

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE  
DEPARTMENT OF CINEMA AND TELEVISION ARTS

**CTVA 416: The Documentary Tradition**

Fall 2009

3 units

#10515

Classroom: Manzanita Hall 112  
Meeting time: Tuesdays, 7-9:45pm

**Class Website**

<http://www.csun.edu/~med61203>

Professor: María Elena de las Carreras, Ph.D.  
Office: Manzanita Hall 323      Office Hour: Tuesdays, 6pm  
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**Focus of the Course**

This course covers the history and development of the documentary film from the genre's beginnings to the present day. It will examine major films, movements, filmmakers and various types of documentaries from numerous national and cultural contexts. As the course progresses, it will become evident that there are many definitions, forms, political agendas and versions of reality represented by the term 'documentary film'.

**Course Requirements**

The class meets once a week for three hours of lecture, discussion and screenings. Attendance is obligatory.

Two screenings have been scheduled at the CSUN Cinematheque, Manzanita Hall 100: Monday, November 9, 7pm, *When the Wall Came Tumbling Down – 50 Hours that Changed the World* (1999), a German documentary about the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989; and Monday, November 16, 7pm, *The Promise* (1995), a fictionalized account about the same topic. Please make a note of these dates, as listed in the schedule below. Attendance to these special screenings is obligatory. Please note that other screenings or Cinematheque events may be scheduled during the semester.

There will be four graded assignments: a library-based research paper; a midterm; a film analysis paper; and a final exam.

Each week there will be an obligatory short essay (no longer than a page) examining issues discussed in the textbook, in specific articles and in documentaries screened during the semester. These short essays will be part of your attendance and participation portion of the grade.

Papers are due by 7:00pm of the day indicated. Papers submitted after that time, but before the next scheduled meeting, will be lowered by two thirds of a grade. Papers submitted after the next meeting, but before two weeks have passed will be reduced one full grade. Papers later than two weeks will not be accepted. There will be separate handouts on the papers.

All requirements must be completed satisfactorily to pass the class. There are no make-up exams or repeat screenings.

Please note that students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for test taking accommodations must provide a proctor form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on Disabilities prior to making testing arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at (818) 677-2684.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism (from a Latin word for “kidnapper”) is more than simply taking the words of others and presenting them as your own; it is also taking the ideas of others and presenting them as your own. If you use another author’s words or ideas, you must cite them in a proper format. Plagiarism and dishonesty will not be tolerated in any form. All suspected cases will be automatically turned over to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

Library-based Research Paper	20%	Due: September 22, 2009
Midterm	20%	October 20, 2009
Film Analysis Paper	20%	Due November 24, 2009
Final Exam	20%	December 15, 2009
Attendance, participation and weekly essays	20%	

## Required Textbook

Erik Barnow, Documentary. A History of the Non-Fiction Film. Second Revised Edition. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993

This book is available at the campus bookstore

Assigned readings have been put on electronic reserve at Oviatt Library. They can be accessed through the library website, under the course title CTVA 416, password: 7929.

## Recommended Text

Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, A New History of Documentary Film. New York and London: Continuum, 2007.

## Viewing List

The students will see the following eight films, outside of class, and write a single-paragraph report on each one, to be submitted the last day of class. They will choose one of these documentaries as their subject for the film analysis paper. These films will also be included in the Final Exam.

*Être et avoir* (2002, France, Nicolas Philibert)  
*Grizzly Man* (2005, dir. Werner Herzog)  
*Koyaanisqatsi* (1983, Godfrey Reggio)  
*March of the Penguins* (2005, France, Luc Jacquet)  
*Olympia* (1938, Germany, Leni Riefenstahl)  
*Roger and Me* (1983, Michael Moore)  
*Sherman's March* (1986, Ross McElwee)  
*Unknown Chaplin* (1982, Kevin Brownlow)

Some of these films can be found at the University Media Library, located on the second floor, East Wing, of Oviatt Library. You can also rent them through an online service like Netflix, or from the following video stores:

CINEFILE  
11280 Santa Monica Blvd [next to the Nuart Theater]  
West Los Angeles (310) 312 8836

EDDIE BRANDT'S SATURDAY MATINEÉ  
5006 Vineland Avenue [near Lankershim and Magnolia Blvds]  
North Hollywood (818) 506 4242

VIDIOTS  
302 Pico Blvd [near 4<sup>th</sup> Street]  
Santa Monica (310) 392 8508

A VIDEO STORE NAMED DESIRE  
11631 Santa Monica Blvd  
West Los Angeles (310) 444 0079

**TOPICS, READINGS AND SCREENINGS \***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Screenings</b>
1. Aug 25	Introduction to the course  What is a documentary film?		<i>Johnny Unitas</i> (2000, NFL Films) 56'
2. Sept 1	Early documentary  Robert Flaherty and the ethnographic film	Barnow, pp.1-51	Early documentary shorts  <i>Nanook of the North</i> (1922) 79'
3. Sept 8	<b>Workshop at Oviatt Library</b>  The class meets in Lab C <b>7-9:30pm</b>	Nichols, <u>Introduction to Documentary</u> (2001) – Chapter 6: What Types of Documentary Are There?  (Electronic reserve)	
4. Sept 15	Vertov and Soviet documentary in the 1920s	Barnow, pp.51-71	<i>Man with a Movie Camera</i> (1929, Vertov) 68'
5. Sept 22	Experimental documentary in the 1930s  <b>Library-based Research Paper due</b>	Barnow, pp.71-81	<i>Berlin, Symphony of a Great City</i> (1927, Ruttmann) 65'  <i>Ballet mécanique</i> (1924, Léger) 16'  <i>Regen</i> (1929, Ivens) 12'
6. Sept 29	John Grierson and British documentary in the 1930s	Barnow, pp.85-100  111-139	<i>Drifters</i> (1929, Grierson) 49'  <i>Song of Ceylon</i> (1937, Wright) 38'  <i>The River</i> (1937, Lorentz) 31'

7. Oct 6	German propaganda documentary	Barnow, pp. 100-111	<i>Triumph of the Will</i> (1935, Riefenstahl) 110'
8. Oct 13	World War II and documentary in the United States	Barnow, pp.139-172	<i>Prelude to War</i> (1942, Capra) 53'  <i>Battle of San Pietro</i> (Huston, 1945) 32'
9. Oct 20	World War II and documentary in Europe  <b>Midterm</b>	Barnow, pp.172-212	<i>Night and Fog</i> (1956, Resnais) 32'
10. Oct 27	The television documentary	Barnow, pp.213-218	<i>Harvest of Shame</i> (1960, Friendly) 55'
11. Nov 3	Cinéma Vérité  Direct Cinema	Barnow, pp.230-262	<i>Primary</i> (1960, Leacock) 53'  <i>Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment</i> (1963) 52'
12. Nov 9	<b>Cinematheque screening</b>  "Fall of the Wall" 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary series  Manzanita Hall 100, 7pm		<i>When the Wall Came Tumbling Down – 50 Hours that Changed the World</i> [Als die Mauer fiel] (1999, Germany, Hertle and Scholz) 89'
12. Nov 10	The personal essay film	Barnow, pp.299-327  Ellis-McLane, <u>A New History of Documentary Film</u> , Chapter 16: Video Arrives	<i>The Same River Twice</i> (2003, Robb Moss) 78'

		(Electronic reserve)	
13. Nov 16	<b>Cinematheque screening</b> “Fall of the Wall” 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary series  Manzanita Hall 100, 7pm		<i>The Promise</i> [Das Versprechen] (1995, Germany, von Trotta) 115’
13. Nov 17	The politics of history – Revisiting the Civil War	Barnow, pp.327-349  Ellis-McLane, <u>A New History of Documentary Film</u> , Chapter 17: Documentary in the 1990s  (Electronic reserve)	<i>The Civil War</i> (1990, Ken Burns) Episode 1: The Cause 99’
14. Nov 24	The political documentary in Europe  <b>Film Analysis Paper due</b>		<i>Sonata for Viola</i> (1981, USSR, dir. Alexander Sokurov and Semyon Aranovich) 75’
15. Dec 1	The institutional documentary		<i>The Greatest Good</i> (2005, dir. Steve Dunsky & Dave Steinke) 120’
16. Dec 8	The esthetic possibilities of the documentary		<i>The Fog of War</i> (2003, Errol Morris) 95’
17. Dec 15	<b>Final Exam</b>  Manzanita 112 – 8-10pm		

\* Other screenings and events may be scheduled during the semester