

ANTH 4220

Visual Anthropology and Ethnographic Film

2024

Lecture: 6:30 PM – 8:15 PM,

Tutorial: 8:30 - 9:15pm (MA students) 5:30 - 6:15pm (UG students)

Teacher: Alberto Gerosa, NAH 411,

Office Hours: by appointment

albertogerosa@cuhk.edu.hk

Course Description:

This course offers a chance for the application of audiovisual research practices in anthropological inquiry. Through practical exercises, students' projects and lectures, participants will learn about the craft and academic requirements of ethnographic film and performance, with a primary focus on video production skills. We will experiment filmic ways in which students can enlarge ethnographic methods and anthropological scholarship beyond the written word. To explore and represent the human experience, how could we use film and performance to collect evidence, and how as filmmakers can we experiment with voice, style, form, genre, process, etcetera in response to debates over issues of representation? The study of visual anthropology is essentially an exploration into the nature of reality and the problem of perspective. Each student's fieldwork project will be the starting point to choose the most appropriate method of ethnographic research. The power of our academic poetics and politics is considerable: on behalf of whom are we speaking? What kind of story does a particular film or performance tell? Can the means of representation really be shared with informants, as co-authors? Can multimodal anthropological investigation render seemingly unintelligible worlds intelligible?

Learning Outcomes:

Describe and explain in an informed and broad-based manner the visual anthropological theory, history, and practice relevant to art and anthropology

Develop and conduct an ethnographic research, using film, performance or photography, from initial premise to final research.

Utilise a range of academic methods and collaborative practices to render the ethnographic fieldwork data creatively.

Analyse the concept of a film and its cultural responsibility, through ethnographic research terms. Render it in both video, performance and photography.

Show an ability to think critically, independently, and creatively in order to solve problems and communicate clearly and coherently.

Language Of Instruction:

English

Required Texts:

All readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Assessment:

Guidelines for how to write response papers and for the independent project will be provided in class. All assignments (response papers and independent project) must be submitted to VeriGuide. Assignments without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded.

Please visit:

https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.aspx

**

<i>Grade Item</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Independent Project, Pre-Production Stage	15%	February 10th
Written Reflection, Visual and Performance Ethnography	15%	March 18th
Independent Project, Production Stage	20%	March 25 th
Independent Project (2 options, group work) Final Result	30%	04/29/24
Participation	20%	--

Course Schedule:

Week 1 (8th January): Introduction

Introduction to Course Content and the Visual and performative Ethnographic Method. Starting from the documentary dilemma of the “fly on the wall” debate, students will be familiarised with the discipline of visual anthropology and the benefit it brings to social research and cinema.

Required Readings:

Jean Rouch, “The Camera and Man,” (1973), available online at <http://www.der.org/jean-rouch/pdf/CameraandMan-JRouch.pdf>.

Suggested Films:

National Geographic: Taboo, “Rites of Passage”

Leviathan (Barbash and Taylor, 2013, 90 mins) – clips

PRACTICE: Camerawork I (framing, zooming, composition)

Week 2: 15.01 Science and Art

Science and Art In this topic, the double-nature of ethnographic film as both a science and an art will be deepened, inspiring students on how to bring its formal discourse forward.

Required Readings:

Lutz and Collins, “The Readers’ Imagined *Geographic*: An Evolutionary Tale”

Suggested Films:

Barefoot Gen, 1983

The Runner, 1984

PRACTICE: After introducing your movie’s world, what happens to it? (Three Acts Narrative Structure, Tension, Character’s Arch).

Week 3: 22.01 Cine Ethnography

In this topic, students will be acquainted with the milestones of the history of ethnographic film, with a special attention towards the cinematic masterpieces it produced

Required Readings:

Walsh, “From Nü Guo to Nü’er Guo: Negotiating Desire in the Land of the Mosuo”

Barbara Meyerhoff and Jay Ruby, “Introduction” (1982), in *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*, pp. 1-35.

Suggested Films:

Global Villages: The Globalization of Ethnic Display (Tamar Gordon, 2005, 59 mins)

Cannibal Tours (Dennis O’Rourke, 1987, 70 mins)

PRACTICE: Camerawork II: Embedded within a Group, Interviewing, Observing with a Camera, practical and ethical issues.

Week 4: 29.01 Sensory Ethnography In this topic, students will learn how to focus on the sensorial side of human experience through the use of cameras.

Required Readings:

Rony, “Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography: Robert Flaherty’s Nanook of the North”

Ruby, “The Aggie Must Come First: Robert Flaherty’s Place in Ethnographic Film History”

Suggested Film:

Nanook of the North (Robert Flaherty, 1922, 75 mins.)

Nanook Revisited (1990, 60 mins.) – clips

PRACTICE: Writing a visual ethnography proposal (focus, aesthetics VS academic priorities, cinema VS video)

Week 5: 05.02 Writing the First Film Treatment Draft In this topic, students will be required to think of a film treatment draft and research question, based on their interest and the choice of the Professor.

Required Readings:

Heider, “Introduction” to *Ethnographic Film*

Ruby, “Introduction” to *Picturing Culture* – skip the sections on history and on infrastructure (skip pp. 6b-26m)

Film: The Hunters (John Marshall, 1958, 72 mins.)

Film: The Fast Runner (Zacharias Kunuk, 2002, 172 mins) – clips

PRACTICE: Lightning Photography (natural light, artificial light, soft-hard light, mood)

PRACTICE: Techniques of Writing your Film Draft

Week 6: 19.02 Revisions; Start of Ethnographic Film Fieldwork Students will learn about each other's research choices, and start transform their film treatments into a film ethnographic project.

Required Readings:

Mead, “Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words” Ferguson,

Films:

“The Problem of Western Goods” *Microcultural Incidents in Ten Zoos* (Birdwhistell and Van Vlack, 1959, 34 mins.)

The Ax Fight (Tim Asch, 1975, 30 mins.)

PRACTICE: Performative Turns: What happens when the reality confronts your initial ideas?

Week 7 26.02 – In-class Analysis of Ethnographic Film Fieldwork

In this topic, students will discuss their experience of film fieldwork so far, and decide how to proceed towards its development.

Required Readings:

Weinberger, “The Camera People”

Ruby, “Robert Gardner and Anthropological Cinema”

Suggested Films:

Salesman, (Maysles Bros, 1969)

Dead Birds (Robert Gardner, 1964, 83 mins.) - clips

Forest of Bliss (Robert Gardner, 1985, 91 mins.)

PRACTICE: The Magic triangle: “You, Audience, Subject of Research” (How to keep your direction within a long-term ethnographic fieldwork forest)

Week 8 (11.03): Second analysis of Ethnographic Film Fieldwork and first editing

In this topic students will be shown each other's material and continue refining their research focus.

Required Readings:

MacDougall, “Transcultural Cinema” – skip the last section (skip pp. 271-274)

Tomaselli, “Myths, Racism, and Opportunism: Film and TV Representations of the San”

Suggested Films:

N!ai, The Story of a !Kung Woman (John Marshall, 1980, 58 mins.)

The Gods Must be Crazy (Jamie Uys, 1980, 109 mins) – clips

PRACTICE: Film Editing (Montage Theory, Cinema Theory)

Week 9 18.03 Developing the rough-cut In this topic, students will start editing their rushes towards the creation of a first roughcut: Their final Ethnographic films will start to take shape.

Required Readings:

Wu Wenguang, “DV: Individual Filmmaking”

Barbash and Taylor, “From Fieldwork to Filming” – read the sections on Rapport, Ethics, and Methodology

Suggested Films:

Disorder / 《现实是过去的未来》 (Huang Weikai, 2009, 58 mins) **PRACTICE: Video Editing (Practical Class with software)**

Week 10 25.03: Shooting the last materials and finalising the rough-cut Students have a final chance to improve the shooting and editing of their final films, according to their own interpretations of their initial research focus.

Required Readings:

MacDougall, “Unprivileged Camera Style”

Suggested Films:

A Wife Among Wives (David and Judith MacDougall, 1981, 72 mins.)

Week 11 08.04: In-class Final Cut Editing

Students are invited to work on their own editing to finalise the last touches of the final cuts.

Required Readings:

Deren, “Author’s Preface” and “Introductory Note” to *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*

Russell, “Ecstatic Ethnography: Filming Possession Rituals”

Suggested Films:

Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti (Maya Deren, 1985, 52 mins.)

Les Maîtres fous (Jean Rouch, 1954, 35 mins.)

PRACTICE: Distribution: How do we promote our work (being pro-active, leverage on a community of interest, the impact VS academic rigour dilemma)

Week 12 15.04: The Anthropological Cinema of Jean Rouch

Required Readings:

Grimshaw, “The anthropological cinema of Jean Rouch”

Suggested Films:

Chronique d’un été (Jean Rouch, 1961, 85 mins) – clips *Jaguar* (Jean Rouch, 1967, 93 mins.)

Week 13 22.04 In/class presentations Students present to the class their final films, explaining how their project has evolved throughout the semester.

Class presentations of independent projects Final Deadline to hand in final project: **April 22nd**

Week 14 29.04 Public Screenings Students present their films to the larger audience

POLICIES

Participation

Student participation is critical to the success of each class. Please come to class prepared to discuss and listen to your classmates thoughtfully, and ask questions. You certainly don't have to speak up during every class period, but you will be evaluated on the general pattern of your class involvement over the course of the semester. Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a stupid question or comment. As long as it is respectful to others, your question or comment will likely help to stimulate conversation.

Late Submissions Late response papers will suffer a full grade deduction – e.g. an A- will become a B-. Late

submissions will not be accepted past Monday 5:00 p.m.

Late take-home exams will not be accepted more than 48 hours past the original due date, and will suffer a full grade deduction for every day late.

Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on academic honesty, and adopts a policy of *zero tolerance* on cheating in examinations and plagiarism. Any such offence will lead to disciplinary action including possibly termination of studies at the University. Students should know how to properly use source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Students should read the detailed guidelines and examples for the acknowledgement of sources in the University's website at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty>. Students are required to submit all papers through VeriGuide, which is also explained at the above website.