

NINT 5241: DOCUMENTING INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

SEAN JACOBS

Wednesday 8-9.50pm

Course Outline

Mass media have become integral to how we gain knowledge and information about world events. This course covers a range of media outlets: news media, Hollywood films, documentaries, “fictional documentaries,” graphic novels and television dramas. Topics discussed include the “War on Terror,” the media legacy of the Vietnam War, the Rwanda Genocide, and charity politics. Some of the questions raised in this course include: What is the “CNN Effect”? Does the mainstream media still set policy and news agendas or has the advent of new media technologies (especially social media, blogs and) ended that monopoly? Can news media be held accountable for the outcomes of political events? Are documentary films reflective of “real life” or what famed documentarian John Grierson called “the raw material of actuality”? Can graphic novels pass as historical documents?

The readings will be complemented by a number of film screenings, especially documentaries, both inside and outside the classroom. We will also host two guest speakers.

Course Requirements

20% Class Participation

Given the seminar format, class discussion is a very important and integral part of the course and I expect students to have read and digested the readings before class as well as to be prepared to productively discuss the material.

20% Presentations (*)

Students (whether alone or as part of a group, depending on class size) must sign up to lead the seminar discussion at least once during the semester. The presentation should include a clear summary of the content of the readings, i.e. the main arguments, points of criticism, as well as raise questions for discussion.

20% Book or Film Review

The first written assignment, due on October 21 will be a book or film review and should focus on the issues covered in class. As a result it should comment on a wide range of issues that go beyond the specifics of the book or film. The length of the review will be 5 double-spaced pages. A list of suggested titles will be provided. The instructor must approve all other topics.

40% Final Paper

The final requirement is the preparation of a research paper/project (it could also take the form of a short video or audio documentary) on a topic that explores some of the questions/issues raised in class. This paper will require some original research. This assignment is due on the last day of class. It must be accompanied by a comprehensive bibliography. The instructor must approve the topic.

Class Rules

Unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor, late work will be docked by a fraction of a grade for each day past the due date.

Regarding plagiarism, I will not tolerate any incidents and will report any you to immediately to the university authorities.

Class Schedule

During the semester the reading assignments may change due to circumstances beyond our control. If that happens, I will inform you accordingly.

PDF's of book chapters and journal articles will be available online. Books (marked with a (+) can be purchased online. Buy second hand.

September

2 Introduction

9 Reporting International Affairs

Readings:

Monroe Price, "The End of Television and Foreign Policy," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 625, No. 1, 196-204 (2009)

Michael Massing, "The News About the Internet." New York Review of Books, Volume 56, Number 13 · August 13, 2009

Anand Giridharadas, "These days, no reporting behind a nation's back," New York Times, March 14, 2009.

The Brookings/Harvard Forum, 2002, " 'The CNN Effect': How 24-Hour News Coverage Affects Government Decisions and Public Opinion." January 23, 2002.

Piers Robinson, "The CNN Effect Revisited," in Critical Studies in Media Communication, Volume 22, Issue 4 October 2005 , pages 344 - 349

Rebecca MacKinnon, "[The World-Wide Conversation: Online Participatory Media and International News.](#)" Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, 2004.

Ted Friedman, "Tweeting the Dialectic of Technological Determinism," [FlowTV.org](#)

16 Reporting Iraq

Watch "Control Room" by Jehane Noujaim (in class)

Readings:

Michael Massing, Now They Tell Us, (2004), [+]

Tara McKelvey, "In Arabic in English in D.C." The American Prospect, December 16, 2007.

Christian Kolmer and Holli Semetko, "Framing the Iraq War," American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 52, No. 5, 643-656 (2009).

23 * Hollywood and Narrative Fiction

Readings

Thomas Patrick Doherty, Projections of war: Hollywood, American culture, and World War II. Chapters 1.

Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black, Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies, Chapter 7

Rob Nixon, Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond, "Cry White Season: Anti-Apartheid Heroism and the American Screen" (Chapter 7)

Klaus Dodds, "Hollywood and the Popular Geopolitics of the War on Terror," Third World Quarterly, 1360-2241, Volume 29, Issue 8, 2008, Pages 1621 – 1637.

October

7 * The Documentary Revolution

Readings

Jack Ellis and Betsy McLane, A New History of Documentary Film (2005), 1-11

Louis Menand, "Nanook and Me: Fahrenheit 9/11 and the Documentary Tradition," New Yorker, August 9, 2004.

Jill Godmilow and Ann-Louise Shapiro, "How Real is the Reality in Documentary Film?" History and Theory, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 80-101

Paula Rabinowitz, "Wreckage upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory," History and Theory, Vol. 32, No. 2 (May, 1993), pp. 119-137

Elizabeth Sussex, "Grierson on Documentary: The Last Interview," Film Quarterly, Oct 1972, Vol. 26, No. 1: 24-30.

Bill Nichols, "The Fact of Realism and the Fiction of Objectivity" in Representing Reality Issues and Concepts in Documentary, chapter 6 (Indiana University Press, 1991), 165-200.

Alan Rosenthal, 'The Historical Documentary' in Writing, Directing and Producing Documentary films and videos (2002), 297-307

14 View "Hearts and Minds" by Peter Davis (112 minutes, 1974) in class.

21 * Discussing "Hearts and Minds"

Readings:

David Grosser, " 'We aren't on the wrong side, we are the wrong side:' Peter Davis Targets (American) Hearts and Minds," in Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud (eds), From Hanoi to Hollywood, 269-282

John Carlos Rowe, 'Eyewitness: Documentary Styles in the American Representation of Vietnam,' John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg, The Vietnam War and American Culture, 148-174.

Marilyn Young, "The Vietnam War in American Memory," in Jayne Werner and Luu Doan Huynh, The Vietnam War. Vietnamese and American Perspectives, 248-257.

Rick Berg, "Losing Vietnam: Covering the War in an Age of Technology," John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg, The Vietnam War and American Culture, 115-147.

28 Speaker from Witness.org visits class.

November

4 * "Political Films"

View "The Battle of Algiers" (125 min; 1966) outside class.

Readings:

Joan Mellen, "Film and Style: The Fictional Documentary," The Antioch Review, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Autumn, 1972), pp. 403-425.

Patrick Harries, "The Battle of Algiers between fiction, memory and history" in Vivian Bickford-Smith and Richard Mendelsohn (eds.), Black and White in Colour: Africa's History on Screen, 202-228.

Joan Mellen and Gillo Pontecorvo, An Interview with Gillo Pontecorvo, Film Quarterly, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Autumn, 1972), pp. 2-10.

Peter Matthews, "The Battle of Algiers: Bombs and Boomerangs"

Michael T. Kaufman, "What does the Pentagon see in 'Battle of Algiers'?" The New York Times Magazine, September 7, 2003.

Michael Chanan, 'Outsiders: "The Battle of Algiers" and Political Cinema,' Sight and Sound 17:6 (June 2007) p. 38-40

11 * Rwanda

View "Hotel Rwanda" outside class

Readings:

Samantha Power, "A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide," by Samantha Power p329-390.

Graham Spencer, The Media and Peace. From Vietnam to the War on Terror, Chapter 5, "Rwanda and Reporting Africa," 71-86.

Mohamed Adhikari, "Hotel Rwanda: Too much heroism, too little history—or horror?" in Vivian Bickford-Smith and Richard Mendelsohn, Black and White in Colour: Africa's History on Screen, 279-299.

Kenneth Harrow, 2005, "Un train peut en cacher un autre": Narrating the Rwandan Genocide and Hotel Rwanda," Research in African Literatures, Volume 36, Number 4, Winter 2005, pp. 223-232

- 18 Visit to Class by Sasha Polakow-Suransky, Associate Editor of Foreign Policy Magazine.

Readings TBA

No class on 25th

December

- 2 * Graphic Politics

Readings:

Art Spiegelman "Maus" and J P Stassen, "Deogratias."

J E Young, "The Holocaust as Vicarious Past: Art Spiegelman's 'Maus' and the Afterimages of History." Critical Inquiry, 24: (3) 666-699
Spring 1998

JoshyaDysart.com, Behind the scenes: Unknown Soldier.

George, Gene Gustines, "Civil War in Uganda, Illustrated and in Panels," The New York Times, August 12, 2009.

Hugo Frey and Benjamin Noys, "Editorial: History in the Graphic Novel," Rethinking History, 6 (2002): 255-???

- 9 * View the pilot of "The Philanthropist" outside class on the [the show's website](#)

Readings:

Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte. "Better (RED)[™] than Dead: 'Brand Aid', Celebrities and the New Frontier of Development Assistance," DIIS Working Paper 2006/26, 33 p.

Daphne Eviatar, "Spend \$150 billion Per Year to Cure World Poverty," [The New York Times Magazine](#),

Alessandra Stanley, "How a Very Rich Man Grows a Conscience," [New York Times](#),

Robert Lloyd, "Review: The Philanthropist NBC," [LA Times](#).

[Show's website](#).