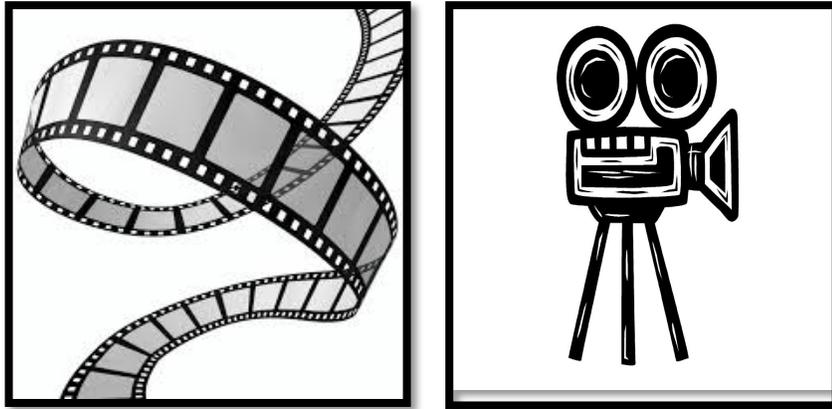


Issues in Work: Workers in Documentary Film: 37:575:394:MB
Fall 2019
Preliminary Syllabus

LSEER, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers, the State University of NJ
Nov. 6, 2019 to Dec. 11, 2019
Donna L. Schulman, Instructor
Email : donna.schulman@gmail.com (preferred mode of communication)
Phone: 917-882-7747



Documentary film is variously defined as “a nonfiction film about real events and people, often avoiding traditional narrative structures” (Timothy Corrigan); “the creative treatment of actuality” (John Grierson); and ‘mediated reality.’

Documentary films are a primary way we learn about the work experience, working-class history, and the social and political issues that challenge us today. The best documentary films entertain as they inform, educate, and persuade. We will be viewing films (and selected television shows) that portray workers and the workplace within the documentary framework and discussing the techniques the filmmakers use to represent the ‘reality’ of work and their unique perspectives.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Some of the films we will be viewing in class employ subtitles for all or part of the film. Also, some of these films may employ slang or unusual language.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Understand the different forms and techniques of documentary film as used to portray workers, the workplace, labor organizations and associated social issues.
- Be able to 'read' a documentary film's message and understand how the filmmakers are creating a story using 'mediated reality.'
- Learn a framework with which to critically analyze films, television, and other visual media.
- Write about documentary film themes and structure.
- Acquire knowledge about the history of significant labor films and about the gender, economic, and racial issues that they explore.

Attendance and Grading

Attendance is critical. There are only 5 classes, so attendance is mandatory. If you miss a film screening, you will be responsible for viewing the film on your own, making up the work and getting class notes. You will only be excused for an illness, death in the family, or other 'real' emergencies; there is a limit of one excused absence. Notify the instructor before class if you will be absent or late, or as soon as possible after class.

Students who are late to class will lose attendance points. If you leave early, you will be marked absent for the entire class. Phone calls should be made before or after class or during the break.

Grades will be based on:

1. **Attendance & Attention. This includes arriving in class on time and staying for the full class period.** All Cell Phones turned off in class; no social media at any time. This includes film screenings. Students who are found using laptops, phones, or other devices for non-class purposes will lose points and may be asked to leave class. Using phones or laptops during screenings detracts from others' focus on the film as well as your own. (20%)
2. **Contributions to class discussion & class work** (quantity AND quality). You will be expected to listen to and respond to other student comments and questions as well as articulate your own views. Assignments may be given in class. (30%)
3. **Writing Assignment.** Graded on content and writing quality (including grammar and spelling). (25%)
4. **Exam.** There will be one short-answer exam to test your comprehension of the readings, films, class lectures and discussions. (25%)
5. **Grade Review:** If you feel that your final grade should be changed, please submit this request by email with a detailed explanation why you think it should be changed. Your work for the course will be reviewed and a decision made on whether your grade is appropriate. Under grade review, your grade could go up or stay the same.

Required Readings & Films

Readings will be available on Canvas or online. Readings will be taken from film studies and labor and gender studies literature. Films will be viewed in class. If you miss a class, you will be responsible for viewing the film on your own.

You may need to view a film not seen in class for your Writing Assignment, and this may involve purchasing or streaming a film. Most films cost far less than the cost of a textbook.

Writing Assignment

You have a choice of writing assignments; these are described at the end of the syllabus. Writing assignments are due Friday, **December 13th, 11:00pm and must be submitted via Canvas in PDF format** (doc,.docx, .rtf and other word processing formats will not be accepted).

Writing Resources: I highly recommend you consult the [Purdue Writing Lab Website](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/) (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>) for suggestions on effective writing techniques. These topics in particular address common problems I see in students' papers:

Spelling

Verb tense consistency

Paragraphs

Conciseness

Active and Passive Voice

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is basically offering other's ideas as your own. Acts of plagiarism include direct copying from another source without attribution, close paraphrasing from another source without attribution, and using a paper written for one course in another course. Incidents of plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity will have consequences, ranging from a failing grade to being reported to the dean.

- Tips on how to avoid plagiarism: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism
- Video explaining plagiarism:
<http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModule/Plagiarism/>
- How to paraphrase without plagiarizing:
http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase.html
- Rutgers Academic Integrity Principles and links to relevant documents:
<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>

Office of Disability Services Accommodations

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines> .

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.



Films screened for this course may change, depending on availability.

Class One: Introduction to Documentary Film & Filming Workers and the Workplace (11/06)

What is a documentary? What techniques and tools do documentary filmmakers use to communicate their message?

What can documentaries show us about workers and how do they do this?

View In Class:

Short films about the workplace, union-made films, clip from *Ex Library* (Wiseman).

Knife Skills (2017, Thomas Lennon) or *A Day's Work* (2015, David Garcia)

Assignments for Class 2:

Readings & Interviews:

(a) "Defining the Documentary," pp. 1 - 55, from Aufderheide, Patricia, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2007).

(b) "Harlan County, U.S.A.," pp. 175–176, from Zaniello, Tom, *Working Stiffs, Union Maids, Reds, and Riffraff: An Expanded Guide to Films about Labor* (ILR Press, 2003).

(c) Optional: Pellet, Gail. The Making of Harlan County, U.S.A.: An Interview with Barbara Kopple. *Radical America*, March-April 1977, pp. 33-42.
<http://library.brown.edu/pdfs/1125403552886481.pdf> (also Sakai)

(d) Optional: Barbara Kopple Interview, DocTalk: <https://youtu.be/SnlusTcrV-g> (5 min.)

Class Two: Cinéma Vérité looks at Labor (11/13)

What is cinéma vérité?

What kind of labor documentary wins an Academy Award?

View in Class: *Harlan County, USA* (1976, Barbara Kopple)

Assignments for Class 3:

Readings:

(a) "Defining the Documentary," pp. 56 - 106, from Aufderheide, Patricia, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2007).

(b) "At the River I Stand," pp. 40 - 42, from Zaniello, Tom, *Working Stiffs, Union Maids, Reds, and Riffraff: An Expanded Guide to Films about Labor* (ILR Press, 2003).

Class Three: Labor History on Film (11/20)

Finish discussion on *Harlan County, USA*

Is a history documentary really history? How do we document the past?

View in Class: *At the River I Stand* (1993, David Appleby, Allison Graham, Steven Ross)

Assignments for Class 4:

(1) Readings:

- (a) "Julia Reichert," pp. 121-134, chapter from *Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film and Video* by Alexandra Juhasz (Univ. of Minnesota Pr., 2001)
- (b) Chapter 5, "Style and Structure in Writing," from *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 9th ed. by Timothy (Pearson, 2015), pp. 112-130. For writing assignment.

(2) Start writing assignment, if you haven't already!

NO CLASS ON NOV. 27TH - HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Class Four: The Labor Doc Today (12/04)

View in class: *American Factory* (2019, Julia Reichert & Steven Bogne)

Begin discussion on film's themes, film elements, reception.

Assignments for Class 5:

- (1) Study for exam.
- (2) Finish written assignment.

Class Five: The Labor Doc Today & Tomorrow

Finish discussion and present assignments on *American Factory*.

Exam

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Select **one** of these options. Inform me of your choice by Class Three. Writing assignments are due Friday, **December 13th, 11:00pm and must be submitted via Canvas in PDF format** (doc,.docx, .rtf and other word processing formats will not be accepted).

I am interested in what you have to say. It is acceptable to read articles about the background and history of the film and filmmaker(s) or television series. **Please do not read professional reviews.** If you do use any articles, web sites, etc., they should be documented according to MLA or APA style sheets.

(1) Critical Film Review

View a documentary film not shown in class and write a critical review; 2-3 pages long, double-spaced.

The documentary film should be about the workplace or a contemporary social issue (inequality, discrimination, immigration, environment, etc.). A workplace film may include unusual types of work in the fields of entertainment, food, or fashion. The film must be over 1 hour long. I will be distributing a list of suggested titles and am open to others. Please check with me if you are not sure if the title you want to review meets the assignment criteria.

The review should include:

- (a) A heading or title page giving film title, your name, course title, and date.
- (b) Film basics: Director, year, anything else of significance.
- (b) What is the documentary about? What is the “message”? What is the goal of the film—advocacy, education, entertainment? Be brief, no longer than two or three paragraphs. I am not looking for a play-by-play summary.
- (c) What documentary style (or styles) does the director use to get her message across? What documentary techniques? Do they work? Not work? Be specific here, describe specific scenes.
- (d) Conclude your review with your personal, informed recommendation of whether or not you recommend this film and to what type of audience.

(2) Write Your Own Documentary

Outline a documentary film about a topic of interest to you and related to labor, the workplace, organizing, or a related social issue. Topics may include: a significant labor event (a strike, a fire, an organizing drive); a significant labor figure (historical or current); immigration; the educational system; a personal hero; the work process (close-up of the work life of a waiter,

retail clerk, grad student, Uber driver, etc.); health and safety; unpaid labor (child care, housework); the community where you live; etc.

This may involve research; cite any articles you use for background.

Your outline should answer the following questions:

What are the film's themes?

What is the story?

What is the significant message of your story?

Who are the main characters and what are their goals and/or possible agendas?

Why is the subject matter of this documentary important to you?

Locations for shooting?

What techniques and tools will you be using (interviews, archival footage, etc.)?

Will you be using music or special sounds?

What are the beginning, middle, and end of the narrative?

Possible sources of funding?