

**Performance Documentary / Documenting Performance
FILM 80S**

Dr. Jamie Lyons
(jaclyons@ucsc.edu)

W/F 2:40pm-4:10pm

Location: Zoom (links will be sent out the night before each class)

Office Hours: Monday 2-4pm

Teaching Assistants:

Marilia Kaisar (mkaisar@ucsc.edu)

Ruth Anne Beutler (rbeutler@ucsc.edu)

Course Description

The class explores cultural and political resistance through the documentation of performance, or Live Art. While class discussions engage with the performance itself, the focus of the lectures will fall on the creativity and authorship of the documentary maker, exploring how performance documentation is a creative collaboration between artists and deserves to be considered a genre in itself. We'll explore different mediums of performance documentation, including photography, cinema, music videos, and television.

The class begins by considering the social and historical context of the formation of performance documentation as a specific genre within the documentary tradition, and the creation of an authorial position that emerged with graphic art and photography. We explore photographers such as Alexy Brodovitch, Paul Strand, Agnes Varda, Stanley Kubrick, and continue through with the work of Annie Liebowitz and Hiroshi Sugimoto. As the genre developed cinematically in the 1960s, we will examine artists and media texts such as Shirley Clarke, D.A. Pennebaker (*Don't Look Back*, 1967; *Monterey Pop*, 1968) Robert Frank (*The Rolling Stones*, 1972), and later Martin Scorsese (*The Last Waltz*, 1978), as well as Jonathan Deme (*Stop Making Sense*, 1984; *Swimming to Cambodia*, 1987). These films allow us to discuss the ways that cinema can be used as a tool of resistance while students also interrogate the limits of the documentary form in representing diverse identities and social issues. The course incorporates other mediums of performance documentary including television: Louis Valdez (*El corrido: Ballad of a Farmworker*, 1976), Chris Maker (*Junktopia*, 1981); music videos: Spike Lee, Anton Corbijn; web streaming Beyonce (*Homecoming*, 2019) and Chris Rock (*Total Blackout: The Tamborine Extended Cut*, 2021); and social media with K-pop.

The course addresses key issues in cultural, film, media and performance theory, pairing these visual texts with readings pulled from those disciplines. Lectures and discussions will focus on analyzing the structures, performers, and acts of resistance, rebellion, and revolt not just in the captured Live Art event but represented in the documentation process (camera angles, editing, coloring, etc.) A main goal of this class is to explore performance documentation in the context

of different cultural and political movements, such as farm labor organizing and the movement for Black Lives Matter; and through scholarly and aesthetic conversation such as the politics of race and representation, and ideas of authenticity. We will also consider the specific aesthetics of the genre of performance documentary which at its best creates intrigue and suspense, and prompts questions of ethics, credit and ownership among artist, subject and audience. Finally, the course requires a hands-on component, encouraging students to experiment with methods of the digital humanities, media art, and other creative practices in their final project.

Course Objectives

- Explore the authenticity of performance documentary film stories.
- Question documentary film as historical record, factual evidence, “objective” witness.
- Engage with theoretical strategies and ideological positions adopted by performance documentary filmmakers.
- Examine the use of fiction filmmaking techniques and styles in performance documentary: narrative structure, plot, editing, etc.
- Analyze production, exhibition and distribution practices.
- Investigate the impact of digital technology and new media upon performance documentary

Requirements

Class Attendance and Participation (20% of grade):

This class requires your regular attendance and invested participation in class activities and scholarly investigations into social theories and topics covered in this class. Please arrive at each class having completed the scheduled readings and prepared to participate in class activities and discussions—noting questions or reactions to the material, and making connections between concepts in readings, videos, and your own life. Late arrival will disrupt the flow of class and compromise the collaborative nature of the work.

To reiterate: You are expected to prepare thoroughly for each class. Preparation includes any outside readings or viewings, completing assignments prior to class and being ready to discuss them.

We take attendance each day. The grading scale is as follows:

19-20 classes: A+

17-18 classes: A

16 classes: A-

15 classes: B

14 classes: C

13 classes: D

12 classes and below: F

5 Responses/Assignments (50%)

Announced in class and posted on canvas. Please submit completed assignments on Canvas.

Late Work

This is a large class. Because of the size, we must require all work be completed on deadline. This means that: responses cannot be made up for reasons other than a demonstrated medical emergency. If you do wish to request an extension please reach out to me or one of the TAs well before the deadline and know that any late work will have points deducted.

Final Documentary Project (30% of grade)

You are tasked with creating a Performance Document Project: a video (no longer than 5min), a podcast (no longer than 5 min), or a series of images (no less than 10 and no more than 20). The choice of topic with final project is yours, however **I encourage you to check in with us** to ensure that it is manageable in scope and reflects your interests. I will give an introduction to this assignment and describe this project in more detail during the lectures. However, I do want to note:

- **For extra credit (boost of 5% of course grade)** you can turn your Personal Media Project in a few days early (Specific date TBD), and present your project on the final Friday of class. NOTE: we will view the project to review whether it is appropriate. Please see me if you would like to take advantage of this opportunity.

Accompanying the project, I ask that you write a 500-750 word artist statement, connecting your project to the themes, ideas, and questions that have been raised in class.

Course Grade Scale:

A+:	98-100
A:	93-97.9
A-	90-93.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83-86.9

B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9
C	73-76.9
C-	70-72.0
D	60-69.9
F	<60

Accommodations

All students need accommodations, and those accommodations vary from student to student. If you have an accommodation letter, please send it to me as soon as possible. I would also like to meet on Zoom during Office Hours, to ensure that the class meets your needs. For more information: contact the Disability Resource Center 831-459-2089.

My Office Hours: Mondays 2-4pm

If you would like to talk about the readings, films, the class in general I am more than happy to engage. Just email me (jacl Lyons@ucsc.edu) and we can set up a zoom call or phone call. In addition, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email me or our TAs Marilia Kaisar (mkaisar@ucsc.edu) and Ruth Anne Beutler (rbeutler@ucsc.edu)

Canvas

This course makes extensive use of Canvas in class and out. Please familiarize yourself with Canvas and check the course page regularly throughout the quarter.

Readings

All assigned reading can be found on Canvas

Academic Integrity

We take plagiarism very seriously. Please also become acquainted with UCSC policies on plagiarism, beginning with the UCSC Library's website, "What is plagiarism?" UCSC maintains an Academic Misconduct Policy for Undergraduates. If a student has plagiarized in their work, We are required to report them to their College Provost, according to this procedure: https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct

Lectures

We will meet every Wednesday of the quarter. Our Friday classes will be a film screening. Sometimes you will screen these on your own when streaming services are available. Some Friday Classes (those specific dates are noted below) we will watch the films together over zoom and use the chat function to comment and analyze what we are viewing.

Zoom Etiquette: wear clothes, don't walk and watch, always use mute unless you have question, be aware this is a public space.

Class Schedule

Week #1 Introductions

3.31 Wednesday

Intro to the course and review of syllabus and assignments.

Topics: John Cage (composer), Lester Bangs (rock critic), John Berger (art critic)

4.2 Friday (asynchronous)

Reading: Lester Bangs, "How to be A Rock Critic"



Watch: *Almost Famous* (dir. Cameron Crowe), 2000

https://ucsc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CDL_SCR_INST/1kt68tt/alma991025050384904876

A high-school boy is given the chance to write a story for Rolling Stone Magazine about an up-and-coming rock band as he accompanies them on their concert tour.

ASSIGNMENT #1 Due by the end of day (Midnight) Sunday April 4th.

Week #2 Origins

4.7 Wednesday (synchronous)

Topics: Lumiere Brothers; Alan Lomax; Works Progress Administration (WPA), Dmitri Vrtov, W. Eugene Smith (photographer)

Reading: Eisenstein, Sergei, “The Unexpected”p.18

4.9 Friday (synchronous)



Film Screening during class time: *The JAZZ Loft, According to W. Eugene Smith* (dir. Sara Fishko, 2015)

Between 1957 and 1965 in New York, dozens of jazz musicians jam night after night in a dilapidated Sixth Avenue loft, not realizing that much of what they play and say to each other is being captured on audio tape and in still pictures by the gentle and unstable genius, former LIFE Magazine photographer W. Eugene Smith, who lives in the loft space next door. Meanwhile, Thelonious Monk stops by for three weeks of rehearsals; drummer Ronnie Free gets hooked on hard drugs, having been turned on by a drummer who was his boyhood idol years before; loft-resident Hall Overton, Juilliard instructor and classical composer, becomes a jazz guru; the 50s give way to the 60s; Smith begins to record his own phone calls and visits from the local police; the world changes—and Smith gets evicted.

Week #3 The Memory Problem

4.14 Wednesday (synchronous)

Topics: Errol Morris (documentary film maker), Elsa Dorphman (photographer), Martin Scorssee (film maker), Susan Sontag (writer)

4.16 Friday (synchronous)



Film Screening during class time: Memento (dir. Christopher Nolan), 2000
A man with short-term memory loss attempts to track down his wife's murderer.

Reading: Susan Sontag, "In Plato's Cave", *On Photography*

ASSIGNMENT #2 Due by the end of day (Midnight) Sunday April 18th.

Week #4

4.21 Wednesday (synchronous)

The body, dance and cultural studies; values and social differences in dance; dance studies and screen dance; the genre of the popular dance film.

Topics: Brodovitch (photographer), Kubrick (film maker) Isador Duncan (dancer), Wim Wenders (film maker), Pina Bausch (choreographer)

Reading: Forty-one false starts
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1994/07/11/forty-one-false-starts>

4.23 Friday (synchronous)



Film Screening during class time: *Pina* (dir. Wim Wenders), 2011

A tribute to the late German choreographer, Pina Bausch, as her dancers perform her most famous creations.

Week # 5

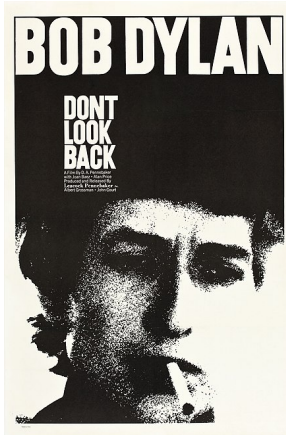
4.28 Wednesday (synchronous)

Capturing 'live' performance on screen; the concert spectacle; discourses of fidelity, the 'real' lives of musicians, performing selves, and ideas of authenticity; types of music documentary; documentaries as histories and archives.

Topics:

Reading: Strachan, Robert and Leonard, Marion. "Reel to Real: Cinema Verité, Rock Authenticity and the Rock Documentary."

4.30 Friday (asynchronous)



Watch: Don't Look Back (dir. D.A. Pennebaker), 1967
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-94ydQGO1AA>

Documentary covering Bob Dylan's 1965 tour of England, which includes appearances by Joan Baez and Donovan.

ASSIGNMENT #3 Due by the end of day (Midnight) Sunday May 2nd.

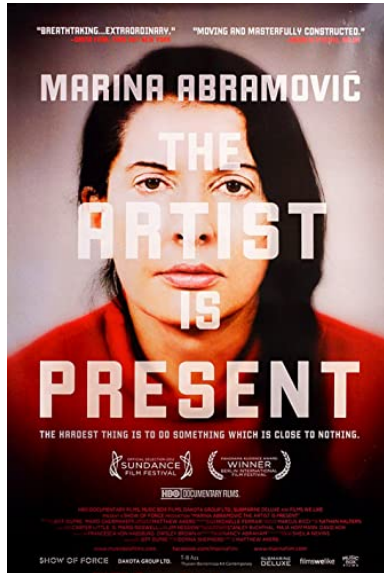
Week #6

5.5 Wednesday (synchronous)

Lecture: E.A.T, Tinguay, Chris Maker (Junktopia,1981), Richard Pryor (Live from the Sunset Strip)

Reading: Nelson Goodman, Twisted Tales

5.7 Friday (asynchronous)



Watch: The Artist is Present (dirs. Mathew Akers / Jeff Dupre), 2012

https://ucsc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CDL_SCR_INST/1kt68tt/alma991025183461904876

A documentary that follows the Serbian performance artist Marina Abramovic as she prepares for a retrospective of her work at The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Week #7

5.12 Wednesday (synchronous)

Topics: Hiroshi Sugimoto (photographer), Louis Valdez (El corrido: Ballad of a Farmworker, 1976), Spaulding Gray / Jonathan Demme (Swimming to Cambodia)

Reading: Peter Brooks, Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative, Chapter 1 (Section I & II)

5.14 Friday (asynchronous)



Watch: Anna Deavere Smith, Twilight (dir. Mark Levine), 2000

<https://www.pbs.org/video/great-performances-twilight-los-angeles-1/>

A one woman documentary play based on hundreds of interviews conducted after the riots that followed the 1992 acquittal of the police officers who beat Rodney King.

ASSIGNMENT #4 Due by the end of day (Midnight) Sunday May 16th.

Week #8

5.19 Wednesday (synchronous)

Reading: Georges Perec, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces (The Apartment)

5.21 Friday (asynchronous)



Watch: Dogville (dir. Lars von Trier) 2003

https://ucsc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991025050396604876&context=L&vid=01CDL_SCR_INST:USCS&lang=en&search_scope=online_access&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=AvailableOnline&query=any.contains,Dogville&offset=0

A woman on the run from the mob is reluctantly accepted in a small Colorado community in exchange for labor, but when a search visits the town she finds out that their support has a price.

ASSIGNMENT #5 Due by the end of day (Midnight) Sunday May 23rd.

Week #9

5.26 Wednesday (synchronous)

Reading: Alain de Botton, How Proust Can Change Your Life, Chapter 3

5.28 Friday (synchronous)



Film Screening during class time: Homecoming, A Film by Beyoncé (dir. Beyoncé Knowles-Carter) 2019

This intimate, in-depth look at Beyoncé's celebrated 2018 Coachella performance reveals the emotional road from creative concept to cultural movement.

Week #10
Postmortem

6.2 Wednesday

Lecture: Class Wrap Up

6.4 Friday

Review of Final Projects

Final Project Due by MIDNIGHT JUNE 7th

