

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS & SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES

Course name: Latin American Documentary Appreciation

Course code: CTV-3400

Total contact hours: 48 hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Documentary Appreciation will focus on the critical analysis of audiovisual documentaries. The course will explore a variety of documentaries from Latin America. Students will explore media literacy and semiotics concepts from in-class lectures, they will use their own experiences and areas of study to analyze the messages presented by the audiovisuals and understand the process of creating a documentary.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Learners will be able to deconstruct documentaries to analyze and critique their building blocks.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Develop basic competencies that enable students to analyze and evaluate media messages.
- Understand the language of media editing.
- Introduce the concept of semiotics.
- Discern good narrative based on investigative work.
- Discuss topics presented in documentaries.

AUDIENCE

This course is structured for International Students attending the Study Abroad program at Universidad Veritas. However, courses are not exclusive to foreigners so a few native students could enroll in this course. This English-taught course has no previous academic requirements. It does require university-level essay writing skills and in-class-engagement abilities.

METHODOLOGY

Initial lectures will be imparted to develop competencies to analyze and evaluate documentaries. Lively in-class discussions after documentary viewings will take place whilst following a structured analysis format. Additionally, student presentations where the students can consolidate, challenge and expand on their understanding of the topics they have learned in the course will be assigned.

ATTENDANCE

Students are only allowed 2 absences (justified or not). The student will fail the course if he/she has more than 2 absences. Students will have a 0 on any assignment evaluated in class (presentations, evaluations, field trips, etc.) if he/she is absent in this class, unless an official document is presented no later than one week after the absence. In this case the assignment will be due this day. An unjustified absence to a fieldtrip will immediately mean failing the course. You can only have two total **nonconsecutive absences** in your elective. Three late arrivals to class (15 minutes later) are treated as one absence. If you tend to be late for class, you will lose 25% of your total grade.

BEHAVIOR

Professors have the right to expel a student from the classroom should he / she:

1. Be disruptive in the classroom.
2. Behave in a disrespectful way.
3. Be under the influence of alcohol or even smell like alcohol.
4. Be under the influence of any illegal drug.
5. Hygiene problems that may disturb other students.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The use of cell phones, smart phones, or other mobile communication devices is disruptive, and is therefore prohibited during class. **Please turn all devices OFF and put them away when class begins.** Devices may be used ONLY when the professor assigns a specific activity and allows the use of devices for internet search or recording. Those who fail to comply with the rule must leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period.

COURSE CONTENTS

Module 1

Course objectives and methodology. Documentary critique format: the basis for our discussions.

Module 2

Understanding the process of documentary creation: pre-production, production and post-production.

Module 3

Design, camera and photography in documentaries. Documentaries and their narrative. The process of editing a documentary.

Module 4

Semiotics and visual language.

Module 5

Direct Cinema or the *observational documentary*. Lightweight cameras and ambient sound. The "as is" process, by the principle of "*no control*", no intervention and an

“invisible” camera.

Module 6

Cinéma vérité or “truthful cinema”. Improvisation combined with the use of the camera to reveal the truth and underline matters many times not so apparent in the real world. The director engaging with the performers in a documentary.

Module 7

The “auto-biographical” view in a documentary: “Intimate cinema”; portraits and memoirs. The documentarian turns the camera on him or herself and depicts —as a memoir— his or her understandings and insights of the story from a personal position.

Module 8

The performative or participatory documentary; cinema “from the first-person perspective”: from the “it is like this” standpoint to the “I tell you it is like this” standpoint. Audiovisual viewpoints that bring into question the objective side of a documentary. The documentarian is in the film and directly expresses his points of view and perspectives.

Module 9

Mock documentary or *mockumentary*: a spoof —or critique— of the codes and conventions commonly used in a documentary. Rhetorical forms that reflect the sobriety, objectivity and truth of documentary language are generally used.

Module 10

Essayistic documentary or the “Essay Film”. Filmic form which is not easy to define. Films often have a poetic quality and rely on a narrative form supported by images to convey a message. Montage is of utmost importance and this “reenactment of reality” is only there because somebody has envisioned it.

Module 11

Experimental documentary. Documentary experimenting with ways of introducing content or information. The creation of metaphors that transmit different and surprising ways to perceive the world. The experimentation of new ways of filming and narrating.

Module 12

Student group presentations.

Module 13

Final Documentary.

Module 14

Final critique.

EVALUATION SYSTEM

Attendance	15%
Participation	25%
Essays	30%
Final Presentation and Critique	30%
TOTAL:	100%

RUBRICS

Each student will be judged on the following:

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Invention: Student has something to say, addresses well his/her central argument.	Student has not identified his/her point of view and is not clear with his/her argument.	Student has identified his/her point of view and has suggested a central argument, but is not convincing.	Student has identified his/her point of view and has stated a central argument.	Student has clearly identified his/her point of view and has clearly stated a central argument.
Analysis of Strategies: Student has chosen an analytical strategy.	Student has not successfully identified an analytical strategy.	Student has identified some essentials of his/her analytical strategy and presented some evaluations.	Student has identified numerous essentials of his/her analytical strategy and presented reasonable evaluations.	Student has identified a great deal of essentials of his/her analytical strategy and presented well-defined evaluations.
Film techniques: Student has identified film techniques and explained their purpose in the documentaries.	Student is not aware of the film techniques employed in films.	Student has some awareness of the film techniques employed in films.	Student has good awareness of the film techniques employed in films.	Student has excellent awareness of the film techniques employed in films.
Organization: Student has effectively organized his or her ideas in a logical, persuasive manner.	Student has not mastered the art of organization of his/her ideas in a logically presented manner.	Student has a planned pattern of ideas, however, it is somewhat mechanical and lacks persuasiveness.	Student has a good pattern of ideas. Introduces main ideas that serve the purpose of movement from one idea to the next.	Student has an excellent pattern of ideas, with creative topics and meaningful conceptions.
Articulacy: Student has expressed his/herself with style and maturity, ideas, vocabulary, and effective well-formed arguments.	Student lacks style when expressing his/her ideas. Poor ideas, vocabulary, and ineffective badly formed arguments.	Student demonstrates adequate style when expressing his/her ideas. Some variation in vocabulary, and relatively well-formed arguments.	Student demonstrates good style when expressing his/her ideas. Good variation in vocabulary, and well-formed arguments.	Student demonstrates excellent style when expressing his/her ideas. Great variation in vocabulary, and remarkably well-formed arguments.
Collaboration: Student adheres to ethos of the course. Clearly understands shared nature of working with peers. Does not exploit or otherwise knowingly	Student does not adhere to ethos of the course. Does not understand shared nature of working with peers. Consciously or inadvertently impacts negatively on peers.	Student adheres adequately to ethos of the course. Has a certain understanding of the shared nature of working with peers. Has little positive or negative impact on peers.	Student adheres well to ethos of the course. Has a good understanding of the shared nature of working with peers. Has a positive impact on peers.	Student adheres remarkably well to ethos of the course. Has a great understanding of the shared nature of working with peers. Has an exceptional impact on peers.

negatively impact peers.				
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DIDACTIC RESOURCES

1. **Physical space:** Classroom, lab, university library, etc.
2. **Material:** Videos, books, etc.
3. **Audiovisual material:** Videos, PowerPoint presentations, pictures, posters, etc.
4. **Technology resources:** Computers, Mini-Beam Projector or flat screen TV, the internet, portable hard drives, USBs, Canvas, etc.
5. **Other resources:** Teacher and student questions, student self-evaluation, teacher evaluation by students, open and up-front classroom evaluation of course, teacher and students, etc.

COURSE TIMELINE

PROGRAM		
Week	Topic	Activities
1	Course objectives and methodology.	Documentary critique format: the basis for our discussions.
2	Pre-production, production and post-production.	Screening. Understanding the process of documentary creation.
3	Design, camera and photography in documentaries. The process of editing a documentary.	Screening. Understanding documentaries and their narrative.
4	Semiotics and visual language.	Screening. Understanding the visual symbols in documentaries.
5	Direct Cinema or the <i>observational documentary</i> .	Screening: Lightweight cameras and ambient sound. The "as is" process, by the principle of "no control", no intervention and an "invisible" camera.
6	Student screening and discussion.	
7	Cinéma vérité or " <i>truthful cinema</i> ".	Screening: Improvisation combined with the use of the camera to reveal the truth and underline matters many times not so apparent in the real world. The director engaging with the performers in a documentary.
8	Student screening and discussion.	
9	The "auto-biographical" view in a documentary "Intimate cinema".	Screening: The documentarian turns the camera on him or herself and depicts —as a memoir— his or her understandings and insights of the story from a personal position. Portraits and memoirs.
10	Student screening and discussion.	
11	The performative or	Screening: Cinema " <i>from the first-person perspective</i> ": from

	participatory documentary.	the “ <i>it is like this</i> ” standpoint to the “ <i>I tell you it is like this</i> ” standpoint. Audiovisual viewpoints that bring into question the objective side of a documentary. The documentarian is in the film and directly expresses his points of view and perspectives.
12	Mock documentary or <i>mockumentary</i> .	Screening: A spoof —or critique— of the codes and conventions commonly used in a documentary. Rhetorical forms that reflect the sobriety, objectivity and truth of documentary language are generally used.
13	Essayistic documentary or the “Essay Film”.	Screening: Filmic form which is not easy to define. Films often have a poetic quality and rely on a narrative form supported by images to convey a message. Montage is of utmost importance and this “reenactment of reality” is only there because somebody has envisioned it.
14	Experimental documentary.	Screening: Documentary experimenting with ways of introducing content or information. The creation of metaphors that transmit different and surprising ways to perceive the world. The experimentation of new ways of filming and narrating.

FILMS

El botón de nácar – Patricio Guzmán (Chile)
Alamar – Pedro González Rubio (México)
Cartel Land – Mathew Heineman (USA)
La hora de los hornos – Fernando Solanas (Argentina)
Manda bala – Jason Kohn (USA-Brasil)
Balseros – Carles Bosch (Spain)
La libertad del diablo – Everardo González (México)
El velador – Natalia Almada (México)