Course Description:

The course will explore the history of the documentary film, with special emphasis on those works that have clearly defined the major philosophical and stylistic approaches to the genre.

In this context, we will examine the filmmaker’s relationship to subject matter, audiences and funding entities. We will also discuss the relationship between form and content, as well as ethical issues raised by the filmmaker’s purpose and method.

Course Objectives

1. To acquaint students with the history of an important form of communication.

2. To point out key developments during the evolution of the form.

3. To place the films in an socio-political-economic context as appropriate.

4. To develop the knowledge and the perspective necessary to become more sophisticated viewers, researchers and practitioners of the form.

Required Readings:


Other materials distributed in class become part of the required readings. Please place them in a notebook or folder. Additional resources may be placed on Blackboard as well.

You will also be expected to do additional reading for your research papers from materials on reserve at Willis Library. Most of the documentaries will also be placed on reserve following the class screening in the UNT Media Library.
Please: Turn all cell phones, laptops and other devices off during class sessions, as their use would be distracting to other students, especially given the design of this classroom.

Do not converse with your neighbor(s) during lectures, discussions or films.

Assignments:

1. One take home midterm examination covering the screenings, readings and lectures through September 28. (Due Oct. 5)

2. One 3-4-page research paper on a documentary screened in class that was produced before 1970. (Due October 26)

3. One 3-4-page research paper on a documentary screened in class that was produced after 1970. (Due December 7)

4. A take home final examination covering the screenings, readings and lectures from October 5 through December 7. (Due December 14)

We will be using Turnitin for these assignments with further instructions to follow.

Grades:

Each assignment will count for 25% of the final grade. The grades for each be computed numerically as follows:

90 - 100  A
80 - 89   B
70 - 79   C
60 - 69   D
00 - 59   F

For each day an examination is turned in late, 5 points will be deducted from the grade for that assignment. For each day a research paper is late, 3 points will be deducted from the grade.

Our Teaching Assistant is Jessica Hoover: JessicaHoover@my.unt.edu

If you have questions regarding a grade, please contact her directly. If you are not able to resolve the issue, make an appointment with me to discuss the situation.

Since this class only meets once a week, one session is the equivalent of 2 normal class meetings. For each unexcused absence, three points will be deducted from the final grade. If you miss half of a class, that will count as 1/2 an absence. Do not leave after the break. We will take attendance again if people leave.
If you arrive late please enter through the 2nd floor doors at the rear of the room. Please leave the first three rows and the back row empty.

We will use a roll sheet that requires your signature next to your name. If you sign for someone else (in their absence) the penalty will be equal to cheating on an exam, and both parties would face serious penalties, starting with a grade of “F” in this class.

This is a 4000 level course and we expect professional behavior on the part of all students. If any personal or medical problem might prevent your attendance, communicate with us about that.

Any student not attending the first day of class may be dropped by the professor to make room for students who are present and need the course. If you decide to drop the class during the semester, be sure to observe the university’s policies regarding deadlines for this process.

The schedules for screenings, lectures and due dates are subject to revision.

Note: There may be content and/or language in selected films that could offend some viewers. Documentaries are about life, and some things in life are not pleasant.

IMPORTANT: The Students Perception of Teaching (SPOT) evaluation is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you with a chance comment on your experience in the classroom. I consider the SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class.

UNT Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism. Use of another’s thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student’s intent, including but not limited to:

1. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation.

2. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in selling term papers or other academic materials.

Where this class is concerned any act of plagiarism will minimally result in a grade of “F” and more severe penalties are possible, including expulsion form the university.

For details on the UNT policy: http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm
UNT ODA Statement:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course.

You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at [http://www.unt.edu/oda](http://www.unt.edu/oda). You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.
Week 1 (8/31) DOCUMENTARY ORIGINS

EARLY AMERICAN EXAMPLES (1893-1894)

LUMIERE FILMS (1895-97)

LUMIERE AND COMPANY (1995) Sarah Moon (Excerpts)

McLane: “Some Ways to Think About Documentary” 1-19

Corner and Rosenthal: 1-13

ADDITIONAL SELECTED CLIPS

Week 2 (9/7) SEMINAL WORKS OF THE 1920’S

NANOOK OF THE NORTH (1922) Robert Flaherty

McLane: “The Work of Robert and Francis Flaherty” 21-40

MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA (1929) Dziga Vertov

McLane: “The Soviets and Political Indoctrination, 1922-1929” 41-56

McLane: “McLane: “The European Avant-Garde Experimentation, 1922-1929” 57-71

Week 3 (9/14) THE GRIERSON TRADITION

GRIERSON (1973) Roger Blais NFBC (Excerpt)

SONG OF CEYLON (1934) Basil Wright

McLane: “Institutionalization: Great Britain, 1929-1939” 73-92

NIGHT MAIL (1936) Basil Wright and Harry Watt

Corner and Rosenthal: 48-58
Week 4 (9/21) **ART AND PROPAGANDA**

TRIUMPH OF THE WILL (1935) Leni Riefenstahl (Excerpts)

OLYMPIA (1938) Leni Riefenstahl (Excerpts)


Corner and Rosenthal: 209-219

Week 5 (9/28) **SOCIAL ISSUES AND THE NEW DEAL**

THE RIVER (1937) Pare Lorentz

McLane: “Institutionalization: United States 1930-1941” 93--115

THE SPANISH EARTH (1937) Joris Ivens (Excerpts)

THE CITY (1939) Willard Van Dyke and Ralph Steiner (Excerpt)

Corner and Rosenthal: 397-408

*****Distribution of the Midterm Due at the Beginning of Class 10/5*****

Week 6 (10/5) **REPORTING WORLD WAR TWO**

LISTEN TO BRITAIN (1942) Humphrey Jennings

McLane: “WWII: Great Britain” 1939-1945” 117-130

McLane: “WWII: Canada” 130-157 1939-1945” 130-137

WHY WE FIGHT SERIES (1942-45) Frank Capra (Excerpts)

McLane: “WWII: United States, 1941-1945” 137-157

THE BATTLE OF SAN PIETRO (1945) John Huston
Week 7 (10/12)  POST WAR DOCUMENTARIES

LOUISIANA STORY (1948) Robert Flaherty (Excerpt)

McLane: “Post-War Documentary, 1945-1961” 159-183.

PAUL TOMKOWICZ: RAILWAY SWITCHMAN (1954)

Corner and Rosenthal: 79-93

NIGHT AND FOG (1955) Alain Resnais

Week 8 (10/19) DOCUMENTARY AND TELEVISION

SEE IT NOW (1953-1958) Edward R. Murrow and Fred Friendly (Excerpts)

McLane: “Documentary for Television, the ‘Golden Years, 1951-71 185-201

GOOD NIGHT AND GOOD LUCK (2005) George Clooney (Excerpt)


McLane: “British Free Cinema and New American Cinems, 1953-1960” 203-217

Week 9 (10/26) THE WORK OF FREDERICK WISEMAN

HIGH SCHOOL (1968) Frederick Wiseman

McLane: Cinéma Vérité, direct cinema 1958-1970” 219-241

Corner and Rosenthal: 194-208

YOU SEE . . . I’VE HAD A LIFE (1972) Ben Levin

*****Research Paper #1 Due 10/26 at the Beginning of Class*****

Week 10 (11/2) FILMS BY AND ABOUT WOMEN

NANA, MOM AND ME (1974) Amalie Rothschild
HARLAN COUNTY U.S.A. (1976) Barbara Kopple

McLane: “The 1970’s: Power to the People” 243-270
Corner and Rosenthal: 150-166

Week 11 (11/9) IMPORTANT WORKS OF THE 1980’S

ROGER AND ME (1989) Michael Moore

Corner and Rosenthal: 59-75; 253-259

SHERMAN’S MARCH (1985) Ross McAlwee (Excerpts)

McLane: “Video Arrives” 271-300

Week 12 (11/16) CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE DOCUMENTARY

FOUR LITTLE GIRLS (1997) Spike Lee

McLane: “Reality Bytes” 301-329
Corner and Rosenthal: 121-127

Week 13 (11/23) THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY (No Class)

Week 14 (11/30) THE VIET NAM WAR AND THE DOCUMENTARY

LITTLE DIETER NEEDS TO FLY (2001) Werner Herzog

Corner and Rosenthal: 409-418

McLane: “The Documentary Tradition in the Twenty-First Century” 331-362

RESCUE DAWN (2006) Werner Herzog (Excerpts)

McLane: “Now and When” 363-390

Week 15 (12/7) CONTEMPORARY TELEVISION AND THE DOCUMENTARY TRADITION
AMERICAN HIGH (2001) R.J. Cutler
Corner and Rosenthal: 327-341
McLane: “Appendices” 391-405

MAN ON WIRE (2008) James Marsh

***** Research Paper #2 Due 12/7 at the Beginning of Class *****

Distribution of the Final Examination

Week 16 (12/14)

###### Final Examination Due by 1:00 p.m. ######

NOTE: THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO REVISION