**COMM 4853/6853** • **DOCUMENTARY FORM IN FILM**

Texts: Barnouw, Eric. *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film.*

New York, Oxford University Press, Second Revised Edition, 1993.

Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary.* Indiana University Press, Second Edition, 2010.

Free Documentaries

http://freedocumentaries.org/index.php

Recommended:

Coles, Robert. *Doing Documentary Work.* Oxford University Press, 1997.

Levin, Roy G. *Documentary Explorations.* New York, Doubleday, 1971.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. Dell, 1973.

Who are these visitors, these avowed doers of good, these earnest documentarians, and what are they up to, and what will they end up doing, or where will they end up going, and what will come of all this, for us and for them?

- Robert Coles

How do we come to know others and the worlds they inhabit? … What strategies are available to us for the representation of people, their experience, and the encounterswe wish to have of them? - Bill Nichols

When does fact veer toward fiction – and how are those two words to be understood with respect to one another; as polarities, as contraries, or as kin, working a parallel, often contiguous territory, and borrowing from one another now and then? – Robert Coles

# Class Schedule

Jan 21 Images and Meaning: The quest for reality.

Screen: Lumiere Shorts, et al. Read: B 3-30, N 1-41, 120-128

Jan 26 What do documentarians want?

Screen: *Stranger With a Camera.* Read: N 42-66.

Jan 28 Reality in Narrative Form.

Robert Flaherty. Screen *Nanook of the North* (1922) Read: B 33-51

Feb 2 Discuss Flaherty’s importance.

Feb 4 Spinning, Twirling, Seeing: The Aesthetics of Reality.

Screen: *Rain* (1929), *Man With The Movie Camera* \*(1929), *Berlin*\* (1929) Read: B 51-81, N 128-141, 162-66, 212-19.

Feb 9 The Kino Eye. Screen *Styx* (1976), *Winged Migration* (2003)

Feb 11 The British Are Coming. John Grierson and the Documentary Movement.

Screen: *Night Mail* (1936), *Housing Problems* (1936) Read: B 85-100, N 219-223

Feb 16 Pare Lorentz: A New Deal for Documentary.

Screen: *The River* (1937) Read: B 111-139, N. 167-71

Feb 18 Film on the Left: Socialism and Documentary.

Screen: *The City* (1939)

Feb 23 Film on the Right. Art, Ethics and National Identity.

Screen: *Triumph of the Will* \*(1935)*.* Read: B 100-111

Feb 25 Mr. Deeds Goes to War. Image and Context.

Screen: *Prelude to War* (1942). Read: 139-172

Mar 2 The Auteurist/Genre Dimensions.

Screen: *Battle of Midway* (1942) *Battle of San Pietro* (1945)

Mar 4 **EXAM**

**SPRING BREAK**

Mar 16 Bearing Witness. Filming the un-image-inable

Screen: *Night and Fog* (1955). Read: B 172-182

Mar 18 The Awful Truth

Screen: *Remember My Lai*

Mar 23 New Realities: Italian Neo-realism, British Free Cinema.

Screen: *La Terra Trema*\* (1948) *Momma Don’t Allow* (1956) and selected clips.

Mar 25 Screen *On the Bowery* (1956) and discuss.

Mar 30 Toward Verité: New Technology, New Directions.

Screen: *Chronicle of a Summer*\* (1960) *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment* (1963). Read: B 231-262, N 172-79

Apr 1 Fred Wiseman, Al and David Maysles, D.A. Pennebaker.

Screen: *Titicut Follies* (1967)\*, *Don’t Look Back*\* (1965), *Salesman\**(1969). Read: B 262-293

Apr 6 Discuss Verité and Direct Cinema.

Screen: *No Lies* (1973), *Seventeen*\* (1982)

Apr 8 Reflexivity and the Performative Documentary.

Screen: *Time Indefinite\** (1993) *Remains (1979)*

Apr 13 Home Movies: Screen: *Mom,* *Italian Americans*, *Ash Requium*.

Apr 15 Screen: *April* (2012)

Apr 20 History on Film

Screen: *At the River I Stand* (1993)

Apr 22 By Any Means Necessary? Michael Moore and the truth.

Screen: *Manufacturing Dissent* (2007)

Apr 27 Screen: *Wasteland* (2010)

Apr 29 **PAPERS DUE**. Discussion/screening

May 6 (10 am – 12noon) FINAL EXAM

\* Indicates “segment” or “edited for length.”

Due to the length of some of the films to be screened, some classes may run slightly over the scheduled time. Advance notice will be provided when possible.

This syllabus may be changed at any time at the discretion of the instructor. If you miss a day, it is your responsibility to check for announced changes. Major changes will be emailed.

Undergraduate students are required to turn in one term paper. The topic must be approved, the paper must be seven to ten pages long, and it must indicate **substantial research** **beyond** the information provided in class or in your text, and **must deal with significant issues raised by the course.**

Graduate papers must be no less than ten pages long.

**Hard copies** of all papers are due on the indicated date. Late work will receive a grade reduction.

Plagiarism will result in a failing grade. It is your responsibility to make yourself familiar with the University Code of Student Conduct.

[http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs/dishonesty/definitions.htm](https://ch1prd0404.outlook.com/owa/redir.aspx?C=RWWOi1w_dEynGISNgqdp17taZtrHms4Ie8BWNTyL9CAtTp7GhXKZjcZ_Xp5Dj2Zjv07jdQCE7iY.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fsaweb.memphis.edu%2fjudicialaffairs%2fdishonesty%2fdefinitions.htm)

**Please turn off all cell phones during class. You may use a laptop for note taking only. No texting, emailing, checking Facebook or any other non-class related activities are allowed during class, including during film screenings.**

The mid-term exam will be administered only on the indicated date.

While attendance is not required by the University, an ability to discuss all the films shown in class is essential for obtaining a decent grade.

Grades will be computed as follows:

4853

Mid-term 30% Final 35% Term Paper 35%

6853

Mid-term 25% Final 30% Term Paper 45%

**Extra Credit:** Documentary Exercise

You are invited to partake in some kind of documentary work over the course of the semester in the form of a film, audio presentation, or written work, including a 2-3 page paper explaining how the project addresses the concerns inherent in the course content. Details will be discussed in class. This work can add between 1 and 10 points to your final grade.

Grades will be calculated using the plus/minus system.