

**Anthropology 382: Visual Anthropology**  
Fall 2007: Mondays, 1:30 – 4:20, Chambers B263

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This seminar introduces students to the tools necessary for making anthropological films. Students will conduct fieldwork and make a film on some aspects of the social and cultural behavior under investigation. Emphasis is placed on developing the critical skills needed for resolving some of the ethical, technical and aesthetic problems that may emerge during the documentation of social and cultural behavior. At the end of the semester the class will host an anthropological film and present them to the larger academic community. The 2007 seminar has received a grant from the Davidson Research Initiative and will also conduct a film project examining the impact of globalization on urban life in Shanghai, to be scheduled between the fall and spring semester.

Because of the vast amount of time and skill necessary in producing an ethnographic film, projects will be done within a group. While individuals within a group may specialize in a particular aspect of the project, I will expect everyone to have a strong working knowledge of all the various aspects of research and production. Much of the work for this course will be conducted outside the Connolly Media Lab and not during seminar meetings, especially in the latter half of the semester.

Note: Students will be expected to participate in at least one of the following venues in the spring semester: Campus film festival, Southern Anthropological Society, or College Social Science Poster Fair

### **Course Readings**

**Required Textbook:**

Ruby, Jay 2000. *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0226730999.

Additional articles will be available on Blackboard.

**Reserve Texts:**

These books are placed in CIT and should not be checked out for more than one day.

Barbash and Taylor, *Cross-cultural Filmmaking: A Handbook for Making Documentary and Ethnographic Videos*.

Barry Hampe, *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos: A Practical Guide to Planning, Filming, and Editing Documentaries of Real Events*. .

Collier, Jr., and Collier, *Visual Anthropology: Photographs as a Research Method*.

## Course Requirements

The most important work in this course is to be prepared for each seminar meeting; this means having thoroughly read the material and being prepared to discuss particular points from the reading. Because this is a laboratory class, being prepared also means having mastered the software skills expected for the meeting. Readings are due on the day listed in the class schedule. Your engagement with the material and mastery of the software and equipment is vital for the success of this learning experience.

*Seminar Participation: (20%)* Students are expected to attend all classes, do the readings and computer exercises prior to class, and **discuss the implications of the issues** in the classroom. Part of this grade will be determined from a self-examination conducted by the group.

*Discussion Board: (15%)* **Each week**, students will write a brief reaction towards a film that was reviewed, a reading, or a reflection of an incident from the filmmaking process. You should feel free to write whatever you feel is relevant. They are due prior to the start of each seminar meeting. I expect you to have also reviewed you're your peers have written – you may respond to what they have written, but I expect all exchanges to be as civil as if they were said in person during the seminar meeting. **LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

*Film Proposal (15%):* (due 22 October) This assignment is based on preliminary fieldwork observations and library research. The writing of this proposal will indicate to the instructors that you have obtained permission from the participants. In order to write this proposal the research team must have observed the site on at least three different occasions. Below are the requirements for this exercise:

- a. A concise statement of the research project and a justification for this research project.
- b. Describe the research site.
- c. List the dates the site was visited and the length of each observation period.
- d. Provide a demographic profile of the participants you observed.
- e. Describe the types of activities the group plans to videotape.
- f. Indicate two cultural beliefs underlying the social behavior to be videotaped.
- g. Indicate two major challenges or obstacles this project will present and suggest measures to counteract them.
- h. Critic two videos that deal with similar or related topic and indicate how your study differs.
- i. Briefly summarize four scholarly articles that deal with the same or a related topic and indicate how this literature influences your ideas.

**IRB Protocol:** (due 8 October) This is part of the film proposal. Prior to conducting each film project student must obtain the approval of the Davidson College Institutional Research Board. The protocol form is listed on the website of the Office of Contracts and Grants. The protocol must be approved by course instructors prior to submission to the IRB.

*Literature Review (10%)* : (due 29 October) The literature review is a more thorough examination and analysis of existing studies that are similar to your research interest. This review should include:

1. An examination of the major theoretical and or methodological concerns within the literature.
2. Discussion that outlines your theoretical concerns and how they either support or differ from existing studies.

*Ethnographic Film Project: (40%)* This is the group ethnographic film. The film will be evaluated in terms of how successful it is in: portraying the ethnographic subject; the effectiveness of the narrative in exploring the social or cultural issue; the aesthetics of the filming and editing. The film will be due on **10 December 2007**. This will be accompanied by a group paper on the film, incorporating elements from the proposal and literature review.

While we will work together on various issues and projects, your papers are your own individual work. All work is subject to the Davidson College Honor Code as stated in the student handbook. If there are individual accommodations for special needs, please let me know and authorize the Dean of Students to contact me so that we can work something out.

#### Course Schedule (subject to modification)

**Week 1, 27 August:** Introduction to the camera equipment and lab facilities.

Lecture: Characteristics of an Anthropological Film

Film Viewing: "Off the Top of the Dome"

**Week 2, 3 September:** Anthropology and Photography

Reading: Ruby, Chapter 1; Pinney essay; Berger essay; Read the chapter in Collier & Collier most appropriate to your photography project.

Blackboard: Clips from Ken Burns' films that use still photographs.

Assignment: View ethnographic films for discussion board and seminar discussion on 3 September (on reserve);

**Week 3, 10 September:** Ethical Issues Faced by Anthropological Filmmakers" and the "Camera as a Research Tool"

Reading: Ruby, Chapter 5, Chapter 6

Lab Exercise: Operation and maintenance of video equipment

Assignment: Photographic Essay due (presentations in class)

Film Assignment: two interviews: one street and one studio; edit the studio film

**Week 4, 17 September**

Discussion: "Manipulation of Visual Images"

Film Viewing: Triumph of the Will by Leni Riefenstahl

Discussion: Selecting a research site

**Week 5, 24 September**

Discussion: Selecting a research site - class out early to conduct research

Assignment: (Barbash Chapter 3)

Activity: Critique *Lost Girls* (Film on China's orphan girls)

**Week 6, 1 October**

*Activities:*

Review and critique of studio interviews and event films.

Select crew members responsible for editing, logging and storyboarding

Editing workshop

Preparing the IRB protocol

Progress report on fieldwork

**Week 7, 8 October**

*Activities:*

Submit IRB proposal to instructors.

View and critique two films: *Black Indian of New Orleans Sidewayz*.

Preparing a Film Proposal

Progress report on fieldwork

Editing workshop

Assignment: Studio Interview of Fieldwork Participant; IRB Protocol due

15 October: Fall Break, have a good holiday

**Week 8, 22 October**

*Activities:*

Submit and present Film Proposal

Review and critique of Studio Interview

Preparing a Literature Review

Editing workshop

Progress report on fieldwork

Assignment: Film Proposal Due

**Week 9, 29 October**

*Activities:* Editing workshop; discussion of *Rize*

Assignment: Literature Review due

Progress report on fieldwork

**Weeks 10, 11, 12: 5, 12, 19 November**

*Activities:*

Consultation with instructors on filming

Review and critique of logging and storyboarding

All filming should be completed

Finish all logging and storyboarding

Discussion of editing plans

**Week 13, 26 November**

*Activities:* Editing of film

Discussion of Film Critique Assignment (Individual Assignment due on Dec. 08<sup>th</sup>)

**Week 14, 3 December**

*Activity:* Continue editing of film

**Week 15, 10 December**

*Activities:* Lunch

Presentation of Final Films