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## ENGLISH 692: CULTURAL STUDIES, Spring 2011

### Documentary/Arts: Picturing a Southern Social Structure

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Mondays, 5-6:30, Bondurant 107-E  
Dr. Leigh Anne Duck  
[lduck@olemiss.edu](mailto:lduck@olemiss.edu) (preferred)

Office hours Mondays 4-5:30 and by appointment.  
Bondurant C-217  
Office Phone (662) 915-7684

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### OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

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In this course, we will:

- learn about the history and formal strategies of documentary film and photodocumentary books concerning the U.S. South;
- examine how documentary strategies have been used in diverse media in order to chronicle southern economic and political problems, explore their causes, and promote strategies for managing or alleviating them;
- consider how documentaries of southern U.S. spaces configure broader socioeconomic forces, particularly the Great Depression and the New Deal, post-Civil Rights race relations in the U.S., and the emergence of the neoliberal state;
- discuss how debates concerning southern documentary reflect issues in cultural practice/cultural studies more generally; and
- practice collaborative and independent research and analysis.

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### REQUIRED TEXTS

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Available at University Bookstore (though no specific edition is required):

- Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937)
- Richard Wright, *12,000,000 Black Voices* (1941)
- Muriel Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead* (1938) (in *Collected Poems*)
- James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941)

All other readings will be made available on Blackboard; go to "Course Content" of our course site. All films will be either screened and placed on media reserve or are available via internet. We will set up screening times based on collective availability; students are strongly encouraged to attend if they are able. (For most texts, media reserve has only one copy.) Screening times and locations will be announced once they are found!

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### GRADES

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Your course grade will be determined by a weighted average:

Weekly writings: 20%

Class participation: 20%

Conference presentation: 10%

Annotated bibliography and other project-related documents: 10%

Final project: 40%

You must complete all assigned work to pass this class. You are expected to participate in every class. Except in rare and dire circumstances, more than two absences will substantially damage your grade; more than four will result in failure of the course.

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### WEEKLY WRITINGS

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**Due:** 3:00 on the day of class (You are allowed an extra 24 hours without penalty once during the semester; repeated lateness will lower your grade.)

**Submit to:** The appropriate discussion forum on Blackboard (numbered by week)

**Length:** approximately 500 words

**Format:** Be sure to provide an informative title in the subject line. If you are citing external sources, please provide bibliographic information at the end of your post; cite sources from our reading parenthetically in your text.

**Topic:** Provide analytic responses to the week's readings/viewings. You may focus on one work—or even one scene or passage in one work—or you may explore connections or contrasts among the works. Your response may be somewhat speculative—pointing, for example, to possible areas for research—but it should be coherent; you want to communicate a distinct point that will contribute to our discussion and understanding of the texts. You are welcome to respond to other students' posts and are encouraged to read the other posts before class.

**Purpose:** The goals of this practice are to encourage independent thought about the readings before class, to practice writing about documentary, to encourage the development of collaborative inquiry (through sharing documents), and to facilitate student-led discussion.

## FINAL PROJECT

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You will design your final project in consultation with the professor. It may be an academic research essay of 15-25 pages, or it may be quite different. (One student has spoken with me about the possibility of combining research on documentaries with work on an independent documentary, for example.) All projects must be approved by the professor and must be accompanied by each of the following related projects, submitted by the due dates listed on the schedule.

### INITIAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

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You should communicate with me about your plans for the final project before spring break, but you must submit a proposal immediately after spring break. This proposal need not posit a thesis, but should articulate the line of investigation that you plan to pursue, as well as the main texts (understood broadly) on which you will write. You need to articulate your research question clearly, and explain how you will approach that question. The extent to which I can helpfully advise you in developing your project will depend on the quality and quantity of information you provide me here. Length may vary widely—from .75 to 1.5 pages, for example—and formats may vary too. (You may combine paragraphs and bulleted lists, for example.) You should provide some information about the media format of your project and presentation here as well.

### ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Include eight scholarly sources that you may cite in your final project. (Feel free to ask if you aren't sure what counts as "scholarly"! I may have to decide on a case by case basis.) Provide full citation information for each source, as well as a brief description of the argument (major claims, methodology, etc.) Also, describe the relevance of each scholarly item to your project. For example: will you be disputing this author's claim? Will it be used to support a certain section of your argument? Will it be used to provide historical context or methodological support (in which case, describe)? If it turns out that this item may not be useful in your project (and you should not submit a bibliography in which no items will be useful), how has reading it helped to shape your plans for the project?

### FORMAL DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

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The purpose of this document is not only to crystallize your argument, but also to develop a clearer sense of your audience. Where your initial proposal provided a more general sense of your project, this document

should explain your contribution to your scholarly (or aesthetic, or institutional) field more precisely. With whom are you arguing? For what purpose are you writing? What audience will be interested in your paper? This document should be about 1.5 double-spaced pages long, and can probably serve as the introduction to your paper. In an appendix, you should also specify what terms and contexts you will need to clarify for the audience you have targeted.

## PRESENTATION

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- Your presentation will provide a brief overview of your research paper. It should clearly and concisely describe:
  - The problem/question you have chosen to investigate
  - Existing scholarship on this question
  - Your critical methodology
  - Your preliminary conclusions
- You are strongly urged to develop multi-media presentations: in other words, you should supplement your talk with images, video or audio clips, presentation software, etc. At the very least, students should provide well-formatted and helpful handouts with their presentations.
- Note that, because the objective for these presentations is to present your findings to your classmates, they constitute an excellent opportunity for you to consider the significance or purpose of your project and also how to organize and articulate your analysis in an audience-friendly manner. The objective of these presentations is not only to share your research but also to augment the paper-writing process.
- Students are expected to provide questions and feedback for their classmates' presentations: attendance and participation are just as important during the last session of class as they are earlier in the semester.
- Presentations must include at least 12 minutes worth of material; they will be stopped at 15 minutes. You will not be able to include all of your examples: select sufficient detail to illustrate your point.
- Students are welcome to volunteer to present on April 20<sup>th</sup>; beyond that, the schedule will be arranged by drawing names.
- Presentations will be graded according to:
  - Vigor of research and analysis
  - Clarity and organization of content
  - Style (use of media, consideration of audience, response to questions, etc.)

## POLICIES

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- Note that one objective of this class is to "practice collaborative . . . research and analysis." Active participation—in every class, by every student—is crucial to the success of this goal.
- Due dates have been scheduled to help you complete your final project on time. Lateness (beyond a certain point) will damage your grade. If you discover that you cannot meet a deadline, contact me immediately to establish a revised schedule.
- You are expected to uphold the University Creed (<http://www.olemiss.edu/info/creed.html>), particularly its clauses on civility, integrity, academic honesty, and academic freedom. Failure to do so will damage your grade.
- It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable classroom accommodations to students who have verified disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

## SCHEDULE

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1. **M, 1/24 Introduction: Duelling "Visions"**  
 Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)  
 Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)
2. **M, 1/31 Documenting the Depression: Vision and "Voices"**  
 Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) (browse)  
 Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" (1961)  
 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988)  
 Stuart Kidd, "Dissonant Encounters: FSA Photographers and the Southern Underclass, 1935-1943" (2006)
3. **M, 2/7 Documenting the Depression: Modernist Negotiations**  
 Richard Wright, *12,000,000 Black Voices* (1941), "Blueprint for Negro Writing" (1937)  
 Muriel Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead* (1938) (in *Collected Poems*)  
 Mike Gold, "Proletarian Literature" (1930)  
**Recommended Reading:**  
 Excerpt, Eric Schocken, *Vanishing Moments: Class and American Literature* (2006)  
 Jeff Allred, "From Eye to We: Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices*, Documentary, and Pedagogy" (2006)
4. **M, 2/14 Documenting the Depression: Artists, Subjects, and History**  
 James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941)  
 Excerpt, Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson, *And Their Children After Them* (1989)
5. **M, 2/21 Documenting the Depression: Voice, Viewer, and Viewed**  
 Luis Buñuel, *Las Hurdes/Tierra sin Pan (Land without Bread)* (1933) (screening/media reserve)  
 Pare Lorentz, *The River* (1937) (screening/media reserve)  
 U. S. Office of War Information, *Valley of the Tennessee* (1944) (media reserve/YouTube  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8BUUdX6k30>)  
 André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" (1958, 1967)  
 Excerpt, Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983)  
 Excerpt, Jonathan Kahana, *Intelligence Work: The Politics of American Documentary* (2008)  
**Recommended Reading:**  
 Excerpt, Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (1999)
6. **M, 2/28 Viewing Appalachia: Transitions in Documentary**  
 Barbara Kopple, *Harlan County, U.S.A.* (1976) (screening/media reserve/streams from Netflix)  
 Michael Moore, *Roger & Me* (1989) (screening/media reserve/streams from Netflix)  
 Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary" (1983)  
 Lauren Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy and Politics" (2000)  
 Excerpt, David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005)  
**Recommended Reading:**  
 Miles Orvell, "Documentary Film and the Power of Interrogation: *American Dream & Roger and Me* (1995)

7. **M, 3/7 Viewing Appalachia: Acts of/against Documentary**

Elizabeth Barret, *Stranger with a Camera* (2000) (screening/media reserve)

Jennifer Baichwal, *The True Meaning of Pictures: Shelby Lee Adams' Appalachia* (2002) (screening/media reserve)

Excerpt, Shelby Lee Adams and Lee Smith, *Appalachian Portraits* (1993)

Excerpt, Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1977)

Excerpt, Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003)

**Recommended:**

Calvin Pryluck, "Ultimately We Are All Outsiders: The Ethics of Documentary Filmming" (1976)

Slavoj Žižek, "Looking Awry"

**M, 3/14 SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS**

8. **M, 3/21 Representing and Remembering the CRM: Screening History**

At least one episode from *Eyes on the Prize I: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (media reserve)

At least one episode from *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-1985* (media reserve)

Stephen Prince, "The Discourse of Pictures: Iconicity and Film Studies" (1993)

Elizabeth Amelia Hadley, "Eyes on the Prize: Reclaiming Black Images, Culture, and History" (1999)

David Scott, "On the Archaeologies of Black Memory" (2008)

**Recommended:**

Excerpt, Sasha Torres, *Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights* (2003)

Edward P. Morgan, "The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten: Media Culture and Public Memory of the Civil Rights Movement" (2006)

**INITIAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE!**

9. **M, 3/28 Representing and Remembering the CRM: Body, Image, Argument**

Spike Lee, "4 Little Girls" (1997) (screening/media reserve)

Keith Beauchamp, "The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till" (2005) (screening/media reserve)

Jacqueline Goldsby, "The High and Low Tech of It: The Meaning of Lynching and the Death of Emmett Till" (1996) (best accessed through Project Muse, <http://0-muse.jhu.edu.umiss.lib.olemiss.edu/search>)

Susannah Radstone, "Reconceiving Binaries: The Limits of Memory" (2005)

**Recommended:**

Fred Moten, "Black Mo'nin'" (2002)

10. **M, 4/4 Representing and Remembering? Alternate Histories**

Cheryl Dunye, *The Watermelon Woman* (1996) (screening/media reserve)

Kevin Willmott, *C.S.A.: The Confederate States of America* (2004) (screening/media reserve)

Linda Williams, "Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary" (1993)

Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner, Excerpt, *F Is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing* (2006)

**Recommended:**

Marlon Riggs, *Ethnic Notions* (1987) (media reserve)

Paul Arthur, "Springing Tired Chains: Experimental Film and Video" (1999)

11. **M, 4/11 Perspectives on Katrina: Expository, Observational, Interactive I**

David Redmon and Ashley Sabin, *Kamp Katrina* (2007) (screening/media reserve)

Dawn Logsdon and Lolis Eric Elie, *Faubourg Tremé: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans* (2008) (s/mr)

Geralyn Pezanoski, *Mine* (2009) (screening/media reserve)

Paula Rabinowitz, "Wreckage upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory" (1993)

**Recommended:**

Emmanuel David, "Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Gendered Collective Action: The Case of *Women of the Storm* Following Hurricane Katrina" (2008)

Lynnell L. Thomas, "'Roots Run Deep Here': The Construction of Black New Orleans in Post-Katrina Tourism Narratives" (2009)

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE!**

**12. M, 4/18 Perspectives on Katrina: Reflexive, Interactive II**

Ed Pincus and Lucia Small, *The Axe in the Attic* (2007) (screening/media reserve)

Tia Lessin and Carl Deal, *Trouble the Water* (2008) (screening/media reserve)

Elizabeth Wood and Gabriel Nussbaum, *Wade in the Water, Children* (2008) (screening/media reserve)

Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constitutents of a Theory of the Media" (1970)

Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, from *The Public Sphere and Experience* (1988)

**Th, 4/21 FORMAL DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM DUE!**

**13. M, 4/25 Further Contexts for Documentary**

Fernando Solanas and Gettino Octavio, "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World" (1969)

Trinh T. Minh-Ha, "Documentary Is/Not a Name" (1990)

Stephen Crofts, "Reconceptualizing National Cinema(s)" (1993)

Anne Friedberg, "The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change" (2000)

**14. M, 5/2 CONFERENCE: PRESENTATION DUE!  
CLASS BEGINS AT 5:30 AND WILL END BY 9:30**

**T, 5/11 FINAL PROJECT DUE!**