

ARTS 310: AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY TRADITION, FALL 2008  
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*Maturity... surely means taking our places in history, in accountability, in the web of responsibilities met or failed, of received and changing forms, arguments with community or tradition, a long dialogue between art and justice. (Adrienne Rich)*

This course examines documentary film and photography as tools for social change. Students will analyze how mass media creates meaning, shapes public memory, and frames issues of justice. Contemporary works will be studied in relation to social issues, with attention to poverty, racism, immigration and labor.

Students will learn the basics of film and photography language as well as the political uses of art. While many films address national and international issues, one unit will be devoted to the films of Appalshop, an award-winning media arts cooperative in eastern Kentucky that focuses on regional identity and economics.

Each student is expected to acquire and demonstrate the skills of an active, critical viewer; to practice public speaking in oral presentations; to develop and write viewing guides for films in small groups; and to write several self-reflexive essays.

ARTS 310: AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS\*, FALL 2008

These assignments are listed for the day they are due, and may be subject to change.  
DF= *Documentary Film, a Short Introduction* ELEC=library electronic reserve

- 8/19 First day of class
- 8/26 Read DF 1-55 and ELEC "Analysis of *Thin Blue Line*" from *Film Art*, p 413-419; determine group time availability
- 9/2 Read DF 56-124  
Groups 1 & 3 view *Control Room* and read ELEC viewing guide  
Groups 2 & 4 view *Hearts & Minds* and read ELEC viewing guide.
- 9/9 Groups 1 & 3 introduce, screen and conduct discussion of *Control Room* for class
- 9/16 Write one-page website review about <http://documentaries.about.com>  
Groups 2 & 4 introduce, screen and conduct discussion of *Hearts & Minds* for class
- 9/23 Write one-page website review about <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/>
- 9/30 Write 2-page self-reflexive essay on goals, intentions and study-skills strengths and weaknesses; Read DF 125-136
- 10/7 Examine ELEC *Born Into Brothels* curriculum guide; write one-page website review about <http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/>
- 10/14 Fall break
- 10/21 Group presentations on documentary photographers  
1: Lewis Hine 2: Dorothea Lange 3: Charles Moore 4: Robert Frank
- 10/28 Examine <http://www.itvs.org/strangerwithacamera>; read ELEC 3 articles on Appalshop
- 11/4 Film log due (two-page analysis of four films):  
a) from folkstream.com  
b) from bestonline.docus.googlepages.com  
c) from NCLIVE/PBS Collection (via Ramsey Library home page), either an episode of Ken Burns' *Civil War*, *Frontline* or *American Photography: a Century of Images*  
d) your choice of documentary film (one not viewed in class)
- 11/11
- 11/18
- 11/25 Group viewing guides due 1 & 2: *Morristown* 3 & 4: *Stranger with a Camera*
- 12/2 Two-page self-reflective and analytical essay on learning process and plans

\* Subject to change

GRADING RUBRIC  
ARTS 310 American Documentary FALL, 2008

My learning model aims to guide students in becoming engaged critical viewers who move from the factual/content level to a deeper one of analysis and engagement. In addition, I want students to be mindful of their individual learning styles and processes, and to develop keen viewing, writing, speaking and reading skills.

YOUR GRADE IS BASED UPON INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP WORK.

Individual Portfolio 50%:

- 3 one-page website reviews
- 1 eight-page film log (two-page analysis of four films)
- 2 two-page personal essays (a. goals/intentions/skills b. process/plans)
- Active participation in all class discussion and activities

Group Portfolio 50%:

- Introduction, screening and post-viewing discussion of one assigned film
- Presentation of lecture, slide show and discussion of one assigned documentary photographer
- In-depth viewing guide of one assigned Appalshop film
- Active participation in all stages of group work assignments

Assessment is based on the following criteria:

A: VERY ACTIVE & ENGAGED—excellent preparation, relevant questions and comments, excellent critical skills, analysis related to lectures and readings, thoughtful, insightful, focused, responsive, creative, active, viewing/reading for meaning, understands major aesthetic and political issues, develops personal interest, completes all assignments thoroughly and with engagement. In small groups, takes initiative, shares responsibility, supports others in completing assignments.

B: ACTIVE & ENGAGED—well prepared, interpretive, responsive, uses critical reading/viewing skills, good analysis, contributes to discussion, considers several sides of an argument, consistent, has some sense of political and aesthetic issues, completes all assignments competently. In small groups, carries her share of the work and supports others. In small groups, shares responsibility in completing assignments.

C: SOMETIMES ACTIVE—adequate preparation, little interpretation or analysis, reads/views for information only, contributes to discussion only when called upon, assignments done superficially, little sense of aesthetic or political issues. In small groups, does own portion of the work adequately but contributes little to the group as a whole in completing assignments.

D: PASSIVE—responds only when called on, offers little insight or analysis, little contribution to class communication and learning, present but not active, inconsistent/incomplete assignments. In small groups, contributes little to the assignments.