EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION

FILM AND VIDEO
School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design
Department of Cinema and Media Arts

FA / FILM 3310 3.0 SECTION A
STUDIES IN THE DOCUMENTARY
FALL 2019 / WINTER 2020

Last Modified Date: 09/12/2019

COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Explores the creative interpretation of actuality in film, from Flaherty to the present day. A study of changing forms, techniques and theories of documentary. Prerequisites: FA/FILM 1400 6.00 or FA/FILM 2401 6.00 or permission of the Film Department. Explores the creative interpretation of actuality in film, from Flaherty to the present day. A study of changing forms, techniques and theories of documentary. Prerequisites: FA/FILM1400 6.0 or FA/FILM2401 6.0 or permission of the course director.

INSTRUCTOR(S)

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Section / Format / Term</th>
<th>Contact Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evans, Barbara</td>
<td>Sec. A / LECT / F</td>
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SPECIAL FEATURES

Expanded Course Description

Studies in the Documentary offers an historical overview of documentary film and video, frequently highlighting Canadian documentary within a wider international social and political context. Although in general the course is structured chronologically, we will frequently move back and forth through time and across borders in order to situate the documentaries under scrutiny in relation to broader movements and influences. In the course of our study, we will look at films which have had a catalyzing effect on documentary film and video making, some of them established ‘classics’ and others influential but less well known. We will look at early social documentaries, examples of cinéma-vérité and direct cinema along with, for example, more recent personal, reflexive and activist modes of documentary filmmaking. We will also consider the implications of documentary films that have moved into the broadcasting, theatrical and gallery locales.

Classes will include lectures, discussions of screenings of short and feature-length documentaries as well as excerpts from relevant films and videos to provide further examples and give a wider context to the films under discussion.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

(Full details will be found on the course website under the topic ‘Class Schedule’.)

Sept 5 - Week 1 Beginnings/Explorations
A look at early documentary filmmaking and contemporary examples

Sept 12 - Week 2 – Ethnography on Film
An overview of ethnographic films and practices

**Sept 19 - Week 3 – The Filmmaker as Poet; The Filmmaker as Advocate**
Documentary filmmakers take sides

**Sept 26 - Week 4 – The British Are Coming: Expository and Other Modes**
Focusing on the influence of John Grierson in the UK and abroad.

**Oct 3 – Week 5 - The Camera Observes**
A look at observational cinema, direct cinema and cinéma direct

**Oct 10 – Week 6 – The National Film Board of Canada**
A discussion of the changing faces of the NFB, established in 1939 by John Grierson

**Oct 17 – Reading Week**

**Oct 24 – Week 7 – The Filmmaker Intervenes/Cinéma Vérité and the Documentary Film**, Jay Ruby, pp.64-77

**Oct 31 - Week 8 – Towards More Diverse Documentaries**
Filmmakers representing themselves

**Nov 7 - Week 9 – Personal Cinema**
The personal point of view

**Nov 14 - Week 10 - Recent Trends in Documentaries**

**Nov 21 – Week 11 – Activist Cinema**

**Nov 28 - Week 12 – History on Film – The Archival Project/Student Screenings**

- **Course Texts**
- **Required Reading:**

Various selected chapters and articles

Any other material posted online

*Recommended (many of these will be useful for your presentations):*


LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF

1. **Statement of purpose**
   The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of the historical development of documentary film, to encourage historical research in documentary, to understand the historical, political, social and cultural contexts in which the films were made, to develop a historical understanding and critical overview of the social, economic and aesthetic conditions which have informed the development of documentary practice. Students will be familiar with a wide variety of aesthetic approaches and be able to critically analyze the historical developments, from the hand-cranked celluloid past to the digital present and to compare and contrast various documentary modes. Students will be able to discuss the major theoretical issues and arguments surrounding documentary film.

2. **Specific learning objectives**
   At the end of the course, students will have developed:
   1. An enhanced overall understanding of the various aspects of documentary filmmaking.
   2. Enhanced skills in researching documentary films.
   3. A broad overview of the historical developments surrounding documentary film.
   4. Knowledge of some of the key theoretical and critical issues of documentary film.
   5. Familiarity with a range of key Canadian and international documentary films, both contemporary and historical.
   6. An increased ability to discuss and write about key issues and aesthetic approaches in documentary film.
   7. An increased understanding some of the key contemporary issues and arguments surrounding documentary film.

**GRADED ASSESSMENT**

**Assignments and Due Dates**

- **Assignment 1**
  
  **In-class presentation**
  Prepare a short programme note (one page) to introduce one of the films or excerpts being screened. These should be posted to the website no later than 12 midnight on the night prior to the class. Notes should include background information on the film being screened, quotations from reviews and articles, etc. You should also research and discuss the historical, political, social and economic context in which the film was produced. Sign up sheets will be available.
  *Due on the assigned date*

- **Assignment 2**
  
  **Essay**
  Prepare a paper of 1500 to 2000 words which compares two or more films (one or more or which should have been screened in class). More complete assignment details will be made available.
  *Due on October 10th*
Assignment 3

Documentary assignment
In groups of four people, prepare a proposal and a short video (no longer than 5 minutes in length) which illustrates one of the documentary modes discussed in the course. (You may also do a short documentary on a subject to be assigned.) Due on November 28th

Final exam
The final exam will be an essay-based take-home exam. Details will be circulated on April 1st. Due on December 5th

Attendance and Participation
Attendance and participation in classes are essential for the successful completion of the course requirements. Much goes on in class that cannot be repeated and that requires your participation. Staying away to work on your film or on an upper-year project is not a valid excuse for missing class and you will be marked as absent. Participation in critique sessions is essential and an important part of your film education. Class begins promptly at 2:30 so plan to arrive a few minutes early. Late arrival is disruptive, and arriving late while “touching up” your presentation for class is unacceptable. Handing in your assignment late will result in the lowering of your grade as indicated below unless medical documentation is submitted. It is unacceptable to miss class because you are working on a production from another class.

Tips for Writing Essays on Documentary Films
1) Remember that your essays should be analytical, not merely descriptive.

2) Don’t slavishly follow other theoretical writings on the film(s) you are discussing. You should seek to develop your own interpretations, which may or may not be underpinned by previous theoretical writings.

3) You will be expected to view a number of related films in order to develop and contextualize your argument.

4) Remember that you are not writing chiefly about your own particular likes or dislikes, although these may be stated. You should be striving to analyze the meaning conveyed by elements of the film which go beyond your personal opinion, although this of course will enter into your argument. Make sure perspectives are differentiated.

5) Your essays must be submitted to the class website (Moodle). Remember to include a cover page with a title, your name and student number, the title of the course and the name of the course director. Make sure all pages are numbered. Essays should be double-spaced which will allow 250 to 300 words per page. All margins should be at least one-inch wide.

6) You will be expected to review a number of texts and journals as sources for your writing, not just the required text(s). Properly cited references are essential. Please refer to the Chicago Manual of Style or other scholarly-accepted formats.

7) As well as film texts and journals, you are encouraged to seek out texts and journals in related areas of study, such as history, feminism, race, representation and ethnography.

Evaluation and Grade Distribution
Assignment 1 15%
The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York.

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<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Per Cent Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>Competent</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>Fairly competent</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>Passing</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>Marginally Passing</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(marginally below 50%)</td>
<td>Marginally Failing</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Below 50%</td>
<td>Failing</td>
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Assignment Submission Guidelines:
In accordance with professional practice, proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but also on time and collaboratively. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment.

All written submissions must be typed, double spaced and properly identified with a title page that indicates your name, student number, course number and title, assignment topic and date. Email submissions will not be accepted without the permission of the course director.

Assignment Deadlines and Lateness Penalty:
All deadlines will be announced in class and on the class website. There will be intermediate stage deadlines for rushes and rough cuts and final deadlines for fine cuts for all projects. Deadlines should be considered as absolute, and grade penalties will apply for lateness. Normally deductions are a half grade for missing an intermediate deadline, (e.g. B+ to B) and a full grade per week (e.g. B+ to C+) for missing a completed project deadline. No assignments will be accepted three weeks after the due date. Exceptions to the lateness penalties for valid reasons such as illness or compassionate grounds will require supporting documentation (e.g. a doctor's note).

Equipment Borrowing Privileges, Insurance and Crewing Rules
No production equipment may be borrowed from the Studio.

Retention of Course Work
Students are advised to retain all course work for one academic year for their own protection. This will ensure that should there be any discrepancies regarding grades or any academic honesty issues you will be
able to provide copies of your work.

**Email Policy**

Please reserve e-mail for making appointments and for asking brief questions. The course director will endeavour to answer e-mails as promptly as possible but please allow one week for a response. Substantive discussion about course material and assignments should occur during office hours.

Last date to drop a winter term (W) course without receiving a grade: November 8th, 201.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Academic Policies / Information**

The Senate Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy (ASCP) provides a Student Information Sheet that includes:

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures / Academic Integrity Web site
- Access/Disability
- Ethics Review Process for Research Involving Human Participants
- Religious Observance Accommodation
- Student Code of Conduct

**Additional information:**

- Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
- Alternate Exam and Test Scheduling
- Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy

The Senate Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy stipulates that (a) the grading scheme (i.e. kinds and weights of assignments, essays, exams, etc.) be announced, and be available in writing, within the first two weeks of class, and that, (b) under normal circumstances, graded feedback worth at least 15% of the final grade for Fall, Winter or Summer Term, and 30% for ‘full year’ courses offered in the Fall/Winter Term be received by students in all courses prior to the final withdrawal date from a course without receiving a grade.

- Important University Sessional Dates: you will find classes and exams start/end dates, reading/co-curricular week, add/drop deadlines, holidays, University closings and more at http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/index.htm
- "20% Rule"

No examinations or tests collectively worth more than 20% of the final grade in a course will be given during the final 14 calendar days of classes in a term. The exceptions to the rule are classes which regularly meet Friday evenings or on Saturday and/or Sunday at any time, and courses offered in the compressed summer terms.

Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Program or Faculty grades distribution profiles.

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Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.

**Moodle @ York University**