New Documentary Cinema in Brazil

How does documentary film represent reality? Not, certainly, as a transparent window, but as a complex form that may include elements of staging and fiction. In Brazil (as elsewhere), the last twenty years have seen a surge in documentary filmmaking and critical thinking about this kind of film, which have reached a larger and more enthusiastic audience than ever before. The increased production of documentary film is part of the Retomada or Renewal of Brazilian cinema of all kinds since the 1990s, made possible by favorable government policies. This course, CONDUCTED IN ENGLISH, will examine a selection of these Brazilian films from the 1990s to the present (with brief retrospectives to earlier films) and explore issues such as: the uses of fact and fiction and the multiple ways in which documentary film may go beyond offering realistic versions of preexistent realities; the scope and limits of its political impact; ethical concerns about the respectful use of other people’s images and words; the construction of layered and complex images of Brazil. Readings concern these and other aspects of documentary films.

Because documentary filmmaking in Brazil is open to and aware of similar practices elsewhere, we will also view and discuss two influential French films and an American one (by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, by Frederick Wiseman and by Agnès Varda).

Readings for the course are available in one or more of the following ways: for purchase online (amazon.com or elsewhere), or posted in Resources at NYU Classes. All films will be available for streaming, either in a video folder in Resources (NYU Classes) or through Avery Fisher Film Library at Bobst.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed to introduce students to the study documentary film as a genre and to diverse aspects of Brazilian culture. It also aims to develop their critical thinking skills and fluency in writing about cinema.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Written work:
A mid-term take-home exam (8 pp.) and a final paper (8 pp.). Students will also write 4 short, graded, one-page (250 words) comments on the films in the course (free choice), due before class on the day that we discuss the film. These will not be accepted after the film was discussed in class. For the papers, instructor will provide suggested paper topics or work with you to develop your own.

**Oral work:**

Students will be asked to open discussion with questions on the films or readings, and will present a draft of their final paper to the class. Consistent class attendance and active class participation are CRUCIAL in this course; more than one absence without a doctor's note will have a negative impact on your grade.

**Paper due dates:**

**OCTOBER 18 (Saturday):** TAKE-HOME MID-TERM EXAM (e-mail attachment)

**DECEMBER 15 (Sunday):** FINAL PAPER DUE

**Grades:**

30% mid-term take-home exam

40% final paper

10% class participation

10 % graded film responses

10% final oral presentation

**FILMS:**


Coutinho, Eduardo, dir. *Boca de lixo* (*The Scavengers*). 50 min. 1992. DVD 28334


__________________. *Edifício Master*. 110 min. 2002. DVD 11532

__________________. *Jogo de cena* (*Playing*). 107 min. 2006. DVD 20463

Jabor, Carolina and Lula Buarque de Hollanda, dir. O mistério do samba. 90 min. 2008. DVD 21384

Jardim, João and Walter Carvalho, dir. Janela da alma (Window to / of the Soul). 73 min. 2002. DVD 23294

Kogut, Sandra, dir. Um passaporte húngaro. 71 min. 2003. DVD 40089 P


Masagão, Marcelo, dir. Nós que aqui estamos por vós esperamos. (Here we are waiting for you). 55 min. 1999. VCA 11500.

Mascaro, Gabriel. Doméstica (Housemaids), 76 min. 2012. DVD 31474.

Padilha, José and Felipe Lacerda, dir. Ônibus 174. 120 min. 2002. DVD3020

Prado, Marcos. Estamira. 116 min., 2006. DVD 24564 P e DVD 26549 P.


Rocha, Glauber, dir. Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol; Black God, White Devil. 111 min. DVD 8396.


Salles, João Moreira and Kátia Lund. Notícias de uma guerra particular. 50 min. 1999, DVD 34692. ALSO as a supplement to Cidade de Deus, DVD12259.

Salles, João Moreira, and Kátia Lund, dir. Notícias de uma Guerra Particular. DVD 34692. Also as a supplement to Cidade de Deus, DVD 12259.


Santos, Nelson Pereira dos, dir. Vidas Secas, 100 min. 1993. DVD 6554.
Siqueira, Rodrigo. *Terra deu terra come* (The earth gave and the earth eats it up) 88 min. 2010, DVD 34694.


_____________. *Palavra (en)cantada*. 84 min. 2009. DVD 23292.


**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**


(Books marked with an asterisk are available online through Bobst for NYU users)

**SYLLABUS**

**I. INTRODUCTION: WHAT WE LOOK AT, WHAT WE SEE**

Sept. 3: Introduction to the course. View in class *Janela da alma* (*Window to the Soul, João Jardim*).

**II. PLACES AND LIVES: SPEAKING FOR/WITH THE OTHER**

A) EXTRAORDINARY TRASH

Sept. 10: *Waste Land (Lixo extraordinário, Lucy Walker)*. Available for streaming (Kanopy).

*Boca de Lixo* (*The Scavengers, Eduardo Coutinho)*.

Sept. 17: *Ilha das Flores* (*Isle of Flowers, Jorge Furtado*) (also available on YouTube)

*Estamira* (Marcos Prado).

B) MIDDLE CLASS CITY-DWELLERS AND FAVELA RESIDENTS


*Babilônia 2000* (Eduardo Coutinho)


Nichols, pp. 184-187.

Nichols, Ch. 2, "Why are ethical issues central to documentary filmmaking?" pp. 42-66.

**III. CINEMA NOVO: A BRIEF RETROSPECTIVE**


Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol (Black God, White Devil, Glauber Rocha).

Suggested reading:
Ismail Xavier, "Black God, White Devil:" Allegory and Prophecy, in Xavier, Allegories, pp. 31-52.

IV: INTERFACES BETWEEN DOCUMENTARY AND FICTION

Oct. 8: A retrospective: Trance: Uma transa amazônica (Jorge Bodanski and Orlando Senna).

Terra deu terra come (The earth gave it, the earth eats it up, Rodrigo Siqueira)
Nichols, Chap. 1, "How can we define documentary?" pp. 1-41

Suggested viewing:
Nós que aqui estamos por vós esperamos (Here we are waiting for you, Marcelo Masagão).

Oct. 15: NO TUESDAY CLASSES

MID-TERM TAKE-HOME DUE ON FRIDAY OCTOBER 18 (by e-mail attachment)

V. PERSONAL NARRATIVES; SOCIAL PLOTS

Oct. 22: Um passaporte húngaro (Sandra Kogut).


Doméstica (Housemaids, Gabriel Mascaro) Available for streaming (Docuseek2)
Counterpoint with a French film: Les glaneurs et la glaneuse (The gleaners and I, Agnès Varda).

VI. DRUG TRAFFIC AND VIOLENCE IN RIO: PERSPECTIVES

Oct. 29: Notícias de uma guerra particular (João Moreira Salles);
Ónibus 174 (Bus 174, José Padilha).
Crafting Truth, Ch. 5, "Argument," pp. 113-133.
Lorraine Leu, "Spaces of Remembrance"
Nov. 5:  Juízo (Court Hearing, Maria Augusta Ramos).
*Morro dos Prazeres* (Hill of Pleasures, Maria Augusta Ramos).
An American film as counterpoint: *Titicut Follies* and the "direct cinema" of Frederick Wiseman as counterpoint to a similar style of documentary film-making in "Court Hearing."
*Crafting Truth*, p. 68
Ismail Xavier, "Ways of Listening in a Visual Medium."

**VIII. REFLECTIONS ON DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING (REFLEXIVE DOCUMENTARIES)**

Nov. 12:  *Santiago* (João Moreira Salles);
*Crafting Truth*, pp. 226-227.
*Jogo de cena* (Eduardo Coutinho).
Marililia Martins, "The Garbage Man: An Interview with Eduardo Coutinho."

**IX. DOCUMENTING PERFORMERS AND PERFORMANCES**

Nov. 19:  *Bananas is my business* (Helena Solberg)
*O mistério do samba* (The Mystery of Samba, Carolina Jabor)
*Crafting Truth*, Ch. 10, "Sounds," 239-263.

Nov. 26:  *Palavra (en)cantada* (The (en)chanted word, Helena Solberg).
*Nelson Freire* (João Moreira Salles)

Dec. 3:  Film(s) to be added.

Dec. 10:  ORAL PRESENTATIONS

December 15:  FINAL PAPER DUE