Hybrid Cinema – Fiction/Non-fiction and the Exploration of Reality

Spring 2019: Thursday, 1:30 – 4:00 (Additional Screenings: Wednesdays, 7:00 – 9:30 (length of Wednesday screenings vary from an hour to two and a half hours)

Instructor: Sally Berger, sberger@haverford.edu

Office Hours: VCAM, Wednesday afternoons, 4 - 5 or by appointment

SYLLABUS

“One measure of reality must always be sacrificed in the effort of achieving it. (Bazin, What is Cinema? Vol. 2, 30)

“Tous les grand films de fiction tendent documentaire, comme tous les grand documentaire tendent a la fiction. . . et qui opte a fond pour l’un trouve nécessairement l’autre au bout du chemin [All great fiction films tend toward documentary, as all great documentaries tend toward fiction. . . and he who opts for one necessarily finds the other at the end of his journey].” (Jean Luc Godard, quoted in Douglas Morrey, Jean-Luc Godard, 4)

“In great moments of cinema, you are hit and struck by some sort of enlightenment, by something that illuminates you. That’s a deep form of truth, and I call it ecstatic truth, the ecstasy of truth, and that’s what I’m after in documentaries and feature films.” (Werner Herzog, quoted in Bill Nichols, Speaking Truths with Film: Evidence, Ethics, Politics in Documentary, 108)

“There is no such thing as documentary—whether the term designates a category of material, a genre, an approach, or a set of techniques. This assertion – as old and as fundamental as the antagonism between names and reality – needs incessantly to be restated despite the very visible existence of a documentary tradition.” (Trinh T. Minh-ha, ‘The Totalizing Quest of Meaning’ in Michael Renov Theorizing Documentary, 90)

COURSE INTRODUCTION BLURB

How as spectators, makers, activists, scholars, do we respond to the way stories are presented to us as a kind of truth – whether dramatically or realistically told? How do these approaches appeal to or coerce us, overwhelm or satisfy our need for information?

This course traces the evolution of “hybrid” cinema – film and media informed by documentary and fiction traditions - from the inception of the moving image to the present. Throughout cinema history, filmmakers have been grappling with the representation of reality: For many trailblazing directors, the interplay between non-fiction and fiction filmmaking has inspired new ways of expressing the complexities of identity and society.

Beginning with the actualities, recreations and silent short dramas of early cinema (1895 – 1905) the class covers decade-by-decade a wide range of documentary/fiction film forms that have expanded upon and provoked new ideas in following generations. We will cover the documentary storytelling of Robert Flaherty, the Kino Pravda sought by Dziga Vertov, the ethno-fictions of Jean Rouch, the narrative essays of Jean-Luc Godard,
the improvisational acting in John Cassavetes’s films, the non-narrative ethno-feminisms of Trinh T. Minh-Ha, and the observational films of Chantal Akerman. The hybrid film forms of avant-garde, experimental, essay, surrealist, re-creation, re-makes, docu-fictions and the use of non-professional actors and subject/characters in narrative will be revealed through the films of directors such as: Luis Bunuel, Rithy Panh, Cheryl Dunye, Abbas Kiarastami, Agnes Varda, Chris Marker, Jem Cohen, Pedro Costa, and Laura Parnes.

The class will be seminar-style based on weekly screenings and discussions of films and filmmakers.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To look at the history of cinema through the interplay between non-fiction and fiction film techniques, formal approaches (genre styles and new forms), content and theory.
- To consider how hybrid forms in cinema evolve and how they reflect contemporaneous societal and political issues.
- To analyze film and media through the understanding and interpretation of its construction.
- To study specific filmmakers, scholars, and theorists for the purpose of understanding the impact of their work in the fields of cinema studies, anthropology/ethnography, and in popular culture.
- To learn how to speak and write about film and media for the purposes of research, analysis and critique.

TEXTS ON WRITING ABOUT FILM:

Timothy Corrigan with Graham Corrigan, A Short Guide to Writing About Film, Boston: Pearson, 2015 (ninth edition), Style and Structure in Writing.


REQUIRED BOOKS (ON RESERVE AND) AVAILABLE IN BOOK STORE:


Bill Nichols, Representing Reality, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University
REQUIRED FILM AND MEDIA VIEWING AND READINGS:

Required films and media are listed in the course outline below. Film and media will be viewed in class (Thursdays, 1:30 – 4:00) with additional weekly screenings (Wednesdays, 7:00 – 9:30 [these screenings will run from 1 hour to 3 hours depending on the material]), as noted on the syllabus. Any changes will be posted on Moodle. Whenever possible, films and media shown in class will be on reserve in the Library and/or available on Kanopy.

All readings are due on the day they are listed in the syllabus, unless otherwise noted. PLEASE NOTE: We will at times need to make changes to the syllabus such as in readings and the timing of screenings and discussions during the semester due to various contingencies such as visiting filmmakers.

*RECOMMENDED FILMS AND TEXTS ON RESERVE:

These are not required but suggested for future research and potential areas of study.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

This is a seminar-style class so attendance, reading and viewing of texts and films prior to each class and participation in class discussions are mandatory.

COURSE POLICIES:

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the students’ legal names. If you have a preference for how to be addressed (alternate name or gender pronoun), please let me know in writing.

ATTENDANCE:

You must attend the weekly seminar class and screenings. Three unexcused absences constitute habitual truancy: habitual truants run the risk of failing the class because they count against your final grade. If you must miss a class, contact me ahead of time and arrange with a peer to get notes and assignments in order to make up your work. After missing a class, you must write to me with an explanation of your absence.

TECHNOLOGY:

There are no laptops, pads, tablets, or handheld devices allowed in class or during screenings unless you have an accommodation.

ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATIONS:

**Syllabus Statement found on Access and Disability Services (ADS) website:** hc-ads@haverford.edu
Haverford College is committed to providing equal access to students with a disability. If you have (or think you have) a learning difference or disability – including mental health, medical, or physical impairment, please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at hc-ads@haverford.edu. The Coordinator will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations.

Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and want to use their accommodations in this course should share their verification letter with me and also make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss their specific accommodations. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice if they are to be recorded. Therefore, any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be approved for this accommodation from the Coordinator of Access and Disability Services and then must speak with me. Other class members will need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

COURSE CONTENT: At times this semester we will be viewing films and discussing topics that may be disturbing to some students. Please review the syllabus and course content ahead of time to make yourself aware of the material and its timing. If during a class, you ever feel the need to step outside, either for a short time or for the rest of the session, you may always do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student and see me individually. If thoughts, readings, or projects become overwhelming or impede your studies, the College has several resources available to you:


ASSIGNMENTS

1.) Readings and Viewings: Students are responsible for keeping abreast of all assigned readings and viewings.

2.) Ongoing: Keep a Personal Viewing Diary of all films, media and exhibitions viewed for class. Your notes will be used to aid in discussions in class, Q&A’s with visiting filmmakers, and to provide material for your written essays and presentations.

3.) Due to me at the start of class on week three: Working with an assigned class partner, write a two-paragraph film blurb (descriptive blurb or review) based on the notations from your diary of one of the films shown in classes 1 or 2, submit to me and read your co-writing in class.
4.) Due to me at the start of class on week seven (mid-term assignment): Write a short essay based on one area of the films and readings screened and discussed in the first four classes about the use of non-fiction and fiction techniques in cinema: actualities and films from the early silent film era; Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* and contemporary indigenous filmmakers; Dziga Vertov/City Symphonies; surrealism/satire/reenactment (based on classes 1, 2, 3, 4). (Submit proposed topic to me via email by class 5; paper should be 2 to 4 pages in length)

5.) Due on week eleven: Write a short essay on how non-fiction/fiction manifests in any one area of the following areas of class discussion: Italian Neorealism/American Realism; Jean Rouch’s Ethno-fictions; Cinema Verite/Direct Cinema; Varda/Cassavetes; Feminist Fakes and Remakes (based on classes 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). (Submit proposed topic to me via email by class 9 (3 to 5 pages in length)

6.) Make an in-class presentation on one of the filmmakers and his/her films discussed, specifically looking at how that filmmaker addresses hybridity (short clips and images can be incorporated; exact date for your presentation to be assigned for classes 12 and 13). (15 – 20 minutes)

7.) Final Exam: Due on Moodle and in my email according to Haverford published schedule (May 11 for seniors, 5:00 p.m.; May 17 for non-Seniors). Exam questions will be based on a selection of the following topics:

- Analysis of the work of one filmmaker covered in class
- Comparison of the form and content of two or more film in class
- The history or theory about an aspect of the forms of hybrid documentary/fiction covered in class
- The analysis of a film movement or filmmaker’s style and its relationship to hybrid form

**GRADING:**
Grade Percentages:
Attendance: 10%
Class participation: 10%
In-class presentation: 20%
Writing assignments (2 short essays): 30%
Final exam: 30%

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**SESSION 1.** (Thurs., Jan. 24) -- Introduction/Actualities, Recreations, and Early Silent Film Dramas
Edison films including:


*The Kiss,* William Heisse for Thomas Edison. 1896. (Edison: Early Years, 25 min.)

*Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show.* Edison. 1902. (Edison: Early Years, 25 min.) Tripod

Lumiere films including:

*Lumiere’s First Picture Shows: La Sortie des usines Lumiere (Workers Leaving the Factory).* 1895. Louis Lumière. 46 sec. "Workers leaving the Lumière Factory", "The Gardener", "L’Arrivée d’un Train en Gare de la Ciotat (The Arrival of the Train at Ciotat)." 1896. Auguste and Louis Lumiere. 50 sec., and many more are on display in Lumière's First Picture Shows. 37 min.

Melies films including:


**READING:**


*Nanook of the North.* 1922. 79 min.

*Nunavut (Our Land).* Zach Kunuk. 1995. TV series – 13 Episodes. 30 min. segment

SCREENING in VCAM201: (Wed., Jan. 30, 7:00 p.m.)

*Rebel (Bihttos).* 2014. Elle-Maija Tailfeathers. 14 mi.

*INaate/SE It Shines a Certain Way to a Certain Place it Falls.* 2016. Adam Khalil and Zack Khalil. 68 min.

*RECOMMENDED FILMS ON RESERVE:*
Man of Aran. 1934. Robert Faherty. 76 min. (Available on Tripod)


READING:


Isuma.tv (isuma; isumabios; isumastyle; ourprojects)


https://theoffingmag.com/enumerate/the-violence-inherent/


*RECOMMENDED READING

Paul Chaat Smith, “A Place Called Irony,” Everything You Know About Indians is Wrong, University of Minnesota Press, 2009

https://www.curtisfilm.rutgers.edu/index.php

SESSION 3. (Thurs. Feb. 7, 7:00 p.m.) Kino Pravda and City Symphonies: Documentary and the Avant Garde

Man with a Movie Camera. 1929. Dziga Vertov. 68 min.

Rain. 1929. Joris Ivens. 12 min.

SCREENING in VCAM001 (Wed. Feb. 6, 7:00 p.m.)

*Twenty-four Dollar Island.* Robert Flaherty. 10 min.

*Night Mail.* 1936. Directed by Harry Watt and Basil Wright. 25 min.


**READING:**


Perry Bard, “When Film and Database Collide,” *Video Vortex Reader II: Moving Images Beyond Youtube*, 322 – 326


**SESSION 4.** (Thurs. Feb. 14) Documentary Surrealism/Satire/Reenactments

*Las Hurdes (Land Without Bread).* 1933. Luis Bunuel. 27 min.

*La France est notre Patrice (France is our Mother Country).* Rithy Panh. 2015. 75 min. (link provided through filmmaker; producer for rights)

SCREENING VCAM001 (Wed., Feb. 13, 7:00 p.m.)

*RECOMMENDED FILMS ON RESERVE:

I am Cuba. Cuba/Russia. 1964. Mikhail Kalatozov. 141 min.

In the King of Prussia. 1982. Emile de Antonio. 92 min.


The Devil Never Sleeps. 1996. Lourdes Portillo. 86 min.

Tongues Untied. 2007. Marlon Riggs. 55 min.

Chile Obstinate Memory. 1997. Patricio Guzman. 59 min.

READING:


*RECOMMENDED READING


SESSION 5 (Thurs. Feb 21). Committed Visions: Italian Neorealism and American Realism


Screening in VCAM001 (Wed., Feb. 20)


*RECOMMENDED FILMS ON RESERVE:

La Terra Trema. 1948. Luchino Visconti. 160 min.


Bless Their Little Hearts. 1983. Billy Woodberry. 80 min. [may not be able to acquire]

READING:


L.A. Rebellion UCLA Archive on-line, Getty Research Collection: Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, Billy Woodberry (http://primo.getty.edu/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=GETTY_ROSETTAE719641&index=2&recIds=GETTY_ROSETTAIE719641&recIdxs=1&elementId=1&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&vid=GRI&mode=Basic&tab=all_gri&vl(96033584UII)=all_items&dsent=0&scp.scps=scope%3A%28GETTY_EAD2%29%2Cscope%3A%28GETTY_NEWBOO K5%29%2Cscope%3A%28GETTY_ROSETTA%29%2Cscope%3A%28GETTY_ALMA%29&vl(freeText0)=%20Burnett%20Charles%20-%20Interviews&vl(1UIStartWith0)=exact&vl(21781791UI0)=sub&dstamp=1542313455 22)


*RECOMMENDED READING*


*Jaguar* 1967. 93 min.

SCREENING VCAM001 (Wed. Feb. 27, 7:00 p.m.)

*Les Maitres Fous (The Mad Masters).* 1956. 29 min.

*TRYPPS #6 (Malobi).* 2010. Ben Russell. 11:31 min.

*Visions of an Island.* Sky Hopinka. 2016. 15 min.

*RECOMMENDED FILMS ON RESERVE:*

*La Pyramid Humaine (The Human Pyramid).* 1961. 93 min.

*Petit a Petit.* 1971. 96 min.

READING:


*RECOMMENDED READING*


SCREENING VCAM001 (Wed. Mar. 6):


VIEWING:


READING:


SPRING BREAK
SESSION 8. (Thurs. Mar. 21) Dramatic Narratives Shot in Situ/Improvisation: Trailblazers Varda (French New Wave)/Cassavetes (New American Cinema)

John Olshefski and Sabrina Schmidt Gordon visit class

John Cassavetes, Shadows. 1959. 83 min.


VIEWING:
Agnes Varda. Le Pointe Courte. 1954. 86 min.)

*RECOMMENDED FILMS ON RESERVE:

READING:

“John Cassavetes Interviews,” Ed. By Gabrielle Oldham, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016, 11 – 12 (Mr. John Cassavetes on the Actor and Improvisation) and 24 – 29 (The Director/Actor)

Jonathan Olshefski, Website – Feral Filmmaker, Photographer, Interactive Designer, Teacher

http://olshefski.org/

“I Became Like Furniture,” Director/DP Jonathan Olshefski on Quest, with Filmmaker Staff, January 25, 2017

https://filmmakermagazine.com/101248-i-became-like-furniture-directordp-jonathan-olshefski-on-quest/#.XDd_cM9KhJw


https://variety.com/2017/film/reviews/quest-review-1202014622/

*RECOMMENDED READING*


SESSION 9. (Thurs. Mar. 28) Feminist Reimagining and Remakes


SCREENING VCAM001 (Wed., Mar. 27)

*Daughter Rite.* Michelle Citroen. 1980. 49 min.

*Shulie.* 1997. Elisabeth Subrin. 37 min.

READING:


SESSION 10 (Thurs. April 4). Radical Approaches for Radical Times: Jean-Luc Godard Haskell Wexler and Laura Parnes “Mostly Fiction with slippage into reality (Parnes)”

Laura Parnes visits class

*2 or 3 Things I Know About Her.* 1967. Jean-Luc Godard. 87 min. EXCERPT

SCREENING VCAM (Wed. April 3)

Tour Without End. Laura Parnes.
VIEWING:


READING:


Thomas Beard, Haskell Wexler, Criterion Collection, booklet (Available on Tripod: PN1993.5.F7 G6339 2009)


Paige Katherine Bradley, “This New Music Doc is Like Spinal Tap By Way of the Enlightenment,” Garage.Vice.com, June 11, 2018

SESSION 11 (Thurs. April 11). Chantal Akerman: The Long Take into Narrative:

(Complete screening of Jeanne Dielman)


SCREENING in VCAM (Wed. April 10)

Jeanne Dielman, 23 commerce quai, 1080 Brussels. 1975. Chantal Akerman. 3 hours 45 min.

*RECOMMENDED FILMS ON RESERVE:


READING:


SESSION 12. (Thurs. April 18) Ethnography Re-observed

Chris Harris visits class


Wed., April 17

SCREENING in VCAM001: Stranger than Fiction Chris Harris reception, installation and screening

Chris Harris, Still/here. 2001. 60 min.; Reckless Eyeballing. 2004. 14 min.; Hakimuhfack. 2016. 4 min.

*RECOMMENDED FILMS ON RESERVE:
Surname Viet Given Name Nam. 1989. 108 min.

READING:


CLOSE-UP. Iran. 1990. Abbas Kiarostami. 98 min.

SCREENING VCAM (Wed. April 24)

In Vanda’s Room. 2000. Pedro Costa. 179 min.

*RECOMMENDED FILMS ON RESERVE:


READING:


SESSION 14. (Thurs., May 2) Performance: Collaborations with Subjects


SCREENING VCAM (Wed., May 1, 7:00)


*RECOMMENDED FILMS ON RESERVE:

Reading:

COURSE SCREENING TIMES AND DATES AT A GLANCE:

1. January 24 Intro/Actualities, Early Recreations and Silent Dramas
3. February 7 Vertov: Kino Pravda, City Symphonies - Documentary Avant Garde
4. February 14 Luis Bunuel: Documentary Surrealism/Satire and Reenactments
5. February 21 Italian Neo-realism/American Realism (L.A. Rebellion)
6. February 28 Jean Rouch: Ethnofictions/ Ben Russel
8. March 21 Jon Olshefski/Sabrina Schmidt Gordon and Varda/Cassavetes
9. March 28 Feminist Reimaginings and Remakes: Cheryl Dunye/E. Subrin
10. April 4 Godard/Wexler/ Parnes: Radical Approaches in Radical Times – "Mostly fiction, with constant slippage into reality (Parnes)"
11. April 11 Chantal Akerman: The Long Take into Narrative
12. April 18 Trinh T. Minh-ha/Chris Harris: Ethnography Re-observed
13. April 25 Abbas Kiarastami, Pedro Costa: Docufictions and Personal Reenactments
14. May 1 Performance Collaborations/Class Wrap and Evaluations

STRANGE TRUTH and other SPECIAL FILM SCREENING TIMES AND DATES:

February 15 Hale County, This Morning, This Evening, Ramell Ross, Swarthmore (Optional)
March 20 Quest. Directed by Jon Olshefski. BMFI
March 21 Baddd Sonya Sanchez. Directed by Sabrina Schmidt Gordon. VCAM (Optional)
April 4 Tour Without End. Laura Parnes. VCAM
April 17 Chris Harris, Still/Here. 2001. 60 min.; Reckless Eyeballing. 2004. 14 min.; Hakimuhfack. 2016. 4 min. VCAM

April 15 - 19 Chris Harris installation, A Willing Suspension of Disbelief + Photography, Fetish. 2014. 17 min. 3-channel installation VCAM Create Space

*Recommended Art Exhibitions:
“Colored People Time: Mundane Features, ICA, Philadelphia, February 1 – March 31, 2019