Course Description:

HUM 161  Advanced Film Studies  2  2  3

Prerequisites:  HUM 160

Corequisites:  None

This course provides an advanced study of film art and production, building on skills learned in HUM 160. Topics include film production techniques, film genres, examination of master directors’ styles, and the relation of film to culture. Upon completion, students should be able to recognize and critically analyze advanced elements of film production. This course has been approved to satisfy the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement general education core requirement in humanities/fine arts.

Description of the Module:

The module, entitled “Documentary Visions Beyond the West,” covers approximately three weeks in a traditional sixteen week course, or approximately 15-20% of the course curriculum. The unit is part of a larger course pertaining to documentary film studies and works to generate continued conversations about documentary ethics and the form’s influence on culture(s). Since some students have a limited understanding or misconceptions about Eastern cultures, we will speed time learning about and drawing on similarities between Eastern aesthetics and their Western counterparts.

Objectives:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how documentary filmmakers around the world grapple with similar concerns and ideas about the human condition.
2. Analyze the works in a historical and global context, indicating how these films work to express and/or challenge a particular worldview.
3. Critically engage with film texts to find similarities between Eastern and Western styles.

Methodology:

Discussions: Students will engage with critical questions about the films in class between the instructor and other classmates. Students are assessed based on active engagement with the discussion group. Discussions make up 15% of the overall course grade. Here are some questions pertaining to the films that students were asked to respond to:
Critical Questions Pertaining to *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*:

1. Why, as an American culture, do we seem less concerned with the history of the Pacific War? We have many films about German atrocities, but very few about atrocities committed by the Japanese during the war.

2. Why do you think Japanese officials are interested in covering up the truth about the war in New Guinea? Keep in mind that only 30 of the more than 1000 survive from Okuzaki’s unit. In addition, over 140,000 were killed in New Guinea, and only 11,000 return home.

3. Is the violence perpetrated by Okuzaki justified if it gets us closer to truth? Does Hara, the director, have an ethical responsibility to get involved?

4. How does Hara use Okuzaki to construct an argument about the influences of hegemony on the masses?

5. How is the film similar to Lanzmann’s, *Shoah* and Moore’s, *Roger and Me*?

Critical Questions Pertaining to *Senso Daughters*:

1. What do we make of the “official denials” by former Japanese military officers that comfort women did not exist? Keep in mind that approximately 90,000 women are conscripted to serve as “military commodities” during World War II.

2. What effect does the alleged conscription of New Guineans as comfort women have on their identity? What do we make of the New Guinean individuals who still seem to serve the Empire?

Critical Questions Pertaining to *Up the Yangtze*:

1. Does *Up the Yangtze* succeed in giving a voice to those who have been marginalized? How so?

2. How can we compare *Up the Yangtze*’s argument about environmentalism to our country’s current concerns pertaining to the effects of energy production on the environment?

3. How is this film similar to other documentaries screened this semester that deal with social injustices?

4. Why is the Americanization of China, as evidenced in Chang's film *Up the Yangtze*, problematic for Chinese culture and identity?

Journals: Students are required to respond to the films by providing an interpretive analysis organized around the films and written texts. These journal responses will be included in a larger portfolio worth 20% of the overall grade in the course. The students were asked to respond to all of the following:

Prompt #1: Throughout Kazuo Hara’s film, *The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On*, the filmmaker serves as an observer to, and possible enabler of Okuzaki actions. In a response of at least 300 words, using specific evidence from the film, please engage with the following: Does
Hara, as the filmmaker, have an ethical responsibility to the social actors to intervene when Okuzaki assaults them on camera? Would the filmmaker’s intervention inhibit truth?

**Prompt #2:** In a response of at least 250-300 words, please engage with the following: A significant number of individuals were affected by the Japanese occupation of New Guinea. Of the 140,000 Japanese soldiers sent to the island, only 11,000 return. In addition, women conscripted as "military commodities" were also affected by this “forgotten war”. Using evidence from the films, *Senso Daughters* and *The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On*, please respond to the following: Why do you think the Japanese government and former military officials are still interested in perpetuating lies when the truth exists?

**Prompt #3:** In a response of at least 250-300 words, please engage with the following: Yung Chang's film, *Up the Yangtze*, focuses on China's marginalization of peasants along the Yangtze River Basin. Essentially, progress is achieved at the expense and detriment of the poor and impoverished. Using Chang's film as the primary text, please compare the film to another work from this semester that focuses on social injustices. How do both films work to provide a voice to those who have been marginalized by society?

**Exam Question:** Students will have an opportunity to develop and integrate their ideas about the film(s) in a final exam worth 25% of the overall grade in the course. The first of two essays from the exam draws on ethical questions pertaining to the *Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On* and two other films from the semester that present ethical concerns for viewers. Students responded to the following:

**Exam Prompt #1:** Using the *Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On* as the primary text, select two other documentaries from this semester that deal specifically with documentary ethics. In your response, determine whether or not these films violate ethics in the search for truth. Your response should support or challenge the means by which these films arrive at truth, and work toward answering the following question: Are ethics important if truth is being covered up? The essay should draw on specific, sound reasons to support the argument being made. In addition, the essay should include an introductory section with a clear thesis statement that supports your argument, organized body paragraphs with evidence to support the argument, a solid conclusion that ties your argument together, proper grammar, and an academic voice.

**Quiz:** In addition to the assessments above, students will complete a quiz directly corresponding to ideas and concepts related to the films in the module. The quiz stresses application of knowledge through multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. The quiz is calculated in with other quizzes in the course. Quizzes are worth a total of 10% of the final grade. The class completed the following assessment:
GTCC Dept of English & Humanities, HUM 161, Joe Partin, Instructor. “Documentary Visions Beyond the West” Quiz. Please circle the correct answer and respond to the short answer question fully.

(1) The Second Sino-Japanese War, or The Great East Asian War, is known as this in Japanese culture:
A. “The Forbidden War”
B. “The Forgotten War”
C. “The War of Chinese Aggression”
D. “The Emperor's War”

(2) True/False: The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On was heavily criticized by the Japanese Communist party on its initial release.

(3) What is Okuzaki's primary motive in The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On?
A. Using the atrocities of the New Guinea campaign to challenge the Emperor's authority.
B. Assaulting former military personnel for the sake of violence.
C. To expose the truth about comfort women.
D. To expose atrocities committed by the Japanese against China.

(4) Senso Daughters and The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On deal specifically with:
A. The role of comfort women in the war.
C. Official denials of atrocities committed by the Japanese military during World War II.
D. The occupation of China.

(5) True/False: Sekiguchi reveals that many of the personal accounts of the New Guinea campaign have been left unpublished.

(6) What is Sekiguchi's primary motive in Senso Daughters?
A. Using the atrocities of the New Guinea campaign to challenge the Emperor's authority.
B. To challenge the Diet.
C. To expose the truth about comfort women.
D. To expose atrocities committed by the Japanese against China.

(7) Up the Yangtze focuses on all of the following except:
A. The marginalization of peasants along the Yangtze River.
B. Class inequalities.
C. China's industrial growth.
D. All of the above are true.
(8) True/False: There seems to be an implicit argument being made in the mise en scene about the environmental impact of the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River.

(9) In a short answer response of at least 5-7 sentences, please engage with the following: Why is the Americanization of China, as evidenced in Chang's film Up the Yangtze, problematic for Chinese culture and identity?

Answer Key: (1) B. (2) True (3) A. (4) C. (5) True (6) C. (7) D. (8) True (9) interpretive

Resources:


*Note: These resources were preliminary resources, but were not used in the 2011 module; however, these resources will be utilized in future classes.