

Carleton University
Fall 2023
ENGL 5610F/CLMD 6104F
Studies in Contemporary Literature I/Issues in Cultural Politics
Documentary and Crisis
Monday 11:35-14:25

[Note that this is a scent-free classroom]
Instructor: Franny Nudelman
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This course considers documentary responses to contemporary crises. We will study documentary filmmakers, photographers, and writers who respond to the unanticipated and often incomprehensible crises of our age and, in the process, create or rejuvenate forms of documentary expression. Taking an expansive view of the field, we will consider documentary texts that deal with war, forced migration, climate emergency, poverty, and gendered violence. We will ask: How do documentarians represent what they cannot yet fully understand? What role does literary and visual culture play in making disruptive change real? How do documentarians help to define an ethics of witnessing? How are the methods and aims of documentarians transformed by new technologies and alternative forms of collectivity? Throughout, we will explore the power of documentary to respond to catastrophic events and uncharted social conditions as they unfold.

BOOKS

Lucy Lippard, *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* (2014)

Maggie Nelson, *The Red Parts: Autobiography of a Trial* (Paperback edition, 2016; originally published, 2007)

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003)

Books for the course will be available from *Haven Books*. Other materials (film, videos, readings, images) will be available on ARES and/or Brightspace.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Class Participation

This seminar will be a workshop where we will hammer out ideas with an emphasis on collaboration and collective inquiry. Please come to class prepared to share your responses, thoughts, and questions about the week's readings. Each of you will on occasion be responsible for developing discussion questions and leading class discussion.

Co-Journal

You will write **three** entries in a collaborative journal over the course of the term. Each of these entries will reflect on one of the units that loosely structure the course: immersive reporting; collage and hybrid form; slow violence and extraction. Journal entries will be

posted to a common document and will engage and respond to one another. Ideally, the result will be a kind of chorus in which we weave our ideas together on the topic and texts at hand. I will give you more direction as the due date for the first entry (October 13) approaches.

Research Essay/Project

You will write a 12-page research essay that is due at the end of the term. This essay will either take up a single text or documentarian from our syllabus or build on a theme/idea/problem that is important to the course. The purpose of your research is to build a context (historical and critical) that allows you to advance an original and illuminating interpretation of the subject at hand. You will write a brief (2-3 paragraph) research proposal that states your research question and identifies the archives and primary sources that you will use. This proposal is due on Friday, November 17 and your final essay is due on Tuesday, December 12.

Grading and Assessment

My final determination of your grade will be based on the following questions: 1) Did you do the reading/viewing regularly and on time? 2) Did you participate in discussions in a generous and generative way? 3) Did your writing demonstrate engagement, polish, creativity, and independent thought? 4) Did you conduct disciplined and purposeful research using both primary and secondary sources?

With these questions in mind, your final grade will be based on class participation, including attendance, contribution to discussion, and journal posts (65%) and your research project (35%). These percentages are, however, not written in stone and when determining your final grade, I will keep individual circumstances in mind. Feel free to check in with me about your grade at any point during the term.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

University Policies:

Plagiarism

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Statement on Student Mental Health

As a University student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you.

Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form ([click here](#)).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Weekly Schedule**September**

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Sara Blair, Joseph Entin, Franny Nudelman, Introduction to *Remaking Reality: U.S. Documentary Culture after 1945* (2018)

Part 1: Immersive Reporting

18

Spike Lee, “When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts” (2006)
 Barrett Swanson, “Disaster City” from *Lost in Summerland* (2021)
 Christopher Wilson, “Immersion Journalism and the Second-Order Narrative” from *The Routledge Companion to American Literary Journalism* (2020)

25

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

October

2

Tim Hetherington

--“Sleeping Soldiers” (2008)

<https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/conflict/sleeping-soldiers-tim-hetherington/>

--“Diary” (2010)

<https://vimeo.com/18497543>

--“By Any Means Necessary” (2008)

Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, “Unconcerned but not Indifferent” (2008)

<http://www.broombergchanarin.com/text-unconcerned-but-not-indifferent>

Franny Nudelman, “The Document,” from *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Visual Culture*, eds. Aubrey Anable, Joan Saab, Catherine Zuromskis (2020)

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Canada Day/No Class

16

Jehane Noujaim, “Control Room” (2004)

Judith Butler, “Precarious Life, Grievable Life,” in *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2010)

Friday, October 13: First Co-Journal Entry Due (on immersive reporting)**Fall Break****Part II: Cutting and Collage**

30

Albert and David Maysles, “Yoko Ono’s ‘Cut Piece’” (1966)

<https://vimeo.com/106706806>

Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Remembering Yoko Ono's 'Cut Piece,'" *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2003)

Joan Didion, "The White Album" from *The White Album* (1979)

November

6

Maggie Nelson, *The Red Parts*

Friday, November 10: Second Co-Journal Entry Due (on cutting and collage)

13

Raoul Peck, "I am not your Negro" (2016)

Catherine Venable Moore, "The Book of the Dead" (2016)

<https://main.oxfordamerican.org/magazine/item/1049-the-book-of-the-dead>

Friday, November 17: Research Proposal Due

Part III: *Extraction and Slow Violence*

20

Lucy Lippard, *Undermining*

27

Rob Nixon, Introduction to *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011)

Renzo Martens, "Episode III: Enjoy Poverty" (2008)

"Letter from Lusanga: Can an Artists' Collective in Africa Repair a Colonial Legacy?" from *The New Yorker*, July 25, 2022

Friday, December 1: Third Co-Journal Entry Due (on slow violence and extraction)

December

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Richard Mosse,

"Infra" and "Enclave" (2009-2013)

https://jackshainman.com/artists/richard_mosse

"Incoming" (2017) <http://www.richardmosse.com/projects/incoming#home>

"'Incoming' Artist's Statement" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1YSbBMBE-s>

"Transmigration of Souls" in *Incoming* (2017)

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Tia Lessin and Carl Deal, *Trouble the Water* (2008)

Final Essay Due on Tuesday, December 12