

Erica Romaine
Fall 2007
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Thursdays 9:15AM-12:15PM

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DOCUMENTARY EXPRESSION IN AMERICA
01:050:315

Required Texts:

Bulosan, Carlos. 1943. America is in the Heart: A Personal History. U of Washington Press, 1973.

Capote, Truman. 1965. In Cold Blood. New York: Vintage Books, 1994

Frank, Thomas. What's the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America. New York: Owl Books, 2005

Riis, Jacob. 1890. How the Other Half Lives (edition w. photos). New York: Dover Books, 1971.

Sides, Hampton. Americana: Dispatches from the New Frontier. New York: Anchor Books, 2004.

Willis, Deborah. Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography. New York: New Press, 1996.

Yeziarska, Anzia. 1925. Bread Givers: A Novel. New York: Persea Books, 2005.

Online sources as listed in course schedule.

Electronic reserve sources as listed in course schedule, available through RU Libraries.

Course Description:

This course will analyze the social and aesthetic functions of documentary in film, photography, journalism, biography, and the non-fiction novel. We will focus on critical questions that documentarians have pursued in their attempts to record phenomena and create cultural products about U.S. culture, society and politics. We will pay a great deal of attention to medium and form by considering the qualities and features distinct to various documentary media, including print and radio journalism, oral history, documentary film and video, web/net/electronic media, and fictionalized approaches to documenting.

Our goal is to investigate some of the key issues and questions at stake in documentary and in constructions of "America." What does it mean to document people and/or culture? What is the role of the documentarian? What is the relationship between documentary and fiction? What are some of the ethical questions at stake in exposing private subjects to the public domain through the documentary project?

Course Policies and Requirements:

Workload:

Each member of the class will produce 4 short papers (two papers of 3-4 pages and two of 5-6 pages) addressing particular filmic and written texts included in the course materials. In addition, students will work in small groups throughout the semester to produce a documentary on a topic and in the format of their choosing (as approved by instructor). The documentary will be the culminating project for the course and is heavily weighted. Each student will receive the same grade as the members of his/her group for the final draft of the documentary. All other

assignments pertaining to the project will receive individual grades based on effort, performance, analysis and presentation. The assignments leading up to the final documentary are as follows:

Proposal /Annotated Bibliography: (2-3 pages) Each student will produce a proposal for The documentary including a group project overview (which may be written as a group) and an individual statement page written by each each student, including the students roles and responsibilities as a member of the production team. Each student will also produce an annotated bibliography with at least 3 sources pertaining to the group topic.

Rough Draft: length and form will depend on your group's project

Presentation: Students will present final documentaries in groups with each student responsible for a component of the presentation.

Final Draft: The final draft of the project will be a polished, well-researched, and well-executed group documentary. Students may choose from a number of media and formats, such as radio documentary, print journalism, online blogging, documentary film/video and still photography.

Collaborative Evaluation Paper: Each student is required to keep detailed notes of all group meetings, plans, and division of duties. Notebooks should be organized by dates and entries. At the end of the semester, each student will turn in this notebook along with a 2-3 page paper evaluating the collaborative process and her/his own role in it.

Under special circumstances, students will be permitted to produce documentary projects individually. If you are interested in doing so, then you will need to consult with me very early in the semester.

In addition to our class meetings there will be six film screenings scheduled during the semester. Viewing these films is required. If you cannot attend screenings you are responsible for viewing the films on reserve at the Douglass/Music Library during the week before the screening.

Policies:

As this course meets only once a week, attendance and active participation are crucial

Any student missing more than two class meetings will not be able to pass this course

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the dates assigned. Late papers will be penalized one-half letter grade per day late.

Your work and conduct for this course must adhere to Rutgers University's Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students which can be found online at:

<http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy> All papers and presentations must represent your own, original work, done for this course only. If you submit work that has been copied without attribution or that has been prepared by someone other than you or that in any way misrepresents somebody else's work as your own, your work will be failed and you will face discipline by the University. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it.

E. Romaine
Fall 2007

Documentary Expression in America
Class Schedule

(All assignments are listed on date due)

Thurs. Sept. 6th: Course Introduction
What is Documentary?

Thurs. Sept. 13th: NO CLASS -- assignment discussion on Sept. 20th
Reading assignment: AMERICANA pp. 3-60
Online assignment: "StoryCorps: Recording America"
URL: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4516989>
Listen to: "Taking the Leap Onstage as a Teenager" p.7
"In the Bronx, One Passenger in a Thousand" p.7
"Learning to Live With Cerebral Palsy" p.7
"The Day Bonnie and Clyde Came Calling" home page

Thurs. Sept. 20th: Discussion of recording anecdotes, passing moments and ephemera.
Reading assignment: AMERICANA pp. 89-108, 175-190, 329-342, 355-363.
Online assignment: "Radio Diaries"
URL: <http://www.radiodiaries.org/>
Listen to: "Nick in Salt Lake City Utah: Home School to High School" in Teenage Diaries p.3
"Jeff in Boston: Halffrican" in Teenage Diaries p.1
"David Isay's Hearing Voices Project"
URL: <http://www.hearingvoices.com/stories.php>
Listen to: "Letters to Butchie" in "Portraits of a Plague" Stories p.18
"Radio Rookies"
URL: <http://www.wnyc.org/radiorookies/Mosholu/index.html>
Choose to listen to a recording from Veralyn, Derrick, Chico, or Cat, in the Mosholu section.

Thurs. Sept. 27th: Discussion of Oral History and Personal Narrative
Reading assignment: AMERICA IS IN THE HEART pp. 3-71 OR
BREAD GIVERS pp. 1-66
Online assignment: "American Memory: Voices from the Days of Slavery"
URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/index.html>
Audio interview section.
Listen to: Interview with Alice Gaston, Gee's Bend, Alabama, 1941, part I
Interview with Mrs. Laura Smalley, Hempstead, Texas, 1941, part I
Interview with Uncle Billy McCrea, Jasper, Texas, 1940, part I
Interview with Charlie Smith, Bartow, Florida, March 17, 1975
PAPER # 1 DUE

(DEIA: Schedule Cont'd)

- Thurs. Oct. 4th: Discussion of Personal Narrative/Becoming American
Reading assignment: AMERICA IS IN THE HEART, pp. 72-319 OR
BREAD GIVERS, pp. 67-297
- Thurs. Oct. 11th: Discussion of Documentary Photography
Reading Assignment: HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES, pp. 1-69, 77-97,
109-121 (View all photos in Riis book)
PICTURING US, pp. 43-53, 89-102, 113-126, 171-179
(electronic reserve) Susan Sontag "In Plato's Cave" ON PHOTOGRAPHY
(electronic reserve) William J. Mitchell "The Photographic Essay: Four Case
Studies" PICTURE THEORY.
PAPER #2 DUE
- Thurs. Oct 18th: Discussion of Documentary Film/Video
Reading Assignment: Bill Nichols "The Domain of Documentary" (elec. rsv.)
Deirdre Boyle "A Brief History of American
Documentary Video" (electronic reserve)
PROPOSAL AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE
- Thurs. Oct 25th: Discussion of Documentary Film/Video (cont'd)
Reading Assignment: Paula Rabinowitz "History in Your Own Home: *Cinema
(electronic reserve) Verite, Docudrama and America's Families*"
(electronic reserve) Ron Burnett "The Politics of Culture and Community"
(electronic reserve) James M. Moran "Wedding Video and its Generation"
- Thurs. Nov 1st: Discussion of Documentary Novel
Reading Assignment: IN COLD BLOOD pp. 3-300
- Thurs. Nov 8th: Discussion of First Person Journalism and Documentary Novel (cont'd)
Reading Assignment: IN COLD BLOOD pp. 300-343
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS pp. 1-109
ROUGH DRAFT DUE
- Thurs. Nov 15th: Discussion of First Person Journalism (cont'd)
Reading Assignment: WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS pp. 110-190
(electronic reserve) Matthew Bernstein "Documentaphobia and Mixed
Modes: Michael Moore's Roger & Me"
PAPER #3 DUE
- Tuesday Nov. 20th : Discussion of Internet: Blogging and Podcasting
Reading Assignment: Joshua Gamson "Gay Media, Inc.: Media Structures,
The New Gay Conglomerates and Collective
(electronic reserve) Sexual Identities." (cont'd next page)

(DEIA: Schedule Cont'd)

Tuesday Nov. 20th: Cont'd

Reading Assignment Cont'd:

(electronic reserve) Howard Rheingold "The Virtual Community"

(electronic reserve) Steven Silberman "We're Teen, We're Queer, and
We've Got E-Mail"

Online Assignment: "Blogosphere: From Wikipedia the free encyclopedia"

URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blogosphere>

David Pogue "In One Stroke, Podcasting Hits
Mainstream.

URL: T.B.A.

PAPER #4 DUE

Thurs. Nov. 22nd: NO CLASS-Thanksgiving

Viewing Assignment: During the break watch a popular reality TV
Show about domestic life in the US (Such as Supernanny)
and take notes for discussion.

Thurs. Nov. 29th: Discussion of Reality TV/Documenting Domestic Culture

Reading Assignment: Bill Nichols: Reality TV and Social Perversion"
(electronic reserve)

(electronic reserve) Michael Renov "Video Confessions"

BEGIN DOCUMENTARY PRESENTATIONS

FINAL DOCUMENTARIES DUE

Thurs. Dec. 6th: Final Class wrap-up

DOCUMENTARY PRESENTATIONS (Cont'd)

COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION PAPER AND NOTEBOOK DUE