COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will concentrate on an examination of the aesthetics, history, cultural context, social significance, and critical methodologies of the documentary film. Study will begin with the earlier examples of this form, including the pioneering works of such documentarians as Robert Flaherty, Leni Riefenstahl, the Maysles Brothers, and Frederick Wiseman, and continue through more recent extensions of this form as exemplified in the work of Michael Moore, et al. Students will investigate the ideological and formal principles of the non-fiction narrative film. Classes will be comprised of lecture, screenings, and class discussion and analysis of films based on the screenings and assigned readings.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students will:
Demonstrate disciplinary knowledge of documentary film, including:
• key examples in the development of documentary films, as well as new forms of documentary that have evolved over the history of the genre.
• various theoretical frameworks for analyzing and evaluating documentary films.
• the legal and ethical issues surrounding the production of documentary films.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS (required):


(available at the UTEP bookstore).

These books may also be supplemented by assigned and suggested readings, which will be on Blackboard and on reserve at the UTEP Library under the course name & number.
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT STATEMENT: “The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.”

CENTER FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES POLICY: If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu. Or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS staff are the only individuals who can validate and, if need be, authorize accommodation for students with disabilities.

STUDENT EVALUATION: Students will be required to:

I. Attend class screenings and lectures, do assigned readings, and participate in class discussions.

II. Write 4 in-class essays in a blue exam book about a documentary film that will be screened in class. The essays will test your deployment of the following analytical approaches:
   a) Argumentation/Rhetorical strategies (evidence and forms of appeal)
   b) Social/Cultural/Historical Context
   c) Formal/Cinematic codes

III. Pass a mid-term exam on documentary history, theory, practice, and terminology based on the readings, screenings, and class discussions.

IV. Pass a final exam on documentary history, theory, practice, and terminology based on the readings, screenings, and class discussions.

GRADING: Final grades will be based on the above four areas of participation:
I. In-class essays (4) 35%
II. Mid-term Exam 30%
III. Final exam 35%
total 100 points

GRADING: 90-100 = A 80-89 = B 70-79 = C 60-69 = D 0-59 = F
GENERAL RULES

Check the class schedule each week and be prepared for class by doing the assigned readings for that class – be prepared to discuss or ask questions about the material when you come to class.

You are responsible for information from missed classes – be sure to get notes and info from a classmate.

No eating or drinking (aside from water bottles) in class. No texting or emailing during class lectures, discussion, or screenings. Laptops are to be used for relevant note-taking only. If you have personal business to take care of please do it outside of class time.

CLASS SCHEDULE

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES IN THE SCHEDULE/CALENDAR/ASSIGNMENTS DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF THE CLASS.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Discussion Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>8/24</td>
<td><strong>Discuss:</strong> Syllabus, course objectives + expectations</td>
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| 8/31 | **Discuss:** PA, Ch.1, *Defining the Doc.*, pp.1-25/*Founders*, pp.25-32; **EB**, Ch. 1, “Prophet,” pp.3-30; Ch. 2, “Explorer,” pp.33-50; **GS** Ch. 1, “Filmmaker as Hunter”  
**Screen:** “actualities”- early Lumière Bros./Thomas Edison short films; *Nanook of the North*, Robert Flaherty (1922, 79’) (“salvage ethnography”) |
**Screen:** *Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefenstahl (1935, 114’) (excerpts); *Olympia I & II*, Leni Riefenstahl (1936-38, 114’/85’) (excerpts); *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, Pare Lorentz (1936, 30’)  
**IN CLASS ESSAY # 1** |
| 9/21 | **Discuss:** **EB**, Ch. 3, “Bugler,” pp. 139-142/155-164; Ch. 6, “Movement,” pp. 344-346 (upper)/348 (lower)-349 (propaganda); **PA**, Ch. 2, *Subgenres*, pp.70-78 (propaganda cont’d./advocacy), **GS**, Ch. 9, “The Poetics of Propaganda”  
**Screen:** *Why We Fight: No.1, Prelude to War*, F. Capra (1942, 53’) (15’ excerpt); *Fahrenheit 911*, Michael Moore (2004, 122 mins.) (excerpts); *Fahrenheit 911*, Alan Peterson (2004, 75 mins.) (excerpts). |
| 9/28 | **Discuss:** **EB**, Ch. 3 “Prosecutor” (part - *Night and Fog*), pp. 180-182; Ch.4 “Poet,” pp.185-196; Ch.4 “Chronicler,” pp.198-206/”Promoter,” pp.221-228; **PA**, Ch. 2, *Subgenres*, pp.56-70 (Public Affairs) **Reserve Readings:** Warren, “Beyond Documentary,” (re: *Night and Fog* et al.) pp. 8-11; Barsam, Ch. 12 (part - *Night and Fog*), pp. 262-263; **GS**, Ch. 12 “Documenting the Ineffable”  
**Screen:** *Night and Fog*, Alain Renais (1955, 30 mins.); *American Masters: Edward R. Morrow - See It Now* (excerpts?); *Harvest of Shame*, CBS News (1960, 54 mins.) |
<p>| 10/5 | <strong>Discuss:</strong> <strong>EB</strong>, Ch. 4 “Chronicler,” pp. 207-212 (Ethnographic/Rouch); Ch. 5 “Observer,” pp. 231-253; “Catalyst,” pp. 253-262; <strong>PA</strong>, Ch.1, <em>Cinema Verité,</em> |</p>
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<td>10/12</td>
<td><strong>MIDTERM EXAM</strong></td>
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| 10/19    | **Discuss: EB**, Ch. 5 “Guerrilla,” pp. 269-288 (Vietnam/video); Ch. 6 “Movement,” pp. 314, 327-329 (Ken Burns); **PA**, Ch. 2, *Subgenres*, pp.91-101 (Historical/Revisionism)  
**Screen**: *Hearts and Minds*, Peter Davis (1974, 112 mins.); *Atomic Cafe*, Pierce Rafferty et al. (1982, 88’) (excerpt); *The Civil War*, Ken Burns (1990, 700 mins.) (excerpt) [historical/interview] |
| 10/26    | **Discuss: EB**, Ch. 6 “Movement,” pp. 336-338 (film essays), **GS**, Ch. 20, “Documentary Film and the Discourse of Hysterical/Historical Narrative”  
**Screen**: *Sherman’s March*, Ross McElwee (1986, 155 mins.) |
| 11/2     | **Discuss: GS**, Ch. 23, “Mirrors Without Memories”  
**Screen**: *The Thin Blue Line*, Errol Morris, (1988, 101 mins.) (excerpt); *Far From Poland*, Jill Godmilow (1984, 110 min.) |
| 11/9     | **Discuss: GS**, Ch. 19, “Gender, Power, and a Cucumber,” Ch. 24 “Documentaphobia and Mixed Modes”  
**Screen**: excerpts from *This is Spinal Tap*, Rob Reiner (1984, 85 min.); *Roger & Me*, Michael Moore (1989, 91 min.) |
| 11/16    | **Discuss**: LGBT Identity on the Screen: **GS**, Ch. 25, “Silence and Its Opposite,” Ch. 26, “Containing Fire”  
**Screen**: excerpts from *Tongues Untied*, Marlon Riggs (1989, 55 mins.); *Paris is Burning*, Jennie Livingston (1990, 71 min.); *How to Survive a Plague*, David France (2012, 120 min.) |

**IN CLASS ESSAY #2**


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<td>11/23</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS- HAPPY THANKSGIVING!</strong></td>
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| 11/30 | **Discuss:** EB, Ch. 6 “Movement,” pp. 297-304 (International doc.); PA, Ch.2 Advocacy, pp.81-91 ("Third Cinema"/Legacies)  
**Screen:** Hoop Dreams, Steve James (1994, 170 mins.) (excerpt – 1st 30 mins.); Life and Debt, Stephanie Black (2001, 86 mins.); Perfumed Nightmare, Kidlat Tahimik (1977, 93 min.) |
|       | **FINAL EXAM- TBA** |
SUGGESTED READING—Documentary Film

NOTE: Some materials are on reserve at the UTEP Library under the class number. Xerox copies of selected articles and book chapters will also be on reserve in folders under the class name. Some items may also be on reserve for Comm 3346 Documentary Video Practicum.


**BOOKS at UTEP Library (cont’d):**


BOOKS in REFERENCE collection at UTEP Library:


ARTICLES/CHAPTERS ON RESERVE:


JOURNALS:

(available in the Library periodicals section and some online)

*Cineaste*. PN1993.C5177

*Film Comment*. PN1993.F438

*FilmQuarterly*. (Electronic Journal).