

Carleton University
Winter 2020
ENGL 5610 Studies in Contemporary Lit/CLMD 6104 Issues in Cultural
Politics
Tuesday: 2:35-5:25
Location: 201 St Patrick's Building
Instructor: Franny Nudelman
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Office Hours: Tuesday 12-2, and by appointment

Cultural Politics: U.S. Documentary after 1945

In the aftermath of the Second World War, filmmakers, photographers, writers, and performers grappled with violence that was unprecedented in scale; in the decades that followed, documentarians continued to respond to the unanticipated and often incomprehensible crises of their age, and, in the process, created new forms of documentary expression. In this course, we will examine innovations in the field of documentary culture after 1945, including a commitment to activist intervention, immersive technique, and the spoken word. We will take an expansive view of the field, considering a range of documentary texts in relation to documentary practices (interviews, testimony, investigative travel) that produced them. How were the methods and aims of documentarians transformed by changing social conditions, 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

Sara Blair, Joseph Entin, Franny Nudelman, eds. *Remaking Reality: U.S. Documentary Culture After 1945* (2018)
Tings Chak, *Undocumented: The Architecture of Migrant Detention* (2014)
John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946)
Norman Mailer, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1969)
Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight Los Angeles* (1992)

Films

John Huston, *Let There Be Light* (1946)
Albert and David Maysles, *Gimme Shelter*
Haskell Wexler, *Medium Cool* (1969)
Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (2017)

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 CULearn.

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. The most important aspect of your work in the class will be thinking carefully about texts in advance of class, and preparing to share your ideas and questions with each other. The trajectory of discussion in each meeting and over the course of the semester will be driven by your interests and responses to the materials we read and watch.

Documentary Journal

To help prepare for discussion and unearth continuities between class meetings, you will keep a journal in which you make at least two entries each week—one in response to the week's reading/viewing and one in response to class discussion. This assignment is meant to give you a chance to work through your ideas and keep a record of our discussion. In your journal, feel free to write informally, and explore and test thoughts that are not yet fully formed. Please bring your journal with you to class, and plan to hand it in at the end of the semester.

Research Presentation

On March 10 you will each give a brief presentation on one of the films discussed in Jonathan Kahana's "Revolutionary Sound."

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 March 6, and your final essay/project is due on April 10. If you choose, this project may involve the use of documentary forms, combining written analysis with documentary sound, drawing, performance, photography, etc.

Evaluation

Your final grade will be based on class participation (40%); journal (20%); presentation (10%); research project (30%).

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.

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

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/contact/form-pregnancy-accommodation/>

Religious obligation

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the Paul Menton Centre Website: carleton.ca/pmc

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 its 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/focus/sexual-violence-prevention-survivor-support/>

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 must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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>

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.

Class Schedule

January

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Introduction

Documentary at the End of the World

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*Lee Miller, selected photographs (1945)

*Susan Sontag, "In Plato's Cave" from *On Photography* (1977)

Sharon Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau" (2010)

http://www.torontophotographyseminar.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Sliwinski_Lee_Miller.pdf

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John Huston, *Let There Be Light* (1945)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQPoYVKeQEs&t=280s>

Jonathan Kahana and Noah Tsika, "Let There Be Light and the Military Talking Picture," in *Remaking Reality*

John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946)

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Finish John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

*Dwight Macdonald, "Hersey's 'Hiroshima'" in *politics* (1946)

*Mary McCarthy, "Hiroshima *New Yorker*" in *politics* (1946)

Franny Nudelman, "Death in Life: Documenting Survival after Hiroshima," in *Remaking Reality*

*John Whittier Treat, Preface and Introduction to *Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb* (1995)

February

4

Introduction to *Remaking Reality*

*Joan Didion, "Pacific Distances" in *After Henry* (1992)

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>

Documentary Radicalisms

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Albert and David Maysles, *Yoko Ono: Cut Piece* (1966)

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

Chris Burden, "Shoot" (1971)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwh-XFMp8U>

*Martha Rosler, "House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home" (1967-72) and "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)" (1981)

Sara Blair, "After the Fact: Postwar Dissent and the Art of Documentary," in *Remaking Reality*

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Norman Mailer, "The Siege of Chicago" from *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968)

Haskell Wexler, *Medium Cool* (1969)

March

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Jimi Hendrix, "Star Spangled Banner" (1969)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwIymq0iTsw>

Albert and David Maysles, "Gimme Shelter" (1970)

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

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Jonathan Kahana, "Revolutionary Sound: Listening to Radical Documentary," in *Intelligence Work: The Politics of American Documentary*" (2008)

Student presentations

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Guy Carawan and Alan Lomax, *Freedom In the Air: A Documentary on Albany, Georgia, 1961-62*

Cornel West, speech at the First Baptist Church, Charlottesville, Virginia (August 12, 2017)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQ82aD6n6zg>

Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (2017)

Grace Elizabeth Hale, "Participatory Documentary: Recording the Sound of Equality in the Southern Civil Rights Movement" in *Remaking Reality*

Undocumented

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Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight Los Angeles* (1992)

Childish Gambino, "This Is America" (2018)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYOjWnS4cMY>

*Nikhil Singh, Introduction to *Race and America's Long War* (2017)

*Paula Rabinowitz, "Video Vérité: Rodney King in the City of Angels of History," in *They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary* (1994)

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Catherine Venable Moore, "The Book of the Dead" (2017)

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

Tings Chak, "Undocumented: The Architecture of Migrant Detention" (2014)

Rebecca Schreiber, "Counterdocuments: Undocumented Youth Activists, Documentary Media, and the Politics of Visibility," in *Remaking Reality*

April 7

Matthew Frye Jacobson, "Afterword" in *Remaking Reality*