Course Title: Capturing Reality: An Introduction to Documentary Filmmaking
Course Code: VID 08
Instructor: Kelsey Doyle

Course Summary:
This course is designed as an introduction to a broad genre of media we’ve come to call “documentary.” Ostensibly positioned in opposition to fiction film, documentary or non-fiction film in fact has many faces, modes, operations, and purposes. We will start by taking a look at the origins of documentary filmmaking, considering the first moving image works that sought to capture some aspect of ‘actuality.’ As we delve deeper, investigating a range of mostly contemporary work, we will look critically at the truth-promises of documentary and consider complex questions of ethics, propaganda, performance, and witnessing.

Note About Live Attendance and Recording:
These class sessions will be recorded.

Live participation is required in order for students to receive the full benefit of the course. Class recordings are not intended to be a replacement or substitute for class attendance. Students are expected to inform the Instructor of any emergency situations that require your absence from class, and you are strongly encouraged to keep in touch with the instructor about any absences.

Grade Options and Requirements:
- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - Students must attend/watch all 8 class sessions.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - Students must attend/watch at least 6 class sessions and complete all assignments.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

Tentative Weekly Outline:
Our class time together will typically include:
• Lectures, screenings, and group discussions.
• Each class period will begin with a lecture that contextualizes the week’s screenings and readings.

Required Readings:
• PDF Articles
  ISBN: 0-253-21469-6
  • 3rd Edition (2017) OK

Week 1
Introduction to Documentary Filmmaking
Screen: Nanook of the North [France, 1922, Robert Flaherty, 79 min.] DVD1666


Week 2
Assignment 1 Due

Screening: Berlin: Symphony of City (Walter Ruttman, 1927) & Man with a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929)


Week 3
Assignment 2 Due

Screen Assignment: Triumph of the Will (Leni Riefenstahl, 1933), extracts

Reading: Bill Nichols, “Chapter 4: What are Documentaries About?,” “Chapter 5: How Did Documentary Filmmaking Get Started?,” and “Chapter 8: How Can We Write Effectively About Documentary?”

Week 4
Assignment 3 Due
Screen: The Thin Blue Line, Errol Morris (106 min., 1988)
Reading: Bill Nichols, “Chapter 6: What Types of Documentaries Are There?”

**Week 5**
Assignment 4 Due

Screening Assignment: *Paris is Burning*, Jennie Livingston (78 min., 1990)

Read: Bill Nichols, “Chapter 7: How Have Documentaries Addressed Social and Political Issues?”

**Week 6**
Assignment 5 Due

Screen: *Grizzly Man* (France, 2005, Werner Herzog, 103 min.) DVD6604

Read: Steve Baker, “Is It Real or is it Disney?: unraveling the animal system” in *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation* [Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993]

**Week 7**
Assignment 6 Due

Screen: *The Act of Killing*, Joshua Oppenheimer (122 min., 2012)

*No Reading This Week*

**Week 8**
Final Assignment Due

*Although some excerpts will be screened in class, students should plan to watch documentaries before class each week. Some of the earlier documentaries in the public domain may be available for free online, whereas others can be rented or streamed online on various services, *e.g.*, YouTube, Amazon, Netflix.*