***Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen* (2020)**

**Film background:** *Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen* is a 2020 documentary directed by Sam Feder. It features interviews with many transgender actors, writers and producers, including Laverne Cox, Lilly Wachowski, Zackary Drucker, Jen Richards, MJ Rodriguez, Ser Anzoategui, and many others. The film uses extensive footage from film and television over the last 100 years to examine the history of trans representation on screen, and interviews trans members of the film industry about their experiences as actors, creators, and spectators. Much of the film focuses on how audiences--both trans and cis--are often impacted by the portrayals of trans people they see in film. Some films addressed in the documentary include *Paris is Burning, The Crying Game, Boys Don't Cry, Psycho, Ma Vie En Rose,* and *The Matrix,* among many others. Some television series discussed include *Transparent, Pose, Nip/Tuck* and the genres of daytime talk shows, police shows and hospital shows. Topics include cis casting of trans roles, historical stereotypes, appropriation, and trans visibility.

**Content warning:** *Disclosure* contains many brief clips of other films that include nudity, sexuality, references to sex work, transphobia and violence.

**Materials for this week:**

* Day 2: Aufderheide, Patricia. *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. (Excerpt provided: Chapter 1: "Defining the documentary", pp. 1-19)
* Day 3: Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary.* Indiana UP, 2017. (Excerpt provided: pp. 104-110; 137-149)

**Lesson 1 – Close-Reading *Disclosure***

1. (7 min) Screening quiz.
2. (15 min) Student-led scene analysis (see notes in *But I’m A Cheerleader* lesson plan and materials for details on this).
3. (6 min) Start teacher-led scene analysis with screening clip.
4. (4 min) Discussion prep.
5. What argument is made in the first scene we saw? What evidence is used to support that argument?
6. How does Feder use formal elements to support that argument?
7. What argument is made in the second scene we saw? What evidence is used to support that argument?
8. How does Feder use formal elements to support that argument?
9. (17 min) Whole class discussion.

**Lesson 2: Examining *Disclosure* Alongside Patricia Aufderheide’s “Defining the Documentary”**

1. (5 min) Personal reflection. Choose a question to respond to.
2. What’s a movie or TV show that *Disclosure* addressed that you were familiar with? Did *Disclosure* change your perception of that movie or TV show?
3. What’s a movie or TV show that *Disclosure* addressed that you’re unfamiliar with, but are interested in watching? Why?
4. What’s one argument made in *Disclosure* that you thought was interesting? Explain why you found it interesting.
5. (7 min) Discuss.
6. (3 min) Screen today’s clip.
7. Discussion prep.
8. What are the most important points that Aufderheide makes in “Defining the Documentary?” What evidence is used to support that?

* *Defining the documentary: Aufderheide defines documentary as a film that “tells a story about real life, with claims to truthfulness” (2). She also cites John Grierson’s definition of a documentary as a film with an “artistic representation of actuality” (3).*
* *Objectivity v. truthfulness: She draws a distinction between objectivity and truthfulness, arguing to truthfulness: “Viewers expect not to be tricked and lied to…We do not demand that these things be portrayed objectively, and they do not have to be the complete truth….But we do expect that a documentary will be a fair and honest representation of somebody’s experience of reality” (3). She explains that many documentary films do “not strive for balance in representing [all] point[s] of view” but do “strive for accuracy in representing the problem” they examine (7). Many films are “made for action” (7) and are therefore rooted in a persuasive argument.*
* *“Regular documentary” form: Aufderheide speaks of people’s assumptions about what makes a “regular documentary” and lists the formal elements that people tend to think of when they imagine a conventional documentary: a “’voice-of-God’ narration, an analytical argument rather than a story with characters, head shots of experts leavened with a few people-on-the-street interiews, stock images that illustrate the narrator’s point…perhaps a little educational animation, and dignified music” (10). However, she points out that these are merely “a package of choices that became standard practice in the later twentieth century on broadcast television” (10), but many documentary filmmakers make entirely different formal choices.*
* *Tools: Aufderheide provides a list of some tools available to documentary filmmakers: “sound (ambient sound, soundtrack music, special sound effects, dialogue, narration); images (material shot on location, historical images captured in photographs, video or objects); special effects in audio and video, including animation, and pacing (length of scenes, number of cuts, script or storytelling structure) (11). Aufderheide points out that there is a great deal of overlap between the formal choices documentary and nondocumentary filmmakers make: “cinematographers, sound technicians, digital designers, musicians and editors may work in both modes. Documentary work may require lights, and directors may ask their subjects for retakes; documentarians add sound effects and sound tracks” (12)*
* *Shift away from narration: “The choice against narration, which became fashionable in the later 1960s, allowed viewers to believe that they were being allowed to decide for themselves the meaning of what they saw” (12)*
* *Narrative structure: Aufderheide states that documentaries are “stories, they have beginnings, middles, and ends; they invest viewers in their characters, they take viewers on emotional journeys. They often refer to classic story structure” (12)*

1. Whole class discussion.
2. What are the most important points that Aufderheide makes in “Defining the Documentary?” What evidence is used to support that?
3. Review p. 2 and 3. How does Aufderheide define the documentary has a genre?
4. Review p. 3 and 7. How does Aufderheide explain the distinction between objectivity and truthfulness?
5. Review p. 10. How does Aufderheide explain the conventions people associate with documentaries? Have you seen these conventions in documentaries? Have these conventions shaped your impression of documentaries as a genre?
6. Review p. 11-12. What tools does Aufderheide identify as available to documentary filmmakers?
7. Review p. 12. How does Aufderheide explain the shift away from narration in documentary?
8. Review p. 12. How does Aufderheide explain the narrative structure of documentaries?

**Lesson 3: Examining *Disclosure Alongside* Bill Nichols’ *Introduction to Documentary***

1. (5 min) Compare/contrast.
2. Prior to watching *Disclosure,* what’s another documentary you’ve seen? How was *Disclosure* structured similarly to or differently from the other film you’re thinking of? What formal choices did Feder make that were similar or different?
3. (5 min) Discuss.
4. (3 min) Screen today’s clip.
5. (15 min) Study groups.
6. (20 min) Whole class discussion.
7. What are the most important ideas in the excerpts you read from Nichols’ book? What evidence was most important for supporting those claims?