

MDIA 7: DOCUMENTARY FILM

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Spring 2021
Units:	4
Hours:	4 lecture, 1 laboratory per week (60 total per quarter)
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area I: Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Description

A survey of the development and practice of documentary film from the early 1900s to the present. Investigation and critical analysis of influential films, prominent filmmakers, and technological developments. Study of the economic, cultural, and artistic forces at work in the evolution of documentary film.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Identify and analyze the major historical developments in documentary film.
- Identify and explain the basic categories of documentary film.
- Identify and describe technical and production issues encountered by documentary filmmakers.
- Identify and describe the ethical issues documentary filmmakers encounter in representing social, political and cultural issues.

Course Content

- Major historical developments in documentary film.
 - Novelty films 1890s-1900s
 - Science illustration 1900s
 - Travelogue/Exoticism 1910s
 - Romanticism 1920s
 - City Symphonies 1920-1930s
 - Kino-Pravda (Dziga Vertov) 1920s-1930s
 - Newsreel tradition 1940s
 - WWII propaganda
 - Cinéma-vérité 1950s on
 - Political documentaries 1960s-1970s
 - Media: VHS, DVD, internet streaming 1970s to present
- Basic categories of documentary film.
 - Expository
 - Observational
 - Participatory
 - Reflexive
 - Performative
 - Poetic
- Technical and production issues encountered by documentary filmmakers.
 - Background and archive research
 - Scriptwriting form and function
 - Interview preparation and procedures

- Casting and recording narrator(s)
- Cinematography/lighting
- Designing graphics
- Production and post-production sound
- Photo animation
- Ethical issues documentary filmmakers face in representing social, political and cultural issues.
 - Romantic Ethnography: Nanook of the North
 - Protecting subjects
 - Paying subjects
 - Power dynamics—ambush interviews
 - Staging events
 - Collaboration—transparency
 - Editing and narration

Lab Content

- Screenings of documentary films on-campus or online for completion of written assignments and quizzes.
- Feedback on tests and assignments either in person, by telephone, email or online message.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

- Forum-type room with projection booth, video projection system, amplified sound system. Internet access and laptop computer patch to system. Playback equipment formats required: DVD, VHS, audio cassette.
- Library for film research, books, scripts, videotape/DVD playback facility.
- When taught online, access to computer with email; email address, internet browsing software and embedded video viewing. Instructor will provide feedback on tests and assignments via email, personal messaging, telephone, discussion forum or assignment comment form; class discussion may be delivered in online forums.

Method(s) of Evaluation

- Written essays and papers on individual films, film movements, filmmakers.
- Quizzes, midterm and final exam on readings, screenings and presentations.
- Assigned discussions topics.

Method(s) of Instruction

- Lecture presentations, online and class discussions.
- Viewing of film excerpts followed by instructor-guided interpretation and analysis.
- Discussion and critique of assigned reading and film screenings.

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

- Rabiger, Michael. *Directing the Documentary*. 6th ed. Boston: Focal Press, 2015.
- Nichols, Bill. *Speaking Truths with Film: Evidence, Ethics, Politics in Documentary*. UC Press, 2016.
- Kahana, Jonathan and Charles Musser. *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory*. London: Oxford Press, 2016.
- Hogarth, David. *Realer than Reel: Global Directions in Documentary*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006.
- Baker, Maxine. *Documentary in the Digital Age*. Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2006.

Although some texts are older than the suggested "5 years or newer" standard, they remain seminal in this area of study.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

- A. Critical documentary film analysis in the form of quizzes or online discussion assignments.
- B. Analytical essay that requires student to select a film and develop an argument referencing the film and the reading materials.
- C. Analytical essay that requires student to conduct independent research on documentary film of their choosing in relation to form, theory, ideology, or historical issues.

Discipline(s)

Media Production or Film Studies