

**Carleton University**  
**Fall 2020**  
**Department of English/Cultural Mediations**

**ENGL 5610 Studies in Contemporary Lit/CLMD 6104 Issues in Cultural Politics**  
**Monday: 11:35-2:25**  
**Format: Synchronous on Zoom**

**Instructor: Franny Nudelman**  
**Email: [franny.nudelman@carleton.ca](mailto:franny.nudelman@carleton.ca)**  
**Office Hours by appointment**

### **Documentary and Crisis**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, documentary filmmakers, photographers, and writers grappled with violence that was unprecedented in scale; in the decades that followed, they continued to respond to the unanticipated and often incomprehensible crises of their age. In the process, they created new forms of documentary expression. This course examines innovations in the field of documentary culture after 1945, with an emphasis on documentary in a US context. Taking an expansive view of the field, we will consider documentary texts that deal with war, forced migration, racial terror, and climate emergency. We will ask: What role does literary and visual culture play in making disruptive change real? How are the methods and aims of documentarians transformed by new technologies and alternative forms of collectivity? How do documentarians remake social realities? Throughout, we will explore the power of documentary to respond to catastrophic events and uncharted social conditions as they unfold.

#### **Books**

John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946)

Ben Lerner, *10:04* (2014)

Muriel Rukeyser, "The Book of the Dead" (1930) and Catherine Venable Moore, "The Book of the Dead" (2016)

**(Note that these are published together in a single edition put out by West Virginia University Press in 2018)**

Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams: A Journey Into the Landscape Wars of the American West* (1994)

#### **Films**

John Huston, *Let There Be Light* (1946)

Haskell Wexler, *Medium Cool* (1969)

Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts*, Acts I and II (2006)

Books for the course will be available from *Haven Books*, and books and films will be on reserve at the library. Other materials for the course (videos, readings, images) marked with a \* on the syllabus will be available on ARES and/or CU Learn.

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION**

### **Class Participation**

Ours is a small class and we will treat it as a workshop with an emphasis on collaboration and collective inquiry. We will meet on Zoom each week, though we will not necessarily meet for three full hours. You will be expected to come to class prepared to share your ideas and questions about the week's readings; discussion will be shaped by your responses to our shared texts. Each of you will on occasion be responsible for developing discussion questions and leading class discussion.

### **Documentary Journal**

To help prepare for discussion and keep a record of your ideas as they evolve over the course of the term, you will keep a journal in which you make at least one substantial entry before class each week. This journal will give you a space to explore and experiment; it may incorporate images, video, sound and other media. In this course on documentary expression, consider journaling a form of documentary-making. Your journal may feed into your research project (though this is not required) and you may be asked to share entries with the rest of the class on occasion.

### **Research Essay/Project**

This 12-page (or equivalent) essay/project will grow from texts and issues we work on in class and should be developed in consultation with me. A brief (2 page) proposal that states your research question and chief sources is due on November 13 and your final essay/project is due on December 11. This project may involve the use of documentary forms, combining written analysis with sound, drawing, performance, photography, etc.

### **Evaluation**

Your final grade will be based on class participation (35%); journal (30%); research project (35%).

## **POLICIES**

### **Request for 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 more details see the [Student Guide](#).

#### **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 see the [Student Guide](#).

### **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](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation 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). 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).

### **Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University supports and is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated and is treated with the seriousness it deserves. Carleton acknowledges that individuals who are members of equity-seeking groups who experience intersecting forms of disadvantage based on the protected grounds in the Ontario Human Rights Code may be disproportionately affected by sexual violence and its consequences. The purpose of this Policy is to articulate Carleton University's commitment to a safe, supportive and healthy campus and to confirm its commitment to provide support to those members directly affected by sexual violence. See full policy here:

<https://carleton.ca/studentssupport/svpolicy/>

### **Plagiarism**

Academic honesty is considered the ground rule of any university level course. Plagiarism is defined in the "Instructional Offences" section of the *Carleton Undergraduate Calendar* as "using and passing off as one's own ideas the work of someone else" without giving proper credit and documentation or submitting the same assignment in more than one class. This means using someone else's ideas in any format, printed or online (whether from a scholarly essay, a student essay, a website, or even just a blog commentary). If you find yourself tempted to use someone else's ideas or words because of stress, illness, anxiety about your own ability, personal crisis, time crisis, or any other issues, I urge you to let me know about these circumstances, so that we can work together to make sure you do work of the highest integrity. The penalties for plagiarism are severe, ranging from a disciplinary meeting with the Associate Dean of the faculty, failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and/or suspension from the university. If I suspect that an essay or portion of an essay has been plagiarized, I am required to submit the essay to the Associate Dean of the Faculty with documentation. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

## September

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Introduction

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John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

Paul Saint-Amour, “Bombing and the Symptom Traumatic Earliness and the Nuclear Uncanny,” *Diacritics* 30.4 (2000), 59-82

\*Dwight Macdonald, “Hersey’s ‘Hiroshima’” in *politics* (1946)

\*Mary McCarthy, “Hiroshima *New Yorker*” in *politics* (1946)

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John Huston, “Let There Be Light” (1946)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQPoYVKeQEs&t=2s>

\*John Hersey, “A Short Talk with Erlanger,” *Life Magazine* (October 29, 1945)

\*Jonathan Kahana and Noah Tsika, “*Let There Be Light* and the Military Talking Picture,” in *Remaking Reality: U.S. Documentary Culture after 1945*

\*Franny Nudelman, “Psychotherapy Under Sedation: The Amytal Interview” (Ch. 2) and “Sleep and the Historical Record” (Ch. 3) from *Fighting Sleep: The War for the Mind and the US Military* (2019)

## October

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\*Lee Miller, selected images

\*Sharon Sliwinski, “A Fairy for an Introduction” (Introduction) and “The Artist’s Defense: The City in Ruins Dream” (Ch. 4) from *Dreaming in Dark Times: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (2017)

\*Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece* (1966)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTGSsWVK2Eo>

## Thanksgiving

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Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams*

\*Richard Misrach, “Desert Cantos” (selected images)

## Fall Break

## November

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\*Martha Rosler, “House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home” (1967-72)

Haskell Wexler, “Medium Cool” (1969)

\*Jimi Hendrix, “The Star Spangled Banner” (performed at Woodstock Music Festival, 1969)

\*Joan Didion, “The White Album” (1979)

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\*Leigh Raiford, “Come Let Us Build a New World Together” (Ch. 2) in *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (2011)

\*Elizabeth Alexander, “Can You Be Black and Look at this? Reading the Rodney King Video(s),” in *Public Culture* Vol. 7 (1), 1994

\*Audre Lorde, “Afterimages” (1997)

\*John Edgar Wideman, “A Black and White Case,” *Esquire Magazine* (October 2016)

### **Friday November 13: 2-page research proposal due**

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Muriel Rukeyser, “The Book of the Dead” (1930) and Catherine Venable Moore, “The Book of the Dead” (2016)

\*Rob Nixon, Introduction to *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2012)

\*Janelle Monae, “Hell You Talmbout” (2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8Ev9aLqa8c>

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Spike Lee, “When the Levees Broke” (Acts 1 and 2) (2006)

\*Kathryn Yosuff, “Golden Spikes and Dubious Origins” and “The Inhumanities” from *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2018)

William Kentridge, “More Sweetly Play the Dance” (2015) (On view at the National Gallery of Canada)

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Ben Lerner, *10:04*

### **December**

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\*Richard Mosse, “Incoming”

\*Elizabeth Kolbert, “How to Write About a Vanishing World” (2018)

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/15/how-to-write-about-a-vanishing-world>

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Last Class

**Journals and final essays/projects due**