

# *Ethnographic Film*

Anthropology 4243  
3 credit hours  
MWF 11:00-11:50 Fall,  
Main Building 0.302

Peter Cuasay, Ph.D.  
Office Hrs: MW 1:00-2:30  
MH 4.03.10 / Tel# 458-5886  
peter.cuasay@utsa.edu

Visual anthropology is one of the fastest growing fields of social analysis. Its methods and issues apply not only to the study of traditional cultures but to the cultural practices and intersecting communities of the modern media world. This course is a "critique of major ethnographic films, concentrating on field methodology, production values, and the issue of representation." Major figures are used to explore the exciting blend of visual culture theory and current practices of ethnographic interpretation. You also do hands-on learning in two basic visual media projects, along with reflection on primary films from 1898 to 2008, reading selected secondary sources, and writing a critical essay plus midterm and final exams. This course will be watchable, thought-provoking, and fun as we ask: What is a good ethnographic film? Can it challenge a fundamental enterprise of anthropology, ethnography, to escape straitjacket conventions of a written intellectual text? Can its techniques point toward a new wave of visually creative and rigorously revealing studies of social life? Or are these practices themselves caught up in social exploitations of visual styles, compelling viewers to reinforce rather than challenge dominant images and ideologies? Can ethnographic film help us see another world is possible, change the way we can represent others' worlds, or bring us a new world of knowledge – multisensory, surrealist, haptic? And what social insight do you wish others could truly see?

## Course Objectives that match University Requirements

1. Provide opportunity to view significant works of ethnographic film-making.
2. Provide engagement with critical and scholarly views of such projects.
3. Provide an introduction to conceptual terms and intellectual histories of ethnographic film, visual anthropology, and anthropology of media.
4. Provide opportunity for hands-on experience and self-reflection on the ethics, methodology, and creative problems posed by basic visual research projects.
5. Provide a means to demonstrate analytical and creative thought in a student critical essay.

This syllabus records course fundamentals, but changes in details (substitution, addition, altered selection of pages, changes in topical units, etc.) may develop over the semester as class dynamics, student interests, and resource opportunities emerge. If any alterations are made, the revised syllabus will be posted on Blackboard and written hard copy will be easily made. Such change shall not adversely affect student grades (only prospective workload).

## Required Text:

Jay Ruby, *Picturing Culture*, Chicago: U Chicago, 2000. GN347 .R83 2000 JPL

## Recommended Text:

Karl Heider, *Ethnographic Film* (Revised Edition). Austin: U Texas, 2006. GN347 .H44 2006 JPL

Unit Supplementary Readings: Listed below. Available on Blackboard and/or Course Reserve.

## Supplement Types

\* = Major Film or Required Reading: Main portion(s) screened in class, available for finishing or second-viewing in Course Reserves or Streaming Link via John Peace Library (JPL). Students are encouraged to view films together and benefit from peer discussion outside class. However, online/take-home tests must be taken individually and responses must represent your own work. Do not log in together and submit collectively developed answers.

EXC = Excerpt: Used in lecture-demonstration and/or Blackboard exercise.

Un-starred = Readings or sources recommended, esp. for core discussant group of each unit. Any matter from un-starred sources that gets addressed by lecture or discussion may be used in an exam, therefore taking live notes while actually attending class is recommended. Partial selections from PowerPoint slides and other material will be posted on Blackboard; but Blackboard alone will guide but not suffice to comprehensively prepare for exams



## **I. Scope of Course: Interacting Values of Ethnography and Film**

Robert Gardner

\**Dead Birds* (84 mins.) – Robert Gardner, 1963.

EXC *Forest of Bliss* (90 mins.) – Robert Gardner, Ákos Östör, 1978

### Readings

\*Introduction chapter 1 and Attributes chapter 3 of Heider.

\*Gardner chapter 3 of Ruby.

Heider, Karl. *The Dani of West Irian: An Ethnographic Companion to the Film Dead Birds*.  
New York: Warner Modular Publication, 1972.

James Lastra, 2000. Synchronous Sound chapter in *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity*. NY: Columbia U Press, pp. 92-122.

Moore, Alexander. 1988. "The Limitations of Imagist Documentary: A Review of Robert Gardner's 'Forest of Bliss'." *Society for Visual Anthropology Newsletter*, Sep., Vol. 4, No. 2: 1-3.

Östör, Ákos. 1989. "Is That What Forest of Bliss is All About?: A Response." *Society for Visual Anthropology Newsletter*, Mar., Vol. 5, No. 1: 4-8.

### **Sign up for Readings and Groups**

Form small teams to anchor unit discussions. Schedule team meeting with Instructor prior to the relevant week. **Due Week II.**

## **II. Ethnographic Film History up to the Fifties**

Robert Flaherty

\**Nanook of the North* (69 mins.) Robert J. Flaherty, 1922

EXC *In the Land of the War Canoes: Kwakiutl Indian Life on the Northwest Coast* (47 mins.)  
Edward S. Curtis 1914 (1972): Made 1914., restored by Bill Holm, George Quimby and  
David Gerth in 1972. Originally titled: *In the land of the headhunters*.

EXC *Nanook Revisited* (55 mins.) Claude Massot, 2004

### Readings

\*Heider. History section.

\*Ruby. Flaherty section.

\*Documentary Modes Chapter 6 of Nichols, Bill. 2010. *Introduction to Documentary* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.  
Bloomington: Indiana U Press.

Marks, Dan. 1995. "Ethnography and Ethnographic Film: From Flaherty to Asch and After." *American Anthropologist* 97 (2).

Griffiths, Alison. "Knowledge and Visuality in Turn of the Century Anthropology: The Early Ethnographic Cinema of Alfred Cort Haddon and Walter Baldwin Spencer," *Visual Anthropology Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 1996/97): 18-43.

Grimshaw, Anna. 2001. "The Innocent Eye: Flaherty, Malinowski, and the Romantic Quest." In *The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Anthropology*. London: Cambridge U Press. Pp 44-56.

## **III. Science with Camera**

Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson.

\**Trance and Dance in Bali*, b&w, 1952, 22 minutes.

\**Karba's First Years: A Study of Balinese Childhood*, b&w, 1952, 20 minutes.

EXC Jean Rouch. Interview with Margaret Mead, 30 min. (See Alexander Street)

## Readings

\*Camera research chapter 1 in Ruby.

\*Recall Mead and Bateson part of Heider history chapter.

\*Mead, Margaret, and Gregory Bateson. 1977. "On the Use of the Camera in Anthropology." *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, Dec., Vol. 4, No. 2: 78-80.

Ira Jacknis. "Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in Bali: Their Use of Photography and Film," *Cultural Anthropology*, (3)2: 160-177, May, 1988.

Lakoff, Andrew. 1996. "Freezing Time: Margaret Meads's Diagnostic Photography." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Mar., Vol. 12, No. 1: 1-18.

Worth, Sol. "Margaret Mead and the shift from "Visual Anthropology" to the "Anthropology of Visual Communication," *Studying Visual Communication*. Philadelphia: U Penn Press, 1981. Pp. 185-199.

## **IV. "24 Frames"**

### Visual Project I - House Inventory Project after John Collier

Produce 24 still photographs to describe or at least catalog the "house" frequented by a social group – a defined space (like a room, set of rooms/areas, a domicile, building section) through which a community passes.

Must include a visual establishing shot that informs us where/what is the "house" of a community, setting up who/what the photo inventory is about.

Must include shot(s) of the owner(s) or principal inhabitants, preferably at activities *in situ*.

Must have at least one extended paragraph per shot describing its ethnographic value, with reference to elicited quotes, production context, and/or representational intention.

*Detailed Handout in Class*

### "Visualizing Men and Thai Elephant" – On 24 Stills from My Fieldwork

## Readings

\*Collier, John & Malcolm Collier. 1986. Chap 8 pp. 77-104 in *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. Rev/exp from 1967.

\*Ch. 1, "Reading Pictures," pp. 1-12 [From: Banks, Marcus. 2001. *Visual Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage.]

Damon, Frederick H. 2000. " 'To Restore the Events?:' On the Ethnography of Malinowski's Photography." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Mar., Vol. 16, No. 1: 71-77.

Elizabeth Edwards (2011) "Tracing Photography," in *Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology*, Marcus Banks and Jay Ruby, eds. U Chicago Press.

### Additional Reserves for Project Support

Evans, Jessica (ed.) 1997. *The Camerawork Essays: Context and Meaning in Photography*. London: Rivers Oram Press.

Pink, Sarah. 2001. *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research*. London: Sage. See Chapters 1,2, and 3.

Pink, Sarah. 2007. *Visual Interventions: Applied Visual Anthropology*. New York: Berghahn. E.g., Chap 12, pp. 247-270.

Gillian Rose, 2011 3rd Edition. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. London: Sage Publications. E.g., Chap 1, pp.1-27.

## **V. Gender and Gaze**

### Women's Ethnographic Film

\**A Veiled Revolution* (1982) 26 mins. Directed by Marilyn Gaunt. Produced by Elizabeth Fernea. Icarus Films, New York.

### Readings

\*Lila Abu Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" *American Anthropologist* 104(3):783-790, 2002.

\*Laura Mulvey (1975). "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". *Screen* 16 (3): 6-18.

Grimshaw, Anna and Ravetz, Amanda, eds. *Visualizing Anthropology*. Bristol: Intellect Books. "Eyeing the Field: New Horizons for Visual Anthropology," pp. 17-30.

## **Visual Project I Due end of Week**

## **VI. Hollywood Treatment**

### Merian Cooper

\**Chang: A Drama of the Wilderness* (1927) 69 mins.

EXC *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* (1925) 71 mins.

Both by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack who did *King Kong* (1933).

EXC from *King Solomon's Mines* (1950) 103 minutes. Compton Bennett and Andrew Marton.

### Readings

\*Image making chapter 5 in Ruby.

\*Recall "Scripted Fictional Films" in Heider's history chapter.

\*Vaz, Mark Cotta . 2005. *Living dangerously : the adventures of Merian C. Cooper, creator of King Kong*. New York : Villard. See selections about *Chang*.

\*Weakland , John H. "Feature films as cultural documents" in *Principles of visual anthropology*. Hockings, Paul, ed. Berlin ; New York : Mouton de Gruyter, 1995.

Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins. 1994. "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic," in *Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays from V.A.R., 1990-1994*, Lucien Taylor, ed. New York: Routledge. Pp. 363-384

Gallagher, Catherine and Stephen Greenblatt. 2000. "The Touch of the Real" (pp 20-48) and "Counterhistory and the Anecdote," (pp 49-74) in *Practicing New Historicism*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

*Teaching Fellow Class Observation to solicit student feedback.*

### \*\*\*MIDTERM EXAM\*\*\*

Online Exam will consist of questions (multiple choice, short answer, etc) on course material and brief essays applying these concepts to excerpts from screenings.

## VII. Ethics and Reflexivity

### Introduction of Visual Project II – “The Event”

Choice of (i) Storyboard with Stills, (ii) Storyboard with Rushes, or (iii) Pilot Scene (4-8 min.) Must have framed introduction defining scene beginning, and conclusion that makes an ending. Must comment on choices, intentions, strategies, ethnographic argument of event meaning in companion word text (production notes/ethnographic companion). **Due Week XIV.**

*Detailed handout via Blackboard.*

### Timothy Asch

\**The Feast* (1970) 29 min.

\**The Ax Fight* (1975) 30 min.

### Readings

\*Asch, Tim. 1992. “The Ethics of Ethnographic Film-Making.” In Peter Ian Crawford and David Turton, eds. *Film as Ethnography*. (Manchester: Manchester U. Press).

\*Michaels, Eric 1982 “How To Look At the Yanomami Looking at Us.” In *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*, Jay Ruby, editor. Philadelphia: UPenn.

\*Asch chapter 4 in Ruby. Also recall Asch section of Heider history chapter.

Asch, Tim. 1979. “Making A Film Record of the Yanomamo of Southern Venezuela.” *Perspectives on Film 2*.

Ramos, Alcida 1987 “Reflecting on the Yanomami: Ethnographic Images and the Pursuit of the Exotic.” *Cultural Anthropology* 2(3): 284-304.

Sprague, Stephen. 1978. “How I See the Yoruba See Themselves.” *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, Sep., Vol. 5, No. 1: 9-29.

## VIII. The Native’s Point of View

### Seven Navajo Films, Navajo film project of Sol Worth and John Adair (1966)

\* A Navajo Weaver by Susie Benally.

\* The Navajo Silversmith by Johnny Nelson.

\* The Spirit of the Navajo by Maxine and Mary Jane Tsosie.

\* The Shallow Well by Johnny Nelson.

\* Old Antelope Lake by Mike Anderson .

\* Intrepid Shadows by Al Clah.

\* Second Weaver (formerly untitled) by Alta Kahn.

EXC *Stranger with a Camera* (2000) Produced and directed by Elizabeth Barret, edited by Lucy Phenix; 62 mins. Distributed by California Newsreel.

### Readings

\*Sol Worth and John Adair. *Through Navajo Eyes: An Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology*. 1972 (new ed. 1997) Bloomington: Indiana U Press. Based on 1966 project of Navajo making own films.

\*Dubin, Margaret. 1998. “From Artful Ethnography to Ethnographic Art: The Enduring Significance of the Navajo Film Project. *Visual Anthropology Review*.

## IX. Is Native Production Autoethnography?

### Indigenous Myth/Media

\**Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (172 mins.) Zacharias Kunuk, 2001.

## Readings

- \*Viewer Viewed chapter 7; Eric Michaels chapter 9 of Ruby.
- \*Recall Netsilik, Australia, and Native's View from Heider history.
- \*3 essays on Atanarjuat in special issue of Reel American History  
[http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/reels/films/list/1\\_64\\_9\\_77](http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/reels/films/list/1_64_9_77)  
[http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/reels/films/list/1\\_64\\_9\\_74](http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/reels/films/list/1_64_9_74)  
[http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/reels/films/list/1\\_64\\_9\\_166](http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/reels/films/list/1_64_9_166)
- \*Ginsburg, Faye 2000. "Atanarjuat Off-Screen: From 'Media Reservations' to the World Stage", *American Anthropologist* 105(4):827-32.
- Raheja, Michelle. "Reading Nanook's Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*", *American Quarterly*, 59 (4), Dec 2007: 1159-1185
- Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin, *Media Worlds; Anthropology on New Terrain*, University of California Press, 2002. See esp. Ginsburg, Faye 2002. "Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media." pages. 39-44.

## **X. Poverty, Surrealism, Soviet Film**

### Bunuel, Kalatozov, Vertov

- \**Las Hurdes: Tierra Sin Pan* (1933), English language: *Land Without Bread* or *Unpromised Land*, 27 mins. Directed by Luis Buñuel and co-produced by Buñuel and Ramon Acin, cinematography by Eli Lotar.
- \**Salt for Svanetia* (1930) Mikhail Kalatozov. URLs for 6 parts:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOzTO1vhJ-M>  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbdRt4\\_Ptkg&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbdRt4_Ptkg&feature=relmfu)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mRXtb5nFJE&feature=relmfu>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uoTJIRBcsc&feature=relmfu>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gptq6mCt3yc&feature=relmfu>  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WY5Xh6\\_Y3\\_A&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WY5Xh6_Y3_A&feature=relmfu)
- \**Man With a Movie Camera* (1930) Dziga Vertov.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iey9YIbra2U>

## Readings

- \*Speaking chapter 8 in Ruby.
- \*Three Buñuel Scenes Analyzed - Faux Raccord; Respect Property/Golden Rule; Perpendicular v Parallel Mosquitoes. (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/bunuel2.html> and bunuel5)
- James F. Lastra. "Why is this Absurd Picture Here? Ethnology/Heterology/Buñuel," October 89 (Summer 1999): 51-68, reprinted in *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*, Ivone Margolies, ed. Durham: Duke U Press, 2002.
- Sergei Alymov, 2011. On the Soviet Ethnography of the Soviet Life: The Case of the "Village of Viriatino" in *Histories of Anthropology Annual*, Volume 7, pp. 23-48.
- Ingrid Rüütel (2009) Truth and Ethics in Visual Anthropology. Media & Folklore. Contemporary Folklore IV. Edited by Mare Kõiva. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, pp. 205-215.
- David Tomas (1992) "Manufacturing Vision: Kino-Eye, The Man With a Movie Camera, and the Perceptual Reconstruction of Social Identity," *Visual Anthropology Review* 8(2): 27-32.

## **Introduction of Critical Essay** Detailed handout via Blackboard.

Write a comparative review 5-8 pages, comparing a film from first half of this course (prior to VIII) with latter half (VIII and on). Must make specific references to visual evidence and course readings, supplemented by other library research if needed. **Due at Final Exam.**

## **XI. New Wave Experimental**

### Jean Rouch

\**Les Maîtres Fous (The Mad Masters)* 29 mins. Jean Rouch, 1954

\* *Chronique d'un été (Chronicle of a Summer)* 85 mins. Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, 1961.

### Readings

\*Rouch, Jean "The Camera and Man," in *Ciné-ethnography*, Steven Feld, ed. Minneapolis: UMinnesota Press, 2003.

\*Rouch, Jean "On the Vicissitudes of the Self: The Possessed Dancer, the Magician, the Sorcerer, the Filmmaker, and the Ethnographer," in *Ciné-ethnography*, Ibid.

\*Viewer Viewed chapter 7 of Ruby.

Stoller, Paul. *Cinematic Griot: The Ethnography of Jean Rouch*. Chicago:U Chicago Press, 1992.

Russell, Catherine. 1999. Ch. 8, "Ecstatic Ethnography: Filming Possession Rituals." In *Experimental Ethnography* (Durham: Duke University Press).

## **XII. Documentary Unprivileged?**

### David & Judith MacDougall

\**Photo Wallahs (60 mins.)* 1992 On photographers of Mussoorie, a hill station in the Himalayan foothills, meditating on the many uses and meanings of photography.

EXC *The Age of Reason* (87 mins.) 2004. Fifth and final of Doon School Series.

EXC *Gandhi's Children* (185 mins) 2008. Contrast to elite Doon – Prayas Children's Home for homeless boys and young men in New Delhi.

### Readings

\*Speaking chapter 8 in Ruby,

\*MacDougall, David. 1992. " 'Photo wallahs:' An Encounter with Photography." *Visual Anthropology Review*, Sep., Vol. 8, No. 2: 96-100.

\*MacDougall, David 1998 *Transcultural Cinema*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press). See esp Chap 4 "Beyond Observational Cinema"; Chap 9 "Unprivileged Camera Style."

MacDougall, David 2006 *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography and the Senses*. (Princeton: Princeton U. Press). See esp. Chap 5 "The Doon School Reconsidered."

Godmilow, Jill. 2002. "Kill the Documentary as We Know it," *J Film and Video* 54.2-3: 3-10.

Grimshaw, Anna and Ravetz, Amanda, 2009. *Observational Cinema: Anthropology, Film, and the Explanation of Social Life*. Bloomington: Indiana U Press. See chapter 4 on David MacDougall, pp 86-110.

**Early Work Product Due:** Last week to discuss Essay plans. Get Comments on Rough Draft, Outline with Sources, etc. Meet with instructor to put your Essay on success track!

## **XIII. Student Study Week**

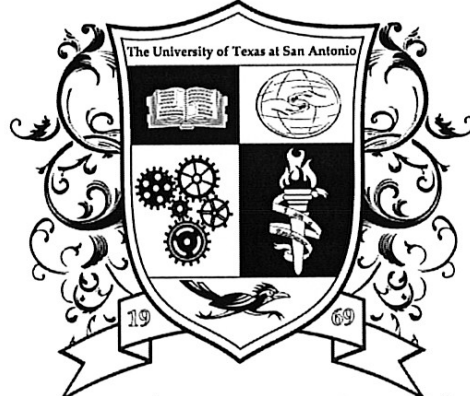
**Visual Project II Due.** If resources and interest can be organized, panels/screenings of ethnographic film projects may be held, perhaps with Final Exam Day prep sessions.

**Final Exam = Take Home Final + 2 handwritten essays.** The Take Home portion is taken this week, to be answered by open book open note study. These exam responses also prepare students to write 2 synthetic essays on the scheduled Final Exam Day. Students should bring blue books or other paper and writing instrument and be prepared to write without any aids (no notes, computers, phones, etc. during exam).

## **XIV. Finals Week**

**Final Exam Dec 17** – Critical Essay Due; Answer Sheet from Take Home Final Due.





## The Roadrunner Creed

The University of Texas at San Antonio is a community of scholars, where integrity, excellence, inclusiveness, respect, collaboration, and innovation are fostered.

As a Roadrunner,

I will:

Uphold the highest standards of academic and personal integrity by practicing and expecting fair and ethical conduct;

Respect and accept individual differences, recognizing the inherent dignity of each person;

Contribute to campus life and the larger community through my active engagement; and

Support the fearless exploration of dreams and ideas in the advancement of ingenuity, creativity, and discovery.

Guided by these principles now and forever, I am a Roadrunner!