

# COURSE SYLLABUS

## Documentary Film Seminar

Course code: FMS 367

**Semester and year:** Spring 2019

**Day and time:** Mondays 18:30 – 21:15

**Instructor:** Mary Angiolillo, Ph.D.

**Instructor contact:** mary.angiolillo@aauni.edu tel: 602441260

**Consultation hours:** Preferably by appointment or Mondays, 17:45- 18:30

<b>Credits US/ECTS</b>	3/6	<b>Level</b>	Introductory
<b>Length</b>	15 weeks	<b>Pre-requisite</b>	None
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	Bachelors/Elective

### 1. Course Description:

This course surveys the history and contemporary vitality of non-fiction films, teaching students to appreciate the social significance and aesthetic possibilities of the form that is considered the root of cinema. The curriculum covers identifying the distinctive development and attributes of documentary; and exploring the range of subjects addressed by these films and the modes in which they do so. The course includes a visit to the largest human rights film festival in Europe.

### 2. Student learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should:

- Have a general understanding of the history, development, and current state of documentary film.
- Be able to critically discuss varied approaches towards non-fiction filmmaking
- Reflect on attending a human rights film festival as well as other screenings in the city.
- Be able to analyze a documentary film for techniques used by the filmmaker to gain and maintain audience interest, as well as formal aspects specific to documentary film.
- Understand and have experience crafting components of a documentary treatment.

### 3. Course Material: Film screenings and readings (chapters and articles to be found on NEO)

- Bordwell, David and Thompson, Kristin. *Film History: An Introduction*, NY: MacGraw-Hill, 2010. (Selected chapters)
- Nichols, Bill. "Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic" *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Autumn 2008), pp. 72-89, The University of Chicago Press.
- Petric, Vláda. "Dziga Vertov as Theorist" *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Autumn, 1978), pp. 29-44, The University of Texas Press.

- Sarris, Andrew. "Film: The Illusion of Naturalism" *The Drama Review: TDR*. Vol. 13, No. 2, Naturalism Revisited (W 1968), pp. 108-112, MIT Press.

#### 4. Teaching Methodology

The course will follow a lecture, screening and discussion format, with lectures devoted to developing an understanding of documentary film development within film history and screenings of a variety of landmark documentary films interesting for their different modes. Guest documentary filmmakers will be invited to screen their work, speak about their process and discuss the form with the students. Some class time is also devoted to student presentations of exercises assigned.

#### 5. Preliminary Course Schedule:

Date	Class Agenda
Monday, Feb. 4	<p><b>Topic:</b> Introduction and screening of <i>Czech Dream</i> (2004)(Klusak and Remunda)</p> <p><b>Description:</b> brief overview of material to be covered in class. Elaboration of syllabus</p> <p><b>Reading:</b></p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Become familiar with course readings</p>
Monday Feb. 11	<p><b>Topic:</b> Technological beginnings</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Understanding the conditions surrounding the emergence of early documentary film; first documentary filmmakers</p> <p><b>Screening:</b> Edison Kinetoscope Films, Lumiere Films, <i>Lumiere and Company</i></p> <p><b>Reading:</b> „The Invention and Early Films of the Cinema. 1880s-1904“ (Bordwell/Thompson)</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare Lumiere film exercise (53 seconds, no sound) to be presented on Feb 25th.</p>
Monday Feb. 18	<p><b>Topic:</b> The Ethnographic Illusion</p> <p><b>Screening :</b> <i>Nanook of the North</i> (Robert Flaherty, 1922) <i>Night mail</i> (Watt/Wright, 1936)</p> <p>Reading: „Film: The Illusion of Naturalism“ by Andrew Sarris</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Examining the process of documenting reality for ethnographic purposes; poetic modes of documentary</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare Lumiere film exercise (53 seconds, no sound) to be presented on Feb 25th.</p>
Monday Feb. 25	<p><b>Topic:</b> Capturing Reality</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Screening of each student's uploaded (youtube) Lumiere exercise with feedback. Discussion of Film Truth in light of Lumiere films and Vertov theory</p> <p>Screening: Student work, Vertov's „Man with a Movie Camera“</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> „Dziga Vertov as Theorist“ by Vlada Petric</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Review lecture notes and readings for test on March 18</p>
Monday March 4	<p><b>Topic:</b> The Documentary Filmmaker's Process / Guest Filmmaker</p> <p><b>Screening:</b> To be announced</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p> <p><b>Reading:</b> „Documentary and Experimental cinema in the postwar era“ (Bordwell/Thompson)</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b></p>
Monday March 11	<p><b>Topic:</b> Participation at ONE WORLD documentary film festival</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p>

	<p><b>Reading:</b>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> written critique of film viewed at festival due March 18</p>
Monday March 18	<p><b>Topic:</b> Propaganda  <b>Description:</b> Film as a powerful tool of manipulation  Screening: <i>Triumph of the Will</i> (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935); <i>Why we fight</i>, (Frank Capra)  <b>Reading:</b> „Documentary and Experimental cinema in the postwar era“ Bordwell/Thompson  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> written critique of film viewed at festival</p>
Monday March 25	<p><b>Topic:</b> Direct Cinema  <b>Description:</b> Observational mode of documentary, cinema verite vs. Direct cinema  <b>Screening:</b> Working Man’s Death by Glawogger, Salesman by Mayles  <b>Reading:</b> „Documentary and Experimental Film since the late 1980s“ (Bordwell/Thompson)  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b></p>
Monday April 8	<p><b>Topic:</b> Historical Storytelling and Documentary re-enactment  <b>Description:</b> Expository and performative modes of documentary. Components in a documentary treatment.  <b>Screening:</b> The Children’s March (Robert Houston, 1963) clips from The Untold History of the United States (Oliver Stone, 2012)  <b>Reading:</b> “<i>Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic</i>” by Bill Nichols.  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare treatment to pitch on May 6</p>
Monday April 15	<p><b>Topic:</b> Documentary Activism  <b>Description:</b> Reflexive and Participatory modes of documentary  <b>Screening:</b> <i>The Thin Blue Line</i> (Errol Moore, 1988) and clips from the <i>Sicko</i> and other work by Michael Moore  <b>Reading:</b>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare treatment to pitch on May 6</p>
Monday April 22	<p><b>No class, Easter Monday, National Holiday</b></p>
Monday April 29	<p><b>Topic:</b> Time Lapse. Guest Filmmaker  <b>Description:</b> Contemporary Czech documentary filmmaker will visit the class for screening and discussion. Discussion of time lapse mode of documentary filmmaking.  <b>Screening:</b> To be announced  <b>Reading:</b>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Prepare treatment to pitch on May 6</p>
Monday May 6	<p><b>Topic:</b> The Documentary Treatment and Pitch  <b>Description:</b> In class pitching of documentary projects  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Review lecture notes and readings for test on May 20</p>
Monday May 13	<p><b>Topic:</b> Review. Possible Guest Filmmaker and screening (on documentary modes and significant documentary films)  <b>Description:</b>  <b>Reading:</b>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Review lecture notes and readings for test on May 20</p>
Monday May 20	<p><b>Final exams' week: Test on material covered</b></p>

## 6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

### Extended Course Description:

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Attendance and Class Participation (includes in-class response sheets to films)	42	20%	Understanding themes, styles and formal aspects within documentary films. Ability to reflect on material screened and engage in critical discussion.	1, 2, 3
"Lumiere" exercise	18	20%	Ability to observe and capture moving phenomenon in reality that has potential human interest/entertainment value; ability to realize a visual story with beginning, middle, end.	1, 2, 3
Written analysis of film viewed at festival	30	20%	Ability to analyze a documentary film for techniques used by the filmmaker to gain and maintain audience interest, as well as formal aspects specific to documentary film	1, 2, 3
Documentary Treatment pitched in class	30	20%	Ability to conceive of a subject for a contemporary documentary film and imagine its development in a particular mode over the course of a short or feature length film.	1, 2, 3
Test	30	20%	Objective understanding of material explored in class and covered in readings	1, 2, 3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

## 7. Detailed description of the assignments

**[Attendance/Class Participation]:** Students will attend class regularly and devote attention to lecture and screening, being ready to comment on film in discussion after screening. For certain films, written response sheets are distributed in class to be completed during the screening, as evidence of attentive and critical viewing.]

### Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Actual Physical Attendance (=attentiveness)	33%
Thorough and correct completion of in-class response sheets	33%

Participation in class discussions on films or w/filmmaker	33%
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**["Lumiere" exercise]:** Following the examples of the Lumiere Brothers' work, the student captures 53 seconds of an activity or movement in one's environment, without reliance on sound or editing for import. Examples shown in class.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Use of cinematic material (motion, color, contrast)	25
Visual storytelling – beginning/middle/end felt in motion	25
Adherence to exercise rules: 53 seconds (10 points), no dialogue (10 points), no editing (10 points), uploaded to youtube (10 points), completed on time (10 points)	50

**[Written analysis of Film screened at One World Festival]:** Student will view a contemporary documentary and analyze it by answering questions distributed in class. More details given in class.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Understanding of documentary mode in which film was made	10
Observations on filmmaker's use of film language	20
Clarity of written work	20
Depth of observations	20
Thoughtful completion of all questions given in assignment	20
Completion of the assignment on time	10

**[Written treatment and pitch for documentary project]:** Student imagines a possible subject for a documentary film and develops a treatment for the subject, according to specific criteria (logline, synopsis, characters, place, visual and dramatic approach, distribution). More details given in class.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Subject has depth and interest, timely	20
Treatment covers all criteria assigned	20
Clarity and depth of written work	30
Clarity of pitch, adherence to time restraints, enthusiasm	20
Completion of the assignment on time	10

**[Test on objective knowledge of documentary film history, modes, significant filmmakers and their work]:** Student understands and can recount material covered in class

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Correct answer to questions on test	100

**8. General Requirements and School Policies**

**General requirements**

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules available in the Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

### **Electronic communication and submission**

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication. It is strongly recommended that any email communication between students and instructors take place in NEO LMS.

Each e-mail sent to an instructor that is about a new topic (meaning not a reply to an original email) shall have a new and clearly stated subject and shall have the course code in the subject, for example: "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question".

All electronic submissions are carried out through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required. The university recommends, as a minimal policy, that students who are absent 35 percent of the course should be failed (or administratively withdrawn from the course if the absences are excused).

### **Absence excuse and make-up options**

Should the student be absent from a class for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters, add/drop period), s/he needs to submit an Absence Excuse Form supplemented with documents proving the reasons for absence to the Assistant Dean. The form and documents must be submitted within one week of absence. If possible, it is recommended to inform the instructor about the absence in advance. Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean are entitled to make up exams they missed provided that the nature of the exam allows for a make-up. The students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week from the date the absence was excused, and for making arrangements with the instructor about make-up options as necessary.

### **Unexcused absences**

Students are allowed two unexcused absences. Absences above this number will result in their grade being lowered by five points.

**Late work:** Exercises need to be presented during the class period devoted to screenings of student work. Please follow the deadlines.

### **Electronic devices**

Any electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops...) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information...). Any other use will result in being marked absent.

No electronic devices may be used during the tests.

**Eating** is not allowed during classes.

### **Cheating and disruptive behavior**

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the activity or for the day and shall report the behavior to the Dean. Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating (e.g. whispering or passing notes) will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misbehavior the student will be expelled from the exam and the exam will be marked as failed.

## **Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center**

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.”

(Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND–REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

The types of plagiarism from 1 through 8 results in the failing grade from the assignment and must be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU. If unsure about technical aspects, students are encouraged to consult papers with tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

## **Students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities are asked to contact their instructor as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodation.

## Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95 – 100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A–	90 – 94	
B+	87 – 89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 – 86	
B–	80 – 82	
C+	77 – 79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has translated this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 – 76	
C–	70 – 72	
D+	65 – 69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 – 64	
F	0 – 59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject covered.

Prepared by and when: Mary Angiolillo November 15, 2018

Approved by and when: