

Truth: Documentary Film

- Essay question examples: compare two films; which one is a documentary? Why?
- Considerations to use when arguing the nature of a film (is it documentary or propaganda?)
 - The intention of the filmmaker -- why did they make it?
 - Audience expectations -- do they expect to learn?
 - Ethical considerations -- high ideals? Propaganda?
 - Communication -- does it do more than entertain or reinforce a position?
 - Label -- how is it generally accepted?
 - Editing and style -- is theme emphasized over dreams?
 - Ethos
 - Pathos
 - Logos
- Propaganda or realism?
 - Definition of propaganda: Chiefly derogatory information, esp. of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.
 - What the enemies say = propaganda
What we say = truth
 - "Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. All you have to do is tell them that they're being attacked."
 - The National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazis)
 - Slowly gained power after WWI
 - Headed by Adolf Hitler, who was appointed Chancellor in 1933 and Fuhrer in 1934
 - Communist leaning in EU, rise of fascism in Germany and Italy
 - EU borders have shifted a lot following WWI
 - Used propaganda and charismatic speech to gain, hold, and increase power
 - Emphasized nationalism, aggressive foreign policy and anti-Semitism
 - Triggered WWII which brought death and destruction to millions
 - Orchestrated and carried out the Holocaust (genocide of six million Jews)
 - Triumph of the will by propaganda filmmaker Libby Rein...
 - Makes Hitler look cherished, loved, admired (of God)
 - Portray Hitler as a straight shooter, a man (of the people)

- Idea that everyone supports Hitler (women, children, farmers, etc.)
 - Hitler youth: example of Hitler bringing his philosophy into every aspect of society
 - Big concentration on abundance (lots of sausages! Lots of soup!), times of starvation are over now
 - Recreate a sense of unity
- Michael Renov writes that there are four distinct although sometimes overlapping purposes of documentary film:
 - To record, reveal, or preserve
 - To persuade or promote
 - To analyse or interrogate
 - To express
- 1922: *Nanook of the North*, 1st documentary
 - Seeks to preserve the traces of a vanishing way of life, similar to Edward Curtis (exoticism)
- Robert Flaherty (1884-1951)
 - 1500 photographs of the Inuit from 1908-1924
 - Worked as a surveyor and a prospector
 - Took a camera up North and filmed, however he was a heavy smoker and accidentally burned the tape
 - When this happened, he went back up North and took better videos (bc he had a better idea of his film)
 - Exoticism → the way Robert Flaherty portrays Nanook in *Nanook of the North*
 - Made films outside the commercial system
 - Is this a documentary? Many scenes are staged, but it represents the northern way of life. *Nanook of the North* is accepted as documentary, but should it be considered truthful?
- What is a documentary?
 - It studies actuality, real life.
 - The film camera is a more impartial observer; purely mechanical process. → Cinema vérité. (Jean Rouch)
 - Others argue that fictional films are more documentary than documentaries. The very nature of making a fictional film is more truthful than making a documentary.
- The Man with the Movie Camera
 - Day in the life of a Russian city as seen through the eye of the Man with the Movie Camera

- Filmed over a few days, in 4 different cities (the movie makes it seem like it's only a day in one city)
- Starts off with a manifesto: "film without subtitles, a film experiment"
- The filmmaker (Dziga Vertov) is a real Marxist, and his films convey that message.
- He thinks fictional films are bad for his country. He wants his films to spread a real message.
- He sets up his film as being oppositional. His message is hard to digest, but he believes that art shouldn't be easy.
- In the same time period, futurism was on the rise. This movement shows movement, technology, progress.
- Art as challenging the status quo, the machine is a Savior (the camera is a machine!)
- Not a linear story. The film is very meta (film starts in the theatre). → shows us how the film is made, thus showing us that it is constructed.
- The eye of the camera vs the human eye
- Window blinds opening and closing vs eyes opening and closing
- Movie clips showing all people and all jobs, → communism: every job is valuable
- Cinema verite: doesn't pretend to construct a narrative (you see the editor, you see people going into the cinema thus showing that this is just a movie, there's no story, references to the eye and how the camera is like the eye), filmic version of cubism (different povs, filmed in 4 cities, different times, different people)
- The Plow that Broke the Plains
 - 1930s
 - Screenplay by Pare Lorentz
 - Works for the department of the Resettlement Administration under the New Deal
 - Propaganda and controversy
 - Very poetic, close to the modern documentary
 - 1st voice narrator
 - Similar to "the River"
 - Tells the story of what happened to the great plains before the Dust Bowl
 - Filmed in 4 different places

War, Photography, Documentary and Propaganda

- Susan Sontag
 - References to Virginia Woolfe (about potential for photography for stopping war) → she has a very optimistic view, if we see war images we'll see how horrible it is and stop fighting
 - Disaster photography and 911
 - "You can't call terrorists cowards!"
 - Very vocal about her criticisms of US foreign policy
 - Photography is the only art where timing and luck can make a masterpiece
 - Richard Drew 2001 picture of man falling from world trade tower
 - newspapers pulled the pics out bc it's too shocking, too hurtful...
 - Susan Sontag argues that the photographs hit very close to home. Why is it that, when we see people from far away places suffering, we're much more willing to accept death n suffering? What does it say abt us?
 - Tumbling woman 2002 by Eric Fischl
 - Taken out of the Rockefeller center and placed far away from New York
 - Crimean war
 - The camp of the 4th dragoon guards
 - Roger Fenton: sitting the position of the previous on the road... if it is more emotionally true? Rocks on the hill first
 - Roger is the only photographer
 - Valley of the shadow of death
 - Home of a rebel sharpshooter July 1863 by Alexander Gardner
 - Altered
 - They dragged bodies around and put more in their pictures
- History of war photography
 - During by WWI photographs become more common
 - Photographers are usually anonymous
 - Photos are seen as more honest than the printed word
 - Susan Sontag argues that photos without text are not enough to convey a message
 - They are also seen as more able to accurately describe the destruction and the carnage of war
 - Robert Capa
 - Falling man 1936 (loyalist just shot, moments from death), found in a magazine next to a hair cream ad (strange juxtaposition)

- Leftist rhetoric
- Change his last name to Capa because it sounds more American (time of American idolization) → it works! More ppl buy his photos
- Pablo Picasso, Guernica, 1937
- David Seymour
 - Land distribution meeting 1936
 - Guernica and fire bombings, ppl were worried for their life bc a bomb could drop at anytime
 - Pic of breastfeeding woman looking up to the sky as if worried of bombs
 - Work with Capa
 - Susan Sontag talks about him
- WWII
 - Joe Rosenthal 1945 photo of Marines planting an American flag
 - Actually, they won this battle and planted a flag. Then their commanding officer wanted the flag so they brought it down. The next day a bigger flag was brought up. The photo captures the first flag's planting.
- Jeff Wall
 - Mimic, 1982 → Hong Kong immigrants entering Canada, racism
 - Jeff recaptures moments
 - Milk, 1984
 - A Sudden Gust of Wind (1993) → reinterpretation of Hokusai (ejiri...)
 - Volunteer (1996) → pic of janitor in a soup kitchen, he has more money at this point so he rebuilds sets
 - Citizen (1996) → doesn't matter if you're a druggie, if you're homeless. We're all citizens.
 - The Flooded Grave (1998-2000) → grave filled with sea urchins and aquatic life, inspired by a dream
 - **Dead Troops Talk** (A vision after an ambush of a Red Army patrol, near Moqor, Afghanistan, winter 1986) (1992) → recreated in a studio, he had a team of assistants and makeup artists and set up the whole scene. Msg that Afghanistan is always going to remain unstable. The whole set-up is funny; the soldiers are posed in funny ways, the gestures they're making are absurd. The whole feeling it gives you is very similar to what actual war would make you feel → Susan Sontag believes this is the most realistic photo of war.
 - Cinematographic photograph, very well known Canadian artist

- Work first noticed in 1970s
 - Susan Sontag writes abt him: talks about one of his photographs being the most accurate portrayal of war (see above)
- ~~Edouard Manet – Luncheon on the Grass (1863)~~
 - ~~Seen as realism (painting ordinary people in an unromantic way)~~
- Propaganda
 - Definition of propaganda (dictionary): Chiefly derogatory information, esp. of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or POV
 - “Planned use of any form of public or mass-produced communication designed to affect the minds and emotions of a given group for a specific purpose, whether military, econ., or political.” –Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger
 - “We must remember that in time of war what is said on the enemy’s side of the front is always propaganda, and what is said on our side of the front is truth and righteousness, the cause of humanity and a crusade for peace” –Walter Lippmann
 - “Naturally the common people don’t want war: Neither in Russia, nor in England, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. ... Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.” – General Herman Goering
- The National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazis)
 - Slowly gained power after WWI
 - Headed by Adolf Hitler, who was appointed Chancellor in 1933 and Führer in 1934
 - Used propaganda and charismatic speech to gain, hold and increase power
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 - Orchestrated and carried out the Holocaust, the genocide of six million Jews
 - Leni Reifenstahl
 - Nazi propaganda films
 - Denies that she knew of the atrocities of WWII

- Makes Hitler's people seem united
 - Fascist vibes
 - She's very proud of her film
 - Willfully ignorant
- US involvement in WWII
 - The USA was initially reluctant to be drawn into war, maintaining a policy of isolationism
 - German victories in 1940 began to change public opinion
 - In 1941 Japan (allied with Germany) bombed the US fleet at Pearl Harbor
- Frank Capra
 - Italian-American director best known for It's a Wonderful Life
 - Was deeply affected by Triumph of the Will and agreed to make a series of propaganda films in response
 - The films were originally shown to recruits, but later shown to the general population
 - Capra made 7 films in the Why We Fight series
 - He was short on time! He decided to work on existing footage.
 - The US has been collecting news reels from overseas
 - These films were not all very popular, because they were very complicated and not everyone at the time had a great education → too hard to follow, boring for many
 - Setting up basic duality (good vs evil, US vs Germany)
 - 2 voice overs by diff people: one for factual text, one for emotional text
- Cold War
 - Nuclear weaponry and development
 - Very fast, these weapons were devel. And improved by many countries so no one country will be more powerful, and if one country attacks others can retaliate

Reality TV and the Cold War

- “Cops” TV Series
 - Debuts in 1989, during a Writers Guild of America strike (circle around periodically—reality TV doesn’t need writers and doesn’t cost as much to make)
 - Influenced by cinema verite
 - First seasons influenced by interest in crack cocaine
 - Criticized by Michael Moore (and others) for showing people of color as criminals, people to be feared
 - Criticisms: cops only catch petty criminals, this show doesn’t shed light on the actual issues in society
 - Personal Videorecorders used!
- Personal videorecorders
 - Rodney King beating
 - History of being a black petty criminal
 - He was on probation, was driving. Police stopped him then dragged him out of his car and beat him.
 - There was a man who saw and filmed the whole scene from his balcony.
 - There was a videotape, so there was a court case.
 - 1991
 - 4 officers acquitted of charges
 - Lead to 1992 LA Riots
 - 55 killed, 2000 injured over days (7000 fires)
- Panopticon by Jeremy Bentham’s: Idea for a prison where prisoners don’t know if they’re being watched (prison guard in the middle). If you think you are, you’ll self-police,
 - Many claim that WE live in a panopticon. We’re all being watched. Traffic cameras, aerial surveillance... We self-police because we know we’re watched. This acts as a deterrent for bad and/or illegal actions.
 - Philosophers believe this is a bad idea. This trains people into doing nothing unexpected. We want people to push back, to do things that the state might not want them to do. Constant surveillance deters this kind of behaviour that could be good for society.
 - Jean Baudrillard
 - The fact that we have prisons hides the fact that we’re all in prison
→ makes us feel like we’re free, but we’re not, we’re all locked away

1. Symbolic order (faithful representation) – photo/painting of coffee bean or plant
 2. First order (perversion of original) – can of coffee
 3. Second order (masks the absence of original) – Starbucks cup
 4. Third order (has no relation to original, is its own truth, “simulacrum”) – caffeine injection
- A simulacrum is not a copy of the real but truth in and of itself. The difference between texts and real life has broken down. Meaning has become destabilized. What is real and what is not?
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- Michael Moore
 - Very liberal, anti-globalisation, fan of strict gun laws, wants to work on public health, very critical of George W. Bush and the Republican party in the early 2000s
 - Grew up in Flint, Michigan. Lower middle class family. Dad is a union worker, mom is a secretary. Humble beginnings, university drop-out (he’s a very mouthy guy)
 - Started an alternative newspaper called Flint Voice (very left-leaning and artsy)
 - He was head hunted by *Mother Jones* as editor and moved to California
 - He left and got a hefty sum through a settlement.
 - Filmed his 1st documentary “Roger and Me” → talking to people in Flint how crappy life is in their city, then interviewing the head of General Motors to try to see what’s going on
 - Activist? Muckracker? Demagog?
 - Pauline Kael, a very influential critic of the New Yorker, who accused him of lying and changing the chronology of events in the film
 - Raised the question of documentary ethics
 - Film was not nominated for an Oscar in the documentary category
 - Fahrenheit 9/11: opened in theatres in 2004 and attacked the Bush administration. Won best picture at Canes
 - Manipulated photographs
 - The public doesn’t like it when photographers manip. Images to create their own narrative.
 - During the digital age → many cases of photo manipulation
 - in National Geographic
 - in newspapers
 - of war photography (i.e. guy who was looking for familiar faces in a photo and realized that some faces were repeated)

- Some ppl have clear political motivations (Israeli bomb smoke)
- Richard Prince
 - Known for stealing stuff
 - Hates Trump
 - Insta pic of Ivanka → "This is not my work."
- Social Darwinism in Survivor
 - Mike Burnett → Expedition Robinson in Sweden (ppl stranded on the island)
his idea is to involve voters in the show
 - Microcosm for what happens in society (survive in society, need to fight to the top, example of med student joining every club and activity so their application appears on top of the pile)
 - It's not enough to be good at surviving, you have to thrive
- Jennifer Ringley and the JenniCam 1996
- Justin Kan 2007
 - Wore a camera
 - People would call the police or the SWAT to his address
 - His idea became Twitch!
- Amalia Ulman, Excellences and Perfections, 2014
 - Starts off with light, faded colours, lots of light pink
 - Part 1: innocent, blonde and blue eyes, white eyed Caucasian girl
 - Part 2: colours become darker, themes of images become more revealing in nature, more nsfw naked/halfnaked selfies, breast aug
 - Part 3: she becomes good again, drinks juices n shit
- #pizzagate and some sort of online conspiracy theory about cheese pizza being a sign for pedophilic intentions +hankerchief +Wikileaks emails

Q&A IN CLASS

- Magnum photos (Capa) – first time photog. Becomes an industry
 - Photojournalists that fly to hot spots around the world and sell their photographs
 - Enlisted soldiers were not supposed to bring cameras, so photojournalists would
- Cinema verite: 1950s, French
 - Fly on the wall, no intervention
 - Vertov, father of cinema verite
 - Critique: having a camera encourages people to continue
- Omar Fast, Palestinian filmmaker
 - Film with different vignettes
 - Work as a bomber, film about the bomber and thieves
 - Critique of news media
 - Things can be seen in diff ways
 - Questioning ppls memory
 - Reaction to images of war
 - Questions about race
- Michael Moore
 - Gore Bush election
 - Kerry Bush election
- Embedded journalism – British troops 2nd gulf war (invited reporters to follow soldiers and befriend them)

- Hitler
 - Chancellor 1933, Fuhrer 1934
 - National Socialist German Workers Party
- Leni Reifenstal
 - Triumph of the Will
 - Nazi propaganda film → Hitler present in every elements of society, abundance in Germany
- Michael Renov
 - 4 purposes to documentary film
- Robert Flaherty
 - Nanook of the North
- Dziga Vertov
 - The Man with the Movie Camera
- Pare Lorentz
 - The Plow that Broke the Plains
- Richard Drew
 - Man falling from World Trade Tower
- Eric Fischl
 - Tumbling woman
- Roger Fenton
 - Valley of the Shadow of Death (Pic of Crimean war – rocks on a hill)
- Alexander Gardner
 - Home of a rebet sharpshooter
- Robert Capa
 - Falling man (dying Loyalist next to hair cream ad)
- David Seymour
 - Land distribution meeting (woman breastfeeding looking up to sky, Spain)
 - Work with Robert Capa
- Joe Rosenthal
 - Photo of Marines planting American flag
- Jeff Wall
 - Series of manip photos
 - Dead Troops Talk! Inspires same feeling as war → most accurate portray.
- Frank Capra
 - It's a Wonderful Life
 - 7 "Why We [Americans] Fight" films
- Rodney King beating
- Jeremy Bentham
 - Panopticon

- Symbolic order (faithful) – First (perversion) – Second (masks the absence of original) – Third (no relation to original, us its own truth, simulacrum!)
 - Jean Baudrillard – prisons hide the fact that we are all in prison
- Michael Moore
- Richard Prince
 - Guy who steals other ppl's work (Malboro cigs, insta pics screenshotted)
 - Mike Burnett
 - Survivor
- Jennifer Ringley
 - Jennicam
- Justin Kan
 - Twitch
- Amalia Ulman
 - Insta performance