

Fall 2015

## FTA 4542

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FTCA 4542 - 601 HISTORY OF DOCUMENTARY FILM

Fall 2015, T: 5:00 – 7:45 PM, PAC 319

INSTRUCTOR: Laszlo Fulop OFFICE: PAC 327 Phone: 504-280-6809

OFFICE HOURS: M-W: 2:00 – 3:30 PM, T: 2:00 – 5:00 PM

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This survey class will introduce students to the history of documentary film. The class mostly deals with the western and especially American, Canadian, and British documentary traditions. There will be lectures and a lot of screenings to understand the range of styles and techniques in the history of documentary film.

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to

- identify and discuss the history and styles of documentary films from pre-cinematic era to present
- distinguish the different styles of eminent documentary filmmakers
- classify and analyze the form and style of documentary films according to categories outlined in class

This course will also help prepare students for a variety of film production courses offered in the department.

### REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

**McLane, A. Betsy: A New History of Documentary Film. 2<sup>n</sup> ed., Bloomsbury. 2012.**

ISBN-13: 978-1441124579 (available at the library)

**Nichols, Bill: Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 2014 (online edition)**

available online from the UNO library through this link:

<http://ezproxy.uno.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=698576&site=eds-live>

### RECOMMENDED INTERNET SITES:

<http://www.documentary.org/>

<http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/>

### STUDENT CONDUCT

**No computer use or cell phone use in the classroom. That means LAPTOPS must be turned off. Take notes in a notebook. Cell phones must be turned off or silenced with vibrate off before class begins and put away. No eating in class.** Students are expected to bring a spirit of respect and enthusiasm to the class discussions. Students do not need to agree with everything that is expressed, but their responses must be courteous.

### ATTENDANCE

This is a highly interactive class, so attendance is mandatory! At the same time, we all know that emergencies do happen. Because of this, no points will be taken off for the first absence from class. Please use this absence very carefully, when you feel sick or for other unexpected emergencies.

The SECOND AND EACH FOLLOWING ABSENCE will reduce the student's final grade by 5 POINTS EACH. With A TOTAL OF FIVE (5) or more absences the student will get a final grade of F for the class.

Being late: A five-minute grace period is allowed before a student is marked late. Three "late"-s make up one absence. After thirty minutes, a late student is considered absent. Leaving early is considered a "late," leaving more than 30-minutes early will be considered a missed class.

#### DEADLINES

In this class students learn professional discipline, as well. Being a successful professional revolves around meeting deadlines. Assignments, exercises, and presentations must be turned in/held on the date due. **LATE ASSIGNMENTS will be penalized 15 POINTS for the first three days (starting from the date and time when it was due) and 3 POINTS for each additional day** they are late. E.g. If you bring in your project after class, not by the time class starts (when it is due) you will lose the 15 points. No assignment will be accepted after being more than one week late. This is also a fairness issue, since students who are doing the work on time deserve to get better grades than those who are late (i.e. unfairly have more time to finish their projects). There are no make-up quizzes or exams.

#### ASSIGNMENTS:

For each of these following items a handout will explain the details and the grading.

1. **Class Presentation:** Each student will present a documentary film to the class.
2. **Quizzes:** 6 quizzes about reading/viewing material (the lowest grade will be dropped)  
**Quizzes will be unannounced and held the first 10 minutes of class. There will be no make-up quizzes.**
3. **Film Festival Paper:** You are required to attend the [New Orleans Film Festival](#) (October 14-22) for at least one documentary film (or group of short documentary films screening), or panel discussion on documentary, as part of your grade. You will submit a min. 750-word paper discussing a documentary film (or several short films) or panel(s).
4. **Essay:** One essay about a documentary filmmaker min. 2000 words
5. **Final Exam**

GRADES: All projects and exams are 100 points. Your final grade will be calculated using the following formula:

|                     |            |
|---------------------|------------|
| Class Presentation: | 10%        |
| Quizzes             | 20%        |
| Film Fest paper     | 15%        |
| Essay               | 20%        |
| Final exam:         | <u>35%</u> |
|                     | 100 %      |

Your points for the classes you missed will be deducted from these final points (see attendance).

Scale: A 91-100; B 81-90; C 71-80; D 55-70; F 0-55

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu>

**Accommodations:** It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>

## CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Classes start Wednesday, so we do not have a class on the first (half) week.

Week 2

Syllabus. Intro to class and overview. What is a documentary? Narrative and Non-narrative Filmmaking and the Origins and Early History of Documentary Films

Week 3

**Mandatory reading for class: McLane: Chapters 1, 2**

Robert Flaherty and the Ethnographic Foundations of American Documentary Filmmaking; Origins of Documentary Film: Early ethnographic documentaries and experimentations. Reality vs. realism: how far can documentary producers “control” or “create” reality.

Week 4

**Mandatory reading for class: McLane: Chapters 3, 4**

Documentary Movements of the 1920s and Early 1930s: Experiments in Montage, Compilation, Abstractionism, Surrealism, and Impressionism. The Soviet Documentary Movement of the 1920s

Week 5

**Class Presentations 1 (Tuesday, September 15)**

Week 6

**Mandatory reading for class: McLane: Chapters 5, 6**

Social Documentary and the Anglo-American Documentary Movements of the 1930s Early documentary (Expository mode): Filmmaker as orator. Is the third person narration an objective voice?

Week 7

**Mandatory reading for class: McLane: Chapter 7**

Propaganda Documentary Filmmaking and the Rise of Fascism in the 1930s Documenting War in Canada, Great Britain, and the U.S.: World War II and the Post-War Era

Week 8

**Class Presentations 2 (Tuesday, October 6)**

Week 9. **Mandatory reading for class: McLane: Chapters 8, 9**

Post-war Documentaries and the Emergence of Television Documentaries

**NOFF starts**

*Mid-semester Break.*

Week 10. **No class: Mandatory visit to NOFF**

Week 11.

**NOFF paper is due (Tuesday, October 27)**

**Mandatory reading for class: McLane: Chapters 10, 11**

Direct Cinema and Cinema Verité, and the observational mode: are they voyeurs or social commentator. Impact of technology on style and content of documentaries.

Week 12.

**Mandatory reading for class: McLane: Chapters 12, 13**

Documenting Protest / Protesting with Documentary

Video arrives

Self and Society: The Autobiographical Documentary

First person films as reflection of social issues

Week 13

**Class Presentations 3 (Tuesday, November 10)**

Week 14

**Essay is due Tuesday, November 17**

TBA

Week 15.

**Mandatory reading for class: McLane: Chapters 14**

Political, Historical, and Investigative Documentaries

*Thanksgiving Break*

Week 16

**Mandatory reading for class: McLane: Chapters 15, 16**

The new hybrids: blurring the line between documentary and fiction

Contemporary documentary

Prep for final exam

**Final Exam is 5:30 – 7:30 pm, Tuesday, December 8.**

*Note: This syllabus is subject to change.*