

Course: Documentary Film and Ethics (ELO-E1504) 2cr
Major in Documentary Film 2020/2021
Department of Film, Television and Scenography
ELO, Aalto University

Dates: 17.05.-21.05.21

Time: 10am-4pm

Online course: <https://aalto.zoom.us/j/63370707307>

Responsible teacher: Arturo Delgado Pereira

Teaching Language: English

E-mail: arturo.delgado@aalto.fi

Description.

This course will look at the ethics of representation in documentary film and other “reality” based practices which imply working with real people (social actors in Nichols’ words). In the course students will be introduced to aspects of consent, exploitation, victimization, personal exposure, etc. The course will also cover basics aspects of sustainable filmmaking. The methodology of the course will include lectures, readings, visitors, film screenings as well as discussions.

Learning Outcomes.

- Students will identify the main aspects that pertain to documentary film ethics.
- Students will be able to analyze films attending to the ethical challenges they present for filmmakers and audiences.

Difficult Material Statement.

You may, on occasion, find some of the audiovisual materials presented in this course challenging with respect to matters of feelings, beliefs, politics, conflict, intimacy, or the body. If you have any concerns about “difficult” materials in the course, please check with your professor ASAP.

Pre-assignment.

Students **read** the following texts found on the MyCourses home page for the course.

- Bill Nichols: “**Why are Ethical Issues Central to Documentary Filmmaking?**”
- Patricia Aufderheide, Peter Jaszi and Mridu Chandra. “**Honest Truths: Documentary Filmmakers on Ethical Challenges in Their Work**”

Watch *Titicut Follies* (Frederick Wiseman, 1967)

Titicut Follies (Finnish subtitles)

<https://vimeo.com/397813650>

PW: Observational

Titicut Follies (English subtitles)

<https://vimeo.com/548284482>

PW: Ethics

Assignment.

Students will write a short essay (around 3 pages) in which they will analyze a film presented in the program related to the issues covered in the course. How can you apply some of the ethical concepts/reflections from the course in the film you are analyzing?

Visitors

Joel Backström

Joel Backström is a moral philosopher from Helsinki. He teaches philosophy at the University of Helsinki and at Uniarts. His research focuses on ethics, Wittgenstein and the philosophy of psychoanalysis. He views moral life in terms of a tension between, on the one hand, the normative orders of collective life, and, on the other, the openness between individual human beings, which we both long for and fear. Currently, he leads a transdisciplinary research project developing an "engaged dialogue" approach to studying people in the social sciences.

Maria Haipus

Maria Haipus is an editor who has worked in reality tv since 2007. She studied in Lahti Polytechnic in Institute of Design to become cinematographer but started as an editor within a year after graduation and stayed in that position ever since. Her first reality tv job was as an editor in Big Brother Finland. Since then she has done a vast number of reality tv shows like Kuorosota (Battle of the choirs), Eläinsairaala (Animal hospital), Pelastushelikopteri (Rescue helicopter), MasterChef Finland and Junior MasterChef, Finnish model reality Mallikoulu, Leijonan luola (Shark Tank), Sohvaperunat (Gogglebox Finland) etc. Currently she is editing a documentary about conductor and composer Kari Tikka.

General Schedule.

Monday 17.05.

10am-12:00: Arturo Delgado Pereira: Introduction to Ethics in Documentary Film.

The importance of ethical issues in documentary film; Documentary filmmakers on ethical challenges; Consent: a key concept; The case of poverty porn.

1pm-3pm. Screening.

The House is Black (Forugh Farrojazad, 1962, 21m)

(Spanish subtitles only if CC is activated. Otherwise, English subs burnt in)

<https://vimeo.com/236940006>

Land Without Bread (Luis Buñuel, 1933, 28 min.)

<https://vimeo.com/548289997>

PW: Ethics

Agarrando Pueblo (Luis Ospina and Carlos Mayolo, 1977, 28m.)

<https://vimeo.com/6086559>

Recommended text:

Jeffrey Ruoff. "An Ethnographic Surrealist Film: Luis Buñuel's *Land Without Bread*."

Tuesday 18.05.

10am-1pm. Joel Jakob Backström: Thinking about moral questions: a philosopher's introduction.

2pm-4pm. Screening.

Stranger with a Camera (Elizabeth Barret, 2000)

<https://vimeo.com/channels/676200/54465749>

You can watch in on this channel (film on the top). Press full screen. If you press vimeo, it would ask you for a password.

Recommended texts:

Ardis, Cameron. "When Strangers Bring Cameras: The Poetics and Politics of Othered Places." **(read only first 11 pages)**

Susanna Helke. "The Documentarist and His Poor: On Radical Otherness and the Exuberance of the Have-Nots."

Wednesday 19.05.

10am-1pm. Joel Jakob Backström: Ethical issues in documenting lives

2pm-4pm

Portrait of Jason (Shirley Clarke, 1967)

<https://vimeo.com/548299942>

PW: Ethics

Homework: Follow the link and read report on Reality TV: <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11894400>

Thursday 20.05

10-11:30am. Maria Haipus: Ethics in entertainment industry.

11:40-12:30. Group Discussion.

13:30-16:00

Independent Study time. Working on your essay.

Suggested screening:

Aileen: Life And Death Of A Serial Killer (Nick Broomfield, 2003)

<https://vimeo.com/551308320>

PW: Ethics

Friday 21.05

10-12:00 Kaisa Astikainen: Sustainable filmmaking.

1-3pm Discussion about students' essays and wrap up of course.