

050:315

American Documentary

This course will analyze the social and aesthetic functions of documentary in film, photography, journalism, and other media. 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 also pay a great deal attention to medium and form. The course will consider the qualities and features distinct to various documentary media, including print and radio journalism, oral history, documentary film and video, ethnography, and new media.

Our goal in this course is to investigate some of the key issues and questions at stake in documenting cultures, practices, and events in the United States. 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?