



GOUCHER COLLEGE

Welch Center for Graduate and Professional Studies

SYLLABUS – Ethnographic Methodologies: Visual (As of 6-8-18)

Course Number **CSP 670B/DA 651 18FA**
Credits 1.5
Semester Fall, 2018
Instructor: Barry Dornfeld
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Course Description

Documentary media offer great descriptive and emotional power in representing cultural forms and experience. The documentation and presentation of cultural others using media – visual, sound, digital – raises complex challenges in approach, authorship, aesthetics, politics, and circulation. From Robert Flaherty and Dziga Vertov, early pioneers representing culture in film, through a range of documentarians and storytellers in conventional media (Alan Lomax, Jean Rouch, David MacDougall), including popular forms (film, video/television, radio), up to emerging experiments with digital forms, consistent themes and problematics persist. This course seeks to help students develop an understanding of how media have been and can be used to represent culture, and to look at important questions about these practices -- authorship, inter-subjectivity and collaboration, the politics of voice, distribution, and ownership. By looking at historical, contemporary and emerging examples of cultural documentary work, we engage this dialogue, with a special focus on preparing those interested in working with these representations in public settings.

Main Course Topics

1. History of documentary and ethnographic media
2. Narrative versus scientific modes of discourse
3. Models of authorship and the role of community in media production
4. Changes in media production and consumption with digital technologies

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify approaches to representing culture in media form
2. Put these approaches in historical context
3. Evaluate the use of media in ethnographic film, photo, and audio documents
4. Implement strategies for using documentary and ethnographic media in cultural sustainability work with sensitivity to the relevant aesthetic and political issues

Departmental Learning Outcomes

This course is aligned with two departmental learning outcomes, listed below. Students will meet departmental learning outcomes through successful completion of assignments and activities in core and elective courses. A list of all departmental learning outcomes can be found at:

<http://www.goucher.edu/graduate-programs/ma-in-cultural-sustainability/curriculum>

Outcome 3: Design, undertake and critique cultural documentation field projects applying diverse research methods such as observation, writing, photography, video, and/or sound recording to identify and nurture traditions of knowledge and practice that are meaningful and valued by communities.

Outcome 4: Devise, implement and evaluate actions that support cultural sustainability such as educational programs, exhibitions, performances, workshops, projects, media productions, websites, festivals and other initiatives that align with community practices

Course Format

The course combines a 3-day residency followed by three weeks of online work. The **residency** will be made up of lectures, media screenings, and discussions in full and small groups. The virtual portion of the course will include a guest speaker, readings, media and asynchronous discussions, and three live video conference meetings. Student work includes participation in discussions and all class sessions, completion of readings and media screenings, assigned writings, and one final project/paper.

Readings and Media

- Agee, James and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939)
- Asch, Timothy, with J.I. Cardoza, H. Cabellero, and J. Bortoli. 1991. The story we now want to hear is not ours to tell. *Visual Anthropology Review* 7(2).
- Clark, Jessica. 2018. "Do You Feel What I Feel? The rise of haptic storytelling. Immerse/Medium. <https://immerse.news/do-you-feel-what-i-feel-cc1a3deda071>
- Ginsburg, Faye. 2002. Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village? *Cultural Anthropology* Feb 1991, Vol. 6, No. 1: 92-112.
- MacDougall, David. 1998 (1973). Beyond observational cinema, in *Transcultural Cinema*, Princeton, pp. 125-139.
- Perlmutter, Tom. 2014. "The Interactive Documentary: A Transformative Art Form. *Options Politiques* Nov.-Dec. 2014.
- Rouch, Jean. 1979 (2003). The Camera and Man. In Feld, Steven, ed. *Cine-Ethnography: Jean Rouch*. 2003. Minnesota, pp. 29-46.
- Ruby, Jay. 2000. Introduction. *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film & Anthropology*, Chicago.
- Ruby, Jay. 2000. The Aggie Must Come First: Robert Flaherty's Place in Ethnographic Film History. In *Picturing Culture*, Ruby. Chicago. Pgs. 67-93.
- Ruby, Jay. 1991. Speaking for, speaking about, speaking with, or speaking alongside -- an anthropological and documentary dilemma. *Visual Anthropology Review, Fall 1991: Volume 7, Number 2*. <http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/ruby/speaking.html>

- Sinclair, Kamal. 2018. The High Stakes of Limited Inclusion. Post #1 in the Making a New Reality series. Immerse/Medium. <https://immerse.news/the-high-stakes-of-limited-inclusion-908e8f6deda0>
- Vertov, Dziga. 1984. *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, Annette Michelson, ed., Pluto Press. Introduction xv-lxi, 5-21, 40-42, 82-85, 283-289.

Media:

- *The Man with a Movie Camera*. Dziga Vertov. 1929. 95 mins. *
 - *Nanook of the North*. Robert J. Flaherty. 1922. 55 mins. *
 - *Trance and Dance in Bali*. Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead. 1951. 20 mins.
 - *A Balinese Trance Séance*. Timothy Asch and Linda Connor. 1979. 45 mins. *
 - *Chronicle of a Summer*. Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin. 1961. 90 mins. *
 - *Les Tambours D'Avant: Tourou et Bitti*. Jean Rouch. 1971. 10 mins.
 - N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman. 1980. John Marshall.
<http://search.alexanderstreet.com/goucher.idm.oclc.org/view/work/764976> *
 - *Faces Places, Visages Villages*. 2017. Agnès Varda and JR.*
 - *Fast Runner (Atanarjuat)*. 2001. Igloodik Isuma Productions, Zacharias Kunuk.
 - Appalshop Films. <https://www.appalshop.org/>,
<https://www.youtube.com/user/Appalshop/videos>
 - National Film Board of Canada. https://www.nfb.ca/channels/aboriginal_peoples_channel/
 - *Stranger with a Camera*. 2000. Elizabeth Barrett.
 - *128 Deep*. Trevino Brings Plenty. <https://vimeo.com/62957301>
 - *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. DVD.
- * (Available through library, on Netflix, DVD)

Assignments

Assignment 1: Defining Ethnographic Film -- Pre-Class

Based on the readings and using concrete examples from *Nanook of the North*, and *Man with a Movie Camera*, develop a definition of what ethnographic film is, its characteristics, purposes and possibilities, limiting yourself to three paragraphs. Be sure to address issues raised in the readings as well as examples from the films to make your arguments.

Assignment 2: Course Project Mini-Proposal.

Post an initial proposal (2-3 paragraphs) for your course project. Options include:

1. Proposal to produce original media documenting a cultural community, practice, or form
2. Using existing media material for a specific purpose (exhibit, publication, archive, etc.)
3. Analyzing a collection or production of documentary or ethnographic media material.

Outline the following:

- What you propose to do
- Why this is worth doing
- What materials you will use
- What ideas/theories/approaches you will explore through this project

Assignment 3 – Modes of Participation in Ethnographic Media

We have considered a number of modes of participation in ethnographic film. Ruby divides these into “cooperative, community and collaborative” approaches. In a short essay, (approx. 250-400 words) reflect on these modes of participation in light of arguments from Ruby, Ginsburg, and Asch. Reference media examples in your consideration, the benefits and consequences of these modes of production and participation, and how they impact the work and its reception. Think about your own interests in working with media as you develop a position here. What mode might you want to explore and why?

Assignment 4: Update on project idea

Post the following:

- Quick update on your proposal – Topic, material, and theoretical context
- One important insight you have had about representing culture in media as you have worked on your revised proposal.
- One issue or area where you need help/advice/the thinking of the group.

Assignment 5: Final project. Due – 8/15/18. Five-to-seven-page paper in academic format (citations, voice, bibliography) on ethnographic representation in media form. Post to course site. For help, see <https://libraryguides.goucher.edu/researchprocess>. Your paper can take one of several approaches:

1. Review and reflect on existing media work (film, photographic exhibit, research project, etc.) representing other culture worlds. Paper should reference that work in relation to issues of cultural representation and sustainability and films and readings reviewed in the course, and reflect on issues of production, distribution and/or reception of those works.
2. A proposal to use media to represent a cultural group or process. Proposal should outline work intended, reference that work in relation to issues of cultural representation and sustainability and films and readings reviewed in the course, and take a stance regarding approach and strategy for representation. (Note -- it is not expected that you will produce these materials within the course time frame.)
3. Other ideas possible with prior approval.

Course Schedule**Residency Session 1. Culture Meets the Camera: Inventing Media Representations of Culture**

Explores foundational ideas and early history in the representation of culture and society through visual media. Identify the emergence of tropes or tendencies -- Artist, Storyteller, Scientist – as reflected in the work of pioneering media ethnographers.

Themes include:

- Scientific cinema and Ethnographic Film as Research Method
- Artistic Encounters with cultural others
- Narrating other cultural worlds.
- Arguments about truth, objectivity, subjectivity.

Residency Session 2. Core Ethnographic Approaches to Media Representation

Understand the evolution of core approaches to visual ethnography, as well as the limitations and critiques of them. Includes narrative, observational and participatory modes of documentary. Explores the role of the “subject” in the work, and the dynamics of interaction around production. Establishes conventions of aesthetics, exposition, and narrative.

Residency Session 3. Stretching the Boundaries of Cultural Representation

As traditional approaches to cultural representation in the social sciences are challenged, visual/media representations come under scrutiny from several perspectives –political, social scientific, and aesthetic. This scrutiny enlarges the debate about cultural representation, and introduces other models and domains, including:

- Indigenous Media
- Participatory Cinema
- Popular and public culture

Virtual Session 4. New Models of Documentary in the Present and Future

Zoom meeting - How do new technologies, politics, and institutions open up possibilities for cultural documentation and distribution? Do these new media shift the producer/community/ viewer dynamic in meaningful ways? What do we need to know/do about this emerging future? We explore emerging approaches to collaborative, digital media, and consider their implications on documentary and ethnography.

Guest Speaker – Jessica Clark, Digital Strategist, Dot Connector Studios

Jessica Clark is an online producer, researcher, and journalist focused on media, technology, and what drives change. From 2007 through mid-2011, she directed the Future of Public Media initiative at American University's Center for Social Media and contributed to a number of related projects: helping to launch the Public Media Corps, co-organizing the Beyond Broadcast and Public Media Camp conferences, and writing regularly for PBS MediaShift. She has co-authored several influential publications on shifts in journalism and public media, including [Spreading the Zing: Reimagining Public Media Through the Makers Quest 2.0](#) with AIR Executive Director Sue Schardt, and *Beyond the Echo Chamber* (New Press, 2010). Jess runs her own company Dot Connector Studio (<http://dotconnectorstudio.com/>), a cross-platform production and strategy firm.

Jess is the editor of Immerse (<https://immerse.news/>) an online publication about emerging forms of documentary and news.

Virtual Session 5. Project Development

Zoom meeting - Sharing and discussion of project ideas, with feedback and resources provided.

Prepare short presentation (4-5 slides) outlining:

1. Purposes of project
2. Materials you will use and/or reference, including readings and media materials, and key points from those materials
3. Issues of cultural representation in media you will explore and stance you will take in relation to these issues.

Virtual Session 6. Project Presentation and Completion

Zoom meeting - Be prepared to lead a 15-minute presentation on your project using slides as are appropriate to your work.

Be sure to include:

1. Purpose of the project
2. Research material you are drawing on (visual, scholarly, primary research)

3. Key insights about the media material in light of theories of visual representation in cultural work.
4. Key insights about the cultural communities you are looking at.
5. Your learning about doing work in this arena

Grading

Course Elements	Percent [or points]
Discussion and participation (In class, WebEx sessions and discussion board)	35%
Writing Assignments	35%
Final project (includes presentation)	30%
TOTAL	100%

Grade Scale

A	93 or more points
A-	90 - 92 points
B+	87 - 89 points
B	83 - 86 points
B-	80 - 82 points
C+	77 - 79 points
C	73 - 76 points
C-	70 - 72 points
D	60 - 69 points
F	59 points and below

Course Policies

Communication:

- Faculty will be available at their Goucher email address and will respond to queries within 24-48 hours.
- Course participants are responsible for maintaining continuous involvement with faculty, fellow students and student groups. In particular, participation in all online discussions is required. Ongoing communication allows you to gain deeper insights into the content, activities and assignments in the course. Please give notice of any obstacle that prevents this.
- You are encouraged to ask questions whenever information needs clarifying.
- For questions pertaining to your assignments: send an email directly to the instructor (please do not post personal questions on the discussion board).
- For questions about assignments that may be interesting and helpful to other class members: please use the discussion board.
- For problems with technical aspects of the website: contact helpdesk@goucher.edu (you may copy the instructor).

Missed Work:

You are responsible for material covered in the course. It is your sole responsibility to obtain any materials missed.

Late Policy:

For proper graduate student learning to occur, pacing of content mastery is critical. Therefore, assignments are to be completed on time. If extreme circumstances prevent an assignment to be completed in a timely fashion, please notify me before the assignment is due so a new date can be negotiated. Only follow-ups completed by the due date can be redone. Late assignments without such notification will be docked.

Academic Integrity:

All final work products are to be the independent work of each student and stored in the electronic portfolio. Suspected violations of the Honor Code will be referred to the Academic Honor Board. For a full description of the code and what constitutes a violation of the code, refer to the Goucher Handbook or online at www.goucher.edu/x1292.xml.

Disability Support:

<http://www.goucher.edu/academics/academic-support/disability-support-services>