



South Portland, Maine 04106

Academic Department

Title: Introduction to the Documentary

Catalog Number: CNMS 250 01

Credit Hours: 3

Total Contact Hours: 45

Lecture: Lecture & Screening, Synchronously via Zoom

Instructor: Huey Coleman

Office Hours – Location:By appointment, usually before or after class

Contact Information: Email: hcoleman@smccme.edu

Course Syllabus

Introduction to the Documentary, CNMS-250 01

Fall Semester, 2020, Tuesday, 9:30AM - 12:15PM

Meet Synchronously via Zoom

Course Description:

Documentaries are becoming the programming of choice for television networks and cable channels - they are also being used to manipulate, persuade, and entertain us. It is becoming increasingly difficult to tell the difference between fiction or non-fiction movies - how can we tell when we are being fooled? This class will help students develop a critical sense that will make them more discerning viewers of non-fiction films. Using examples from classic documentaries students will learn about the history of documentary filmmaking, what makes them different from other types of films and what gives documentary films their unique voice. Using historical, controversial films, we will discuss how documentaries address the social and political issues of our time and what are some of the ethical dilemmas that face non-fiction filmmakers. At the end of this class students will be able to recognize the films that manipulate and persuade through propaganda and those that deliver a gift of truth to their viewer

Course Objectives

To acquaint the student with a range of documentary styles and filmmakers and explore the definition of the documentary film. To analyze both form and content in a variety of nonfiction films. To explore the tightrope walk a documentary filmmaker takes between fact and opinion, the real and the imagined, in search of telling the truth.

After successfully completing the course, the student will be able to:

To understand the definition of the documentary film.

To be able to discern the multiple roles documentary film plays in society: as an information medium, as a forum for personal opinion, as a vehicle for social justice, and as a cultural statement.

To determine the difference between propaganda and truth telling in a documentary film.

Course Requirements

Weekly assignments include writing critical analysis essays on films watched in class and sometimes additional films seen outside of class. All assignments have readings and quotes and references from the readings or additional readings done on your own must be part of all written assignments. There will be self reflection papers on class discussions and individual projects. There is a midterm paper. The final project is on a topic in the history on documentary film. Please refer to Midterm and a separate Final information sheets posted online.

Written assignments are to be typed and handed in at the start of the following class. Your participation in class is an important component in determining your grade. Each week there will be time devoted to discussion on the subject at hand. In addition each week be prepared to present all or a portion of your assignment to the class.

For this 3 credit class, that equates to 8-10 hours of additional work outside of class, each week. You will have the opportunity to rework your assignments within a set period of time (typically 2 weeks) as long as initial deadlines are met.

Consider the time commitments as you are developing your class schedule alongside your other obligations. Being a full time college student IS a full time job. The quality of your work will reflect the amount of time you put into it. Here is a great resource that can help you with your time management: <http://www.studygs.net/timman.htm>

***Be aware that you must check your SMCC e-mail account weekly for course updates.**

Text, Tools and / or Supplies:

Required Materials:

Text: *Documentary: A History of the Nonfiction Film*, Erik Barnouw

ISBN: 0-19-507898-5

Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction, Pat Aufderheide

ISBN: 978-0-19-518270-5

Office Hours: By appointment.

Student Evaluation & Grading:

- a. Attendance 10%
- b. Class Participation in discussions 15%
- b. Weekly Assignments written and group assignments 40%
- c. Mid-term Project 10%
- d. Final Project 25%

Topical Outline of Instruction

See attached course weekly schedule

Format

Written assignments should be printed on 8.5x11 inch typed page, double spaced in 12 point font, with your name and date due at the top of the page. No discs please. You must keep a copy (digital or paper) of your written assignments and notes for oral presentations for reference use during the semester

Attendance Policy

You are required, as stated in the college handbook, to attend all classes. Attendance means being at all Zoom meetings synchronously on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3PM-PM to 4:15PM. Part of your grade is determined by both your attendance and your active class participation. For all classes you are expected to follow a professional, “real world” approach and attitude; that you show up on time, have your video on (for Zoom meetings), participate and make contributions in class discussions and activities, and complete assigned tasks.

Three consecutive unexcused missed classes will result in an Administrative Failure (AF).

Tardiness

For every two instances of an unexcused late arrival or early departure, the student will receive an absence.

Exemptions

Absences due to medical reasons can be waived if a written note or email from the medical provider is presented to the instructor.

If there are other issues that arise that impose a hardship in meeting the attendance policy, please contact me so we can work out a plan that works best for meeting the learning objectives in the course.

If you need help writing papers please take advantage of SMCC’s Writing Center in the Student Center upstairs across from the Library. You can also visit virtually if you prefer. Here’s the link: <https://smccme.libguides.com/writingcenter>

***A Personal Note**

I want all of you to do well in this class. If you are having problems keeping up with the class and the assignments, please talk to me so we can develop a plan enabling you to make up for past due assignments and class work.

End-of-Course Evaluation

Students complete evaluations for each course attended at SMCC. Evaluations are submitted online and can be accessed through the student portal. Students can access the course evaluations beginning one week before the end of classes. The deadline for submission of evaluations occurs Monday at 5 p.m. following the last day of the class. You will receive an e-mail to your student e-mail account when course evaluations are available.

For Classes with any Face- to -Face Component

While the syllabus represents current plans, there may be changes during the semester in response to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic. Depending on the progression of the virus, it is possible that the College may have to suspend face-to-face instruction for part of the semester. If we must stop face to face instruction anytime during the semester, your instructor will contact you via your SMCC email or the Brightspace course homepage to discuss next steps for the course.

ADA Statement

Southern Maine Community College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution and employer. For more information, please call (207) 741-5798. If you have a disabling condition and wish to request accommodations in order to have reasonable access to the programs and services offered by SMCC, you must register with the Disability Services Coordinator, Sandra Lynham, who can be reached at 741-5923. Further information about services for students with disabilities and the accommodation process is available upon request at this number. Course policies about online testing are modified to suit each individual's accommodations.

Additional Note: SMCC encourages faculty to record online sessions for ADA use and to offer the recordings to students who miss class meetings. I will inform students when online meetings are being recorded.

The Learning Commons:

The library, tutoring and writing centers, and reference/research assistance (typically located on the second floor of South Portland's Campus Center and in the Midcoast's LL Bean Learning Commons and Health Science Center) will be fully available online during the fall 2020 semester.

Here you can find free academic support through individually scheduled and drop in, online tutoring. You can also find information literacy/research librarians, and professional academic strategy/planning mentoring online. While the physical space of the Learning Commons will not be available at this time, we can also work with you to set up zoom classrooms for small group study. Services are offered by appointment or as drop-in assistance.

To access services:

- Visit My Learning in My Maine Guide or
- Select the "tutoring needed" button if it appears inside your Brightspace course.

Whether On Site or Online, students have consistently reported that the Learning Commons is a friendly, risk-free, and helpful place to seek academic support. It has also been shown that those who make use of the Learning Commons do better in a course than those who do not. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this valuable and enjoyable resource.

SMCC Pay-for-Print Policy

Each semester students receive a \$20 printing credit. The balance resets at the end of the semester and any remaining credits are removed. The College's pay-for-print system monitors printing on all printers (including those in general access labs, library printers, Tutoring Services, Campus Center Lounge and technology labs). Be sure to

log OUT of the system when you've finished your printing, to prevent unauthorized access to your account. Students can check the number of pages they have printed by using the Printing Balance tool available on SMCC computers (located in the lower right corner of the screen, near the clock). Departments with work study students who need to print documents for the department should contact the Help Desk at 741-5696 to have a special account set up. To find ways to reduce your printing charges, please go to the IT Help tab on My SMCC. If you have questions about the pay-for-printing policy or your printing charges, please contact the Help Desk at 741-5696 or send an e-mail to helpdesk@smccme.edu

Refunds

Print jobs are eligible for a refund in the event of mechanical or electronic error on the part of the printer, print server, or software used to submit the job. Jobs are not eligible for a refund in cases where the job was not set up correctly, was submitted multiple times, or the student is not satisfied with the result. To request a refund, please bring the offending print to the IT Department in the basement of the Ross Technology Center. Refunds will be granted in the form of a credit to the student's account.

Add-Drop Policy

Students who drop a course during the one-week "add/drop" period in the fall and spring semesters and the first three days of summer sessions receive a 100% refund of the tuition and associated fees for that course. Please note any course that meets for less than the traditional semester length, i.e., 15 weeks, has a pro-rated add/drop period. There is no refund for non-attendance.

Withdrawal Policy

A student may withdraw from a course only during the semester in which s/he is registered for that course. The withdrawal period is the second through twelfth week of the Fall and Spring semesters and the second through ninth week of twelve-week Summer courses. This period is pro-rated for shorter-length courses, usually 75 percent of course meeting times; please check with the Registration Office. To withdraw from a course, a student must complete and submit the appropriate course withdrawal form, available at the Registration Office. This process must be completed either in person or by using SMCC e-mail accounts.

Plagiarism Statement

If an instructor suspects that a student has knowingly committed a violation defined in the Maine Community College System Policy on Student Grade Appeals and Academic Misconduct, the instructor has the authority to review the alleged misconduct and determine the grade that the student should receive for the assignment and the course. The instructor may assign a failing grade for the assignment or course and may require the student to complete additional work for the course. The instructor may consult with the department chair and/or the College's chief academic officer prior to making such decisions. If a student seeks to challenge an instructor's determination, the student should submit a grade appeal. Grade appeal forms are available in the Advising Office on the South Portland Campus or in the administrative offices in the Learning Commons

on the Midcoast Campus. An instructor may also refer the matter to the College's disciplinary officer for review under the procedures of the MCCS Student Code of Conduct

— — — — **Weekly Class Schedule Follows** — — — —

Introduction to the Documentary, CNMS-250 01, Fall Semester 2020
Meets Synchronously via Zoom, Tuesday, 9:30AM - 12:15PM
All Assignments, Announcements, and Resources are available on Brightspace

Check your SMCC e-mail account weekly for course updates.
The syllabus is meant as guideline for the semester's goals and objectives.
Please refer to assignment sheets posted each week for assignments.
This syllabus is subject to change.

September 1

Week 1. Defining the Documentary

Films Shown in Class:

- *Eadweard Muybridge, Lumiere Brothers, Edison, various short films, 1895 - 1915
- *Robert Flaherty, *Nanook of the North*, 79 min., 1922
- *In-class discussion: Course Introduction. Get to know each other exercise. Discuss criteria for the definition of a documentary, an ongoing theme of the course.
- *Written assignment due the following class: Assigned questions handed out by instructor. Three questions with total of 3-4 pages of writing each week. Questions ask for: a critical analysis of the films, a quote from the reading assignment relevant to your essay, and your opinions on the topic.
- *Reading Assignment due the following class: *Documentary: a History of the Nonfiction Film*, Erik Barnouw, pgs 3-51 (stop at "Reporter"). Plus Aufderheide, pg. 25-32
Plus each week optional additional references and readings are listed for student research use.

September 8

Week 2. Storytelling or Truth Telling

- *Sergei Eisenstein, *Potemkin*, 74 min., 1925. (excerpt)
- *Sergei Eisenstein, *October*, 103 min., 1927 (excerpt)
- *Esfir Shub, *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, 101 min., 1927 (excerpt)
- *Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Camera*, 68 min., 1929
- *In-class discussion: Contrast the storytelling brought about through the innovation of editing techniques by Russian filmmakers. Compare and contrast filmmaking styles of Eisenstein, Shub, and Vertov.
- *Written assignment: Assigned questions handed out by instructor.
- *Reading Assignment: Barnouw, pages 51-71 (stop at "Painter"). Plus Aufderheide, pg. 32-44.

September 15

Week 3. Lyricism and Music

- *Alice Guy Blache, a variety of short films, 1898 - 1915
- *Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler, *Manhatta*, 10 min., 1921
- *Fernand Leger, *Ballet Mechanique*, 14 min., 1924 (excerpt),
- *Joris Ivens, *Rain*, 14 min., 1929, (excerpt)
- *Pare Lorentz, *The Plow That Broke The Plains*, 28 min. 1936
- *Leni Riefenstahl, *Olympia*, 204 min., 1938, (excerpts)
- *In-class discussion: Discuss the use of visual composition in the development of the documentary. Discuss the use of sound and music in the films.
- *Written assignment: Assigned questions handed out by instructor.
- *Reading Assignment: Barnouw, pages 74 - 99, also pg 113 - 120

September 22

Week 4. Propaganda or Patriotism

- *Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will*, 120 min., 1935 (excerpts)
- *Frank Capra, *Why We Fight*, series of films, 1942-45 (excerpts)
- *John Ford, *Battle of Midway*, 25 min., 1942
- *Alain Resnais, *Night and Fog*, 31 min., 1955
- *In-class discussion: Discuss what techniques were used to influence the audience. Are we watching propaganda or patriotic films?
- *Written assignment: Assigned questions handed out by instructor.
- *Reading Assignment: Barnouw, pg 100-113, pg 155-166, Aufderheide, pg 65-78

September 29

Week 5. Giving Voice to the Voiceless.

- *Edward R. Murrow, *Harvest of Shame*, 55 min., 1960
- *Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke, Act 2*, 60 min., 2006
- *Or New Film on Racial equality and social justice in America
- *In-class discussion: Compare and contrast the styles of Murrow and Lee (or new film) and how making documentaries changed over the ensuing time span.
- *Written assignment: Assigned questions handed out by instructor.
- *Reading Assignment: Barnouw, pages 213-228. Plus Aufderheide, pg. 60-65.

October 6

Week 6. Politics and Civil Rights.

- *Leo Hurwitz, Paul Strand, *Native Land*, 79 min. 1946, (excerpt),
- *Stanley Nelson, *Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, 115 min., 2015 (excerpt)
- *Henry Hampton, Orlando Bagwell, *Eyes on the Prize*, Part 3, "Ain't Scared of Your Jails, (1960-1961)", 60 min., 1987
- *In-class discussion: Are these films effective in getting across their points of view in their varied approaches to documentary filmmaking? Discuss the use of archival footage with contemporary footage in telling the subject's story.
- *Written assignment: Assigned questions handed out by instructor.
- *Reading Assignment: Aufderheide, pg. 97-106.

October 13 Midterm Assigned Due October 20. Women?

Week 7. Cinéma Vérité

*Robert Drew & Associates, *Primary*, 53 min., 1960 (excerpts)

*Jean Rouch, *Chronicle of a Summer*, 99 min., 1961 (excerpt)

*Frederick Wiseman, *Titicut Follies*, 84 min., 1967 (excerpt)

*Frederick Wiseman, *High School*, 75 min., 1968 (excerpt)

*D.A. Pennebaker, *Dont Look Back*, 96 min., 1966 (excerpts)

*D.A. Pennebaker, *Monterey Pop*, 79 min., 1968 (excerpts)

*Maysles Brothers, *Salesman*, 89 min., 1969 (excerpts)

*Maysles Brothers, *Gimme Shelter*, 91 min., 1970 (excerpts)

*Maysles Brothers, *Grey Gardens*, 100 min., 1975 (excerpts)

*In-class discussion: Discuss how adhering to the cinema vérité style impacts the way these films are made. Is cinema vérité (film truth) style documentaries closer to the truth than other documentaries we have viewed?

*Written assignment: Midterm, Pick one cinema vérité film from the list and answer the assigned questions in a 4 page essay.

*Reading Assignment: Watch and Research your cinema vérité film. Plus Barnouw, pages 235-253. Aufderheide, pg. 44-55.

October 20 - Midterm Due

Week 8. True Fakery

*Orson Welles, *Citizen Kane* 119 min., 1941 (excerpt)

*Orson Welles, *F is for Fake*, 88 min., 1975 (excerpt)

*Banksy, *Exit Through The Gift Shop*, 87 min., 2010

*In-class discussion: How do documentaries balance the objective and the subjective, the real and the imagined. What is the truth as presented in *F is for Fake* compared to Banksy's film made 35 years later. Is this a documentary, a hoax, or a forged work of art along the lines of *F is for Fake*?

*Written assignment: Assigned questions handed out by instructor.

*Reading Assignment: Article on the films.

October 27

Week 9. Powerful Women.

*Nancy Hamilton, *Helen Keller in Her Story*, 55 min., 1954 (excerpts)

*Madeline Anderson, *I Am Somebody*, 30 min., 1970

*Freida Lee Mock, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*, 105 min. 1994 (excerpt)

*Barbara Kopple, *Harlan County USA*, 103 min., 1976 (excerpts)

*Barbara Kopple, *Miss Sharon Jones*, 93 min., 2016

Nancy Hamilton was the first woman to win an Oscar for Best Documentary Feature in 1955. Barbara Kopple won her first Oscar in 1976 for *Harlan County, USA*. In these intimate portraits of people famous and everyday, what is the obligation of the filmmaker to her subjects after the film is finished? How does the making of film on people affect those people? Why did the filmmakers select these people as subjects for their films?

Written assignment: Assigned questions handed out by instructor.

*Reading Assignment: Barnouw, pg 333-339, Aufderheide, pg 125-139

October 29

Week 10. The Personal Film.

*Stan Brakhage, selected short films, 1960-75

*Jonas Mekas, Diary films (excerpts),

*Kirsten Johnson, *Cameraperson*, 102 min., 2016 (excerpts)

*Ralph Arlyck, *Following Sean*, 88 min., 2006

*Or New Film of a personal nature

*In-class discussion: Discuss the filmmaker's personal involvement in these films. How does Arlyck use the biography of Sean and his own life to portray the culture of an era and place and how it changes through time.

*Written assignment: Assigned questions handed out by instructor.

*Reading Assignment: Aufderheide, pg 1-25

November 3

Week 11. Film as Investigative Journalism

*Lionel Rogosin, *On the Bowery*, 65 min., 1956 (excerpt)

*Errol Morris, *Thin Blue Line*, 103min., 1988

*In class discussion: Compare Morris's use of reenactments to Rogosin, Eisenstein, and others. How does Morris's Interrotron influence how interviews appear in the film. Compare Morris's style of filmmaking and use of reenactments to cinema vérité filmmaking.

*Written assignment: Assigned questions. Assigned questions handed out by instructor. Bring in 1-3 ideas for your final paper. The Final Paper is 7-8 pages and is in 2 parts.

Part 1: 5-6 page research paper with critical analysis of your topic in the context of the history of documentary film.

Part 2: 2 page essay on your definition of a documentary film and how it has changed over the course of the semester with references to at least 3 films in the course that impacted your definition of a documentary.

Refer to Brightspace handout on Final Guidelines and Rubric for more details.

*Reading Assignment: Barnouw, pages 231-235,

November 10 Final Project Due December 8

Week 12. Serious Humor, The Films of Michael Moore

Michael Moore, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, 122 min., 2004, (excerpt)

Michael Moore, *Where to Invade Next*, 120 min., 2015, (excerpt)

Michael Moore, *Bowling for Columbine*, 120 min., 2002

*In class discussion: How does Moore use satire and humor in his films in telling the story of his subjects? Is this his opinion or is he telling the truth or both?

*Written assignment: Part 1: This is the last weekly assignment required. Future weeks are optional assignments for extra credit.

Part 2: Write a 1/2-1 page thesis statement on your Final Project. With the 3 films you will watch and 3 research sources (see list of qualifying research sources).

*Reading Assignment: Research for your final.

November 17

Week 13. Life on the Streets

*Steve James, *Hoop Dreams*, 171 min., 1994 (excerpt),

*Steve James, *The Interrupters*, 125 min., 2011

How does James combine cinema vérité with interviews to tell the story of the Interrupters and the people portrayed.

*Written assignment: Optional assignment done for extra credit. Continue work on your final paper.

*Reading Assignment: Research on your final

November 24

Week 14. More Life on the Streets

Bing Liu, *Minding the Gap*, 93 min., 2018 (excerpt)

Damon Davis, Sabaah Folayan, *Whose Streets: An Unflinching Look at the Ferguson Uprising*, 102 min. 2017

Compare and contrast *Whose Streets* to Steve James's approach to documenting life on the streets.

*Written assignment: Last optional assignment done for extra credit. Continue work on your final paper

*Reading Assignment: Research on your final

December 1 Final Assignment DUE December 8

Week 15. History of a Movement in a Biography

RaMell Ross, *Hale County This Morning This Evening*, 76 min., 2018 (excerpt)

Ava Duvernay, *13th*, 100 minutes, 2016

Or

Raoul Peck, *I am Not Your Negro*, 94 min., 2016

How does Peck present the life of James Baldwin in discussing the treatment of black people then and now? OR How does Duvernay present the 13th amendment and its impact on life for black Americans when passed and now? How has racial equality changed over the time span presented in the films?

*Written assignment: Continue work on your final paper

*Reading Assignment: Research on your final

December 8 - Final Paper is Due

Week 16: A Portrait of the Artist

Chris Marker, *Sans Soleil (Sunless)*, 104 minutes, 1983 (excerpt)

Agnes Varda, *The Beaches of Agnes*, 108 minutes, 2009 (excerpt)

Agnes Varda and JR, *Faces Places*, 89 min., 2017

Varda was 88 and JR was 34 years old when they made *Faces and Places*, which turned out to be Varda's last film. Her career went from 1954 to 2017. Discuss how she approaches documentary film compared to films watched in the class.

No Assignment

December 15 - Last Class

Week 16. A Legend in Our Time

Dawn Porter, *John Lewis: Good Trouble*, 96 min., 2020

In class discussion: Compare this recent film to others seen this semester. Will it stand the test of time and become a landmark documentary. Is that due to the filmmaker's interpretation of the subject or the subject himself? Hand back finals. Course wrap up.