

07-033

UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM PROPOSAL COVER SHEET RECORDS

Title of Proposal – Must begin with Department Abbreviation:

COMM 355 - DOCUMENTARY I: HISTORY, THEORY & PRACTICE

DEC 09 2008

Check One: Full Proposal or Information Item

REGISTRATION

Effective Date for Curricular Offering: _____

FROM: Elizabeth Gailey, Communication, 208 Frist Hall, x5201, Elizabeth-Gailey@utc.edu

(proposal originator: include spokesperson's name, department, office number, telephone, e-mail)

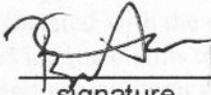
Does this require new resources from the originating department or other department? No

Please attach explanation if yes.

Faculty of the originating department approved this proposal on Dec. 1, 2008 (date),

by a vote of 6 aye votes; 0 nay votes; 0 abstentions; 1 eligible voting members absent

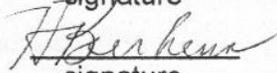
The following have examined this proposal:

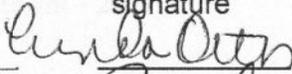
Dept Head/Director: Betsy Alderman, PhD  approve neutral disapprove*
(printed name) signature

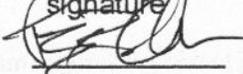
College Curriculum Committee Date: _____ Vote: _____ Signature of Chair: _____

Spokespersons for Affected Departments:

(name, department, date) signature approve neutral disapprove*

Dean/Director: H. Burhean  approve neutral disapprove*
signature

University Registrar: Linda Orth  approve neutral disapprove*
(printed name) signature

Provost: Phil Oldham  approve neutral disapprove*
(printed name) signature

*Those who disapprove may attach an explanation

ACTIONS on this proposal:	Curriculum Committee	Faculty Senate
Date the proposal was considered	_____	_____
Vote of the body:	_____	_____
Accepted as information item (indicate date)	_____	_____
Approved as submitted (indicate date)	_____	_____
Approved with amendments (amendments indicated and transmitted to all signatories above, date):	_____	_____
Signature of Chair:	_____	_____

Course Title: DOCUMENTARY I: HISTORY, THEORY & PRACTICE

Department/Program: Communication

Level: COMM 355

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: None

Type: Elective; offered on demand

1a. Catalog description. Introduces students to the theory, history, aesthetics, editing practices, ethics, and political significance of the genre, as well as concept development and visual storytelling techniques. Includes analysis of significant documentaries and preparation of a treatment for a short documentary. *(3 hours)

1b. Pedagogical objectives.

- To introduce students to the genre's history, conventions, aesthetics, ethics, and rhetorical strategies
- To address central theoretical issues associated with the documentary, including blurred definitions and boundaries, ethical dilemmas, and unique claims to objectivity, truth, and authority
- To enhance students' critical thinking and visual literacy skills
- To expose students to outstanding examples of investigative journalism in the documentary form
- To familiarize students with the pre-production process (research and proposal writing) involved in the creation of documentary films

1c. Model syllabus (see attached).

1d. Methods by which students will be evaluated.

- Examinations: mid-term plus quizzes on readings
- Papers: (1) *Documentary Film Analysis*: critical evaluation of a full-length (1-2 hr.) documentary not covered in class; and (2) *Documentary Treatment*: a 5-10 page proposal for a short documentary designed for future production
- Relative Weight Given to Assignments:
 - Quizzes – 15%
 - Mid-term Exam – 45%
 - Documentary Film Analysis – 20%
 - Documentary Treatment – 20%

1e. No lab fee (N/A).

2a. Rationale for new course. Documentaries represent some of the most provocative and aesthetically interesting films made today. Among the oldest of film genres, non-fiction cinema makes unique claims to truth, authenticity, and access to “the real.” Yet the documentary form frustrates established categories of fact/fiction, entertainment/pedagogy, and history/art.¹ It is these contradictions, as well as the genre's fusion of historical, sociological, psychological, and anthropological approaches and subject domains, that make it a particularly rich area of media studies. The increasingly central role of documentary films in investigative journalism also adds to the relevance of this course as a Department of Communication elective. From *Titicut Follies* (1967) and *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) to *Fog of War* (2004) and the films of Michael Moore, documentaries help fill the void left by corporate television news, which has all but abandoned long-form journalism. As one commentator put it, “Increasingly, moviegoers are looking to documentary filmmakers for the kind of investigative journalism and behind-the-scenes

¹Nichols, Bill. (1991). *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in the Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

reports that were once the province of the networks.”²

This course represents the first of its kind offered in UTC’s catalog. By introducing students to a broad range of documentary styles, theoretical approaches, and filmmakers across historical eras, it will benefit UTC students by: (1) educating them on the role of non-fiction films in U.S. political, artistic, and social history; (2) developing their critical and media literacy skills; (3) providing those interested in producing their own documentaries with more sophisticated conceptual, stylistic, and research tools; and (4) promoting lifelong appreciation and enjoyment of documentary films.

2b. Economic and pedagogical consequences.

Instructor Resources: The addition of this course does not represent an undue burden on faculty resources in The Department of Communication. The course will be taught routinely by Dr. Elizabeth Gailey, a documentary filmmaker and researcher who teaches two other theoretically and historically grounded visual media courses (COMM 320 Mass Media Perspectives and COMM/WSTU 324 Race, Gender & Media). Documentary I could also be taught by other full-time and adjunct communications faculty. Moreover, because the course may eventually be cross-listed with other departments (e.g., anthropology, history, political science), professors in these disciplines may wish to teach the course in partnership with Dr. Gailey.

Fit with Current Department Curriculum: Documentary I aligns well with Department of Communication goals and current course offerings. Conceived as a partner and prerequisite course for COMM 455 (Documentary II: Production and Post-Production), Documentary I represents an important attempt on the part of the communications department not only to expand its course offerings to its own majors and minors, but to UTC students as a whole. Because the course provides a critical approach to documentary study that focuses on the rhetorical power, investigative techniques, and stylistic conventions of the genre, it promises to develop communication majors’ understanding of visual rhetoric and investigative reporting techniques and, in so doing, help them succeed in today’s highly competitive job market. Moreover, as an interdisciplinary course of potential interest to students majoring in art, history, political science, anthropology, philosophy, and sociology, the course helps fulfill the College of Arts & Sciences’ goal of strengthening UTC’s interdisciplinary focus.

Effect on Students: As a communications elective, this course should have no or negligible effect on communication majors’ timely completion of the degree.

2c. Effect on other departments/programs’ requirements. The addition of this course to the Department of Communication curriculum will provide communication minors an additional Department of Communication elective. Aside from this, effects on other departments/ programs should be negligible.

²Fox, Michael. (Oct. 22, 2004). “Truth or Faction; The Year of the Political Documentary,” *Inside Indies*, downloaded Oct. 4, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/insideindies/infocus/truthorfaction/>

SYLLABUS

DOCUMENTARY I: HISTORY, THEORY & PRACTICE

Professor: Elizabeth Gailey, PhD
 Office: 208 Frist Hall
 Office Hours: MW 4:30-5:30 p.m.; TTh 4:30-6
 p.m. and by appt.

Office Phone: (423) 425-5201
 Email: Elizabeth-Gailey@utc.edu
 Class Location: Fletcher 100
 Class Time: MW 2-3:20 p.m.

"All great fiction films tend toward documentary, just as all great documentaries tend toward fiction."
 --Jean-Luc Godard

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Introduces students to the theory, history, aesthetics, editing practices, ethics, and politics of the genre, as well as concept development and visual storytelling techniques. Includes analysis of significant documentaries and preparation of a treatment for a short documentary. *(3 hours)

COURSE OVERVIEW

The historical and theoretical component of the course focuses on documentary film evolution and modes (expository, poetic, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative), with an emphasis on the formal devices (e.g. sound, editing, rhythm, structure, composition), rhetorical techniques, and ethical implications of each. Through readings, in-class screenings, lectures, written assignments, and exams, students gain an understanding of the elements involved in the creation of emotionally and intellectually powerful non-fiction films. In the practice component of the course, students research and write a treatment for a short documentary.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to the genre's history, conventions, aesthetics, ethics, and rhetorical strategies
- To address central theoretical issues associated with the documentary, including blurred definitions and boundaries, ethical dilemmas, and unique claims to objectivity, truth, and authority
- To enhance students' critical thinking and visual literacy skills
- To expose students to outstanding examples of investigative journalism in the documentary form
- To familiarize students with the pre-production process (research and proposal writing) involved in the creation of documentary films

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. *Introduction to Documentary* by Bill Nichols (Indiana, 2001)
2. *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* by Timothy Corrigan (Longman, 2007) (On Reserve at Lupton Library)
3. Other assigned readings on Blackboard.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS (on reserve at Lupton Library)

1. *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction* by Patricia Aufderheide (Oxford, 2007)

2. *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*. (On Reserve)
3. *Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film* by Erik Barnouw (Oxford, 1993) .

COURSE GRADES

1. *Quizzes* (15%): Short quizzes given at the beginning of class to help students complete reading assignments and get more out of films screened and discussed in class. Quizzes will consist of from 2-5 questions (each requiring one-two sentence answers).
2. *Midterm Exam* (45%): Multiple choice, identifications, short-answer, and some essays.
3. *Documentary Film Analysis* (20%): discussion/analysis of a full-length (1-2 hr.) documentary film not covered in class. Papers should address the following:
 - In which of Nichols' documentary categories does this film fit, and why?
 - Using Bernard's (pp. 15-28) components of nonfiction films, describe your documentary's *topic, exposition, theme, protagonists/antagonists, plot line ("train") story arc, and major conflict(s)*.
 - How influential was the film as a source of new socio-cultural, political, economic, and/or historical insights? Provide examples of specific examples.
 - Your own intellectual/emotional reactions to the film.
4. *Treatment* (20%): Students will prepare a (5-10 page, typed, double-spaced) treatment for a short documentary film designed for future production. Treatments will include: (a) the documentary mode or style selected for the film, as well as justification and inspiration for using this approach; (b) a comprehensive list of sources, including individuals and archival materials to be used in the film; (c) photographs, story board, or short video footage to illustrate stylistic or other aspects of the project; and (d) a detailed discussion of the structure, tone, b-roll, and aesthetics of the film, as well as a rough shooting schedule and potential audience for the work.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Paradoxes of the Documentary

Screening (clips): *Short Films*, Lumiere Brothers, 1896-1897; *Nanook of the North*, Robert Flaherty, 1922; *The Fast Runner*, Zacharias Kunuk 2001; *Grizzly Man*, Werner Herzog, 2005
 Readings: *Nanook of the North: Fiction, Truth, and the Documentary Contract* by Jeffrey Geiger, in *Film Analysis*, 118-137 (Blackboard); Robert Flaherty, "[How I Filmed 'Nanook of the North,'](#)" *World's Work* (October 1922): 632-640

Week 2 The Art of the Documentary

Screenings: *Man with a Movie Camera*, Dziga Vertov, 1929; *Rain*, Joris Ivens, 1929; *Sans Soleil*, Chris Marker, 1984
 Readings: Andre Bazin, *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* (Blackboard); Roland Barthes, Excerpts from *Camera Lucida* (Blackboard); Barnouw, *Documentary*, 1-82; Corrigan, Chapters 1-2

Week 3 Expository Documentary

Screenings: *Night Mail*, Harry Watt & Basil Wright, 1936; *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, Pare Lorentz, 1936; *Listen to Britain*, Humphrey Jennings, 1942; *The Thin Blue Line*, Errol Morris, 1998

Readings: Nichols text, pp. 20-42; Corrigan, Chapters 3-4

Week 4 Holocaust Documentaries

Screening: *Triumph of the Will*, Leni Riefenstahl, 1935; *Night and Fog*, Alain Resnais, 1955; *Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann, 1985

Readings: Nichols text, 42-60; Aufderheide, 56-136; Corrigan, Chapters 5-6

Week 5 Observational Modes: Cinéma Vérité

Screenings: *Momma Don't Allow*, Karel Reisz & Tony Richardson, 1955; *Lonely Boy*, Wolf Koenig & Roman Kroitor, 1962; *Don't Look Back*, Pennebaker, 1967; *Titicut Follies*, Frederick Wiseman and John Marshall, 1967

Readings: Nichols, pp. 1-20 & 61-81; "No Lies: Direct Cinema as Rape: (Blackboard); "Direct Cinema and the Myth of Informed Consent: The Case of Titicut Follies, pp. 58-90 (Blackboard)

Week 6 War Documentaries: Vietnam

Screenings: *In the Year of the Pig*, Emile de Antonio, 1968; *Hearts and Minds*, Peter Davis, 1974; *The Fog of War*, Errol Morris, 2003

Readings: Nichols, 82- 98; (other readings on Blackboard)

Week 7 MIDTERM EXAM (**removed Final Exam & substituted paper analyzing a documentary**)

Week 8: U.S. Political Documentaries

Screenings: *Harlan County USA*, Barbara Kopple, 1976; [Labor documentaries](#); *Roger & Me*, Michael Moore, 1989; TBA (docs related to Geo. W. Bush Administration)

Readings: Nichols text, 99-177 & Nichols 139-167, Liz Stubbs, *Documentary Filmmakers Speak*, 109-125 and 209-220 (Blackboard)

Due in class: Idea Research and Development #1

Week 9 The Ethnographic Documentary

Screenings: *The Ax Fight*, Tim Asch & Napoleon Chagnon, 1975; *Reassemblage*, Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1982; *Forest of Bliss*, Robert Gardner, 1985

Readings: Emilie Bickerton, "The Camera Possessed" (Blackboard); Nancy N. Chen, "Speaking Nearby" (Blackboard)

Week 10 Documenting Self and Society

Screenings: *Sherman's March*, Ross McElwee, 1968; *Tarnation*, Jonathan Caouette, 2003

Readings: Ellis and McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film*, pp. 293-325 (Blackboard); Liz Stubbs, *Documentary Filmmakers Speak*, 93-108 & 127-207; Jim Lane, "The Convergence of Autobiography and Documentary," 11-32 (Blackboard); Scott MacDonald, "Southern Exposure: An Interview with Ross McElwee," 13-23 (Blackboard)

Week 11 The Observer and the Observed (Ethical Issues)

Screenings: *The Up Series*, Michael Apted, 1964-2005; *Dancing Outlaw*, Jacob Young, 1991; *My Kid Could Paint That*, Amir Bar-Lev, 2007

Readings: Paula Rabinowitz, “Wreckage Upon Wreckage” (Blackboard); John Corner, “Performing the Real” (Blackboard)

Week 12 Global Documentary

Screenings: *Bus 174*, José Padilha & Felipe Lacerda, 2002

Readings: B. Ruby Rich, “Documentary Disciplines” (Blackboard); Amy Villarejo, “Bus 174” (Blackboard); Patricia White, “Cinema Solidarity” (Blackboard)

Due in Class: Documentary Analysis Paper

Week 13 Treatment and Production Workshop

Discussion of documentary treatments and demonstration of basic camera techniques. Students work in groups on film experience assignment.

Readings: Examples of documentary treatments; production readings (Blackboard)

Due in Class: Idea Research and Development #2

Week 14 Performative Documentary

Screenings: *Tongues Untied*, Marlon Riggs, 1990; *Sink or Swim*, Su Friedrich, 1990; *Blue*, Derek Jarman, 1993; *The Gleaners & I*, Agnes Varda, 2000

Readings: César Aira, *An Episode in the Life of a Landscape Painter* (on reserve at Lupton Library); Corrigan, 109-176 (Blackboard)

Week 15 Documentary Activism

Screenings: *Iraq for Sale*, Robert Greenwall, *30 Frames a Second: The WTO in Seattle*, Rustin Thompson, 2000, *For the Bible Tells Me So*

Readings: Excerpts from *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell, 2002 and *The Video Activist Handbook*, 2001 (Blackboard); [Byron Hurt](#)

Due in class: Short Doc Treatment

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Carolyn and Thomas Benson, *Documentary Dilemmas: Frederick Wiseman's Titicut Follies* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991).
- Andrejevic, Mark. *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).
- Arthur, Paul. Jargons of Authenticity, from M. Renov (ed.), *Theorizing Documentary*. (Routledge, 1993).
- Barsam, Richard M., ed. *Nonfiction Film Theory and Criticism* (New York, 1976).
- Barnouw, Dagmar. Seeing and Believing: The Thin Blue Line of Documentary Objectivity. *Common Knowledge*, (1995). 4, 1:129-143.
- Bullert, B. J "Roger & Me and the Heartbeat of America," from *Public Television: Politics and the Battle over Documentary Film*. (Rutgers University Press, 1997).
- Davidson, David. "Depression America and the Rise of the Social Documentary Film." *Chicago Review* 34.1 (Summer 1983): 69-88.
- Eitzen, Dirk. "When Is a Documentary?: Documentary as a Mode of Reception," *Cinema Journal* 1995, 35(1), 81-102.
- Ellis, Jack C. *The Documentary Idea: A Critical History of English-language Documentary Film and Video* (Prentice Hall, 1989).
- Gross, Larry, John Stuart Katz, and Jay Ruby, eds. *Image Ethics: The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film, and Television* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988).
- Hinton, David. "The Nuremberg Trilogy," *The Films of Leni Riefenstahl* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow, 2000)
- Lane, Jim. *The Autobiographical Documentary in America* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).
- _____. Notes on Theory and the Autobiographical Documentary Film in America. *Wide Angle*, 1993,15(3), 21-36.
- Macdonal, Kevin and Mark Cousins. *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996).
- Mamber, Stephen. "Direct Cinema and the Crisis Structure," *Cinema Verite in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 1974): 115-140.
- Monaco, James. "The Language of Film: Signs and Syntax," from *How to Read a Film*. (Oxford University Press, 1989).
- Murch, Walter, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2nd ed. Silman-James Press, 2001.
- Nichols, Bill, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind., 1994.
- _____. Representing Reality. M. Renov (Ed.), *Theorizing Documentary*. (Routledge, 1991).
- Rose, Vivien Ellen and Julie Corle, "A Trademark Approach to the Past: Ken Burns, the Historical Profession, and Assessing Popular Presentations of the Past," *The Public Historian* 25:3 (Summer 2003): 49-59.
- Rothman, William. "Land Without Bread" *Documentary Film Classics* (New York, 1997), pp. 21-38.
- Zimmermann, Patricia R., *States of Emergency : Documentaries, Wars, Democracies*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

DOCUMENTARY TREATMENT ASSIGNMENT

The documentary treatment or proposal is generally the first document a filmmaker prepares in the pre-production process. Offering a concise description of the overall vision and objectives of the project, the treatment is used to obtain financial backing and support from collaborators. It typically includes a section outlining the budget. Although your treatment requires neither a budget nor collaborators, writing it will force you to conduct research on your topic, identify likely sources, decide on a stylistic approach, come up with a working structure, and work through some of the inevitable obstacles faced by documentary video producers (e.g., permissions, lack of access, technical challenges).

Assignment: Prepare a five-page, typed, double-spaced proposal for an 8-10 minute video documentary. Assume that your professor is your “financial backer” and that you must convince her that your film is worth supporting and that it will succeed as outlined. Unconvincing proposals will require selection of new topics or revisions (as well as grade reductions).

Your proposal should include the following (use subheadings for each):

- (Working) Title
- Category: What documentary type or types (observational, interactive, etc.) does your film fall within?
- Synopsis: A brief summary of the story at the heart of your documentary. Use the following terms from Bernard: *story, conflict, theme, emotional impact*
- Structure: Decide on the *arc* your story will take (based on the research you’ve conducted). If possible, divide the story into Acts (I, II, & III) and describe the climax and anticlimax. If it helps to exhibit your ideas on structure in storyboard form, feel free to do so.
- Characters: A list of protagonists/antagonists
- Soundtrack: A discussion of narration, music, and/or other sound elements you plan to include
- Social Context and Research Background: Explain the larger historical and/or social framework/context for your documentary. For example, the social context for a documentary on a local environmental activist fighting for cleaner rivers might include a brief history of the type of industries responsible for polluting our city’s waterways. You’ll need at least 5-6 sources. Try finding articles and books on your topic by searching online databases at UTC’s Lupton Library and the Hamilton County Library downtown, media sources such as the Chattanooga-Times Free Press, The Echo, The Pulse, and local TV news. Also check out the Chattanooga Regional History Museum and the African-American Museum if appropriate.
- Source List: Who specifically do you plan to interview for the film (provide brief biographies of each)?
- Shot List: Based on your work on the structure of the proposed film, create a list of all shots/scenes—A-roll and B-roll—that you’ll need.
- Be sure to include an appropriately cited bibliography at the end.

Evaluation Criteria: Proposals earning an “A” will demonstrate considerable research and planning, as well as creativity and knowledge of terms from the assigned readings. “B” treatments will be thorough and detailed, but will devote less attention to research and/or lack the specificity and careful planning evident in “A” papers. “C” papers will be less complete and lack the insights and planning evident in “A” and “B” papers. “D” papers will demonstrate a clear lack of effort, thought, and research and may have spelling and grammar errors. “F” papers will be incomplete, extremely lacking in detail and thoughtful planning, and may be poorly written.

Evaluation Criteria for Film Analysis Paper

(adapted from Mark Freeman, PhD)

A. This is an exceptionally thorough, well-written analytical paper. It makes a cogent argument, supports it with specific examples and makes reference to a variety of credible outside resources. It considers form and content, and may include discussion of the relationship of the filmmaker to subjects and audiences, as well as ethical concerns. The author demonstrates familiarity with appropriate documentary theory and history. The analysis supplies sufficient cultural, historical, social and/or economic context to evaluate film under discussion. It may refer to other films or filmmakers to further develop the case. The research including five or more sources and relies primarily on books and serious journals rather than internet or newspaper reviews.

B. This paper is similar to an “A” paper, but the arguments may be somewhat less developed, the analysis less compelling. This paper is a solid piece of work, which demonstrates a clear understanding of the major concepts considered in class. It may have fewer “high level” sources and be less thorough than an “A” paper..

C. A paper earning a “C” has multiple deficiencies. It may be unfocused or unclear about key concepts of documentary theory or history. The argument is generally weaker and much less developed than in a “B” paper, and it may tend to rely heavily on plot summaries. There is little or no reference to documentary theory, history or social context. Sources tend to be missing or less analytical and credible than in a “B” paper. The writing may be weak and less than clear.

D. This paper is very poorly written and organized. There is little or no analysis. There are major errors and misconceptions. Sources are inappropriate or non-existent. There is little evidence of care or effort expended to address the issues at hand.