

Doc Nomads 2022-24

3rd semester (Brussels)

Documentary History (III): Contemporary Documentary

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**DOC
NOMADS**
JOINT MASTERS

Classes

Classes focus on the screening of a selection of contemporary films in different styles of documentary filmmaking. Every week, one documentary and/or specific topic will be introduced, shown and discussed afterwards. In addition to the course Documentary History (I) in Lisbon, this class focusses mostly on contemporary documentary film. Further analysis intends to provide an understanding of the context of the periods in which the films were produced by examining correlated cultural, social, artistic and technical influences. Throughout the different lectures, attention will be also paid to different filmic characteristics as narration, montage, camera, etc.

Attention is paid to a wide area of topics, styles and formats. The cycle starts with relative traditional documentaries and slowly evolves into more and more experimental formats. Each lesson has a central (but not exclusive) film and theme.

We plan classes on essay film, art & the art of recreation, document & documentary, as well as “other voices”. Filmmakers whose work will be discussed are for example Agnes Varda, Fiona Tan, Gustave Deutsch, Raoul Peck, John Akomfrah, Eduardo Williams, Alice Diop, Chloé Zhao, Bill Morrisson. The title of the next film / theme will be confirmed at last the lecture before.

We will also collaborate with Beursschouwburg for screenings by contemporary filmmaker and audiovisual artist Saodat Ismailova and a masterclass with her end of November.

To enhance **participation and discussion**, we expect two things:

1. For each class, a text and/or a film connected to the topic will be made available through Toledo. Everyone is expected to read or watch the text/film before the related class. The PowerPoint presentations will be posted on Toledo afterwards.
2. The first goal is to reflect *your* vision on the screened film. The second goal is to enhance discussion and defend your own vision. This mainly means formulating your own thoughts on the film and/or theme, as well as formulating questions during the class discussions that follows the lecture and screening. The tutor will function as a moderator in these discussions.

In accordance with the student agreement, unmotivated absences from these classes may also lead to a lower grade. Systematic absence means that you cannot pass for this course, regardless the height of the provisional grade you received for your paper.

In principle, the classes take place on campus. Individual consultations can be organised online via Toledo Collaborate. In case of a COVID surge, online classes will be organised. On campus teaching will be organised according to the applicable COVID-19 regulations. In case of on campus teaching, there will not be provided an online alternative. Excursions and visits will be organised according to the COVID-19 regulations at the time of the event.

Assignment

Main goal

The assignment consists of a written paper with academic value (specified below), made in collaboration by 3 or 4 students.

- Groups will be formed by the students end of October
- The topic should be connected to one of topics, films and/or filmmakers discussed in the course

By letting students work together, we want to enhance the learning process for everyone.

Content

In this assignment, students **must** discuss at least one of the following subtopics:

- Formal topics: forms and ideas within a film, such as:
 - o Narrative analysis (storyline(s) and its construction)
 - o Character analysis (sketch of the protagonist(s))
 - o Stylistic analysis (formal arrangements of image and sound)
- Contextual topics, such as:
 - o Production history (recounting the film's production history, relating the film to other works of the same director etc.)
 - o Reception analysis (discussing the film's reception by critics and festivals, the positive or negative reviews it may have received, the awards it may have won)
- Broader contextual topics, for instance:
 - o Cultural analysis (relating the film to its place in history, society or culture)
 - o Comparative analysis (comparing the film with other similar films)

There is no obligation to discuss all these topics, but at least one of these subtopics (the second level of the scheme above) should be present. Students may also benefit from reading Bill Nichols' book chapters "How can we write effectively about documentary?" and "Notes on Source Material". Handbooks on film analysis as David Bordwell's *Film Art*, even if often mainly focused on narrative film, can also be helpful. Secondly, it is important to frame this film within the recent history of documentary filmmaking. Try to explain why this film and/or its director are considered important. You are strongly invited to add your own opinion and may agree or disagree with critics and 'public opinion'. As a third element, you *can* eventually elaborate on how this specific film inspires your own work or approach.

Form

You write, as a group, in collaboration, a research paper or essay of approximately **5.000 words (references included)**. This essay must follow the 'Doc Nomads Guidelines for writing papers'.

In Toledo, a module will be made available to the students to work together. The main goal is to have a collaborate work that benefits all group members.

Literature

It is of crucial importance that your paper/ paper presentation is not just a reflection of your own thoughts, but also of the (most important) literature that is available on the topic, film and/or director. There are three important places for research: [Cinematek](#), the library at LUCA, as well as through databases such as Academic Search Elite (which you can access at the LUCA premises, but also from other locations, providing you use the LUCA interface and log in with your LUCA account). If you have troubles accessing these sources, ask the librarian for help, or the tutor.

Schedule

1. In October, you reflect about the **subject of your choice**. Your final topic and group should be clear beginning of November. An overview of the groups and topics will be shared in the class of November 3.
2. In the second half of November / beginning of December, the tutor will organise a feedback session for each group. By then, you should formulate the main questions of your research paper, your approach, the way the work will be divided and shared in the group, and a first overview of the structure of the paper.
3. A second optional feedback session is possible by demand of the student groups (contact the tutor).
4. The final deadline to upload your paper is Monday December 11, 23.59, through Toledo.

You will receive constructive feedback about your assignment (and a provisional grade) before the end of the semester. Every group who would like to receive a higher grade for this paper will get the opportunity to rework it. (Groups with a grade below 10/20 must rework the paper anyway.) Students with additional questions about their paper or about the comments they received, can contact Pascal Vandelanoitte via e-mail.

If during the process, individual students do not collaborate sufficiently, this should be signalled to the teacher by at least two members of the same group. In that case, the teacher will contact all group members to discuss & resolve this. This kind of signal can only be given before the last feedback session end of November. Once the paper has been submitted, it is regarded as a joint collaboration.

The **retake deadline [if applicable!!!] for submitting your paper again (retake exam period) is Friday 26 January 2023.**

Evaluation

Every student is **required to meet the deadlines**. If you submit your paper beyond the deadline, it is only taken into account for the retake deadline. This means you won't get an opportunity to rework your assignment if necessary.

The paper is graded on a scale of 1 to 20. Elements of evaluation are structure, informative character and insight in documentary value, originality, academic requirements, presentation, as well as group collaboration.

If your participation in the course is below level, 1 to 3 points can be deducted from this grade. In accordance with the student agreement, unmotivated absences may also lead to a lower grade. The grade may be significantly reduced if you miss classes or do not participate during the classes.

Students can only pass if they obtain at least 10/20 for the assignment. Therefore, students who score below 10/20, ARE obliged to do a retake.

Students who miss the regular first deadline and submit their assignment only for the retake, will only be credited a pass or fail (0 or 10/20).