Course Syllabus
HUAS6312 | Documentary: Aesthetics & Ethics
Spring 2013 | Thursday, 1-3:45pm | Location: JO 4.708

Professor: Dr. Shilyh Warren
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Ph: 972-883-6316 | Office: JO 5.304
office hours: Tuesday 2-4pm and by appointment
*please contact me by email with any questions!

Course Description:
In this course we set out to discover what political, ethical, and aesthetic questions distinguish documentary from fictional filmmaking. We're interested in the intertwined histories of cinema, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and tourism, particularly as these have defined the “worldview” of documentary film. The course is roughly divided into 3 parts: documentaries about others; documentaries about selves; and documentaries about nature and the environment. Throughout the semester, we're asking if, how, and why documentaries construct knowledge about the self, others, and the world we all share. Our work occurs at the intersection of art, history, and the broadest questions of the humanities, such as how we do relate to one another as humans and non-humans, how do we represent those relationships through visual and aural technologies, and what responsibilities do we have to each other and the forms of art we produce, consume, and experience?

Required Textbooks and Materials:
*All other materials will be on e-reserves.


*Members of the class are required to print out all reading assignments and/or bring hardcopies to each class.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes:
By the end of this course students should demonstrate:
• Broad knowledge of the field of documentary studies, including an understanding of the major scholarly debates surrounding aesthetic, political and ethical questions particular to documentary film, and
• An understanding of the research methods & writing conventions particular to the field of film studies

Grading Policy:
Your final grade will be determined as follows:
• 3 Reading/Screening Responses (1 for each section – 500 words) = 30%
• 1 Mid-term Creative Project = 35%
• 1 Final Paper (2000-2500 words) = 35%
*I will provide guidelines for each assignment.*
Assignments & Academic Calendar

I. Ethics and Others.

1. Thursday, Jan 17. What Ethical Issues?
   Intro and in-class screenings.
   *No Lies* (Mitchell Block, 1979: 16 min.) and *The Queen of Versailles* (Lauren Greenfield, 2012: 100 min.)

2. Thursday, Jan 24. Encountering the Constructed Real.
   Watch: *Nanook of the North* (Robert J. Flaherty, 1922: 80 min.)

   Watch: *Dead Birds* (Robert Gardner, 1964: 83 min.)
   In class screening: *Las Hurdes, Land Without Bread* (Luis Buñuel, 1933: 30 min.)

4. Thursday, Feb 7. Complicating the Picture.
   Watch: *Cannibal Tours* (Dennis O’Rourke, 1988: 68 min.) on youtube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQiDufdir_M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQiDufdir_M)
   In-class screening: *Reassemblage* (Trinh Minh Ha, 1982: 40 min.)

5. Thursday, Feb 14. Ethics in the War Zone.
   Watch: *The Oath* (Laura Poitras, 2010, 90 min.)
II. Ethics & Selves.

Watch: Chronicle of a Summer (Rouch, Morin, 1960, 85 min.)
In class: Man with a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929, 68 min.)


7. Thursday, Feb 28 - Filmmaker as Subject.
Watch: Sherman’s March (Ross McElwee, 1986, 157 min.)


8. Thursday, Mar 7 – Self & History.
Watch: El General (Natalia Almada, 2009: 83 min.)


10. Thursday, Mar 21 – Self & Form.
Watch: Tarnation (Jonathan Caouette, 2003) and Measures of Distance (Mona Hatoum, 1988, 16 min.)


***Mid-term Creative Project Due: A Study of Documentary Ethics in Two Parts***

11. Thursday, Mar 28 – Self, Crisis, and Love
Watch: Señorita Extraviada (Lourdes Portillo, 2002: 54 min.) and The Price of Sex (Mimi Chakarova, 2011: 73 min.)

III. With and Beyond the Human Subject

12. Thursday, Apr 4 –Your World or Mine
Watch: *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2005: 103 min.)

3. David T Johnson, “You Must Never Listen to This”: Lessons on Sound, Cinema, and Mortality from Herzog’s *Grizzly Man*, *Film Criticism* 32.3 (Spring 2008): 68-82.
*Due: Proposal for Final Paper.

13. Thursday, Apr 11 – Traditional Nature Documentaries.
Watch: *March of the Penguins* (Luc Jacquet, 2005: 80 min.)

*Due: Draft 1.

Watch: *Sweetgrass* (Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Ilisa Barbash, 2010: 100 min.)


15. Thursday, Apr 18 – Earth as Place. Close and Far.
Watch: *Our Daily Bread* (Nikolaus Geyrhalter, 2005: 92 min.)
In class screenings may include: *Mothlight* (Stan Brakhage, 1963, 3 min.); *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (Stan Brakhage, 1.5 min.); *Scene 32* (Shambhavi Kaul, 2009, 5 min.); *Petropolis: Aerial Perspectives on the Alberta Tar Sands* (Peter Mettler, 2009: 43 min.); *Silent Springs* (Erin Espelie, 2010).


16. Thursday, May 2 – Putting it all Together.
In-class screening: *TBA*

2. Jill Godmilow, “Kill the Documentary as We Know It,” *Journal of Film and Video* 54.2-3 (Summer/Fall 2002): 3-10.
*Due: Final Draft.