

ENGL 0042 - THE DOCUMENTARY FILM

Catalog Description

Prerequisite: Eligibility for ENGL 1A

Hours: 54 lecture

Description: Development of a critical appreciation of modern documentary film across a variety of subject matter: sports, advertising, politics, music, art, biography, foreign affairs, business, science, and history. (CSU, UC)

Course Student Learning Outcomes

- CSLO #1: Communicate analyses, interpretations and critiques of documentary films with closely related themes in written essays.
- CSLO #2: Identify, interpret and analyze documentary films according to style, rhetoric, mode and voice.
- CSLO #3: Develop independent research in documentary film studies.

Effective Term

Fall 2020

Course Type

Credit - Degree-applicable

Contact Hours

54

Outside of Class Hours

108

Total Student Learning Hours

162

Course Objectives

A student will, through examinations, oral presentations, discussions, and essays, be able to:

1. identify, interpret, and analyze documentary films according to style, rhetoric, mode, and voice;
2. identify and analyze differences and similarities in directors' modes in documentary films;
3. generalize modern and contemporary themes to real-life issues;
4. identify, interpret, and apply knowledge of documentary mode to individual documentarists;
5. develop independent research in documentary film studies;
6. formulate and assess themes and stances in documentary film across a wide variety of topics;
7. review, analyze, and evaluate single documentaries in class discussion, on exams, and in written responses;
8. identify and illustrate the use of bias, objectivity, testimony, and propaganda in documentary film in class discussion, in written essays, and on exams;
9. communicate analyses, interpretations, and critiques of documentaries with closely related themes in written response papers;

10. describe modern critical response to documentary film in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

General Education Information

- Approved College Associate Degree GE Applicability
 - AA/AS - Literature & Language
- CSU GE Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU approval)
 - CSUGE - C1 Arts
- Cal-GETC Applicability (Recommended - Requires External Approval)
- IGETC Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU/UC approval)
 - IGETC - 3A Arts

Articulation Information

- CSU Transferable
- UC Transferable

Methods of Evaluation

- Classroom Discussions
 - Example: Students are to engage in analytical discussions on the themes and rhetorical techniques of documentary films. Students will be evaluated on participation and general understanding of themes and techniques used in documentary films.
- Essay Examinations
 - Example: Midterm (take home) essay question: In a 2-3 page essay, analyze a single aspect of one of the first eight films you've watched and explain how it works or how it contributes to the film's meaning. For instance, you might examine juxtaposition used in "Roger and Me", or the effect of the archival footage or the handheld camera in "Grey Gardens" or the use of animation in "Waltz with Bashir." Return to your notes and your journal to reflect upon your observations, then develop those thoughts in your essay. Follow your instinct in getting started; then follow logic and use strong support as you revise. Essays will be evaluated based upon logic and reasoning, substantive use of appropriate examples, clear focus, and awareness of audience.
- Projects
 - Example: In groups, compare and contrast two films with a similar subject (for instance, the subject of art in "Exit Through the Gift Shop" and "Wasteland") in terms of how a similar subject (art) is treated thematically. Be sure to make comparisons between the two films' differing tones, points of view, assumptions about audience, editing techniques and camera angles, and use of rhetorical strategies. Present orally to the class. These presentations will be evaluated based upon appropriateness of the selection of the film pair, the clarity of distinctions made, and the use of specific examples.

Repeatable

No

Methods of Instruction

- Lecture/Discussion
- Distance Learning

Lecture:

1. Instructor will present a lecture on juxtaposition as a visual rhetorical technique. Instructor will design study questions to enable students

to identify juxtaposition in the film "Roger and Me" and to evaluate its effectiveness.

2. Instructor will engage students in a discussion on the differences between point-of-view and bias, using specific examples from viewed films.
3. Instructor will lead students in oral evaluations of films, incorporating terms, concepts, and standards covered in lecture and discussion.
4. Instructor will lecture on and lead discussions that model the interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of the course films. Instructor will provide feedback on specific writing assignments that require the skills modeled in discussion and lecture.
5. Instructor will read and respond to oral and written student responses to films.

Typical Out of Class Assignments

Reading Assignments

1. Read "The Basics of How to Read a Film" handout.
2. Read "Composition and the Image" in A Short Guide to Writing about Film.
3. Read "Six Approaches to Writing about Film" in A Short Guide to Writing about Film.

Writing, Problem Solving or Performance

1. After viewing the film, "Waltz with Bashir" respond to one of the following questions in group discussion:
 - a. What sorts of questions does the movie raise? Do these questions bear any similarities to those in "Regret to Inform"?
 - b. The movie is structured around a series of interviews. What's the effect of this, do you think? What observations can you make when comparing these interviews to those in "Regret to Inform"?
 - c. Take note of the types of images the movie uses. How do the images work emotionally? Symbolically?
 - d. What effect does the music have upon the film?
 - e. Why do you think director Ari Folman chose to make such a giant shift at the end of the movie? What did you think about it?
2. For each movie viewed, respond to one of the following in your journal:
 - a. How do your thoughts/feelings change from the beginning, middle, to end of the movie? Why do you think this is so? What elements of the film help to create or evoke this response?
 - b. Is the film narrated or not? What's the effect?
 - c. Where/how do you detect bias in the film?
 - d. Does the documentary assume anything of its audience? For instance, is it part of a larger conversation?
 - e. What techniques do you find effective in the film (for instance, the use of overdubs, particular types of shots, motifs, music, etc)?
 - f. How is the film edited? Why does this matter?
 - g. What patterns do you recognize (repeated images, music, etc).
 - h. How are people presented? Toward what end? Is it fair?
 - i. What's the film's purpose? - to inform/educate? Persuade? Call to action? How do you know?

Other (Term projects, research papers, portfolios, etc.)

Required Materials

- A Short Guide to Writing About Film
 - Author: Corrigan, Timothy
 - Publisher: Pearson/Longman
 - Publication Date: 2014
 - Text Edition: 9th
 - Classic Textbook?:

- OER Link:
- OER:
- Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction
 - Author: Patricia Aufderheide
 - Publisher: Oxford University Press
 - Publication Date: 2007
 - Text Edition: 1st
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- Introduction to Film Studies
 - Author: Nelmes, Jill
 - Publisher: Routledge
 - Publication Date: 2011
 - Text Edition: 5th
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:

Other materials and-or supplies required of students that contribute to the cost of the course.

May be required to subscribe to Netflix.