

2065-323-70

Visual Anthropology

FALL 2001

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Course Objective:

This course is designed to give you an introduction to Visual Anthropology – an approach to the study of diverse peoples and their material culture. Cultural information is collected through film, video, and photographs, and presented with contextual written materials. The study of culture through films uses anthropology's "ethnographic method" – hence, the term "ethnographic film". It is this approach which makes the ethnographic film distinctive from other film genres.

The filmmaking process involves a particular set of ethics relating to issues of representation, collaboration, authorship, a specific respect towards the subjects of the film, in particular, a privileging of "the native point of view" above the point of view of the anthropologist/filmmaker.

To record culture, one must know what "culture" is. Students will study the nature of culture (values, beliefs, behaviors, shared materials, etc.) through readings and films; learn about ethnographic methods (e.g. observation, participation, and interviewing); and assimilate the anthropological perspective through its key concepts – culture, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativism.

Developing emphasis will be placed on the role of photography/film/video as aspects of our Western material culture, their roles as archive and art in the contemporary world.

Required Texts:

Sardar, Ziauddin, and Borin Van Loon; **Introducing Cultural Studies**; Totem Books (1977).

Sharon R. Sherman; **Documenting Ourselves: Film, Video, and Culture**. Univ. Press of Kentucky (1998).

numerous class handouts on the themes and on the films of this course.

The Workload:

The readings, films and discussions provide the materials of this class. It is important that you keep abreast of the readings and terminologies for class week by week. There will be both an objective **Quiz** on the terminology of the field of cultural studies given at the end of class, and a **written research paper** on some central theme or idea generated by this class of interest to you.

The topic of your research paper will be provided by you. As early as possible, submit a short statement or question which you wish to investigate in the class for approval by the professor. Indicate what other sources you will be using to answer the question posited by your investigation.

Although the class material is entertaining, the films are not offered for enjoyment alone. The films and videos must be regarded as **data** to be examined. Attendance at all screenings is required.

A final note:

I am teaching this class for the first time, depending some on the earlier offerings of this course by Dr. Victoria Razak, and filmmaker/professors Doris Loesser and Pacho Lane. The course is again changed indicating my interests in the field as a filmmaker, artist, and critic. Your input into this course will be important, shaping not only our academic experience this term, but helping the continuous re-definition of this course in the future.