

BC/ENG 394 – DOCUMENTARY FILM AND VIDEO (Fall 2016)

M, W 4:30-6:30 p.m. Simpkins 220

Instructor: Richard Ness

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Office Hours: M 3:15-4:14 p.m.; Tu 3:30-4:30 p.m.; W 2-4:15 p.m.

COURSE TEXTS (BOTH REQUIRED): Introduction to Documentary, Second Edition, by Bill Nichols; Documenting the Documentary (New and Expanded Edition), edited by Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski

OFFICIAL CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

BC/ENG 394 Documentary Film and Video. (3) History of documentary film and video with focus on the documentary as a medium of communication, information, and interpretation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To provide an overview of the key works and practitioners in the development of non-fiction film and media, and to examine how significant historical events have been addressed in the age of cinematic and electronic media technology.
- To define, differentiate among and identify examples of various modes of documentary production and stylistic aspects.
- To raise and explore significant theoretical issues about the nature of non-fiction film and what constitutes actuality, truth and reality as presented in media texts.
- To provide students with the opportunity to engage in debate about these questions in relation to specific works screened as part of the course, and to require them to take and defend positions on significant issues.
- To examine various techniques of message construction in documentaries, including the employment of various channels of communication, the use of cognitive and affective appeals, and the manipulation of reality through editing, music, narration, and other production methods.
- To provide students with an opportunity to develop and defend their own definition of documentary, drawing on major works and readings presented as part of the course.
- To address the importance of non-fiction media in relation to other disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and ethnography.

GROUND RULES:

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY – Assignments submitted after the specified due date WILL NOT BE GRADED. Comments and feedback may be provided, but the score will be recorded as a zero. Students anticipating a problem meeting a deadline or attending a class session when an assignment is due must contact the instructor IN ADVANCE to make arrangements. No exceptions will be made to this policy. NOTE: Completed assignments CAN NOT be submitted via email, unless specific arrangements have been made with the instructor prior to the due date (also note that if permission is given for an email submission it must be sent in Microsoft Word format).

SCREENINGS – Films are considered to be a primary text for the course and students are responsible for all films screened during the semester. Do not assume that if you have already seen a film or are seeing it in another class this excuses you from a screening. There are specific things you will be asked to look for and tested on in each film, so students should be prepared to take notes during screenings. Whenever possible films screened in class also will be available on reserve in the library, and students are encouraged to look at films more than once to prepare for exams and papers. However, viewing a film outside of class should be regarded as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, a classroom screening.

READINGS—Assigned readings are intended to supplement, not serve as a substitute for, lectures. Students are expected to have done the assigned reading in advance of that day's lecture. Class lectures are intended to expand on the material in the course texts and it will be assumed that students already have done the readings and are prepared to discuss them.

ATTENDANCE – Attendance for all class sessions is mandatory. Lectures and screenings are considered to be major elements of the course content and exams will be designed to test understanding of all material covered during the semester, including all films screened. Missing a class period will seriously undermine a student's ability to pass the class. If you must miss a class period or screening, please notify the instructor in advance. Online Absence Reporting System (O.A.R.S.) is a system that allows you to self-report your absences. This course requires you to use it anytime you will be missing class, regardless of the reason. You will need to submit one form for each day you will miss. Your submission will generate an automatic email to your instructor. The link to O.A.R.S. is <http://wiu.edu/oars>. The attendance policy for this course is the same as stated on the Online Absence Reporting system form: "Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled. Each faculty member determines his or her own policy dealing with class attendance. Therefore, if a student misses a class or classes, the student is expected to discuss the matter with the instructor, and it is up to the discretion of the instructor whether to allow a student to make up any missed assignments, exams, or projects."

Students with prolonged or repeated absences should also contact the Student Development Office at http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/student_development_office
For more information visit the full policy at <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/stuabsc.php>

NOTE THAT THIS CLASS IS DESIGNATED A NO CELLPHONE ZONE. If you must bring cell phones, ipods, MP3 players or other electronic devices into the classroom they **NEED TO BE TURNED OFF AND PUT AWAY DURING ALL CLASS SESSIONS, INCLUDING ALL FILM SCREENINGS.** Do not assume that just turning off the sound is sufficient. The blue glow created by cellphone use is extremely irritating and distracting to others around you who are trying to concentrate on the film screening or lecture and is not acceptable in this course. Use of electronic devices during class periods (such as text messaging, answering email, game playing, Angry Birding, etc.)

WILL BE GROUNDS FOR STUDENTS RECEIVING A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE.

PAPERS – Papers must be typed/computer-printed and should reflect accepted standards for university research papers. Assignments should demonstrate a degree of research on the part of the student, combined with careful consideration of the student's own ideas. These assignments often will require that students support their conclusions with specific evidence from the assigned readings as well as from works viewed for the course, so students should get in the habit of taking notes during screenings.

Research and material drawn from outside sources must be properly credited. PLAGIARISM IS AN INEXCUSABLE OFFENSE AND WILL BE GROUNDS FOR AUTOMATIC FAILURE IN THIS COURSE. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, consult the university's policy statement or the instructor prior to submitting an assignment. Any time you quote or paraphrase someone else's work, you must give her/him credit. This includes material from print, audio/video and computer-mediated/Internet sources. The instructor reserves the right to fail any student who does not meet the requirements of the assignments, so any deviations from the guidelines should be discussed well in advance. Also note that even if you share information or discuss the readings with other students in the class, you need to make sure that you each submit your own individual work for the assignments. Duplication of writing in work submitted by two or more students may be considered grounds for charges of plagiarism. <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>. Web address for student rights and responsibilities: <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING SYSTEM – Assignments will be graded on a 500-point system, with grades determined by a straight percentage. The following is the breakdown for assignments:

Position Paper #1	-- 50 points
Position Paper #2	-- 75 points
Position Paper #3	-- 75 points
Article Summaries (5 @ 20 pts. Each)	-- 100 points
Midterm	-- 75 points
Final Paper	-- 125 points

This course will make use of the plus-minus grading system required by the university. The following is the scale that will be used to determine final grades in the class, based on the percentage of total points earned:

100-93 = A
92-90 = A-
89-87 = B+
86-83 = B
82-80 = B-
79-77 = C+
76-73 = C
72-70 = C-
69-67 = D+
66-63 = D
62-60 = D-
59 and below = F

Specific descriptions of the major assignments will be provided separately. In order to receive a passing grade for this class, students must complete all major assignments and the exams. All assignments are evaluated carefully before a grade is given and every effort is made to provide appropriate feedback for the student. Occasionally a student will have an objection to a grade. In such cases, the instructor will reevaluate the assignment and determine if there is justification for a grade change. NOTE: If a student asks for a reconsideration of a grade, the instructor reserves the right to assign a lower, as well as a higher, grade. ALL DISCUSSION OF GRADES MUST BE DONE WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF THE GRADE BEING RECEIVED. THIS INCLUDES THE FINAL GRADE FOR THE COURSE. REEVALUATION OF GRADES WILL NOT BE DONE AFTER THAT TIME.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

(subject to change based on availability of materials)

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic/Readings</u>
8/22, 24	Introduction; definitions of documentary; the actuality/creativity debate; early documentary production SCREENINGS: Operation Lune (aka Dark Side of the Moon); Nanook of the North READINGS: Grant, Chap. 1 ("The Filmmaker as Hunter" by William Rothman); Nichols, Chap. 1 and 9
8/29, 31	Early experimentation; the Kino-Eye Movement; European documentary movements; poetic and expository modes; British and American social/political movements of the 1930s SCREENINGS: Man with a Movie Camera; Las Hurdes (Land without Bread); The River; other selected short films READING: Grant, Chap. 2 ("Peace Between Man and Machine" by Seth Feldman); Grant, Chap. 4 ("Synthetic Vision" by Vivian Sobchack); Grant, Chap. 7 ("American Documentary Finds Its Voice" by Charlie Kiel); Nichols, Chap. 5
9/7	The rise of nationalism; media and/as propaganda; strategies of persuasion; cognitive and affective appeals SCREENINGS: Triumph of the Will (excerpts) READINGS: Grant, Chap. 6 ("The Mass Psychology of Fascist Cinema" by Frank P. Tomasulo); Nichols, Chapter 4
9/12, 14	Hollywood, Britain and the documenting of war; politics, poetics and propaganda; the aftermath of war and the rise of independent production SCREENINGS: Prelude to War; (Battle of) San Pietro; Night and Fog; The War Game READINGS: Grant, Chap. 9 ("The Poetics of Propaganda" by Jim Leach) and Chap. 12 ("Documenting the Ineffable" by Sandy Flitterman-Lewis); Nichols, Chapter 6
9/19, 21	Television (and) documentary; the growth of TV news and the personality profile; news coverage SCREENINGS: Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment; Zapruder film and JFK assassination coverage READING: Grant, Chap. 18 ("A Bastard Union of Several Forms" by Jeffrey K. Ruoff); Nichols, Chapter 2
9/26, 28	The direct cinema and cinema vérité movements; observational and participatory modes of production SCREENING: Titicut Follies READINGS: Grant, Chap. 15 ("Ethnography in the First Person" by Barry Keith Grant); Nichols, Chapter 7

MIDTERM EXAM

- 10/3, 5 The influence of the Maysles Brothers; the creation and documentation of celebrity; the music/media connection
SCREENINGS: Grey Gardens; excerpts from Don't Look Back, Gimme Shelter, etc.
READING: Grant, Chap. 14 ("Don't You Ever Just Watch?" by Jeanne Hall)
- 10/10, 12 "Film is truth 24 times a second" (Godard); the elusive nature of truth; reflexive and performative modes; the documentary as personal biography
SCREENINGS: David Holzman's Diary; Gray's Anatomy
READING: Grant, Chap. 20 ("Gender, Power, and a Cucumber" by Carl Plantinga); Nichols, Chap. 3
- 10/17, 19 Documenting socio-political issues; new forms of identity; planned and unplanned events
SCREENINGS: Return Engagement; The Times of Harvey Milk
- 10/24, 26 McElwee, Morris, Moore and the new documentary movement: the filmmaker and/as the subject; personal introspection and the self-reflexive documentary
SCREENING: Sherman's March
READING: Grant, Chap. 21 ("Documentary Film and the Discourse of Hysterical/Historical Narrative" by Lucy Fischer)
- 10/31, 11/2 Documentary and/as social commentary; the personal and the political; the filmmaker as agenda setter; social issues and (vs.) personal portraiture
SCREENINGS: Roger and Me; 4 Little Girls
READING: Grant, Chap. 24 ("Documentaphobia and Mixed Modes" by Matthew Bernstein) and Chap. 28 ("Spike Lee's *4 Little Girls*: The Politics of the Documentary Interview" by Paula J. Massood); Nichols, Chap. 8
- 11/7, 9 Documentary and/as investigative journalism
SCREENING: The Thin Blue Line
READING: Grant, Chap. 23 ("Mirrors Without Memories" by Linda Williams)
- 11/14, 16 Documentary and/as social science research
SCREENING: The "Up" Series
- 11/28, 30 Documenting subcultures; (anti-) corporate documentary; the limits of documentary
SCREENINGS: Wordplay; Werner Herzog excerpts (Grizzly Man and White Diamond)
READING: Grant, Chap. 30 ("You Must Never Listen to This" by David T. Johnson)
- 12/5, 7 New directions in documentary; documentary and other cinematic forms; the documentary in the age of new media and social networking
SCREENING: Waltz with Bashir
READING: Grant, Chap. 31 ("Cultural Learnings of Borat for Make Benefit Glorious Study of Documentary" by Leshu Torchin)