

LP² STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR SPRING 2023

WHAT'S NEW IN DOCUMENTARY FILM?

Coordinators: Lynn Brenner, Mary Connelly, Miriam Lawrence and Robert Sholiton

Documentary films are a lively source of information, inspiration and entertainment. But the sheer volume of new documentaries can be daunting to the prospective viewer. We have selected twelve of the most provocative and engaging recent films that showcase the variety of subjects and the creative storytelling techniques employed by today's documentary filmmakers. Their subjects range from international culture clash and complex family dynamics to government oppression, uplifting artistic collaboration, and social media's ominous algorithms. Participants view films at home prior to discussion.

Lynn Brenner has previously coordinated and/or co-coordinated Six Screwball Comedies, Reel Justice, New York City and the Movies, and The Art of the Profile.

Mary Connelly has previously co-coordinated study groups on Documentary Film, Spinning Elections, Narrative Nonfiction and Baseball in Literature.

Miriam Lawrence has co-coordinated study groups on documentary film, theater and music. In addition, she organizes the ongoing memoir reading series.

Robert Sholiton, a member since 2000, has co-led numerous study groups on documentary film and narrative nonfiction.

Type of Study Group: Presentation followed by discussion

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

Weekly links to articles sent via email;

All films available to stream on Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, or HBO Max.

***** SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS *****

WEEK 1: *Knock Down the House* (2019) Rachel Lears

Questions:

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What makes an election a natural subject for a documentary film? Can you think of similar natural subjects? The film follows four women candidates, but one is highlighted above the others. Why do you think the filmmakers made that decision? What do you learn from seeing Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in action as a candidate, as well as in her private life? How does it affect your opinion of her? Her success as a politician?

WEEK 2: *American Factory* (2019) Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert

QUESTIONS:

What differences in attitude toward work threatened the success of the factory? What were the results of the American workers' visit to the Chinese factory? What conflicts transcended cultural differences?

WEEK 3: *The Painter and the Thief* (2020) Benjamin Ree

QUESTIONS:

What does Bertel's reaction to the painting that Barbora creates of him tell you about his character? What events in the film did the director explore to help viewers understand and accept the attraction between Bertel and Barbora? What's your opinion of the film's ending and the final reveal?

WEEK 4: *One Child Nation* (2019) Nanfu Wang and Lynn Zhang

WEEK 5: *Crip Camp* (2020) James Lebrecht and Nicole Newnham

WEEK 6: *Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters* (2021) Tom Hurwitz and Rosalynde LeBlanc

WEEK 7: *Dick Johnson Is Dead* (2020) Kirsten Johnson

WEEK 8: *The Social Dilemma* (2020) Jeff Orlowski

WEEK 9: *Nuclear Family* (2021) Ry Russo-Young

WEEK 10: *Operation Varsity Blues* (2021) Chris Smith

WEEK 11: *Oliver Sacks* (2021) Ric Burns

WEEK 12: *The Automat* (2021) Lisa Hurwitz

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