**Com 350: Documentary Film History and Theory**

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Required Textbook:

Barnouw, Erik. *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, Second Revised Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. ISBN 978-0195078985

## Course Objectives

This course is a historical and critical study of documentaries. Students will:

1. Develop a critical understanding of documentary film and video. Students will demonstrate a substantial increase in general knowledge of documentary media.
2. Develop writing skills to begin thinking about constructing documentaries. Students will grow in their capacity to demonstrate ability to write professionally.
3. Gain a knowledge of the history of documentary film, technology, theory and techniques.

# **Attendance**

Attendance is essential for passing this course. Reading about the information is important but only part of the learning process. A quasi-Socratic approach is used to teach this course, which requires informed participation. Participation in class discussions and in-class assignments is extremely significant in understanding documentary. University sanctioned excuses are accepted.

# **Reading/ Participation**

All reading assignments should be completed before class. Since classroom interaction is primarily in discussion form, the student’s ability to articulate ideas expressed in the text will be imperative.

Points will be awarded for participation in discussion. If informed discussion within the class is lacking, quizzes will be given in lieu of participation points.

# **Assignments**

All assignments (except in-class assignments) must be typed and turned in on time. Missing class deadlines will cost you points toward your final grade (see section on grading). Late work will only be accepted in the event of a death in one’s family or an illness documented by a health professional.

# **Writing Guidelines**

Some semesters the paper topic will be dictated, such as with the Foxtail Film Festival.

Other Paper Topic Options [If needed]:

1) How are documentaries used by social and political activists?

2) Construct a critical analysis of documentary on a political or social topic.

You may combine these topics. Critically write about what interests you.

You can write on either of these topics or combine the two in your paper.

Undergraduate Papers should be between 6-10 pages and should cite at least 5-8 outside sources (in addition to our text). Graduate papers should be between 10 to 16 pages and cite at least ten sources.

The paper should be well organized. Please craft an appropriate introduction and conclusion. I would suggest using between 3 and 8 major main points in your paper and developing them with evidence, arguments, and examples.

Please format the paper according to an accepted set of style guidelines. APA is accepted as the appropriate style for communication scholarship. Most importantly, please be consistent with your use of style guidelines.

Papers must be typed (or word-processed). Hand-written assignments will not be accepted for credit. Typewritten guidelines: 1-inch margins; 12-point font in Times New Roman or 11-point font Courier New **only**.

All out-of-class assignments are due at the beginning of the class period. Out-of-class assignments are considered late ten minutes after the beginning of the class period in which they are due and will receive an automatic deduction of two full grades (20 percent) for that assignment. Late assignments will receive an additional reduction of two full grades (20 percent) for each additional day late (each 24-hour period after the due date and time), except in cases of an excused absence (see Attendance requirements). Predictable problems, such as printer glitches or running out of paper, are NOT excuses for turning in work late. Make sure to anticipate those predictable problems so that you can prevent them.

**Assignments** 1- Paper 200 pnts.

2- Test 1 300 pnts.

3- Test 2 (Final) 300 pnts.

4-Quizes 100 pnts.

5- Participation 100 pnts.

Total 1000 pnts.

Graduate students will add additional 250 points for a total of 1250.

## Grading Scale

90% - 100%=A; 80% - 89%=B; 70%-79%=C: 60%-69%=D: >60%=F

I demand rigorous effort, but I am fair.

**Tolerance is an ethical imperative, and must be reciprocal.**

**Graduate Credit**

This course allows additional opportunities for graduate students who are interested in communication coursework. This is another way the School of Communication can expand course offerings to graduate students.

There are additional requirements for graduate students taking this course. Graduate students who take this course will be required to write an **additional research paper** applicable to the contemporary communication topic. The instructor must approve the topic. This graduate requirement will entail a research proposal (2 to 3 pages), a literature review (5-7 pages), and a final paper (15 to 20 pages). The due date for each phase of this research will be established through discussion with the instructor. Graduate students will be expected to use APA style.

This graduate paper will be worth 250 points. Thus, graduate students will be graded on percentage from 1250 total points.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and need special arrangements for this class, please let me know or contact the ADA coordinator for the Department of Communication. Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability contact Disability Concerns, Fell 350, 438-5853 (Voice), 438-8620 (TDD).

### Academic Honesty/Plagiarism/Cheating

Honesty in writing is critical in the academy. Plagiarism includes using someone else's ideas, work, or words as one's own without providing proper citation. It can also include attributing information to a source that is really from another source. I expect you will be honest in your attributions of information, and accurate in your reporting and writing and in all areas that challenge you in this class.

If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating, either by taking *or* giving work that belongs to someone else, you will receive a zero (0/F) on the assignment or exam. In accordance with Illinois State University procedures regarding misconduct, your name will be given to the department chair and, likely, the Student Dispute Resolution Services office. This can result in failure of the class and, possibly, dismissal from the university.

**Grading**

Accuracy and readability are such essential parts of writing. All out-of class assignments will be graded in the following way: Spelling and punctuation errors (such as misspelling a source’s name, providing an incorrect address, writing run-on sentences, using sentence fragments when a full sentence is required, using inaccurate information) will result in an 8-point deduction from the overall grade for each error. Misspelled proper names will incur a 16 point deduction. Clearly, you will want to edit and re-edit your work before turning it in for a grade. If editing is not your strong suit, find a partner either in this class or a roommate/friend who is willing to read the piece.

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## Weekly Class Schedule (All dates tentative)

**1-22 Class 1**  Course Intro Course Intro:

Syllabus

View Introductory Documentary: *Picture This: The Fight to Save Joe* (Dir. McHale, 2004)

**1-29** **Class 2** Principles of Drama

What is a documentary?

Assignment: Read Chapter 1, "Glimpse of Wonders" in Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film by Barnouw (DOC) pp 1-30

View *Nanook of the North*, Dir. Flaherty, 1922, 60 min.

Suggested Viewing: Graduate Student Required to view:

*Animal Locomotion (1880)*, Muybridge

*Worker Leaving the Lumiere Factory*

*Arrival of a train* (1895), Louis Lumiere

Pathe short films

**2-5 Class 3** Chapter 2, "Images at Work," "Explorer" and "Reporter" DOC 31-70.

Screen Contemprary Documentary

Suggested Viewing: Graduate Student Required to view:

*The Man with the Movie Camera (1929)* Kaufman (Vertov)

*Grass* (1925) Cooper and Schoedsack

*The Black Cruise* (Fr. 1926; Poirier) Africa

*The Yellow Cruise*: Asia: Lebanon to Indochina

*Congorrila* (1929 by the Johnsons) condescending

Suggested Viewing: Graduate Student Required to view:

*Three songs of Lenin (1931)*

*Anniversary of the Revolution* (1919)

*History of the Revolution (1921)*

**2-12 Class 4** Chapter 2, "Images at Work," "Painter" DOC 71-81.

Screen Contemprary Documentary

Suggested Viewing: Graduate Student Required to view:

Joris Ivens, *The Bridge* (1928):

*Rain* (1929)

Ruttman, *Berlin: Symphony of the City* (1927)

Cavalcanti: *Only the Hours (1926)*

Jean Vigo: Made *On the Subject of Nice* (1930)

Jean Painleve: *Sea Horses (1934)*

**2-19 Class 5** Chapter 3, "Sound and Fury" "Advocate" DOC 85-138.

Screen Contemprary Documentary

View, *Triumph of the Will* Dir. L. Rienfenstahl, Germany, 1934

*Night and Fog*, [Alain Resnais](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-url/index=vhs&field-director=Alain%20Resnais/002-3162454-8668860), 1955

Suggested Viewing: Graduate Student Required to view:

*Housing Problems (1935*)

*Drifters* (1929)

*Industrial Britain* (1933)

*Coal Face (1936)*

*Song of Ceylon (1935)*: funded by corps, but identified imperialism

*Night Mail* (1936) (H. Watt and B. Wright)

*Man of Aran* (1934) Flaherty

Leni Riefenstahl, *Olympia* (1938)

Jorgen Ivens

*Song of Heroes* (1932)

*New Earth* (1934)

**2-26 Class 6** Chapter 3, "Sound and Fury" " Bugler"

Screen Contemprary Documentary

Pare Lorentz, *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936), *The River* (1937)

Suggested Viewing: Graduate Student Required to view:

*Why We Fight* Series. (U.S. World War II Doc (s))

*The Battle of Russia* (1943) Directed by Anitoli Litvak

*The Battle of Midway* Dir. J. Ford, 1944

*War Comes to America*. Dir. Capra & Litvak. 1945.

**3-6 Class 7**

Read: "Prosecutor," DOC 139-182

View: *Bowling For Columbine* (2002) Directed by Michael Moore

Suggested Viewing: Required for Graduate Students:

*Bowling For Columbine* (2002) Directed by Michael Moore

*Fahrenheit 9-11* Directed by Michael Moore

*Roger and Me* Directed by Michael Moore

**3-11 Spring Break**

**3-18 Class 8**

**Test 1**

Chapter 4 "Clouded Lens" "Poet" and "Chronicler" DOC 183-212

Writing the Documentary

Screen Contemporary Documentary

**3-25 Class 9** Chapter 4 "Clouded Lens" "Promoter" DOC 213 – 228

Screen Contemporary Documentary

Suggested Viewing: Required for Graduate Students:

*Louisiana Story* (Flaherty: 1948)

*The Rival World [Our Greatest Enemy]* (Haanstra, 1955)

*See It Now* (Series; 1951 Ed Murrow and Fred Friendly)

**4-1 Class 10**

Chapter 5 Part 1 "Sharp Focus" "Observer" DOC 229-253

Screen Contemporary Documentary

Suggested Viewing: Required for Graduate Students:

*On the Bowery* (1956; Lionel Rogosin):

*Chicago: First Impressions of a Great City* (1960: Mitchell)

*Salesman* (1969) Maysles, David

*Gimme Shelter* (1970) Albert and David Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin

*Grey Gardens* (1975) Albert & David Maysles, Ellen Hovde, Muffie Meyer

Wiseman: *Titicut Follies* (1967)

*Basic Training* (1971)

**4-8** Screen Contemporary Documentary

Read Catalyst 254-262 Shap Focus Ch. 5 Pt. B

Suggested Viewing: Required for Graduate Students:

*Minimata* (1971)

*You are On Indian land* (1969)

4-15 BEA: No Class

**4-22** Screen Contemporary Documentary

Preview“Guerilla" in Barnouw pp. 262 to p. 293 Ch. 5 Part C

Suggested Viewing: Required for Graduate Students:

*The Civil War* (1990)*,* Directed by Ken Burns

*Prohibition* (2011), Directed by Ken Burns

*The Roosevelts: An Intimate Portrait* (2014)

**April 25-28 - Foxtail Film Festival**, Normal Theatre, Uptown Normal

Write a news piece about the event or write a film review

**4-29**

“Guerilla" in Barnouw pp. 262 to p. 293

Suggested Viewing: Required for Graduate Students:

*Why Vietnam?* (1965) Dept. of Defense

*The 17th Parallel, 1967)* Jorgen Ivens

*Inside North Vietnam* (1968; Felix Greene)

Selling of the Pentagon (1971; Peter Davis)

Suggested Viewing: Required for Graduate Students:

*Going Clear* (2015)*,* Directed by Alex Gibney

*Taxi to The Dark Side (2007),* Directed by Alex Gibney

*Steve Jobs: The Man in the Machine* (2015), Directed by Alex Gibney

**4-29 Class 12**

Chapter 6 Pt. 1 "Movement" in Barnouw, pp. 293-349

Ch. 6 Pt. B Historical Chronical

Suggested Viewing: Required for Graduate Students:

*The Civil War* (1990)*,* Directed by Ken Burns

*Prohibition* (2011), Directed by Ken Burns

*The Roosevelts: An Intimate Portrait* (2014)

*The Battle of Chile* (’74,’77, ’79)

*El Salvador: Another Vietnam (1981)*

*Life on Earth (1979)*: David Attenborough

*Cosmos* (1980): featured Carl Sagan: directed by Adrian Malone

*Union Maids (1976)*: Reichert, Klien, and Mogulescu

Barbra Kopple: *Harlin County USA (1976) American Dream (1990) Unions*

*Shoah* (1986)

Final Paper due on day of Final Exam

**Final Test** as scheduled by I.S.U.

These dates and assignments are tentative. (Thinking people change their minds.)

Communication 350: Documentary Film

Dr. John McHale

Final Paper Assignment

Construct a critical analysis of a documentary or documentaries seen at Foxtail Film Festival Ap. 27-30.

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The paper should be well organized. Please craft an appropriate introduction and conclusion. I would suggest using between 3 and 8 major main points in your paper and developing them with evidence, arguments, and examples.

I would recommend that you consider including factual information from credible sources in your paper. Film reviews written by others could also be useful.

I would think and general discussion of the potential for political impact (and limits on that potential) would be good, although discussion in depth on maybe a few political issues could also be valuable.

Please format the paper according to an accepted set of style guidelines. I prefer APA, but other formats such as MLA or Chicago are acceptable. Most importantly, please be consistent with your use of style guidelines.

Papers must be typed (or word-processed).

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Communication 350: Documentary Film

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