

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & MULTIMEDIA STUDIES

FAVORITE FILM ICEBREAKER

Objective:

This icebreaker activity is specifically designed to introduce students to the discussion portion of their foundational Film Appreciation course. This section is designed to teach students how to critically analyze and discuss films, so we will begin by having students talk about their favorite films to get them comfortable.

Rules:

- Students must state their name, year, major, and favorite film.
- If they are unable to choose a favorite film, they may choose a film that they love to rewatch.
 - If students claim that they don't watch films, ask them to choose their favorite TV show or web series.
- Next, students must tell us WHY that is their favorite film.
- If a student can't explain "WHY?" Or simply state something like "It's just really good" or "I just really like it" - It is worth mentioning at this point that the goal of the discussion sections will be to learn how to elaborate when we talk about films. Since it's a foundational course, this is a good point for them to start from!

Prompts:

- We will begin at one corner of the room and work our way around to everyone.

Time:

10 - 15 minutes

Debriefing:

- If a student can't explain "WHY?" Or simply state something like "It's just really good" or "I just really like it" - It is worth mentioning at this point that the goal of the discussion sections will be to learn how to elaborate when we talk about films. Since it's a foundational course, this is a good point for them to start from!
- This icebreaker gives you a pretty good idea of where everyone is standing in relation to the content of the course; some students already have knowledge of film vocabulary while most have little to none. If I have a comment to make about a film I do. I also poke fun at those students who choose movies like "The Hangover" or "The Wolf of Wall Street" to make a point about the surface-level nature of their choice.

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & MULTIMEDIA STUDIES

WHIP AROUND DISCUSSION FOR EDITING 2

Objective:

This interactive engagement activity is specifically designed to discuss “Montage and Other Alternatives to Continuity” for the Editing 2 module of a foundational Film Appreciation course. These discussion sections are conducted to help students foster critical analysis skills for discussing and analyzing film, so this activity is perfect as it systematically allows each student to speak. This activity involves showing students film clips and then working through a set of questions, giving each student a chance to answer each question.

Questions & Video Clips:

At Land dir. by Maya Deren - Show the last 4-5 minutes.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvafmE3Lel0&t=632s>)

- In your opinion, what is the meaning of this film? Is it a metaphor for something?
- How do the editing and camera techniques differ from classical Hollywood style?
- Is this an effective form of storytelling?

Battleship Potemkin dir. by Sergei Eisenstein - Show the last 3-4 minutes of the Odessa Step Scene. (<https://youtu.be/K1Vx3AOpVDo?si=w1GSQ-t5TzTXhcl&t=486>) Show this clip comparing different music choices between the first and second question in the set:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAbzRjErywY>

- How does Eisenstein’s use of “montage” in the Odessa Steps sequence compare to modern instances of montage?
- What difference does the music choice make in silent films?
- Is this an effective storytelling technique? Do you think Battleship Potemkin still deserves praise 98 years later?

La Jetee dir. by Chris Marker - Show the last 1-2 minutes.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ibtrxdUBTw>)

- What is the plot?
- Is this an effective storytelling technique?
- Did you catch the one moment of 35mm moving image?

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgZ_O2rwo8c)

Rules:

- Show the class the first clip (*At Land* dir. by Maya Deren) to refresh their memory. If possible, display the corresponding set of questions afterward.
- Ask the first question in the set, then allow students 5-10 seconds to come up with their answers.
- Start at one corner of the room and allow each student a chance to give their answer to the question. Students are allowed a “pass” if necessary.
- Tie together students' similar and contrasting viewpoints. Once you have completed the first set of questions, show the second clip and REPEAT.

Prompts:

- The instructor will show a clip. A set of questions will follow it. The instructor will ask these questions individually, giving everyone a chance to answer. We will begin at one corner of the room and work our way around to everyone.

Time:

40 - 45 minutes

Debriefing:

- Students are allowed to “pass” on a question if they don’t have an answer, but they should be required to answer at least 1 or 2 questions each session.

Yee, K. (2020). 58. Whip Around. In, *Interactive Techniques*. Creative Commons. (p. 4)

Corrigan & White (2021) - Chapter 8 Documentary Films: Representing the Real (p. 273)

A **documentary** film is a visual and auditory representation of presumed facts, real experiences, and actual events in the world. Documentary films usually use different strategies and organizations than narrative films. (p. 300)

- A short history of documentary cinema
 - Prehistory of documentaries
 - 1895-1905: Early actualities, scenics, and topical films - The very first movies were nonfiction films, frequently called **actualities**: moving presentations of real people and events. Also popular during this period were other **scenics**, which depicted exotic and foreign locations, and **topical films**, which presented current events. (300)
 - The 1920s: Robert Flaherty and the soviet documentaries - *Nanook of the North* (1922) and other anthropological films proved the commercial possibilities of the documentary format. Around the same time, Soviet filmmakers pioneered the documentary for political purposes. (300)
 - 1930-1945: The politics and propaganda of documentary - The introduction of **optical sound recording** in 1927 greatly affected documentary films by allowing the addition of educational or social commentary to accompany images. (300)
 - 1950s-1970s: New technologies and the arrival of television - In the 1950s, lightweight 16mm cameras and portable magnetic sound-recording equipment gave filmmakers new ways to capture reality, as exemplified by the **cinéma vérité** movement in France and **direct cinema** in North America. (300)
 - 1980s-present: Digital cinema, cable, and reality TV - From the 2000s on, digital video cameras and editing systems have made documentary filmmaking less expensive and technologically streamlined. (300)

- The elements of documentary films
 - Nonfiction and non-narrative - **Nonfiction films** present presumed factual descriptions of actual events, people, or places. **Non-narrative films** are organized in a variety of ways that deemphasize stories while employing other organizational structures. (300)
 - Expositions: Organizations that show or describe
 - *Évocateur: The Morton Downey Jr. Movie* (2012) behind-the-scenes clip
 - Examine carefully the organization of this clip from *Évocateur: The Morton Downey Jr. Movie* (2012). Does it follow a clear formal strategy? Explain. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yye-mTbDZ0w>)
 - Rhetorical positions
 - Watch this clip from *He Named Me Malala* (2015). Describe the presiding voice or attitude with as much detail as possible. How does the dominant rhetorical argument position the subject it addresses? Can you imagine another way of filming this subject? Explain. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQjU9IzYMP8>)
- Thinking about documentary films
 - Confronting assumptions
 - Altering opinions
 - Interpretive contexts and traditions

Primary documentary traditions include:

- *Social documentaries* examine and present people and cultures from a perspective that focuses on a particular problem or social issue. They include *political documentaries*.
- *Historical documentaries* concentrate on recovering and representing events or figures in history.
- *Ethnographic films* are cultural explorations aimed at presenting specific peoples, rituals, or communities that may have been marginalized by or are invisible to the mainstream culture. They include *anthropological films*.

- *Personal documentaries* emphasize the personal perspective or involvement of the filmmaker. A related tradition is the **mockumentary**, which takes a humorous approach to questions of truth or fact.
- Various types of documentaries use reenactments to re-create real or presumably true events. (300)

Students will be sent a poll and asked to vote for the film they would like to see.

- Polls will be sent out ahead of class time to ensure that every student has a chance to respond.
- Once the lecture is complete, we will wait 5 minutes for everyone to complete their response for the film poll, then begin the film with the highest number of votes.
- Students receive 1 point for attending and a second point for participating in the poll for a 2/2 attendance/participation grade. The poll includes links to trailers for each film.
- *Évocateur: The Morton Downey Jr. Movie* (2012)
- *Breakfast with Hunter* (2003)
- *The True Meaning of Pictures: Shelby Lee Adams' Appalachia* (2002)
- *LA 92* (2017)

The discussion might be slightly adjusted based on which film is selected by the poll, but the same general questions will be asked.

- How do the storytelling strategies and techniques of this documentary film differ from traditional narrative films?
- Does this film follow direct cinema style or cinema verite style? How or how not?
- Is this film nonfiction or non-narrative? Why or why not?
- How does the film confront assumptions?
 - Do you believe this film could effectively alter audience opinions? Why or why not?
- Is this documentary social, political, historical, ethnographic, anthropological, or personal?

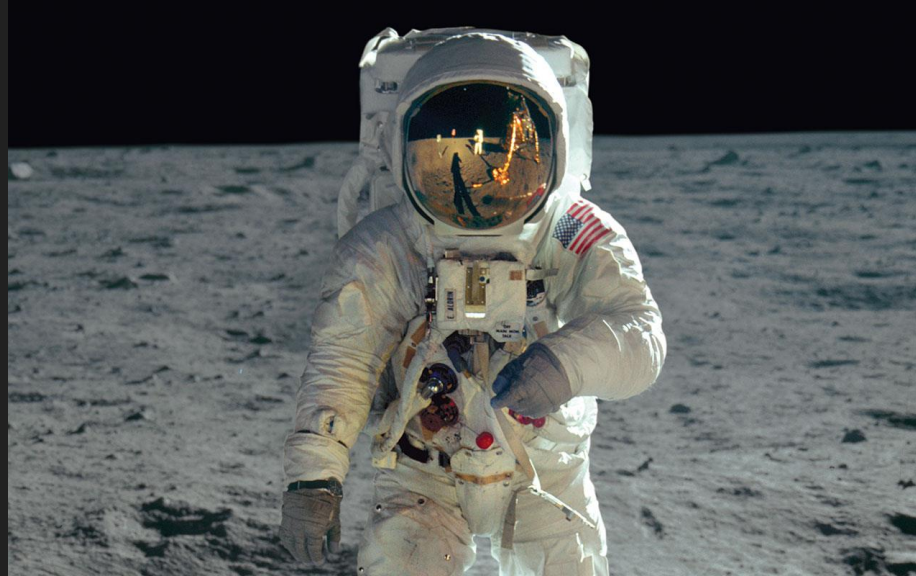
Corrigan, T. & White, P. (2021). *The film experience: an introduction*. (6th ed.) Bedford/St. Martin's.

Chapter 8: Documentary Film

Representing the Real

A documentary film is a visual and auditory representation of presumed facts, real experiences, and actual events in the world.

Apollo 11 (2019)



Entertainment and artistry intermingle in this historic documentary about the 1969 moon landing.

Documentary films usually use different strategies and organizations than narrative films.

Key objectives:

- Recognize that documentary films are best distinguished as cultural practices.
- Describe how documentary films employ nonfictional and non-narrative images and forms.
- Identify how documentary movies make and draw on specific historical heritages,
- Explain the common formal strategies and organizations used in documentary films.
- Summarize how documentary films have become associated with cultural values and traditions from which we develop filmic meaning.

A short history of documentary cinema

Prehistory of documentaries

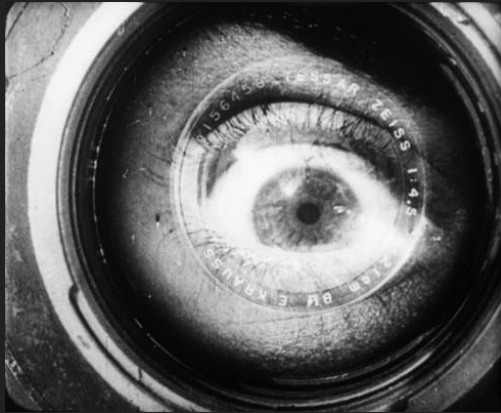
1895-1905: Early actualities, scenics, and topicals



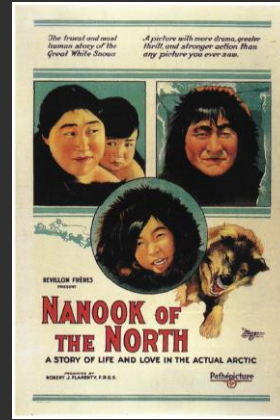
President McKinley's Funeral Cortege at Buffalo, NY (1901)

The 1920s

Robert Flaherty and the soviet documentaries



Man with a Movie Camera (1929) dir. by Dziga Vertov

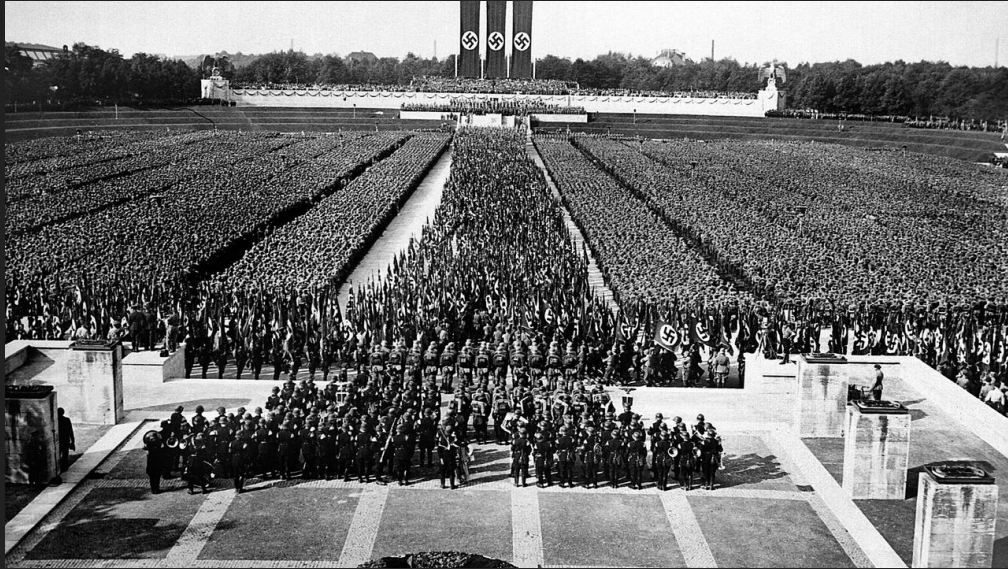


Nanook of the North (1922) and other anthropological films proved the commercial possibilities of the documentary format.

Around the same time, Soviet filmmakers pioneered the documentary for political purposes.

1930-1945: The politics and propaganda of documentary

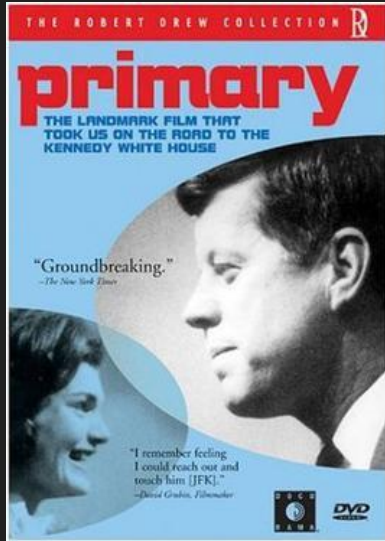
The introduction of **optical sound recording** in 1927 greatly affected documentary films by allowing the addition of educational or social commentary to accompany images.



Triumph of the Will
(1935)

1950s-1970s: New technologies and the arrival of television

In the 1950s, lightweight 16mm cameras and portable magnetic sound-recording equipment gave filmmakers new ways to capture reality, as exemplified by the **cinema verite** movement in France and **direct cinema** in North America.



Primary (1960)

The elements of documentary films

Nonfiction and non-narrative



Nonfiction films present presumed factual descriptions of actual events, people, or places.

Non-narrative films are organized in a variety of ways that deemphasize stories while employing other organizational structures.

Examine carefully the organization of this clip from *Évocateur: The Morton Downey Jr. Movie* (2012). Does it follow a clear formal strategy? Explain.



Watch this clip from *He Named Me Malala* (2015). Describe the presiding voice or attitude with as much detail as possible.



How does the dominant rhetorical argument position the subject it addresses? Can you imagine another way of filming this subject? Explain.

Thinking about documentary films

- Confronting assumptions
- Altering opinions
- Interpretive contexts and traditions

Primary documentary traditions include:

- Social documentaries, political documentaries
 - Historical documentaries
 - Ethnographic films, anthropological films
 - Personal documentaries, mockumentary
-
- Various types of documentaries use reenactments to recreate real or presumably true events.

Screening Poll >>>

- *Évocauteur: The Morton Downey Jr. Movie* (2012)
- *Breakfast with Hunter* (2003)
- *The True Meaning of Pictures: Shelby Lee Adams' Appalachia* (2002)
- *LA 92* (2017)



BREAKFAST WITH HUNTER

How do the storytelling strategies and techniques of this documentary film differ from traditional narrative films?

Does this film follow direct cinema style or cinema verite style? How or how not?



Is this film nonfiction or non-narrative? Why or why not?

How does the film confront assumptions?



Do you believe this film could effectively alter audience opinions? Why or why not?

Is this documentary social, political, historical, ethnographic, anthropological, or personal?

Corrigan, T. & White, P. (2021). *The film experience: an introduction*. (6th ed.)
Bedford/St. Martin's.