COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will analyze the social and aesthetic functions of documentary in film, photography, journalism, biography, and the nonfiction 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 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 fictional approaches to documenting.

Our goal in this course 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?

REQUIRED TEXTS
BOOKS:
Online sources as listed in course schedule
Course packet available through University Copies

ASSIGNMENTS
Attendance/Participation/In-class Assignments
This course is an advanced undergraduate seminar and active participation is crucial. Because of this, attendance is extremely important. More than two unexcused absences will negatively
Fleetwood Syllabus, Documentary Expression in America, 2

affect your grade. All students are required to hold one conference with instructor to discuss course progress and collaborative documentary project. Students will not be able to make up in-class assignments, unless absence has been approved prior to class or there is a documented emergency or serious illness.

Additionally, students are required to watch six (6) films outside of our regularly scheduled time. The screenings will be held in the Douglass Campus Biology Bldg, Room 205 (building next door to Ruth Adams) at 5:45pm on the following dates: 13 Sept, 4 Oct, 18 Oct, 1 Nov, 15 Nov, 29 Nov. If you are unable to make the screening times, then it is your responsibility to watch each film on your own time. Each film will be on reserve at the Music Library during the week of its respective screening. Students must sign in at each film screening or sign the check out sheet taped to the reserve copies. Skipping the screenings or not setting aside time to view the films will negatively affect your grade and ability to complete assignments.

**Book Review (2)**
Students will write two book reviews (one: 3-4 pages; one: 4-5 pages) over the course of the semester. Deadlines are listed in the course schedule. For each review, the professor will give more detailed instructions as the date approaches. In both instances, students should assume that the reader is familiar with the texts and should spend little, if any, time summarizing the texts. Instead, the reviews should engage with the respective texts in light of critical and analytical issues discussed in class and in theoretical readings.

**Film Review (2)**
Students will write two short reviews of films (one: 3-4 pages; one: 4-5 pages) chosen by the professor for analysis. More detailed instructions will be provided closer to date. Each review should offer a detailed analysis of the respective film and should apply course concepts to interpret it. Film reviews should differ from book reviews in one critical aspect. They should address the visual components of the film. Students should pay particular care to the cinematography, editing, and narrative style.

**Collaborative Documentary**
Over the course of the semester, students will work in small groups to produce a documentary on a topic and in the format of their choosing (must be approved by instructor). During the beginning of the semester, we will brainstorm topics and students will be grouped based on their interests. The documentary will be the culminating project for the course and is heavily weighted. Students in each group will receive the same grade for the final draft of the documentary. However, all other assignments pertaining to the project will receive individuated grades based on effort, performance, and presentation. The assignments pertaining to the documentary are as follows:

- **Proposal/Annotated Bibliography (2-3 pages)**
  Each student must produce a proposal and an annotated bibliography. The proposal must consist of one to two paragraphs that give an overview to the project (this overview can be written as a group). The proposal should also include one page written individually by each group member explaining his/her role and responsibility as a member of the production team. This document should also include an annotated bibliography with at least three entries pertaining to the group’s topic. Each member of the group must produce her/his own
bibliography. There should be no more than one duplicate entry across your group’s bibliographies.

Rough Draft
Mid-way through the semester, each student must produce a working draft of her/his contribution to the documentary. The length and form of this draft will depend heavily on your group’s topic and chosen medium. Further details will be discussed closer to date and in consultation with instructor.

Presentation
Students are required to present the final version of their documentary at the end of the semester. While students will present as a group, each should be responsible for a component of the presentation.

Final Draft
The culminating assignment for the course 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, students will turn in this notebook along with a 2-3 page paper evaluating the collaborative process and her/his own role in the collaboration.

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.

GRADE BREAKDOWN
Attendance/Participation/In-class Assignments: 10%
Book Review 1 (3-4 pages): 10%
Book Review 2 (4-5 pages): 15%
Film Review 1 (3-4 pages): 10%
Film Review 2 (4-5 pages): 15%
Collaborative Documentary: 40%
  Documentary Grade Breakdown
  Proposal/Annotated Bibliography: 5%
  Rough Draft: 5%
  Presentation: 5%
  Final Draft: 20%
  Collaborative Evaluation Paper: 5%

Total 100%

POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS
Assignments are due at the beginning of class. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day late. All papers must be double-spaced, typeset with Times or Times New Roman 12pt font, and have page
numbers and one-inch margins. Format of papers should adhere to a recognized style manual (such as MLA, APA and Chicago).

Students must use the Internet, the class listserv, and email for this class. All assignments and course updates will be posted online and many of the reading assignments are electronic documents. There are a number of computers on campus where you can access the Internet. If you have problems accessing the appropriate online source, it is your responsibility to contact me for assistance at least one day before class.

Students are expected to complete all readings for each class, to arrive ready to engage with the written and visual materials assigned, and to prepare thoughtful responses to course materials. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as the semester progresses. It is your responsibility to stay abreast of changes to the course schedule by attending class, checking email regularly, and contacting instructors for updated information.

**Plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated.**
Except for the collaborative documentary project, all assignments that a student submits must be his/her own independent effort. Students must cite properly all outside sources consulted in preparing written assignments. Students should review the university’s policy on academic integrity (see the website for the Teaching Excellence Center: http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html).

The Writing Program maintains a website that defines and discusses plagiarism: http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/201/plagiarism_policy/. This site clarifies many issues regarding the university’s policy on academic integrity. Failure to comply with this policy can result in failure of the course. Ignorance of university policy is not an excuse.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Th 1 Sept:** **INTRODUCTION/ WHAT IS DOCUMENTARY?**
Course overview

**Tu 6 Sept:** **RECORDING ANECDOTES, PASSING MOMENTS, & EPHEMERA**
*Americana*, pp. 3-60
“StoryCorps: Recording America”
Listen to:
“In the Bronx, One Passenger in a Thousand”
“Learning to Live With Cerebral Palsy”
“Taking the Leap Onstage as a Teenager”

**Th 8 Sept:** **RECORDING ANECDOTES, PASSING MOMENTS, & EPHEMERA**
*Americana*, pp. 89-108, 175-190, 329-342, 355-363
Radio Diaries URL: http://www.radiodiaries.org/
Listen to: “Remembering the General Slocum”
David Isay’s Hearing Voices Project: http://www.hearingvoices.com/isay.html
Listen to: “Letters to Butchie”

Radio Rookies: http://www.wnyc.org/radiorookies/
Choose to listen to a recording from Veralyn, Derrick, Chico, or Cat.

Tu 13 Sept: **ORAL HISTORY & PERSONAL NARRATIVE**
America is in the Heart, pp. 3-71  OR  Bread Givers, pp. 1-66
American Memory: “Voices from the Days of Slavery”
URL: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/index.html
Listen to:
Interview with Alice Gaston, Gee's Bend, Alabama, 1941, part 1
Interview with Mrs. Laura Smalley, Hempstead, Texas, 1941 part 1
Interview with Uncle Billy McCrea, Jasper, Texas, 1940, part 1
Interview with Charlie Smith, Bartow, Florida, March 17, 1975
clips: Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives


Th 15 Sept: **PERSONAL NARRATIVE CONT/ “BECOMING AMERICAN”**
America is in the Heart, pp. 72-151  OR  Bread Givers, pp. 1-66
clips: First Person Plural, Silent Sacrifices: Voices of the Filipino American Family, Hester Street

Tu 20 Sept: **PERSONAL NARRATIVE CONT/ “BECOMING AMERICAN”**
America is in the Heart, pp. 72-151  OR  Bread Givers, pp. 67-138
clips: All across America, Taking Root, The Americans

Th 22 Sept: **PERSONAL NARRATIVE CONT/ “BECOMING AMERICAN”**
America is in the Heart, pp. 152-225  OR  Bread Givers, pp. 139-201
clips: A Great Wonder, A Day without a Mexican

Tu 27 Sept: **PERSONAL NARRATIVE CONT/ “BECOMING AMERICAN”**
America is in the Heart, pp. 226-319  OR  Bread Givers, pp. 202-297

Th 29 Sept: **DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY/ CASE STUDY: CIVIL RIGHTS**

Tu 4 Oct: **CIVIL RIGHTS CONT/LYNCHING PHOTOGRAPHY & POSTCARDS**
Read Picturing Us, 43-53, 89-102, 113-126, 171-179
clips: Eyes on the Prize, Black is…Black ain’t, The Murder of Emmett Till, Brother Outsider


**Th 6 Oct:** DOCUMENTING CHINATOWN
clips: The Chinatown Files

**Tu 11 Oct:** DOCUMENTARY FILM/VIDEO THEORY
Nichols, Bill. “The Domain of Documentary.” [COURSE PACKET]

clips: Nanook of the North, The Plow that Broke the Plains, Titicut Follies, High School

**Th 13 Oct:** DOCUMENTARY FILM/VIDEO THEORY
Rabinowitz, Paula. “History in Your Own Home: *Cinema Verite*, Docudrama, and America’s Families.” [COURSE PACKET]


clips: Big Mama, Hoop Dreams, Blue Vinyl, Hybrid

**Tu 18 Oct:** DOCUMENTARY NOVEL
In Cold Blood, pp. 3-79


**Th 20 Oct:** DOCUMENTARY NOVEL
In Cold Blood, pp. 79-123

**Tu 25 Oct:** DOCUMENTARY NOVEL
In Cold Blood, pp. 123-198
Th 27 Oct: **DOCUMENTARY NOVEL**  
In Cold Blood, pp. 199-248

Tu 1 Nov: **DOCUMENTARY NOVEL**  
DUE: ROUGH DRAFT  
In Cold Blood, pp. 251-343

**1 NOV: FILM SCREENING: Roger & Me, dir. Michael Moore. Warner Home Video, 1989.**

Th 3 Nov: **FIRST-PERSON JOURNALISM**  
What’s the Matter with Kansas?, pp. 1-66

[COURSE PACKET]  
clips: Bowling for Columbine, Super Size Me

Tu 8 Nov: **FIRST-PERSON JOURNALISM**  
What’s the Matter with Kansas?, pp. 67-109  
clips: Harlan County, USA

Th 10 Nov: **FIRST-PERSON JOURNALISM**  
What’s the Matter with Kansas?, pp. 113-190

Tu 15 Nov: **ETHNOGRAPHY**  
[COURSE PACKET]


Th 17 Nov: **INTERNET: BLOGGING & PODCASTING**  
DUE: FILM REVIEW 2  

Rheingold, Howard. “The Virtual Community.” Reading Digital Culture. [COURSE PACKET]

Silberman, Steven. “We’re Teen, We’re Queer, and We’ve Got E-Mail.” [COURSE PACKET]
“Blogosphere: From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia”
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blogosphere


Tu 22 Nov: WED CLASSES MEET
Assignment: During the week of Thanksgiving Break, watch a popular reality TV show about domestic life in the U.S. Some examples are Nanny 911, Wife Swap, and Make Room for Baby. Take notes for discussion.

Tu 29 Nov: REALITY TV/DOCUMENTING DOMESTIC CULTURE
DUE: BOOK REVIEW 2
Renov, Michael. “Video Confessions.” [COURSE PACKET]
clicks: reality TV programs


Th 31 Nov: DOCUMENTARY FICTION
Drown: “Aguantando,” “Drown,” “How to Date a Browngirl…,” “No Face,” and “Negocios”
clicks: My American Daughters

Tu 6 Dec: DOCUMENTARY PRESENTATIONS
DUE: FINAL DOCUMENTARY

Th 8 Dec: DOCUMENTARY PRESENTATIONS

Tu 13 Dec: DOCUMENTARY PRESENTATIONS
DUE: COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION PAPER & NOTEBOOK

LAST DAY OF CLASSES