips: *Gates of Heaven* (Errol Morris, 1978), *Sweetgrass* (Lucien Castaing-Taylor, Ilisa Barbash, 2009)

Readings: *Crafting Truth*, Ch. 8, "Camerawork"

RESPONSE PAPER #1 DUE

MIDTERM ASSIGNMENT ASSIGNED

Week 4 (4/22): Sound

Screening: *Lessons of Darkness* (Werner Herzog, 1992)

Clips: *Nobody's Business* (Alan Berliner, 1996), *Leviathan* (Lucien Castaing-Taylor, Verena Paravel, 2012), *Montage of Heck* (Brett Morgen, 2015)

Readings: *Crafting Truth*: Ch. 10, "Sounds"

Week 5 (4/29): Character and Performance

Screening: *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2003)

Clips: *Don't Look Back* (D.A. Pennebaker, 1967), *Portrait of Jason* (Shirley Clarke, 1967); *Crumb* (Terry Zwigoff, 1994)

Readings: *Crafting Truth*, Ch. 9. "Profilmic," Paul Arthur, "Beyond the Limits: The documentary work of Werner Herzog"; Felicia Feaster, "Crumb" (review)

MIDTERM ASSIGNMENT DUE

Week 6 (5/6): Reenactments, Animation and Digital Effects

Screening: *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2008)

Clips: *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), *Terminal Bar* (Stefan Nadelman, 2002), *Tarnation* (Jonathan Caouette, 2002)

Readings: Garrett Stewart, "Nonfictions: Screen Memory in *Waltz With Bashir*"; Beige Adams, "When Docs Get Graphic: Animation Meets Actuality"

Week 7 (5/13): Dramatic Structure

Screening: *Searching for Sugar Man* (Malik Bendjelloul, 2012)

Readings: *Crafting Truth*, pages 113-147

FINAL PROJECT ASSIGNED

Week 8 (5/20): Poetic, Essayistic, and Alternative Structures

Screening: *The Black Power Mixtape: 1967-1975* (Göran Olsson, 2011)

Clips: *Atomic Café* (Jayne Loader, Kevin and Pierce Rafferty, 1982); *Sans Soleil* (Chris Marker, 1983)

RESPONSE PAPER #2 DUE

Readings: *Crafting Truth*, pages 147-157; Michael Atkinson, "Collective Preconscious"; Philip Lopate, "In Search of the Centaur: The Essay-Film"

Week 9 (5/27): MEMORIAL DAY: NO CLASS

Week 10 (6/3): True/False: Hybrid Forms

Screening: *The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2013)

Clips: *Medium Cool* (Haskell Wexler, 1969), *I Am A Sex Addict* (Caveh Zahedi, 2005), *Stories We Tell* (Sarah Polley, 2012)

Readings: "Art of the Real: Hybrid Cinema Timeline" by Dan Sullivan (*Film Comment*, 2014); "I Walk the Line," by Kent Jones (*Film Comment*, 2005); "Irony, Cruelty, Evil (and a Wink) in *The Act of Killing*" (Bill Nichols, *Film Quarterly*)

FINAL PROJECT DUE