COM 321--Documentary Form in Film, Television, & Interactive Media

Dr. Kim Neuendorf               Spring 2016
Office: MU 253, 687-3994          Class: MU 107, 2:00-3:15 pm Tu. & Thur.
Office hrs.: Wed. 1:30-4:30 pm, Thur. 11:30 am-1:30 pm, and by appointment
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Course Objectives
This course will explore the history, aesthetics, theory, and production of nonfiction film/video/television from its inception through the present. The various functions of the documentary will be examined--as ethnography, as tool for social change, as political propaganda, as art, as entertainment, as parody, and as commercial enterprise. International perspectives will be considered, as will issues of form, reality, and objectivity. Major figures to be studied include Robert Flaherty, John Grierson, Leni Riefenstahl, and Dziga Vertov from the 1920s and 1930s, the core documentarists of the 1950s-1970s including Frederick Wiseman, D. A. Pennebaker, Richard Leacock, and the Maysles brothers and their associates, groundbreaking documentarists of the 1980s onward, such as Errol Morris, Michael Moore, Agnes Varda, Ken Burns, Werner Herzog, Barbara Kopple, and Marlon Riggs, and more contemporary practitioners such as Morgan Spurlock, Steve James, Seth Gordon, and James Marsh, and Cleveland’s own Shawn Rech and Brandon Kimber.

Accommodation
Educational access is the provision of classroom accommodations, auxiliary aids and services to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their disability. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services at (216) 687-2015. The Office is located in MC 147. Accommodations need to be requested in advance and will not be granted retroactively.

Screenings
About half the class time will be devoted to screenings of full documentaries and clips. These viewings constitute PRIMARY TEXTS, not just entertainment. You will be required to think--seriously and critically--about what you are seeing and hearing. In short, an active (rather than passive) viewing is required. The exams will cover the screenings, the lectures and discussions, and the readings. Additionally, the instructor will assign out-of-class viewings as requirements.

Books and Readings
Required:

Recommended:

Additional short readings will be posted on the class web site; they are only recommended unless announced otherwise.
Handouts & Website
Handouts and other required readings will be distributed to the class as the quarter progresses. Most materials will be posted on the class website: http://academic.csuohio.edu/kneuendorf (click on Spring 2016 → COM 321).

Screening and Class Rules
1. Documentary screenings may last longer than our class time. Nevertheless, you are expected to see THE ENTIRE DOCUMENTARY, and may be tested especially on the beginning and the end, since these are often important parts of the material. Running times are typically listed in the course outline. Please be aware that most class periods will include some clips (excerpts) from films or television programs that will be difficult to make up.

2. Each individual has a right to his/her own personal emotional response to a film or video. But remember that you are seeing these documentaries in a classroom, not in your own home, nor in a movie theater. Therefore, students who publicly impose their inappropriate responses (whispering, open comments, cheers, boos, etc.) upon the other students in the class will be penalized through point deductions and/or being dropped/expelled from the class. However, laughter is an appropriate response to comedic material, and is encouraged.

Grading
Grading is based on two take-home exams, one short viewing assignment, one research paper of moderate length (5-7 pages) OR original short documentary, and various class activities (to be announced).

1. The exams will be short essay in form. Both will be take-home. You will be given the exam questions one week prior to each exam’s due date.

2. There will be one short written viewing assignment (approx. 2-3 pages) that requires you to view a documentary related to your current or future occupation. It is due during the fifth week of the term. More information on this viewing assignment will be distributed in a separate handout.

3. Each student should complete a paper or short documentary.
   The paper will require some research/library work and some viewing outside of class. The paper will be described in greater detail in a handout. You need to hand in a short proposal in the sixth week of the term. The paper will require several serious sources and individual viewing of 2-3 documentaries. I strongly encourage “pre-writes”— given a couple days, I’ll look over early drafts of your paper and provide feedback. You may write additional drafts of the paper as often as you wish up until the due date.
   OR
   The short documentary may replace the paper requirement. A proposal that clearly outlines the plan for the documentary must be submitted by the sixth week of classes. If you do not have the prerequisite course(s) for the use of School of Communication equipment (e.g., COM 204), then you must use your own equipment for the documentary. Also, you must be prepared to show your documentary to the class by the last day of classes.

4. The major COM 321 class activities will be related to the CSU/CIFF Filmmaker Panels to be held on the last Saturday of the Cleveland International Film Festival. These panels have been held annually since 2008, and are an exciting way to network with filmmakers from around the country and the world. Class members’ participation will likely include some subset or combination of: (a) Helping staff the Filmmaker Panels on April 9 (to be held in MU 107 on the CSU campus); (b) shooting/editing
documentary footage of the Panels or related Festival activities; (c) serving as a researcher for the panel discussions, providing moderators with info about the films and filmmakers or possibly creating brief PowerPoint introductions to the filmmakers.

Other class activities may include a couple of brief in-class experiences that may require a small amount of preparation (e.g., preparing questions for a guest speaker). Other activities are possible.

Your instructor reserves the right to change assignments as may become necessary--e.g., require other small assignments (including quizzes) that may replace a portion of one of these assignments. And, you may be asked to attend additional screenings at the Cleveland Institute of Art Cinematheque, Cleveland Museum of Art, or other theaters, OR to watch assigned documentaries on video.

Each assignment is worth the following:

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<td>Final exam</td>
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<td>Viewing Assignment</td>
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<td>Paper or Documentary</td>
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<td>Class activities</td>
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100%

Extra Credit Opportunities
Extra credit opportunities can add points to your course grade. You may not receive more than 10 percentage points total in extra credit for the course. The nature of the extra credit will be described in detail in a handout; generally, you may gain extra credit by viewing certain approved documentaries outside of class, and completing written analyses as specified. Such documentaries may be found at libraries, from Netflix, or shown at the Cinematheque, the Cleveland Museum of Art, or elsewhere. See the separate handout for details.

Incompletes
University rules indicate that "a grade of Incomplete is given only by prior arrangement with the instructor and only when a course requirement is unfulfilled through no fault of the student." In all cases where there is a problem, talk to the instructor as soon as possible--an early good-faith effort is likely to be rewarded. After-the-fact pleas will be viewed in a much more negative light.

Attendance
Attendance will be taken during each class period via a sign-in sheet. Three absences are allowed without penalty. Subsequent absences will result in a loss of points from the class activities portion of the grade: -3% for each absence. And, you are responsible for all lecture material, documentary content, clips shown in class, handouts, announcements, changes in assignments, etc.--in short, for everything that happens in class. Dr. N will not be held responsible for repeating lecture material outside of class, and there will be no "makeup" viewing of materials viewed in class (documentaries, film clips). And, while many of the documentaries for the class are available for rental on video, or may be found on YouTube, they may be in a somewhat different form, and you are responsible for seeing each documentary as shown in class.

Cheating
Cheating in any form will not be tolerated. This includes plagiarism (copying from a source without careful attribution), copying from another student’s assignment (all instances of identical and near-identical answers will be suspect), talking with others during an in-class exam, obtaining copies of an exam prior
to the test date, etc. Please refer to the CSU student handbook for the university’s official stance. If you have any questions about this subject (e.g., how to adequately attribute source in a paper), feel free to speak with me. Any student caught cheating will receive a grade of “zero” for that exam/assignment and risks failing the entire course.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE (1/18/16 version)

NOTE: “Doc” refers to key films and television programming that fit the topic(s) of the week--many will be shown in class (in whole or in part), some will be assigned for out-of-class viewing, and some will simply be recommended. This will be announced as the term progresses. “Clips” indicates that only selected portions of the documentary have been selected for in-class viewing. * - Indicates that viewing is to be done online and outside of class, with links provided on the class web site.

Week 1
Jan. 19 →
**Defining the Documentary; Barnouw’s Prophet; Hale’s Tours**
Read: Barnouw Ch. 1, #1-“Prophet,” pp. 1-30
Read: Barnouw Ch. 2, #2-“Explorer,” pp. 31-51
Doc: *Genius of Photography: Fixing the Shadows* (David Byrne, U.K., 2007, 45 min.)
*Doc: Actualities by the Lumieres and others; some are Hale’s films also*

Week 2
Jan. 26 →
**Barnouw’s Explorer; Barnouw’s Reporter**
Read: Barnouw Ch. 2, #3-“Reporter,” pp. 51-71
Clips: *Que Viva Mexico!* (Grigori Aleksandrov & Sergei Eisenstein, U.S./Mexico, 1932)
Doc: *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, U.S., 1922, 79 min.)
Doc: *Flaherty and Film* (U.S., 8 min.)
Doc: *Eight Prohibition Newsreels* (U.S., 1923-33, 13 min.)
*Doc: The Man with the Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, Soviet Union, 1929, 68 min.)

Week 3
Feb. 2 →
**Barnouw’s Painter**
Read: Barnouw Ch. 2, #4-“Painter,” pp. 71-82
Doc: *Racing Symphony* (Hans Richter, Germany, 1928, 5 min.)
Doc: *Rain (Regen)* (Joris Ivens, Netherlands, 1929, 14 min.)
Doc: *A Propos de Nice* (Jean Vigo, France, 1929, 23 min.)
Doc: *Le Vampire* (Jean Painleve, France, 1939, 8 min.)
*Doc: Manhatta* (Charles Sheeler & Paul Strand, U.S., 1921, 12 min.)
*Doc: Berlin, Symphony of a [Great] City* (Walter Ruttmann, Germany, 1927, 61 min.)

Week 4
Feb. 9 →
**Barnouw’s Advocate**
Read: Barnouw Ch. 3, #5-“Advocate,” pp. 83-139
Clips: *Song of Ceylon* (Basil Wright, U.K., 1934)
Doc: *Las Hurdes/Land Without Bread* (Luis Bunuel, Spain, 1932, 27 min.)
*Doc: The Spanish Earth* (Joris Ivens, U.S., 1937, 54 min.)
*Doc: Industrial Britain* (Arthur Elton, Robert Flaherty, & Basil Wright, U.K., 1933, 21 min.)
*Doc: 50 Documentaries to See Before You Die, Part 3* (Tom Barbor-Might, U.S., 2011,
Week 5

Feb. 16 →

**Barnouw’s Bugler**

**Read:** Barnouw Ch. 3, #6-“Bugler,” pp. 139-172

**Clips:** *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* (Ray Muller, France/Germany/U.K./Belgium, 1993)

**Doc:** *Listen to Britain* (Humphrey Jennings, Britain, 1942, 19 min.)

*Doc: *Why We Fight—The Nazis Strike* (Frank Capra, U.S., 1943, 42 min.)


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Week 6

Feb. 23 →

**Barnouw’s Prosecutor**

**Read:** Barnouw Ch. 3, #7-“Prosecutor,” pp. 172-183

**Doc:** *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, France, 1955, 32 min.)


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Week 7

Mar. 1 →

**Barnouw’s Poet; Barnouw’s Chronicler**

**Read:** Barnouw Ch. 4, #8-“Poet” and #9-“Chronicler,” pp. 183-213

**Clips:** *Henri Langlois: The Phantom of the Cinematheque* (Jacques Richard, France, 2004)

**Doc:** *Glas* (Bert Haanstra, The Netherlands, 1958, 10 min.)

**Doc:** *Neighbours* (Norman McLaren, Canada, 1952, 8 min.)

**Doc:** *Fantastic Female Filmmakers* (Mickey Peters, U.S., 2012, 30 min.)

**Doc:** *These Amazing Shadows* (Paul Mariano & Kurt Norton, U.S., 2011, 88 min.)

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Week 8

Mar. 8 →

**Barnouw’s Promoter**

**Read:** Barnouw Ch. 4, #10-“Promoter,” pp. 213-228

**Clips:** *The McCarthy Years* (Edward R. Murrow, U.S., 1953-54)

*Doc: *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (Pare Lorentz, U.S., 1936, 25 min.)

*Doc: *Harvest of Shame* (Fred Friendly, U.S., 1960, 55 min.)

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**MIDTERM EXAM**

Due Thur., Mar. 10, in class

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**SPRING BREAK**

Mar. 14-18

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Week 9

Mar. 22 →

**Barnouw’s Observer; The Rockumentary**

**Read:** Barnouw Ch. 5, #11-“Observer,” pp. 229-253


**Doc:** *Blood of the Beasts* (Georges Franju, France, 1949, 20 min.)

**Doc:** *Titicut Follies* (Frederick Wiseman, U.S., 1967, 84 min.)

**Doc:** *Grey Gardens* (Ellen Hoyde, Albert Maysles, David Maysles, & Muffie Meyer, U.S., 1975, 95 min.)

Week 10
Mar. 29 — Documentary Techniques
Clips: The “Documentary Techniques Parts 1 and 2” clips collection (see handouts)
Clips: Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary (Pepita Ferrari, Canada, 2009, 90 min.)
Doc: A Brief History of Errol Morris (Kevin Macdonald, U.S., 2000, 48 min.)
*Doc: The Last Angel of History (John Akomfrah, Britain, 1996, 45 min.)
*Doc: Koyaanisqatsi (Godfrey Reggio, U.S., 1983, 87 min.)

CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL at Tower City Cinemas Mar. 30-Apr. 10

Week 11
Ap. 5 — Barnouw’s Catalyst
Read: Barnouw Ch. 5, #12—“Catalyst,” pp. 253-262
Clips: Chronicle of a Summer (Jean Rouch & Edgar Morin, France, 1961)
Doc: The Thin Blue Line (Errol Morris, U.S., 1988, 103 min.)
*Doc: Doc on Chris Marker (10 min.)

CSU/CIFF FILMMAKER PANELS at CSU (MU 107) Ap. 9

Week 12
Ap. 12 — Barnouw’s Guerrilla
Read: Barnouw Ch. 5, #13—“Guerrilla,” pp. 262-294
Clips: Sad Song of Yellow Skin (Michael Rubbo, Canada, 1970)
Doc: Warsaw 56 (Jerzy Bossak, Poland, 1956, 7 min.)
Doc: The Act of Seeing with One’s Own Eyes (Stan Brakhage, U.S., 1971, 32 min.)

Week 13
Ap. 19 — Barnouw’s Movement; Global Symphony Documentaries
Read: Barnouw Ch. 6, #14—“Movement,” pp. 295-350
Doc: A Michael Moore film, TBA
Doc: Tongues Untied (Marlon Riggs, U.S., 1989, 55 min.)

Week 14
Ap. 26 — Humor and the Documentary: Found Humor, Parody, the “Mockumentary”
Read: Grant & Sloniowski, Ch. 20, pp. 339-355 (Plantinga on Rob Reiner’s This is Spinal Tap)
Read: Grant & Sloniowski, Ch. 31, pp. 522-541 (Torchin on Larry Charles’ Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan)
Clips: From the works of Robert Benchley; East Side Story (Dana Ranga, France/Germany, 1997); The Aristocrats (Penn Gillette & Paul Provenza, U.S., 2005); F for Fake (Orson Welles, France, 1974)
Doc: This is Spinal Tap (Rob Reiner, U.S., 1984, 82 min.) or other mockumentary
Doc: Uncle Ernie’s True Adventure Trail (Ernie Culp, U.S., 1980’s, 10 min.)
Doc: In Heaven There is No Beer? (Les Blank, U.S., 1984, 51 min.)
Doc: King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters (Seth Gordon, U.S., 2007, 79 min.)

Week 15
Alternative Modes; The Essay Film; Reality Television; Online User-Generated Content (UGC)
May 3  →  **Read**: Grant & Sloniowski, Ch. 18, pp. 305-321 (Ruoff on Craig Gilbert’s *An American Family*)

**Read**: Grant & Sloniowski, Ch. 29, pp. 494-506 (Bonner on Agnes Varda’s *The Gleaners and I*)

**Clips**: *An American Family* series (Craig Gilbert, U.S., 1973)

**Clips**: “Reality,” “unreality” and perhaps “surreality” television

**Clips**: *Daguerreotypes* (Agnes Varda, France, 1976); *The Gleaners and I* (Agnes Varda, France, 2000); *The Beaches of Agnes* (Agnes Varda, France, 2008)

**Doc**: Online short documentaries, TBA

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**Week 16**  
**Screening**, TBA

**FINAL EXAM PERIOD**  
**Thur., May 12, 12:30-2:30 pm**

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**COM 321 Assignment Schedule**

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