

**Department of Communication and Culture**  
**Film Studies (FILM) 405.9 L/B02**  
**Documentary Film at the National Film Board**  
**Winter 2014**  
**LEC 2: R 18:00 - 19:50; LAB 2: T 18:00 - 20:45**

**Instructor:** Kerry McArthur  
**Office Location:** SS307  
**E-Mail:** kjmcarth@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** Blackboard  
**Office Hours:** Thursdays from 19:50

**Course Description**

This course is an exploration of the documentary film at the National Film Board of Canada, from its formation in 1939 under the guidance of British documentary maker John Grierson, to its postwar focus on nationalistic filmmaking in the 1950s and '60s, to its exploration of diverse immigrant populations in the 1990s and finally to its technologically determined "interactive" approach to documentary in the 2010s. The work of key practitioners -- including Colin Low, Roman Kroitor, Tom Daly, Wolf Koenig, Donald Brittain, Anne Claire Poirier, Cynthia Scott, Anne Wheeler and Jennifer Baichwal, amongst others -- will be considered, both as auteur cinema and rhetorical text. A clear understanding of historic contexts and corresponding policy formation is important for success in this course.

**Additional Information**

Some course content contains material that is sexually explicit, violent or otherwise offensive. If you have concerns about this, please make them known to the instructor in advance.

**Objectives of the Course**

- ^ To introduce students to the historical, policy, educational and artistic influences that shaped and continue to shape the NFB
- ^ To challenge students to debate various interpretations of national identity via NFB films
- ^ To invite students to consider their own (potential) contributions to Canada's documentary-making tradition

**Internet and electronic communication device information**

Cell phones, iPods and gaming devices should be off during class; laptops and iPads may be used for taking notes.

## **Textbooks and Readings**

Readings consist of scholarly articles to be accessed through the University of Calgary library; an online listing of these readings will be available to students via Blackboard.

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

You will be graded on five components:

Group presentations (15%): from January 16 to April 3

Literature review for final essay (15%): due February 6

Final essay (35%): due March 27

Take-home exam (25%): distributed in class April 3, hand-in April 10

Participation (10%)

1. Group presentations (15%): January 16 through April 3. Students will work in small groups to produce a 30-minute presentation on one of the assigned readings as it applies to a chosen film. Each member of the group will contribute to the research behind this project and take an equal part in its presentation.
2. Literature review (15%): due February 6. The literature review will reference five to seven academic articles in the field of film studies to support the final essay topic.
3. Final essay (35%): due March 27. This paper will comprise: a) a scene analysis from a chosen documentary, or b) a comparative analysis of two film documentaries or two film documentary filmmakers. Paper length: 2,500 words, not including References section.
4. Take-home exam (25%): distributed in class April 3, for hand-in April 10. The take-home exam will challenge the student to critique the numerous documentary theories and aesthetic approaches examined throughout the course. The exam will comprise a list of approximately 7 to 8 questions; students will choose two questions from this list and write short-essay-length responses to each. The response will total approximately 8 to 9 double-spaced pages.
5. Participation (10%). Students are expected to contribute insights during class on the course's readings, films and documentary filmmakers: this requires regular attendance, a willingness to speak up in class and a close reading of assigned articles.

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

**Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

**Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.** For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

**Writing Skills Statement**

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

**Grading System**

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

### **Plagiarism**

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

### **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

### **Students' Union**

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

### **Student Ombudsman**

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

### **Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points**

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

### **"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333**

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

## **Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/cfreb>

## **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

A detailed schedule of lectures and readings will be provided the first day of class and posted on Blackboard.