

LEC 5006 Documentary Films

Course Code	LEC 5006	Semester	--
Course Title	Documentary Films		
Credits	3	Type	Elective

Course description:

Cinematic documentaries are vibrant cultural texts with tremendous sociopolitical impact. They often generate intense discourses in civil society. This employability based skill development course is designed with the primary intention of probing into the various aspects related to the conceptualization, production, circulation and reception of various subgenres non-fiction film. The origin, development and the various transformations through which this genre has gone in various historical periods would be the focus of this course. Apart from this, various approaches to documentary filmmaking, different schools of documentary productions and diverse practices related to documentary films will also be studied here. For exemplification and substantiation documentary films by master documentary filmmakers from around the world, including India, would be screened and analysed. Discussion of key-concepts related to documentary cinema will be another major component of this course. The primary logic behind selection of documentaries for this course is the accommodation of various sub-genres of documentary film from different cultural traditions.

Course Outcome

By the end of the course, the students will be able to

1. learn the historical origin and evolution of documentary cinema around the world.
2. understand various philosophical, political, aesthetic and formal aspects of documentary film as a distinct cinematic genre.
3. distinguish between fiction films and documentary films.
4. distinguish between various sorts of documentary or non-fiction films.
5. identify and understand various theoretical schools of documentary films.
6. watch and appreciate documentaries made by renowned filmmakers.
7. produce very short documentary films.

Course Structure**Module I: Introductory components**

- Introduction to documentary Cinema
- Distinction between Feature films and doc films
- History of documentary cinema—Features of documentary film
- Approaches to documentary making
- Theories of documentary
- Aesthetics of documentary—Television documentaries
- Review of Documentary Films
- Major documentary filmmakers: Louis Lumiere, Robert Flaherty, Leni Riefenstahl, John Grierson, Frank Capra, Anand Patwardhan, Michael Moore, Dziga Vertov and so on.
- Emerging Trends—Essay Films

Module II: Literature on documentary films

- John Grierson : “First Principles of Documentary”
- Erik Barnouw : “Glimpse of Wonders”
- Patricia A : “[Documentary] Subgenres”
- Bill Nichols : “The Fact of Realism and the Fiction of Objectivity”
- Frank Tomasulo : “The Mass Psychology of Fascist Cinema”
- Jeremy Hicks : “Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film”
- Michael Renov : “Toward a Poetics of Documentary”
- Carl Plantinga : “What is a Non-Fiction Film?”

Module III: Documentary films for Detailed/Non-Detailed Study:

- Lumiere : 10 Early Films (Actualities), 1895
- Robert Flaherty : *Nanook of the North*, 1922
- Dziga Vertov: *Man with A Movie Camera*, 1929
- Leni Riefenstahl : *Triumph of the Will*, 1935
- Alain Resnais : *Night and Fog*, 1955
- Vittalbhai Jhaveri : *Mahatma: Life of Gandhi*, 1968
- Anand Patwardhan : *Ram ke Naam*, 1992
- M. A. Rahman : *Arajeevithangalkku Oru Swargam*, 1993
- Michael Moore : *Fahrenheit 9/11*, 2004
- Zana Briski : *Born into Brothels*, 2004
- Haobam Paban : *AFSPA 1958*. 2006
- Miki and Romano : *The Dark Side of Chocolate*, 2010
- J. Oppenheimer : *The Act of Killing*, 2012
- Shivendra Sing : *Celluloid Man*. 2012
- S. Soechtig : *Fed Up*, 2014
- Leslee Udwin : *India's Daughter*, 2015
- Nakul Singh Swdney : *Muzaffarnagar Baaqi Hai*, 2015

Module IV:

- A Short visit to a film school or film archive or shooting location to get firsthand experience on how at ground level documentary films are conceived and produced.
- Production of a very short documentary film (5 to 10 minutes) using digital technology.

Evaluation:

Production documentary film (Group)	20 marks
Assignments	10 marks
Mid-Semester Examination	10 marks
End-Semester Examination	60 marks
Total	100 marks

Pattern of end-semester examination:

Long-answer type questions	20 marks
Short-answer type questions	20 marks
Very-short answer questions	10 marks

Instructional procedures (Course transaction mode):

Lectures, screenings, discussions, assignments, presentations, production, etc.

General course requirements:

Regular attendance in the class; Active participation in class-room activities; Submission of assignments on time; Attendance in mid-semester and end-semester examinations.

Reference list:

- Barsam, Richard Meran. *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*. Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1992.
- Bernard, Sheila Curran. *Documentary Storytelling: Making Stronger and More Dramatic Nonfiction Films*. London: Focal Press, 2007.
- Ellis, Jack C and Betsy A. McLane. *A New History of Documentary Film*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2005.
- Garga, Bhagwan Das. *From Raj to Swaraj: The Non-Fiction Film in India*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2007.

- Grant, Barry Keith and Jeannette Sloniowski. *Documenting the Documentary*. Michigan, Wayne State UP, 1988.
- Hicks, Jeremy. *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2007.
- Jolliffe, Genevieve and Andrew Zinnes. *The Documentary Film Makers Handbook*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2006.
- Lewis Jacobs, ed. *The Documentary Tradition*. W. W. Norton & Co., 1979.
- Michael Rabiger, *Directing the Documentary*. Focal Press, 2004.
- Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington, Indiana UP, 2010.
- Reeves, Nicholas. *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality?* New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Roberts, Graham. *Forward Soviet!: History and Non-fiction Film in the USSR*. St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Rollyson, Carl. *Documentary Film: A Primer*. Lincoln, iUniverse, 2004.
- Rosenthal, Alan. *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos*. Carbondale, Southern Illinois UP, 2007.
- Rotha. *Paul Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.
- Rothman, William. *Documentary Film Classics*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Warren, Charles. *Beyond Document: Essays on Nonfiction Film*. Middletown, Wesleyan UP, 1996.