HU3890 Documentary  
(Spring 2006)

Katrina McNeely Farren  
kfarren@mtu.edu  
Office: Walker 314  
Office Phone: 487-3237; Dept Phone: 487-2540  
Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00-2:00 and by appointment

Meeting place: Walker 134  
Meeting time: Tue and Th 2:05-3:20 p.m.

Course Description and Goals:
Participants in this seminar will thoughtfully investigate and engage in theoretical perspectives of visual representation by looking at visual communication, visual literacy, and the image. We will focus on the documentary as a visual genre, and explore questions of interpretation, objectivity, and the reliability of the image, among others.

Required Texts:

Grading Criteria (see descriptions below):
Reflection papers 40%  
Documentary (Including Reflection Paper) 40%  
Attendance, participation 20%

The final grade will be calculated according to the following scale:
A = 93-100 %  
AB = 88-92%  
B = 83-87%  
BC = 78-82%  
C = 73-77%  
CD = 68-72%  
D = 60-67%  
F = 0-59%

Reflection Papers (3-5 pages): The purpose of these reflection papers is for you to begin to make connections between the reading and the documentaries screened in class. For example, in Chapter 1 from Srurken and Cartwright, the concepts of representation, the relationships of image to ideology, and the ways we make meaning from and give value to the image are discussed. In your paper, then, you would take these concepts and discuss them using examples from the documentary that we viewed in class that week. Thus you might take the discussion of representation from the book and detail how the images and language in the film created meaning of the world as we know it, and so on. I want you to get into the practice of using the language of visual theory; thus your grade, in part, will be based on your ability to make the connections between the book and the film using such language.

As the semester progresses, I am expecting that the documentaries we view in class will aid you in helping you envision your own documentary. With this in mind, I would also like you to spend a page discussing the documentary itself; did it move you? Why or why not? What were some of the specific elements of the film that made an impression on you? If you had created this documentary, what might you have changed? Why? What elements and ideas would you like to incorporate into your own film? Most film makers keep a film journal or a diary. These reflection papers, and especially reflections on the films themselves, will be part of your film journal. Along with the reflection paper you will write on your own film, these papers should be compiled into a portfolio and turned in at the end of the semester.
Documentary Film: The final project for this class will be the creation of your own 5-10 minute documentary. Because this class is not designed to be a technical class on how to make a flawless film, but is, instead, about the theories that underline good documentaries and film, your project will not simply be graded on your expertise in using iMovie. It will be graded on your thoughtful intent and ability to take the theories we have learned throughout the semester and utilize them in your own documentary. This is a much harder task than simply creating a film with smooth transitions and a good sound track. For some of you with less confidence in your technical abilities, this should be a relief to you. A flawless film, without thoughtful contemplation on visual theory and practices, will not receive an A. A flawed film, showing that thoughtfulness, with the ability to move the audience, will.

Reflection Paper on Your Documentary: (3-5 pages): This short paper is a personal reflection on the process of creating this film, and should incorporate material from Robert Coles “Doing Documentary Work.” What did this process feel like? What was easy? What was difficult? Was there any pain involved? How, and why? How truthful were you? Is there anything you wish you would have done differently? Was creating this film more difficult than you had originally imagined? In what ways and why? Did the creation of this film change you in any way? Explain. (I will hand out further information on this paper as we near the end of the semester.)

Attendance and Participation: Because this course is designed as a seminar, its success depends on careful preparation and active participation. We will be discussing the chapter readings on Tuesdays, and viewing the documentaries on Thursdays. Some of these films will not be available at area video rental stores, and as the grade of your papers depends on being able to discuss the readings vis-à-vis the film, it is essential that you attend regularly. After two absences, the attendance/participation grade will decrease by 10% per absence. In case of any emergency or unforeseen conflict, or if you know in advance that you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify your instructor as soon as possible. Late work will not be accepted, and no Incompletes will be granted.

NOTE:
MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).

⇒ This syllabus is subject to modification at the discretion of the instructor, in response to student needs and abilities. ⇐

Proposed Reading Schedule (subject to modification)

| January 10 | Introduction to the class. In-class screening The Eternal Jew |
| January 12 | In-class screening Paper Clips |
| January 17 | Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 1 |
| January 19 | In-class screening |
| January 24 | Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 2 (Reflection on Chapter 1/movie due.) |
| January 26 | In-class screening |
| January 31 | Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 3 (Chapter 2/movie reflection due.) |
| February 2 | In-class screening |
February 7  Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 4 (Chapter 3/movie reflection due.)
February 9  NO CLASS
February 14  Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 5 (Chapter 4 reflection due.)
February 16  In-class screening
February 21  Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 6 (Chapter 5/movie reflection due.)
February 23  In-class screening
February 28  Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 7 (Chapter 6/movie reflection due.)
March 2  In-class screening

SPRING BREAK

March 14  Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 8 (Chapter 7/movie reflection due. Also a one page documentary film proposal.)
March 16  Overview of iMovie and CCLI
March 21  Sturken and Cartwright Chapter 9 (Chapter 8 reflection due.)
March 23  CCLI work day
March 28  Poster, Doing Documentary Work (Chapter 9 reflection due.)
March 30  CCLI work day
April 4  Poster, Doing Documentary Work
April 6  CCLI work day
April 11  Poster, Doing Documentary Work
April 13  CCLI work day
April 18  Documentary presentations
April 20  Documentary presentations
April 24 by 3 p.m.  (Monday of Final's week)  Portfolios with documentary reflection due