



SYLLABUS

TITLE: "London Calling: A Survey of British and British Internationalist Documentary and Dramatic Cinema"

Instructor: Daniel L. Miller

Language of Instruction: English

Place and Time: London, United Kingdom, Fall 2017

UO Credits: 5

Contact Hours*: 15

Total Hours of Student Engagement (THSE) in all course activities*: 150

LONDON, ENGLAND

COURSE DESCRIPTION

British Cinema is one of the most vital national cinemas in the world. Both *documentary* and *dramatic cinema* forms are ever more understood as two sides of the same cloth in the development of British filmmaking. By its very technological nature (recording what is before the camera with a mechanical device), cinema seeks realism (closeness to reality) and by its very human-centered and authored creative artistic process it seeks and interprets and intensifies the deeper nature of human and natural existence itself. British cinema has always been interested in the interaction of creativity and the real.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course will introduce students to the British history of realism in cinema, including both documentary and fiction, one of the most profound artistic and intellectual contributions to media.

STUDENT OUTCOMES. Students who successfully complete this course will have a transformed understanding of Britain and of British and British Internationalist Documentary and Dramatic Cinema:

- of its history in the 20th and 21st century and its role in creating that history
- of its cinematic techniques
- of its social impacts
- and of its artistry

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

The class will view, discuss, critique, and honor paradigm-changing films. We will often travel to BFI on the South Bank for their screenings of notable films with those who directed or starred in them coming for Q and A. We will also travel to other archives to see amazing film records that reveal unspeakable events or great heroism in the images of twentieth

century war, violence, and changing relationships to former colonies. The approaches to film that we encounter will doubtless influence our own ways of seeing.

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

- Short reflections and responses to the films
- Two Research papers (using our trips to the archives as well as guest speakers for resources)
- On-going Assessment that measures student progress throughout the term
 - Journals
 - Evidence of reading the film texts and handouts in class participation
 - Attending, discussing and reviewing films in and outside of class
 - Visiting relevant cinema screening and filming sites throughout London and the UK
 - Creative projects
 - Group work

COURSE OUTLINE

Weeks 1: An Overview: Introduction to the History and Theory of Cinema and Cinema Criticism, and of British Documentary and Dramatic Film 1898-2016:

Week 2: This course will begin regarding Early history of British Cinema with review of the original British Acutality film, and *Documentary cinema* was invented as a movement, an art and an educational/reportorial endeavor by the British “father of documentary,” John Grierson, who coined the term *documentary* in regards to Robert Flaherty’s film *Nanook of the North*. He defined it as *the creative treatment of actuality*. During the late 1920s and 30s the British Film Unit teams Grierson assembled produced and distributed hundreds of documentaries, made the term “documentary” understood world-wide, and created a movement in documentary that promoted the form as art and actuality. During the 1940s those Grierson mentored became the representatives of the War in Europe and the British Central protagonists in the war against Fascism.

Week 3: Humphrey Jennings’s home front films, including *Fires Were Started* and *Diary for Timothy*, earned him the name of Poet Laureate of British Cinema. The battlefield films of the British Signal Corps Film Units, Roy Bolting, and the legendary dramatic film director Carol Reed documented war combat and supported the efforts of US academy award-winning directors like William Wyler to document the US air and ground units supported by the British in films like *The Memphis Belle*.

Weeks 4-5: The BFI London International Film Festival October 5-15, Weeks of Preparation and Planning, Daily Attendance, Viewing of Three-Five Films per day, Daily Reports on the films, Photography and Video coverage of the Films and Director QAs, and Interviews.

Week 6: After WWII documentary and dramatic cinema completely changed throughout the world but especially in Europe. With war originated new technologies and styles, including smaller portable and handheld cameras and synchronized sound systems. And after the war came a new found cynicism about ordinary life, governments’ inability to prevent holocausts and establish humane social and humanitarian conditions, the cold war, the nuclear threat, and the ascendancy of bureaucratic consumerist capitalist cultures.

Week 7: Artists and filmmakers disdained traditional “cinema (music, literature, art, subjects) of quality” and sought to create a new cinema that focused once again on real life or life on the doorstep and new models of cinematic representation of the new actual life conditions. Thus British Free Cinema and Social Realist Cinema began experimenting with new documentary and dramatic film forms, styles and subjects in Britain, and the Italian Neo-

Realists and French New Wave did the same in France and Italy. “*Cinema Verité*” is a term coined for a new wave of documentary film that depends on filming real life events with portable cameras and synch sound and extends from these movements in British Free Cinema to Cinema Verite/Direct Cinema in Canada, the US, France, and Britain.

Weeks 8-9: From here in the 1950s and 1960s British Social Realist Cinema becomes a national cinema of international acclaim. It extends the working class *life on the doorstep* representation of actual human conditions through films by Peter Watkins, Karl Reisz, Peter Yates, Lorenza Mazettii, Lindsey Anderson, Tony Richardson, David Lean, and many others. Amongst the many others are the international filmmakers living and working in London--the international hub of international cinema, culture, politics, art, journalism and human rights concerns today.

Weeks 10-11: The 70s, 80s (Thatcherism) and 90s: Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, Tony Boyle, Julian Temple, Andrea Arnold, John Akomfrah.

Weeks 12-13: 21st Century British Film: Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, Tony Boyle, Julian Temple, Andrea Arnold, Shane Meadows, John Akomfrah continue their legacies. Also the phenomena of Harry Potter films will be explored focusing on the British film Director David Yates, the author J.K Rowling, and the British Ensemble actors only (by contractual agreement). Finally, the class will enjoy the very contemporary and evolutionary youth music and working class culture cinema.

Week 14: Warped: A special Tribute to *Warp Films*—Britain’s own Music and Creative Film Greenhouse nurturing and producing contemporary, independent and visionary films by young, independent and visionary filmmakers including Shane Meadows, Paddy Considine, Chris Morris, and Richard Ayoade.

COURSE READINGS

Excerpts from the following

- *Documentary: A History of Non-Fiction Film*, Erik Barnouw
- *A New History of Documentary*: Betsy A McLane
- *British Social Realism: From Documentary to Brit Grit*: Samantha Lay
- *Film Art*: David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson

Various Articles, Outlines, and Handouts

Standard citation needs to include: APA

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS:

Aufderheide, Pat. *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2007.

Bazin, André. *What Is Cinema?* Trans. Hugh Gray. Berkeley: University of California Press, Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. Tenth Edition. Columbus, Ohio: McGraw-Hill, 2012.

Bruzzi, Stella. *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Second Edition. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 2010.

Saunders, Dave. *Direct Cinema: Observational Documentary and the Politics of the Sixties*. Wallflower Press: London and New York, 2007.