

ANTH 309

ANTHROPOLOGY AND FILM AND VIDEO

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The moving image –film or video –is a significant medium explored by anthropologists to represent and engage with the “other” and the discipline of anthropology. This class discusses some of the key concepts related to ethnographic films and / or documentary filmmaking through an anthropological lens (such as representation, immersion, ethics, narrative, the invisible author, collaboration and sharing). Instead of developing how ethnographic films evolved through time (chronological order), this class digs into current debates and approaches providing the tools to watch and analyze films from a constructive and critical perspective. Relationships between the topics and formats present in the films will be connected to broader debates emerging in the discipline at various historical moments. Some of the films that we will watch, understood as ‘classics’, help define what is understood today as ethnographic film. Others, often more recent, by anthropologists and / or directors influenced by an anthropological aesthetic and content, or that have an impact on the discipline will also be watched and discussed. This course was designed with a special attention to value the work of women and directors from various background as well as indigenous filmmakers.

This course aims to meet the following objectives:

- Watch films, let them speak for themselves;
- Connect their content and format to key issues and debates that are at the heart of the discipline of anthropology;
- Develop an individual and nuanced critic of ethnographic films based on the genre standards and expectations as well as their position within and outside the discipline;
- Articulate a short critic based on constructive comments that go beyond a like / dislike appreciation;
- Engage with films at a second level in thinking about how they can contribute to current debates in our society;
- Think about how films can provide alternative discourses / stories about the everyday, and how this can speak to an audience that goes beyond the university community;
- Reflect on the potential of filmmaking to change the world, how can films help rise the voice of marginalized people.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Write a film review that develops a deep and critical analysis of a film;
- Establish the various documentary genres and how each approach affects the construction of specific narratives about certain people / topics;
- Understand the various layers of meaning present in filmmaking;
- Deconstruct the vision that documentary filmmaking is objective and that filmmakers are absent in the construction of a narrative;
- Understand the distinction between the cinematographic grammar (form) and the content of a film;
- Reflect on the various ethical dimensions related to ethnographic filmmaking;
- Comprehend the ways in which marginalized people, Indigenous filmmakers and women provide alternative ways of constructing films and how their visions are necessary to the growing of the discipline of Anthropology;
- Make connections between films and broader issues related to the discipline of Anthropology in various historical periods.