Course Number — VSAR 361
Course Title — New Documentary Film

☐ This is a new course. A FORM C is being filed concurrently.

☒ This is an existing course not currently satisfying an UDGE requirement, which is not being changed.

☐ This is an existing course not currently satisfying an UDGE requirement, which is undergoing change. A FORM C-2 is being filed concurrently.

☐ This is an existing course currently satisfying an UDGE requirement which is being submitted for recertification. A FORM C-2 is required only if the course is being changed.

1. Please attach a syllabus or draft syllabus of the course. ATTACHED

2. How many units is this course? __3__ (Upper-Division General Education courses are limited to 3 units.)

3.a. Does this course have (a) prerequisite (s) other than completion of LDGE requirements?

   _yes_   _X_ no

b. Does this course fulfill requirements for a major by the academic unit in which the course is offered? Check the YES box even if the course counts as an elective in the major.

   _X_ yes   _no_

c. If you answered “yes” to 3.a. or 3.b., then the course is an exception to the definition printed on the next page of this form, and you must explain why the GE committee should make an exception for this course. Please describe how this course is designed to provide valuable and appropriate learning experiences to both majors and non-majors.

   This course is an elective for VPA students in the Visual Arts and Arts & Technology for one of their theoretical/historical fulfillments. It also fulfills one of the elective requirements for the Art History minor. As such, it is designed with the assumption that majors and minors, as well as non-majors, will have no prior special knowledge of the conceptual, theoretical, critical or historical bases on which the course content is based. Thus, New Documentary Film is designed to give broad yet deep understanding of these crucial basic principles guiding the development of new genres of documentary film. Students engage in the acquisition of this knowledge as an equal group and through the different subjects and themes of the films we analyze, and through other course activities that allow them to recognize aspects of learning and knowledge familiar to their various disciplines.

Read Questions 4-8 in the instructions on the next page of this form and submit your answers as attachments. The instructions do not have to be printed or submitted.

Signatures

Originator

Program Director

General Education Coordinator

General Education Committee Chair

Date

Date

Date

Date

8/30/2004
FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR UDGE-CC (WHITE)
UPPER DIVISION GENERAL EDUCATION NEW COURSE PROPOSAL
FOR AREA CC – HUMANITIES

The Definition of Upper Division GE Courses:

Upper Division General Education provides an opportunity for students to learn about areas of study outside their academic major. Upper Division General Education courses assume satisfaction of Lower Division General Education Requirements and develop upper division skills. Courses should not require discipline-specific prerequisites. Designed for non-majors, these courses make explicit the basic assumptions, principles and methods of the disciplinary or interdisciplinary area of study. This conceptual framework and the applicability of these principles and methods should be emphasized throughout the course.

Upper Division General Education courses should help students see how disciplines, ideas, issues and knowledge are often interrelated, intersecting and interconnected. Upper Division General Education courses should present knowledge which can enhance students’ lives outside the classroom or their studies in other subjects. These courses should also provide students with a classroom environment that fosters independent, active, engaged learning and a genuine curiosity about the subject matter.

Upper Division General Education courses shall be three-unit courses so that three such courses will exactly correspond with the 9-unit Upper Division General Education requirement of the CSU.

Attachments and responses to questions 1-4 will help the General Education Committee decide if the course is truly suitable to the General Education student. Please read the definition of Upper Division General Education printed above before answering these questions.

1. Please attach a syllabus or draft syllabus of the course.
2. How many units is this course? Upper-Division General Education Courses are limited to (3) units.
3. a. Does this course have (a) prerequisite (s) other than completion of LDGE requirements?
   b. Does this course fulfill requirements for a major by the academic unit in which the course is offered? Check the YES box even if the course counts as an elective in the major.
   c. If you answered “yes” to 3.a. or 3.b., then the course is an exception to the definition printed above, and you must explain why the GE committee should make an exception for this course. Please describe how this course is designed to provide valuable and appropriate learning experiences to both majors and non-majors.
4. Upper division general-education students may have fulfilled their lower division area C requirements in broad, interdisciplinary courses or in a different discipline than the discipline in which this course is offered. Please explain how this course introduces such students to the basic assumptions, principles and methods of the discipline, and how connection is made between these fundamentals and the particular applications emphasized in the course.

Criteria for Upper Division Area CC Courses:

Questions 5-7 will help the General Education Committee decide if the course belongs in the Humanities category.

On a separate sheet of paper, address the criteria implied by the following instructions. Provide specific examples wherever possible.

5. Please specify how this course represents both past and present approaches to at least one of the following: a) spirituality, b) the arts, c) philosophy or intellectual thought.
6. Please specify how in this course students address issues involving both the cognitive and affective aspects of human experience either using critical analysis or creative activity.
7. Please provide specific examples of the way in which this course examines at least one of the following: aesthetic, metaphysical, or ethical manifestations of the human intellect in at least one of the following contexts: a) diverse historical contexts; b) diverse cultural contexts.

Assessment for Upper Division Area CC Courses:

Question 6 will help the General Education Committee to evaluate whether you have planned sufficiently for assessing the success of your course.

8. a. Please give examples explaining how the work assigned to students (quizzes, tests, essays, projects, etc.) allows you to measure how successful individual students are in meeting the UDGE learning objectives for this course. Please attach an example of the type of assignment you will use to evaluate how successfully students meet the UDGE learning objectives.
   b. If you use any course assessment activities (e.g., “pre” and “post” testing, class-wide analysis of individual test questions, etc.) that measure whether or not the class as a whole successfully meets the General Education learning objectives for this course, please attach examples of these as well.
Responses to UDGE Area CC Humanities Questions 4-8 for
VSAR 361: New Documentary Film
Submitted by Dr. Andrea Liss

4. Basic methods of approach to the discipline of looking at and analyzing artwork, and in this class, film and video artwork, are emphasized through the students' viewing and writing about these media from a broad range of new documentary genres. I introduce them to critical visual analysis skills while they are also learning about the thematic content and style of the films. They learn the basic language of cinematic analysis, including how to be aware of and describe a film's theme, visual style, editing texture, temporal structure and sound composition. I help them understand these basic approaches in order to further layer these methods onto their understanding of how they have been and are currently being re-invented and expanded in the field of new documentary film, which is the focus of this course.

5. This course specifically addresses past and present approaches to the arts through its focus on the representation of assumed knowledge of life and reality through the art of documentary film. I introduce students to past practices of documentary film in which the focus of the genre was to reform and teach, and the mode of expression was primarily authoritative. Then we focus on how these approaches are being redefined and expanded through multiple voices and sometimes conflicting points of view. In addition to introducing students to past and present methodologies in the development of the genre of documentary film, the course simultaneously introduces students to the complexity of the acquisition of knowledge about the seen and lived world. Such questions arise: Is this experience conveyed through film non-negotiable, is it a non-filtered representation of experience and truth? What are the crucial differences between "the art" of documentary and "the experience of the real?" What are their similarities?

6. This course gives students a rich base of opportunity to learn in which the cognitive and affective aspects of human experience interact. They learn cognitively through their process of acquiring knowledge about cinematic methodologies, and learn affectively through viewing films about specific, rich and diverse human experiences recounted through first-person voices. Critical analysis of the films intersects with the students' affective responses to the compelling subjects of the films. One of my most valued goals is to teach students to see how the formal aspects of a work of art give life to an understanding of its theme, which often leads them to make deep connections between that theme and their own lives.

7. New Documentary Film studies the ethical aspects of the human intellect precisely through the very subject of documentary: to teach, to improve and to make available knowledge about diverse aspects of the human experience. Some of the material that the artful documentaries that we view address the historical, cultural and familial contexts of: the Japanese-American internment camps during WWII, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the cultural revolutions in Iran; brothels in Calcutta; and the cultural relationships between family members, for example between a British-Nigerian young women and her British mother.
8. The course assignments for New Documentary Film are fostered by my pedagogic goal to create an active learning environment both within the classroom and in the students' lives. Their weekly assignments of a film analysis demand that they find their own resources in order to do the research required. Yes, I assign a newly published text about new documentary film – but this serves as an intellectual backdrop to their experiences of doing specific research for specific films. They need to find resources, not simply film reviews, that address how the specific aspects of the film contribute to the new field of redefined documentary film. For example, I direct them to look for these aspects in interviews with the filmmakers and in the questions asked. The midterm and final – essentially one assignment done in steps in which they can evaluate their progress – allow the students to choose their own topics for a film. They are asked to think like a new documentary filmmaker, thus to justify their choice of subject and to explain how all the cinematic elements contribute to the meaning and power of the film's theme – in addition, to visually describe in their writing how the elements of their film are rethinking previous assumptions and aesthetic points of view, i.e., merging historical accounts with the personal voice or using abstract elements in their non-fiction film ideas. Please see the midterm and final assignment descriptions on the attached syllabus for New Documentary Film.
NEW DOCUMENTARY FILM: VSAR 361

Visual and Performing Arts/CSUSM/Fall 2011
Weds 2:30pm – 5:15pm/Arts 220
Dr. Andrea Liss

This course explores the concepts and histories that underlie new genres of documentary film as well as examines contemporary documentary films themselves. The documentary mode of expression developed in film as a genre of reform and teaching. The assumed point-of-view was unquestionable; ultimate truth was the goal. Thus the mode of address in early documentary film was primarily authoritative. Contemporary documentary work in film has expanded and complicated this singular point-of-view, replacing this valid quest for truth with new, multiple voices that address more complex modes of witnessing and expressing social, cultural, political, personal and story-telling truths, historical events and points of view. These new genres include combinations of historical documentary, personal documentary, subjective documentary, feminist documentary, non-narrative, non-fiction and experimental work that give voice to various people's experiences.

You will explore the aesthetic and technical dimensions of the films as well as conduct research on their historical, cultural and political backgrounds. You will learn how the cinematic elements of a film shape its meaning and purpose. You will also consider the various relationships among the filmmaker's choice of theme and why s/he chose the particular visual style, documentary mode of address and point-of-view to represent that theme. A documentary point-of-view, in terms of concept, opinion and camera angle, is a metaphor for how knowledge is transmitted. Thus, this course explores the very notion of how knowledge is transmitted cinematically.

Course Goals

➢ Understand and develop critical visual analysis skills using film from a broad range of new documentary styles, ideas and cultures;
➢ Be accomplished in identifying the basic language of documentary cinema, including issues relating to a film’s theme, genre, point-of-view, visual style and structure, as well as its sound composition;
➢ Understand how the above elements help support a film’s overall theme;
➢ Be able to conduct research about a film on multiple levels: identify and report on its scholarly reception and understand and explain its historical and cultural elements as they relate to the particular customs, religions and ideas conveyed in the film;
➢ Be aware of and research a film’s means of production;
➢ Become active participants rather than passive viewers of film.
Wk 1/Aug 31  Introduction to course structure and flow, course goals, your responsibilities and assign films you will write about and present to class

Wk 2/Sep 7  > critical thinking exercise on concepts of subjectivity, objectivity and new modes of documentary film through viewing Rea Tajari's film *History and Memory*, 1991, 32 mins.

Wk 3/Sep 14  Introduction to the term "documentary" and its initial meaning and usage in early filmmaking, photography, anthropology and other nineteenth century fields of knowledge and inquiry.

  > view *Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary*, 2008

Wk 4/ Sep 21  Rethinking Documentary: this week opens up student presentations. A different group of students will discuss each film on the list below weekly and present their research and analyses to the class. The class is driven by these weekly presentations and discussions. Your presentations of each film will be in part guided by readings and interviews you research that focus on the particular documentary mode the director(s) used in the film.


  *discuss midterm

Wk 7/Oct 12  *Chile, Obstinate Memory*, Patricio Guzman, 1997, French Canada


**MIDTERM DUE**

Wk 10/Nov 2   *The Thin Blue Line*, Errol Morris, 1988, USA, 82 mins.

Wk 11/Nov 9   *High School*, Frederick Wiseman, 1965, USA, 75 mins.

Wk 12/Nov 16  *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, Banksy, 2010, England


*FINAL DUE

Wk 14/Nov 30  *La Pivellina*, Tizza Covi and Rainer Frimmel, 2009, Austria, Italy and Spain, 100 mins.

Wk 15/Dec 7   Critical Reflections and share your film concept

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**Dr. Andrea Liss**
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**Course Required Book:** Elizabeth Cowie, *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011). **Read this book in its entirety by Wk 4/Sep 21.** We will refer to specific chapters throughout the semester.

**Course Requirements and Assignments:**
This class is designed to give you a strong understanding of how to visually read a film in order to arrive at an understanding of its meaning, especially within the multiple genres of redefined or new documentary film. Films are highly constructed works of art and culture. The director thinks carefully about how s/he is putting together the visual elements, the editing, the point-of-view, the sounds/music and the entire structure of the piece. The course assignments are designed so that you will have the opportunity to think about the various exciting relationships between the theme of the film and its visual structure as well as other filmic elements. We will break this down in our discussions so that you will see the depth of these relationships in every film we view.
Discussion/Analysis Paper 4 pages – double-spaced – 12 point type – no handwritten or late work accepted. 25% of grade.
Therefore, each of you will have the opportunity to discuss in class at least one film in relation to issues of structure and meaning. You will do this as a small group and present your observations, analyses and research to the class directly after we have viewed the film. You will hand in individual papers that are due the same day -- the day the film is viewed in class. You will need to view the film before class, more than once, so plan your time accordingly. Please answer the following questions in your paper, which are the questions that we will discuss throughout the class:

>> What is the theme of the film?

>> What kind of new documentary film would you call it? In other words, what new category can it be described as? Autobiographical documentary, personal and cultural memorial, combination of documentary and experimental filmmaking..........?

>> Describe the visual form/style (such as color or black and white, camera work, editing, lighting and more) sound elements (music, silence...) and structure (sense of time, linear or other structural forms ...) by giving two details about each of these elements in terms of how they are appropriate to the film’s theme, that is, how they help convey the film’s theme.

>> Include two different kinds of research about the film:

1) How does the filmmaker use these cinematic elements to create a redefined documentary film? -- discuss the reading you have chosen to help you write about this question;
2) historical and cultural research about the particular customs, institutions and ideas treated in the film as they relate to the film’s theme.

Midterm and Final
The midterm and final are really one assignment that you will conduct in a series of steps so that the work and thinking completed for the midterm will form a strong foundation for the work you will do for your final. I will assign separate grades for the midterm and the final. The fun and the challenge of this project is that YOU come up with an idea for a film. Creating your own idea and visualizing it makes you an active participant in the creative process, rather than a passive viewer of film. This assignment also gives you the opportunity to go through the various stages of thinking necessary to conceptualize a redefined documentary film, video or other work of electronic media. You will write about your film using the same terms we use throughout the class to describe the weekly films. You are not being asked to actually make the work, but to think through some of the most important processes involved in cinematic structure. You are welcome to create an actual in-progress or completed product but, as written above, this is not part of the assignment’s requirements.
Midterm – 4 pages – double-spaced -- 12 point type -- no handwritten work and no late work accepted. 25% of grade
You will hand in a creative research paper that explains and justifies the film in terms of the following questions, which you will explain and describe through one scene:

>> Explain the theme and justify why you chose it.

>> Explain in detail the genre of your documentary film? Explain why you chose this genre.

>> Discuss the visual style and structure (such as color or black and white; camera work; editing; lighting and more) and discuss how these elements help convey the work’s theme.

Explain these elements by giving an example of one scene. (Please hold the details of sound elements for the final.)

Final – 5 pages – double-spaced – 12 point type – no handwritten work and no late work accepted. 35% of grade
You will hand in an edited version of your midterm with additions you have made to it in response to my comments in two areas: 1) further thinking and more details in relation to specific questions from the midterm, as noted; 2) grammatical and stylistic corrections.

In addition, you will focus on the following two questions:

>> Explain how sound (or silence) and music function to enhance the theme of your film.

>> What are the means of production for your film? This includes the budget necessary to produce your film and how you want it distributed. Means of production also refers to the targeted audience(s) for your film.

Important: Please hand in your original midterm stapled to the final – put the midterm on top of the final. Clearly mark on the final the changes and additions you have made. If your final does not clearly indicate these changes, your final will not be read. If you do not hand in your midterm with the final, your final will not be read.

Participation and Attendance: 15% of grade
One of this course’s main goals is to transform you from being a passive spectator of film to becoming an active viewer. Your active involvement and participation in the class’s goals, discussions, assignments and other activities will create a productive and enjoyable experience for you and your colleagues. This includes putting in your responsible part to hand in assignments on time, with care toward their clarity of expression and legibility.
Attendance and participation are intricately linked to a rich class experience. For example, if you have zero to two absences and participate richly or moderately in class discussions, this will earn you a grade in the “A” range. If you have three absences yet contribute well in class, this will put you in the “B” range. However, if you have three absences and rarely if ever contribute to class discussions, your grade will be in the “C” range. If you have four absences yet contribute to class activities, this will put you in the low “C” or high “D” range. Be advised that five absences (this is 1/3 of class) will give you a failing grade. Consistently late attendance (that means after class begins) counts as an absence. If you do not stay for the discussion after the film or if you leave during the film, this counts as an absence. So please attend class fully and promptly.

Please note: Refrain from using your computer during class. If I have to ask you to shut down your computer more than once, I will also ask you to drop the class.

Please also note: Most of the films are on reserve at the CSUSM Media Library. Therefore there is no excuse if you missed class and did not see the film.

Grading Guide for Writing Assignments
“A” means an excellent job! The assignment was completed with clarity, thoroughness and thoughtfulness. Your handling of the assignment demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the complexity of the issues and concepts. There were no grammatical errors.
“B” means good work. The assignment has been completed in an organized manner. Overall, you needed to go deeper into your argument, give a few more details or there were some misunderstandings of the material. Your writing needed more attention to correct grammar (i.e. some spelling errors, sentence structure, etc.).
“C” indicates that you need to put much more work and attention into the assignment. Your essay did not fulfill all of the assignment’s requirements. There may be gaps in your argument, inattention to detail or lack of examples. Your writing may have been unclear and/or the assignment contained too many grammatical errors.
“D” means that the work is incomplete or poorly delivered.