

DOCUMENTING CULTURE / AUDIOVISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY
ANTHROPOLOGY 262 / FILM 232 • WINTER 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION

Class Meetings T 9 - 12 PM Communications 113 (Studio D)
Tech Lab T 2-4 Communications 113 (Studio D)
Th 9 - 12 PM Social Sciences 1 414
additional optional group screening time TBD

Instructors Irene Lusztig
 Communications 111
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 Winter Office Hours:
 Tues 12 PM - 2 PM, and by appointment

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 Thursday 12 PM - 2 PM, and by appointment

PREREQUISITE

No prior experience with video production or ethnographic theory is required. The optional lab sessions for this class will cover all basic technical skills of shooting and editing video, sound recording, and basic lighting.

COURSE OVERVIEW

How do we come to know the world? And how do we convey that knowledge to others? And how do technologies -- from the book to film to new media -- change both of these processes? These questions are motivations for thinking through the overlapping projects of documentary film and anthropological ethnography, both of which take as their goal the capture and curatorial framing of social worlds. These questions and efforts in turn lead to deeper questions – about objectivity, accuracy, analysis and aesthetics. In this course, we approach these questions from the perspective of practice, asking students to conduct ethnographic fieldwork as well as produce documentary film.

Film and ethnography developed in tandem. Both find their origins in the 19th century and, although they haven't always been in direct contact, there are many meeting points throughout the 20th and into the 21st century. In this course, we follow this history of film and ethnography, media and methodology, into the birth of cinema and anthropology in the early 20th century. This is succeeded by attention to a series of methodological problems and experimentations – around time, space, bodies, objects, language, non-humans – that captivate theory and practice. How experimentation with content changes expectations of form, and how experimentation with form alters content have impacts both on the production of anthropological knowledge and texts and documentary film; we consider some of these changes with attentions to particular texts and aesthetic movements in anthropology and filmmaking.

This course is also designed as an intensive, hands-on, production lab course for graduate students to create sound and moving image work that is grounded in sensory observation of the real world. Students will learn technical and critical skills required for fieldwork-based ethnographic video and audio media production. Working both individually and collaboratively, students will create a series of three short media projects focused around specific critical / cultural questions and production skills. In the final weeks of the course, students work with a production partner in stages through the creation and completion of a fully realized short audiovisual ethnography project.

To these ends, this course is designed as a double course, with one half spent thinking through theories of representation and media and the other half spent in the lab, making and critiquing audiovisual / moving image work. Students are required to attend both halves of class and complete all assignments for each section.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Ascher, Steven and Pincus, Edward

2012 *The Filmmaker's Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age: 2013 Edition*. Plume.

Barthes, Roland

1982 [1980] *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. R. Howard, trans. New York: Hill and Wang.

Crary, Jonathan

1992 *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19th Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Favret-Saada, Jeanne

1981 *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fischer, Michael.

2009 *Anthropological Futures*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Garfinkel, Harold

1984 [1967] *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Malden: Blackwell.

Hui, Alexandra

2013 *The Psychophysical Ear: Musical Experiments, Experimental Sounds, 1840-1910*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Kittler, Friedrich

1986 *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. G. Winthrop-Young and M. Wutz, transl. Stanford: Stanford University.

MacDougall, David

2005 *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Marcus, George and Fernando Mascarenhas

2005 *Ocasão: The Marquis and the Anthropologist, A Collaboration*. Altamira Press.

McLuhan, Marshall

1994 [1964] *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Moore, Rachel

1999 *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Rheinberger, Hans-Jorg

1997 *Toward a History of Epistemic Things: Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Serres, Michel

2007 [1980] *The Parasite*. L.R. Schehr, transl. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Shaviro, Steven

2010 *Post-Cinematic Affect*. Hampshire, UK: Zero Books.

Stewart, Kathleen

2007 *Ordinary Affects*. Durham: Duke University Press.

COURSE VIEWING

Films are designated as required (*) and recommended (#); required films will be shown in whole or part in class, while recommended films will be held on reserve in the Media Center at McHenry Library.

Chronicle of a Summer (Jean Rouch, 1961)
Mother Dao the Turtlelike (Vincent Monnikendam, 1995)
Florence and New York Portrait I (Peter Hutton, 1975-79)
Royal, Nebraska (Toby Lee, 2011)
Broad Channel (Sarah J. Christman, 2010)
Wedding of Silence (Pavel Medvedev, 2004)
Sound Safari, Bath Maine (Sharon Lockhart and Sensory Ethnography Lab, 2008)
The Tailenders (Adele Horne, 2005)
John and Jane Toll Free (Ashim Ahluwalia, 2005)
Zoo (Frederick Wiseman, 1993)
Portrait of Jason (Shirley Clarke, 1967)
Our Daily Bread (Nikolaus Geyrhalter, 2005)
Songhua (JP Sniadecki, 2007)
Port of Memory (Kamal Aljafari, 2010)
Black Sea Files (Ursula Biemann, 2010)
Fake Fruit Factory (Chick Strand, 1986)
Land of Silence and Darkness (Werner Herzog, 1971)
Poto and Cabengo (Jean Pierre Gorin, 1980)
How to Fix the World (Jackie Goss, 2004)
Darwin's Nightmare (Hubert Sauper, 2004)
Nénette (Nicholas Philibert, 2010)

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance, Participation & Presentation (30%) – Students are expected to attend all classes with the required material having been read and films watched. One absence is allowed; each absence beyond the first will reduce the student's final grade by 5%. Students are required to post a discussion question on the course website 24 hours before our class meeting. These discussion questions must be synthetic and bring together concerns between disparate texts. Each week's worth of discussion questions is worth 3%.

Class Project (20%) – As determined by the students enrolled in the class, a collaborative class project relating to the themes of the course will be developed and submitted by the end of the term. This might be a collaboratively written summary of the course, a documentary film relating to the course, a series of thematically-arranged audio cut-ups from the course, a mix cd of experimental music and commentary, or something else entirely. All students are required to participate, and will be expected to submit a 2-page reflection on the process and their involvement in the collaboration.

Co-Authored Film (30%) – Students will be paired into teams of two and develop a co-authored film over the course of the term. The film must be based on the Media Modules (see Appendix B). It must be 10 minutes long. Students must keep a journal of their labor and turn it in along with their film. Each of the Media Modules is worth 5% (20% total), and the final film is worth 10%.

Writing Prompts (20% total; 5% each) – Students must complete the listed Writing Prompts and turn them in on the date specified in the syllabus. Each prompt should be 4-5 pages long (double spaced, in Times New Roman, with 1" margins).

POLICIES

No late work will be accepted for credit. All assignments must be turned in to receive a passing grade in the course.

Watching the Films: A weekly communal viewing time will be established at the first meeting; films will also be placed on reserve at McHenry Library for students to consult on their own time. It is expected that students will have recently watched the required film for each week.

Academic Integrity – Plagiarism of any sort will not be tolerated. Evidence of plagiarism will result in an immediate failing grade in the course and actions as dictated by university policy regarding academic integrity on graduate students. Please see <http://library.ucsc.edu/science/instruction/CitingSources.pdf> if you have any questions about what qualifies as plagiarism and strategies for avoiding such. For a description of the plagiarism review process, see http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/graduate_students/.

Style Matters: All submitted written work should follow the guidelines set forth in the American Anthropological Association's style guide (available at aaanet.org) – except as outlined above. All papers should be double-spaced, 12 point font, in Times New Roman, with 1 inch margins on all sides, and page numbers. Failure to meet these standards will result in a reduced grade.

All media work should be brought to class as Quicktime MOV files for class screenings.

Equipment and Materials

You are responsible for providing your own media storage, including backup media storage for tapeless media in case of primary hard drive failure. For tapeless flash-based video production, you are strongly encouraged to maintain two identical hard drives. Please view Slugfilm recommendations for specs (http://slugfilm.ucsc.edu/production_support/?page_id=2167).

* Something more about equipment probably needs to be added here

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction & The Powers of Observation

Tuesday, January 7th

Crary, Jonathan

1992 *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19th Century.*
Cambridge: MIT Press.

Ascher, Steven and Pincus, Edward

2012 "The Video Camcorder" and "The Lens" *In The Filmmaker's Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age.* Plume.

Lab: Introduction to Video - terms, concepts, buttons and knobs

Thursday, January 9th

Serres, Michel

2007 [1980] *The Parasite.* L.R. Schehr, transl. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Screening

Chronicle of a Summer (Jean Rouch)

Mother Dao the Turtlelike (Vincent Monnikendam)

Week 2: Anthropology & Cinema

Tuesday, January 14

MacDougall, David

2005 *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lab:

Camera lab - cinematography, framing, composition

Bring 3 shots to screen (surface / depth / movement)

Thursday, January 16

Moore, Rachel

1999 *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Writing Prompt #1: The Elaboration of a Problem

Screening

Florence and New York Portrait I (Peter Hutton)

Royal, Nebraska (Toby Lee)

Broad Channel (Sarah J. Christman)

Week 3: Sound & Vision

Tuesday, January 21

Kittler, Friedrich

1986 Gramophone, Film, Typewriter. G. Winthrop-Young and M. Wutz, transl.
Stanford: Stanford University.

Lab:

Sound recording and microphones

Screening and critique of Study of a Space project

Media Project #1 -- Study of a Space

Thursday, January 23

(Wolf-Meyer in Berlin)

[readings on the avant garde]

Screening

Wedding of Silence (Pavel Medvedev)

Sound Safari, Bath Maine (Sharon Lockhart)

Week 4: Experiments with Sound

Tuesday, January 28

[readings on sound; the senses]

Lab:

Editing, Introduction to Final Cut Pro

Coverage, cutaways, and shooting to edit

Listening to audioscape project

Media Project #2 -- Audioscape (group project)

Preliminary research for Final Media Project

Thursday, January 30

Hui, Alexandra

2013 The Psychophysical Ear: Musical Experiments, Experimental Sounds, 1840-1910.
Cambridge: MIT Press.

Writing Prompt #2 – Sensory Engagements

Screening

The Tailenders (Adele Horne)

Zoo (Frederick Wiseman, excerpt)

Week 5: Experimental Systems

Tuesday, February 4th

Lab:

Screening and critique of edited process

Media Project #3 -- Study of a Process

Final Media Project written treatment

Thursday, February 6th

(Class starts at 10)

Rheinberger, Hans-Jorg

1997 Toward a History of Epistemic Things: Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube.

Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Screening

Portrait of Jason (Shirley Clarke)

Week 6: Experiments with Everyday Life

Tuesday, February 11th

Lab:

Screening and critique of interview project

Media Project #4 -- Interview

Beginning shooting for Final Media Project

Thursday, February 13th

Garfinkel, Harold

1984 [1967] Studies in Ethnomethodology. Malden: Blackwell.

Screening

Our Daily Bread (Nikolaus Geyrhalter)

Songhua (JP Sniadecki)

Week 7: Horizons of Experimentation

Tuesday, February 18th

Lab:

Screening and critique of final project rushes

Thursday, February 20th

Fischer, Michael.

2009 Anthropological Futures. Durham: Duke University Press.

Screening

Port of Memory (Kamal Aljafari)

Black Sea Files (Ursula Biemann)

Week 8: Experimental Forms, Part 1

Tuesday, February 25th

Lab:

Final Cut Pro Workshop -- sound editing, color correction

Screening and critique of Final Media Project, edited selects and scenes

Thursday, February 27th

Barthes, Roland

1982 [1980] Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography. R. Howard, trans. New York: Hill and Wang.

Stewart, Kathleen

2007 Ordinary Affects. Durham: Duke University Press.

Writing Prompt: #3 -- Presentation of Evidence, 1

Screening

Fake Fruit Factory (Chick Strand)

Land of Silence and Darkness (Werner Herzog)

Week 9: Experimental Forms, Part 2

Tuesday, March 4th

Lab:

Screening and critique of Final Media Project rough cuts
Final Project First Rough Cut

Thursday, March 6th

Marcus, George and Fernando Mascarenhas

2005 *Ocasão: The Marquis and the Anthropologist, A Collaboration*. Altamira Press.

Shaviro, Steven

2010 *Post-Cinematic Affect*. Hampshire, UK: Zero Books.

Writing Prompt: #4 -- Presentation of Evidence, 2

Screening

Poto and Cabengo (Jean Pierre Gorin)

How to Fix the World (Jackie Goss)

Week 10: Media/Ethnography/Engagement

Tuesday, March 11th

Lab: Final screening and critique; finished projects due

Thursday, March 13th

Favret-Saada, Jeanne

1981 *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

McLuhan, Marshall

1994 [1964] *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Class Project Due

Screening

Nénette (Nicholas Philibert)

Pawel Wojtasik (not sure which piece yet)

Appendix A: Instructions for Writing Prompts

Your reports must be 4-5 pages long, double-spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font, and with 1" margins on each side. They must also include page numbers, and following the AAA style guide.

Prompt 1: Elaboration of a Problem

Describe an empirical case -- this might be an event, a person, a place, or something more abstract. How do you know of the case, and what is your relation to it? Consider Serres' discussion of the parasite; how does it apply to the situational relation of you to the case? How are there parasites within the case itself? Consider also the frame of the case; who frames the situation and its actors? How does the case relate to a specific problem? This might be a social or personal crisis or a problem of knowledge production; or it may pose problems of a number of different kinds. If the problem is a challenge to knowledge production, how might it be overcome, particularly through the use of technology?

Prompt 2: Sensory Engagements

Use the technology at your disposal to record a series of sensory experiments, particularly audio and video; it may be helpful to try and collect the same kind of data through multiple means (e.g. use audio, but also try touch, smell, etc.). (It might be helpful to listen to [this episode](#) of This American Life to spur ideas.) You might consider describing a space, a process, a person, a conversation, or an interview. Once you have collected the data, write it up in 1-2 pages; in the succeeding pages, answer the following questions: how do different approaches to the same empirical object result in different kinds of data?, how do different approaches influence narrative form?, what approach seems to work the best?

Prompt 3: Presentation of Evidence 1

Collect a series of images related to your case; also describe key spaces and material objects (which you've also taken pictures of). How do these spaces and objects shape the actions of individuals; how are they focal points for relations between individuals?, how do they influence individuals in their relationships with their social and environmental contexts?, reflecting on Barthes and Stewart, how do photographic and written descriptions differ in their powers of representation?

Prompt 4: Presentation of Evidence 2

Conduct a life history interview; it should be no less than four hours in length (although it may be broken up into two sections), and should be recorded (textual, audio or video). Transcribe key portions of the interview, and construe them into a narrative centering around a process, an object, an ethical decision, or a crisis. Reflecting on Marcus & Mascarenhas, how do media influence how individuals represent themselves?, how do media constrain how individuals can be represented?

Appendix B: Instructions for Media Projects

Media Project # 1: Study of a Space

The purpose of this exercise is to acquaint you with the techniques of making video images, and planning a sequence. Scout around for a space (either interior or exterior) that interests you, one that is convenient, accessible, empty of people at times, and reasonably well illuminated. Pick a space that is easily identified as a single, whole space. Carefully plan a sequence of shots that will evoke the space as vividly as possible. You can use the viewfinder to help previsualize the shots. In your planning, include notes about the length of each shot and any possible camera movements. Also plan the order of the shots – think ahead of time about how the sequence of images begins and ends. The sequence should be about a minute long, though there is no need to make it exactly this length: a bit longer or shorter is fine. Probably half a dozen or so shots will be enough, but you are free to use as many or as few as you like. Shots must be at least eight seconds long and should not exceed 20 seconds. You must use the tripod for all of the shots. Please do not zoom. Execute your plan, using the time code display in the viewfinder to time the shots.

This project is edited in camera.

Media Project # 2: Audioscape

This is a collectively-authored, site-specific audio recording project. In your project group, choose a site that has a range of rich, varied, and specific sonic environments. Each group member will be responsible for creating 3-5 recordings in the space. Think carefully about choosing microphones, positioning yourself, positioning your microphone. With your group, edit a short soundscape project (up to 10 minutes long) that conveys a sonic portrait of your chosen space.

Media Project # 3: Study of a Process

The process that you select should be something with a clear beginning and end (for example a haircut, washing a car, etc). Please choose a relatively simple activity that can be taped from start to finish. When shooting, do not direct your subject, but rather respond with the camera to what is happening. Experiment with different camera angles, perspectives, and focal lengths. Individual shots should not be longer than 60 seconds, and many shots should be shorter. Avoid leaving the camera running throughout the duration on your shoot. Instead, as you did with the in-camera project, take the time to compose and frame individual shots, before recording. Make sure that every stage of the process is represented and that you shoot images that can be used as cutaways. Do not interview your subject or attempt to make conversation. Simply observe and film. You don't need to use a tripod unless you feel that certain shots require it.

Once you have completed shooting, edit your materials in the following stages:

1. Log, transfer, and organize your footage in Final Cut Pro
2. Using your shot-by-shot log, create a short, descriptive sequence with a beginning and an end that compresses the process into 1-3 edited minutes.

As a point of departure, think about the following issues as you edit:

Think about beginnings and endings – how does the process begin and end? Does it repeat and if so, how can you convey repetition without actually showing the same thing more than once?

How and when do you establish spatial geography? How can the viewer understand what is happening where? Do you use a traditional establishing shot for each space? Or is there some other way to accomplish the same thing?

Think about how to break the process into its basic components, what shots are most representative of each stage of action, and how to move from one action to the next. Is it necessary to show each stage of the process or can the viewer infer some of the stages without seeing them? When does the cutting become redundant?

Think about shot size – when do you use close ups, when do you use wide shots? How can you use cutaways and inserts to compress the process?

Think about shot duration and rhythm. How long is each shot held onscreen? How long does it need to be held for the viewer to absorb important information in the shot? What pace of cutting seems to best convey the actual rhythm of the process itself?

Media Project # 4: Interview

This project is an opportunity to explore the dynamics of shooting an interview. Think carefully ahead of time about what you want to discuss with your subject. Also think about what the interview will look like, where it is set, what the subject is doing (i.e. is he / she in a neutral setting, in an environment that is part of the process itself, is he / she filmed as a “talking head” or in a more informal style). Spend some time thinking about your role as an interviewer – do we hear your voice? Is your voice a strong audio presence, or a distant off-camera voice? After shooting, watch your entire interview, making notes (with timecode) about which parts are interesting. For this exercise, it’s not necessary to do a word-for-word transcription, but a few basic notes will help you to remember what is said and where to find it. You may wish to log the entire interview (breaking it down by topic rather than shot by shot), or you may want to preselect several interesting pieces, and digitize only the pieces that you plan to use in editing.

FINAL MEDIA PROJECT

This is to be a stand-alone, short, observational audiovisual ethnography, no longer than ten minutes. You must work collaboratively with a partner, on research, production (alternate between camera and sound; all shoots should use a separate sound recordist), and postproduction.

The subject can be whatever you wish, including a development of one of your earlier projects. There should be a minimum of four substantial and productive shoots. It is crucial to develop your idea and make practical arrangements early in the quarter. This will allow sufficient time for all necessary reshooting, careful editing and revision, and sound editing. Be guided by the production schedule outlined in the syllabus.