Documentary Film-making in Theory and Practise

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Course Description
The course is formed of two sections; while the students will be informed of the history of the genre they will also make their own short documentary film. The aims of the course are to foster an understanding of documentary as a diverse form, with a range of styles and genres, to root this diversity in its various historical and social contexts, and to introduce you to some analytical tools appropriate for study of your own and other filmmakers’ work.

Learning outcomes
By the end of the course the students will be able to
- Distinguish between, and critically evaluate, the principle ‘modes’ of documentary making
- Be able to read a documentary text closely and write about how it communicates meaning
- Understanding documentary production in its social and historical context
- Be conversant with, and sensitive to, current debates about documentary ethics and aesthetics.
- Produce their own short film, making informed and creative decisions at every stage of production process.

Instructor
Turkish/French national Baris did his MFA at H.E.A.R. (Haute Ecoles des arts du Rhin) Strasbourg/Mulhouse, Ecole Superieur des Beaux Arts, France. He participated many international mixed exhibitions including "Regionale" at Kunsthalle of Basel, the 11th Biennial of Young Artists from Europe (Athens), at Institut Français in Freiburg and in Venice. His co-directed film “Tülay German: Years of Fire and Cinders” have been nominated and screened in international film festivals including Oberhausen Film Festival and Istanbul Films Festival.

Assessment Methods
In-class participation and presentation, 30
Essay, 30 (1500 words)
Final Project, ‘a 5 to 10 minutes short documentary’ 40

Bibliography
1) History / Accounts on Documentary
The Art of Record, John Corner (Manchester, 1996)
Claiming the Real, Brian Winston (BFI, 1995)
Documentary, Erik Barnouw (Oxford, 1974)
Documentary, Bill Nichols (Indiana, 2001)
Documentary – The Margins of Reality, Paul Ward (Wallflower, 2005)
New Challenges for Documentary, Alan Rosenthal (University of California Press, 1988)
2) Technical / Production Handbooks
Directing the Documentary, Michael Rabiger (Focal Press 1992)
Documentary in the Digital Age, Maxine Baker (Focal Press, 2006)
Theorising Video Practice, Mike Wayne (Lawrence and Wishart, 1997)
The Technique of Documentary Film Production, W. Hugh Baddeley (Focal Press, 1963)

* Filmography is included under the syllabus, under each week and documentary film ‘modes’.

Syllabus
TERM 1 HISTORY

Week 1
Topics: Documentary Dilemmas
Introduction to the course and contentious issues around the documentary form. An overview of the scope of documentary, debates about committed documentary, conceptual documentary and political documentary.

Viewings:
Examples from Contemporary Documentaries
Agnes Varda films.
The Act of Killing.

Week 2
Topic: Nineteenth Century Legacy and films of record
The documentary impulse and the reaction against ‘constructed’ images: the first moving images: early newsreels: looking at other cultures. Nanook of the North becomes the first recognised documentary.

Viewings:
Nanook of the North US 1922
The Battle of the Somme GB 1916

***Presentation of the video project

Week 3
Cinema-verbatim, observational cinema and the lure of the ‘real’
A discussion of “Direct Cinema” in the US in the 1960s and its legacy

Viewings:
Titicut Follies, dir Fred Wiseman US 1967
Salesman dirs David and Albert Maysles US 1969

*** Shooting the video project

Week 4
Topics: Formalism, Revolution and the cinematic subversion

Viewings:
Man with a Movie Camera dir. Dziga Vertov USSR 1928

Social Democracy and the Voice of the People

Viewings:
The Plow that Broke the Mountains dir Pira lorenz US 1936
Housing Problems, British Commercial gas Association 1935
Triumphy of the Will, dir. Leni Riefestahl 1934
Kuhle Wampe, scr. Bertolt Brecht 1932

*** Shooting the video project

Week 5
Topic: Surrealism and the unconscious
From Salvador Dali and Luis Bunuel to Chris Marker

Viewings:
Land Without Bread, dir Luis Bunuel Spain 1932
La Jetee, Dir. Chris Marker, France
Sans Soleil, dir. Chris Marker, France 1983
Meshes of the Afternoon, dir Maya Deren, US 1943

*** Editing the video project

Week 6
Topic: Re-thinking ethnographic film
Reflexivity and the work of Jean Rouch as an ethnographic filmmaker. Comparison between ‘Direct Cinema’ and cine-verite in France. The possibility of unmediated observation. “My aim is not to film life as it is, but life as it is provoked.” Jean Rouch

Viewings:
Les Maitres Fous, dir Jean Rouch, France 1955

*** Editing the video project

Week 7
Topic: Autobiographical films
How does the injection of the personal/confessional mode affect documentary's
‘truth claims’? Is the collapsing of the subject/author divide a way through some of documentary’s ethical and aesthetic dilemmas?

**Viewings:**
Six O’clock News, dir. Ross McElwee
Nobody’s Business, dir. Alan Berliner
Whited Sepulchre, dir. Tony Dowmunt

**Topic:** How does television use and abuse documentary form? & Web documentaries

The proliferation of television genres. Documentary is breaking its Boundaries – both expanding its traditional areas and flowing over into docudrama, reality shows and newer interactive forms.

**Viewings:**
Whatever is current

*** Screening the projects