SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Colorado State University, Academic Partner

Voyage: Spring 2018
Discipline: Communications
Course Number and Title: SPCM 357 Film & Social Change
Division: Upper
Faculty Name: Megan Lewis
Semester Credit Hours: 3

Prerequisites: None.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this globally-focused, upper level course, we will:

- see a variety of films from several different cultural locations;
- analyze these “texts” within their sociopolitical, cultural, and historical “contexts”;
- evaluate their social change impact and efficacy at raising awareness of specific issues, changing hearts and minds, or more direct political action; and
- articulate ideas, reactions, and interpretations to film both orally and in writing.

This course is designed to introduce students to the ways in which the medium of film participates in efforts towards social change across the global landscape. You will gain an understanding of the relationship between artistic expression, culturally-specific context, societal impact, and political efficacy in films addressing social change. We will look at the documentary film as a form of “intelligence work” (Kahana) in culture and a “social imaginary” (Taylor) that helps us “envision the collective consequences of our thoughts and actions (Kahana 1). We will watch documentary films tied to the places we will visit on our Spring 2018 voyage. Films include: Jack Shaheen’s Reel Bad Arabs (Middle East, 2006), Jehane Noujaim’s The Square (Egypt, 2013), Ai Weiwei’s Never Sorry (China, 2012), Michael Patrick Kelly’s Operation Lysistrata (USA, 2006), Emile de Antonio’s In the Year of the Pig (Vietnam, 1968), Robert K. Lieberman’s They Call It Myanmar: Lifting the Curtain (Myanmar, 2012), Deborah Hoffman and Frances Reid’s Long Night’s Journey Into Day (South Africa, 2001), Connie Field’s Have you Heard from Johannesburg? (South Africa, 2010), Gillo Pontecorvo’s Battle of Algiers (USA/Algeria, 1967), (Raoul Peck’s I Am Not Your Negro (USA, 2016), and Ava DuVernay’s 13TH (USA, 2016).

We will see films (in and outside of class) and engage in rigorous dissection of the films in class discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students in SPCM357 Film & Social Change will:

- discover the ways in which the medium of film participates in efforts towards social change across the global landscape, exploring the relationship between artistic
expression, culturally-specific context, societal impact, and political efficacy in films addressing social change;

- examine the documentary film as a form of “intelligence work” (Kahana) in culture(s) and as a “social imaginary” (Taylor) that helps us “envision the collective consequences of our thoughts and actions (Kahana 1);

- appreciate the methods of the documentary filmmaker, including conventions and techniques, ethics and politics;

- understand the social contexts in and out of which documentary films emerge;

- reflect on our learning and discoveries in short written responses and in-class discussion.

Students will reflect on major thematic lines of inquiry across our voyage and write 5 short response papers in which they reflect on the manners in which film addresses, depicts, activates, or challenges social realities in the countries we visit. They will explore the “intelligence work” the films we watch are engaged in; the ethics of representing self and other in documentary film; the role of art as activism; documentary and democracy in Asia and Africa; and the issue of race and racism in documentary film.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Course materials will be provided via the course Moodle site.

- Excerpts from Bill Nichols, Introduction to Documentary (Indiana University Press, 2010)
- Additional topical materials and articles, as appropriate (see below)

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Depart Ensenada, Mexico — January 5

UNIT 1: DOCUMENTARY CONVENTIONS / CLIMATE CHANGE

A1—January 7: Welcome/Course Overview
How to read a film: Documentary conventions

Readings: Juel - Defining Documentary Film;
Nichols – Participatory, Reflexive, and Performative Modes of Documentary Film
A2—January 9: Documentary film as intelligence work

Reading: Kahana - The Intelligence Work of Documentary: Publics, Politics, Intellectuals (excerpts)

A3—January 11: Climate Change: Fisher Stevens & Leonardo DiCaprio’s Before the Flood

Honolulu, Hawaii — January 12

FIELD CLASS: CLIMATE CHANGE: IMPACTS ON ISLAND NATIONS (Hawaii) – January 12

Reading: Anthropocene and global climate change materials for Field Class (TBD)

UNIT 2: ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION

A4—January 14: Depicting the Other: Jack Shaheen’s Reel Bad Arabs

Reading: Shaheen – Introduction; Said - Orientalism and Othering handout

January 16—International Date Line crossing (Lost Day)

Field class reflection essay due

A5—January 17: Self-Depiction: Jehane Noujaim’s The Square

Reading: Sheila Preston – The Ethics of Representation

No Class — January 19

A6—January 20: The Stakes of Representation: Positionality, Voice, Ethics

Reading: Nichols – Why are Ethical Issues Central to Documentary Filmmaking?

Response paper #1 due: Representation reflection

UNIT 3: ART AND/AS ACTIVISM

A7—January 22: Dissenting Art: Ai Weiwei’s Never Sorry

Reading: Art & Dissent across history handout

Kobe, Japan — January 24-28

A8—January 29: Art as Social Protest: Michael Patrick Kelly’s Operation Lysistrata

Reading: Aristophanes’ Lysistrata handout;
Nichols – “How Have Documentaries Addressed Social and Political Issues?”

Response paper #2 due: Art activism reflection

Shanghai, China — January 31 - February 1

In-Transit — February 2-3 Watch Emile de Antonio’s In the Year of the Pig
Reading: Excerpt from Michael Anderegg Inventing Vietnam: the war in film and television

Hong Kong, SAR — February 4-5

UNIT 4: DEMOCRACY & DOCUMENTARY - ASIA

A9—February 6: Raising Political Awareness: Emile de Antonio’s In the Year of the Pig

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam — February 8-13

A10—February 14: Democracy Rising: Robert K. Lieberman’s They Call It Myanmar: Lifting the Curtain
Reading: David Whiteman – “The evolving impact of documentary film: Sacrifice and the rise of issue-centered outreach.”

No Class —February 16

A11—February 17: Democracy Rising: Robert K. Lieberman’s They Call It Myanmar: Lifting the Curtain

Yangon, Myanmar — February 19-23

A12—February 24: General discussion

A13— February 26: General discussion

Response paper #3 due: Democracy & documentary reflection (Asia)

Cochin, India — February 28 – March 5

No Class — March 7

UNIT 5: DEMOCRACY & DOCUMENTARY - AFRICA

A15—March 9: Apartheid: Connie Field’s Have You Heard From Johannesburg?

Reading: David Anthony – “A comparative History of South Africa and the United States” and “The Rise and Fall of Apartheid: A Timeline.”

Port Louis, Mauritius — March 11
A16—March 12: Apartheid: Connie Field’s Have You Heard From Johannesburg?

A17—March 14: Making Democracy: Deborah Hoffman and Frances Reid’s Long Night’s Journey Into Day


A18—March 16: Making Democracy: Deborah Hoffman and Frances Reid’s Long Night’s Journey Into Day

Response paper #4 due: Democracy & documentary reflection (Africa)

Cape Town, South Africa — March 18-23

UNIT 6: RACE & DOCUMENTARY

A19—March 24: Raoul Peck’s I Am Not Your Negro

Reading: BLM Resistance Manual

A20—March 26: Raoul Peck’s I Am Not Your Negro

A21—March 28: Gillo Pontecorvo’s Battle of Algiers

Reading: Frantz Fanon, postcolonial theory excerpts

Takoradi, Ghana — March 30 – March 31

Tem, Ghana — April 1-3

A22—April 4: Gillo Pontecorvo’s Battle of Algiers

Reading: documentary conventions in fiction films

A23—April 6: Ava DuVernay’s 13TH

Reading: Excerpt from The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander

Study Day — April 8

A24—April 9: Ava DuVernay’s 13TH

Casablanca, Morocco — April 11-14
FIELD WORK
Semester at Sea field experiences allow for an unparalleled opportunity to compare, contrast, and synthesize the different cultures and countries encountered over the course of the voyage. In addition to the one field class, students will complete independent field assignments that span multiple countries.

Field Class attendance is mandatory for all students enrolled in this course. Do not book individual travel plans or a Semester at Sea sponsored trip on the day of your field class. Field Classes constitute at least 20% of the contact hours for each course, and are developed and led by the instructor.

Field Class & Assignment (25% of course grade)

Study the impact of climate change on island nations (January 12, 2018) in Honolulu
Country: USA/Hawaii – Honolulu
Idea: Paired with Fisher Steven’s film Before the Flood, featuring Leonardo DiCaprio, we hear from scientists in Hawaii about the impact of climate change on island nations and tour the island to see first-hand what those impacts look like
Objectives: Learn from experts in climate change to gain vital scientific knowledge that complements the film; experience climate change impacts on an island nation (Hawaii) first-hand; assess the efficacy of the medium of film in communicating and educating publics around climate science; discuss activist strategies and how to effect “social change” around these issues.

Evaluation: Reflective essay synthesizing the film and the island experience, reflecting on the “intelligence work” of Stevens’ film in light of what we learned in Hawaii: how effective film is in effecting social change, at communicating about complex, highly politicized topics such as climate change, and at activating people towards impactful change. Essay will be evaluated on the depth and insight with which the student reflects, the details s/he uses to support claims and observations, and the careful analysis with which s/he synthesizes, processes, and reflects in written form.

Independent Field Assignments

Leveraging this tendency to capture our worlds though digital media, I encourage students to use their SmartPhones and cameras during the entire Spring 2018 Semester at Sea voyage to create digital journals of their experiences. But rather than do this piecemeal, or willy-nilly, to create a jumbled accumulation of random experiences, I encourage you to frame your capturing of the voyage through a particular lens, like a documentary filmmaker might do.

Frames or lenses of such an enquiry may include: social change topics such as: human rights; women’s or LGBTQ rights; democracy; climate change; arts and culture as forms of social
change etc. Or students may document their personal growth journeys, tracing their encounters with different cultures, with self and other identities, with comfort and discomfort zones, etc.

This reflective documentary practice offers students the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the Spring 2018 voyage on their sense of self, their understanding of the broader world, and their roles as critically informed global citizens and storytellers.

METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING SCALE

Your grade in this class is comprised of the following:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance, participation &amp; discussion</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 topical response papers</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Class w/ reflective essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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The following Grading Scale is utilized for student evaluation. Pass/Fail is not an option for Semester at Sea coursework. Note that C-, D+ and D- grades are also not assigned on Semester at Sea in accordance with the grading system at Colorado State University (the SAS partner institution).

Pluses and minuses are awarded as follows on a 100% scale:

- **Excellent**: 97-100%; A+
- **Good**: 87-89%; B+
- **Satisfactory/Poor**: 77-79%; C+
- **Failing**: Less than 60%:
  - 93-96%: A
  - 83-86%: B
  - 70-76%: C
  - 60-69%: D

ATTENDANCE/ENGAGEMENT IN THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

BE ACTIVELY PRESENT. Attendance in all Semester at Sea classes, including the Field Class, is mandatory. In order to get the most value out of this course, it is essential for you to be present in class both physically and mentally. Attendance will be taken and 20% of your course grade is participation and attendance. You may take 1 free missed class over the semester; for every additional unexcused absence, your final grade will be lowered by a level (i.e. B to B-). It is your responsibility to inform me prior to any unanticipated absence and take the initiative to make up missed work in a timely fashion. I recommend each of you find a class buddy with whom to exchange notes in the case you miss a class.

WHAT PARTICIPATION MEANS:

READ & VIEW ACTIVELY. Read the assigned texts (written or visual) actively: take notes, write down questions, look up words/ideas you don’t understand, underline or note not only sections that seem important, but those that are hard to understand as well. This kind of engaged reading/viewing is the key to success in this class. Participation means not only
showing up – it means **actively engaging the material** we cover. It means **reading the assignments** in preparation for each class and being **prepared to discuss** them during class. It means **taking notes** during class and reflecting on the material after class. It means **asking thoughtful questions** and **thinking carefully** about the course material. It also means **reviewing material** carefully for, and **articulating your thoughts deftly** on the written assignments and in class discussion.

**WHAT I EXPECT OF YOU IN THIS CLASS:**

- To commit time and energy to this class, and to come prepared and **on time** (simply “showing up” is not enough and I cannot abide tardiness)
- To check the Moodle site daily for updates
- To make note of all deadlines in your calendar and to read (and refer to) the syllabus frequently, as it is our roadmap to the course
- To complete all the assignments fully and carefully, and on time
- To do all the reading, bring annotated copies or your notes to class, and to take notes in class (plan your reading carefully because there is something due for almost every class across the semester)
- To remain open to exploration, change, and challenge
- To risk and stay curious
- To think, doubt, ask questions, and make connections
- To take responsibility for your own as well as the group’s learning experience

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT OF ME:**

- To be prepared and on time
- To engage theatre, theory, history, and the materials we study in engaging, exciting ways through lecture, discussion, class activities, and using multimedia resources
- To provide you with the tools to help you research, think critically, and analyze the works we study
- To provide you with tools and skills that will serve both your thinking and filmmaking practice
- To guide our inquiry, not lead it
- To push your thinking
- To hold you accountable

**LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS**

Semester at Sea provides academic accommodations for students with diagnosed learning disabilities, in accordance with ADA guidelines. Students who will need accommodations in a class, should contact ISE to discuss their individual needs. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation.

A letter from the student’s home institution verifying the accommodations received on their home campus (dated within the last three years) is required before any accommodation is provided on the ship. Students must submit this verification of accommodations to
academic@isevoyages.org as soon as possible, but no later than two months prior to the voyage.

**STUDENT CONDUCT CODE**

The foundation of a university is truth and knowledge, each of which relies in a fundamental manner upon academic integrity and is diminished significantly by academic misconduct. Academic integrity is conceptualized as doing and taking credit for one’s own work. A pervasive attitude promoting academic integrity enhances the sense of community and adds value to the educational process. All within the University are affected by the cooperative commitment to academic integrity. All Semester at Sea courses adhere to this Academic Integrity Policy and Student Conduct Code.

Depending on the nature of the assignment or exam, the faculty member may require a written declaration of the following honor pledge: “I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment.”

**COURSE MATERIALS**

There are no required textbooks to purchase for this course (see above).

All course materials, including PDFs of articles and readings, handouts, worksheets, and video clips will be hosted on our course Moodle site and/or in Homeport course folders.

Films will be shown in class and hosted on the Moodle site and through SAS’ on board film screening system.