

APPROACH: This course will interrogate the practices and issues arising from documentary depictions. Starting with specific practices (documenting, assembling, embodying, authorizing, etc.) related to *The Laramie Project*, as an example of documentary processes in various media, students will investigate the methods, materials, and effects of documentary work on this text and on related performances and films. The syllabus is divided into four units: the what, why, and how of documentary; documentary and alterity; social and political documentary; and documentary and domestic technologies.

Often described as a “discourse of sobriety,” documentaries are generally characterized by their effort to record and/(or) depict “the real.” The popularization of documentary films, videos, and reality television raises important questions about the nature of truth and representation as well as the social practice of film. Because practices of *signifying* and *looking* constitute and produce meanings that in turn (re)form our subjectivities and regulate behavior, visual culture is key to examining the relations between power and knowledge. By interrogating techniques and technologies of production and reception of meanings in a series of films, scripts, and performances chosen for their specific development of issues arising from documentary depiction, students will learn how to think critically about the discursive formations of subjects, others, and visual culture. Topics will cover ethical issues, documentary types, documentary history, evidentiary and political uses, live coverage, re-enactments, “reality TV,” and computer simulation. Materials will include screenings of films as well as readings in film theory, performance studies, cyberculture, and cultural studies. Instructional methods will include lectures, discussions, readings, presentations, writing assignments, and examinations.

REQUIREMENTS:

- **Attendance:** Course goals and methods necessitate conscientious class attendance. Excessive absences (more than 3), tardiness, or repeated violations of viewing and classroom protocols (see below) will adversely affect your final grade.
- **Preparation:** The quality and alacrity of your participation in classroom discussions, of your preparation of various assigned readings and projects, and of your execution of occasional in-class writing assignments will determine 20% of your final grade.
- **Presentations:** Each student will present one 15-20-minute report to the class during the semester (see below for dates). Topics will be arranged in advance (see below for topic due-date), and will consist in reporting on a documentary film that is not included on the syllabus. Presentations will follow the guidelines in pp. 253-271 of *Introduction to Documentary*. This classroom presentation, together with your submission of a written outline and annotated bibliography, will figure as 20% of your final grade.
- **Paper/Project:** Each student will compose a 6-8 page paper that addresses some topic of individual interest within course subject matter. If approved, students who have successfully completed Media Production I may substitute a 5-minute documentary film project for the paper. The papers or projects may be collaborative and will be arranged by consultation during the second half of the semester. This assignment will be due at the time of the final exam and will determine 20% of your final grade.
- **Examinations:** As scheduled below, students will take midterm and final examinations covering all the material on the syllabus up to that date. The exams will test your command of material in both factual and analytical capacities, and will figure as the remaining 40% (midterm = 20%, final = 20%) of your final grade. **Forewarning:** students must score above 50% on identifications in order to have their essay(s) read. Absence from a pre-announced exam cannot be excused.
- **Screenings:** Films and videos will be screened in class, necessitating absolute promptness and other viewing protocols, as described below. Video materials will also be on limited library reserve for students who wish to view or review them in the library at alternative times. Students are required to view all assigned films and media before they are scheduled for in-class discussion.
- **Electronic Devices:** Unless you have specific ADA accommodations requiring the use of an electronic device, all cell phones, computers, etc. must be turned off and stowed during class.
- **Late or Missing Work:** If approved in advance, I shall accept late work, but it will be penalized one letter grade. Otherwise, assignments are due for the class period as scheduled. *Students must submit all assignments to pass the course.*
- **Incompletes:** Grades of "Incomplete" will be assigned only by approval of a written petition from the student. This petition must explain the reasons for the request, and must be accompanied by documentation of either medical or personal emergency. All "Incompletes" must be converted according to the schedule in the College Catalog.
- **Events:** Students are required to attend the TFMS Film Series as well as each of the events included specifically on the attached syllabus. Additional (optional) events may be announced during the semester.
- **Readings:** Your syllabus contains an enumeration of the assigned readings and their due dates. The texts are available from the College Bookstore, and other readings are accessible by e-reserves or Web sites.
- **Honor Code:** Students must abide by the “Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities” in the *Student Handbook*.

OFFICE HOURS/ELECTRONIC ACCESS:

T 12:00 – 1:15 PM

W 1:00 – 2:15 PM

and by appointment

MH 179C; ext. 4251

jrklein@smcm.edu (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

<http://faculty.smcm.edu/jrklein/>

TEXTS:

Gaines and Renov, *Collecting Visible Evidence*

Kaufman, *The Laramie Project*

Mann, *Testimonies* (optional)

Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (2nd ed.)

Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (optional)

also xeroxed and electronically accessible materials, as assigned

TFMS FILM SERIES (<http://www.smcm.edu/tfms/2015-fall-film-series/>):

During fall semester, the Department of Theater, Film, and Media Studies will host its Ninth Annual TFMS Film Series, Baltimore Reel: A Celebration of Films and Filmmakers. Three filmmakers will present their work at 8:15 *pm* on Monday or Wednesday nights in Cole Cinema, and some guests will visit our class on the following Tuesday. For details, consult the brochure distributed in class or check the TFMS Web site . Attendance of the film series is required.

SOME RELATED INTERNET LINKS (SEE ONLINE SYLLABUS FOR MORE LINKS):

Electronic Syllabus: <http://faculty.smcm.edu/jrklein/325.F15.pdf>

Matthew Shepard Online Resources: <http://www.wiredstrategies.com/shepardx.html>

Center for Social Media (resources for social documentaries): <http://centerforsocialmedia.org/>

Media Rights (resources for media that matters): <http://www.mediarights.org/index.php>

Errol Morris: <http://www.errolmorris.com/>

Errol Morris Blog: <http://morris.blogs.nytimes.com/>

Internet Movie Database: <http://us.imdb.com/>

British Film Institute: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/>

Voice of the Shuttle (Humanities Resources site): <http://vos.ucsb.edu/>

VIEWING AND CLASSROOM PROTOCOLS:

- ▶ Some of the films we shall be watching in class are nearly 2 hours in length. Therefore, I shall start the films promptly at 10:00 am. Because of the particular significance of beginnings and endings, you will need to arrange your lives so that you can arrive promptly and remain through the end.
- ▶ Before class begins or films start, get yourself situated so that you will not need to leave the room, rustle your belongings, or pant from the exertion of stair-climbing during the screening. Do not distract others by making unnecessary noise or conversation. *Turn off cell phones and pagers.* Arrive in time to sign the roll sheet.
- ▶ Do whatever you need to do (get sufficient sleep at night, for example) in order to avoid sleeping during screenings.
- ▶ If something in a film offends you, close your eyes and/or cover your ears. If you are easily offended, drop the course. You are welcome to raise this issue – like any other issue related to the films – in class discussion or privately with me.
- ▶ If you **MUST** leave or enter the room during a screening, please avoid throwing light on the screen and distracting others.
- ▶ If you have extenuating circumstances that make it difficult for you to comply with any of these protocols, let me know.

LIST OF FILMS ESPECIALLY RECOMMENDED FOR PRESENTATIONS:

Waltz with Bashir

Koyaanisqatsi

Grizzly Man

Man with a Movie Camera

Standard Operating Procedure (or another Errol Morris film)

Tongues Untied

<u>WEEK/UNIT</u>	<u>DISCUSSION TOPIC</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENTS DUE</u>	<u>SPECIAL EVENTS</u>
1 Sept T	Course Introduction: Whose Truth is It, Anyway?		TFMS Open House, 7:30 pm, Bruce Davis Theater
3 Sept R DOCUMENTARY: WHAT, WHY, AND HOW?	Troubled Boundaries and Ethical Issues	<i>Introduction to Documentary</i> , pp. ix-66	
8 Sept T	Case Study: The Laramie Project	<i>The Laramie Project</i>	
10 Sept R	Re-Presentation in <i>The Laramie Project</i> : Mimetic or Constitutive?	http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/2000/town.cfm and http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/2000/form.cfm , <i>American Theatre</i> , May/June 2000, "Town in a Mirror" and "Into the West: An Exploration in Form"	Screening of A&E documentary, <i>American Justice: Matthew Shepard - Death in the High Desert</i> , in class, 60 min
15 Sept T	Documentary and Performance: Embodying the Social Actor	VOG follow-up fun: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHzdsFiBbFc	Screening of <i>The Laramie Project</i> , in class, 96 min
17 Sept R	Embodied Knowledge and the Politics of Location	Visit www.errolmorris.com , read his Harvard address: http://www.errolmorris.com/content/lecture/theantipost.html ; recommended reading: <i>Blurred Boundaries</i> , pp. ix-16 and pp. 92-106	
22 Sept T	Documentary Voices and Documentary Subjects	<i>Introduction to Documentary</i> , pp. 67-119	Classroom visit by Lotfy Nathan, director, 12 O'Clock Boys
24 Sept R	Voices and Subjects		Screening of <i>The Brandon Teena Story</i> , in class, 88 min
29 Sept T	History, Types, and Uses of Documentary	<i>Introduction to Documentary</i> , pp. 120-211	
1 Oct R	Hollywood License and the "Extra Body" of the Actor		Screening of <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> , in class, 116 min
6 Oct T	Visible Evidence: Production and Reception	Gaines/Renov, pp. 46-83	
8 Oct R	Midterm Examination		
13 Oct T	Reading Day	No class meeting	
15 Oct R DOCUMENTARY AND ALTERITY	Ethnographic Discourses	Recommended reading: <i>Blurred Boundaries</i> , pp. 63-91; presentation topics due	Screenings of <i>Passing Girl: Riverside</i> and <i>Reassemblage</i> , in class, 25 min and 40 min
20 Oct T	Troubling Ethnography	Gaines/Renov, pp. 116-175	

22 Oct R	Hybrid Documentary	https://11polaroids.wordpress.com/2013/07/02/act-nor-mal-hybrid-tendencies-in-documentary-film/	Classroom visit by Matt Porterfield, director, <i>Putty Hill</i>
27 Oct T	Alterity and the Ethics of Intervention		Screening of <i>The Good Woman of Bangkok</i> , in class, 82 min
29 Oct R	Ethnography and the Perils of <i>Veni, Vidi, Vici</i>	Gaines/Renov, pp. 176-189	Classroom visit by Dave Ellsworth, experimental documentary filmmaker
3 Nov T	Advising Day	No class meeting	
5 Nov R	Apparatuses of Production and Reception	Gaines/Renov, pp. 1-45; recommended reading: <i>Blurred Boundaries</i> , pp. 17-42; Paper/project proposals due	
10 Nov T DOCUMENTARY ADVOCACY: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES	Personal Portrait Documentary	<i>Introduction to Documentary</i> , pp. 212-252	Screening of <i>The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter</i> , in class, 65 min
12 Nov R	Student Presentations	Presentations due, as scheduled	
17 Nov T	Student Presentations	Presentations due, as scheduled	<i>Crossroads: On Common Ground</i> opens W, 8:00 pm, Bruce Davis Theater
19 Nov R	Student Presentations	Presentations due, as scheduled	
24 Nov T	Student Presentation, Follow-up Screening		Screening of student-presented film, per vote
26 Nov R	Thanksgiving Break	No class meeting	
1 Dec T	Politics and Documentary	Gaines/Renov, pp. 84-102 and pp. 190-215	_____
3 Dec R	Social Issue Documentary		Screening of <i>Roger and Me</i> , in class, 91 min (or class choice of another Michael Moore film)
8 Dec T DOCUMENTARY AND DOMESTIC TECHNOLOGIES	TV, Liveness, <i>Film-souvenir</i> , and Reality	Gaines/Renov, pp. 241-254 and pp. 292-312; recommended reading: <i>Blurred Boundaries</i> , pp. 43-62	
10 Dec R	Computers, Simulation, and Loss of the Indexical	Gaines/Renov, pp. 274-291 and 313-325	
16 Dec W	Final Examination, 9:00-11:15 am	Papers/Projects due	