

Course title: *From ethnographic cinema to the avant-garde*

Language of instruction: English

Professor: Ricardo Íscar Álvarez

Professor's contact and office hours: Ricardo.iscar@upf.edu

Course contact hours: 45

Recommended credit: 6 ECTS credits

Course prerequisites: there are no prerequisites for this course.

Language requirements: Recommended level in the European Framework B2 (or equivalent : Cambridge Certificate if the teaching language is English.

Course focus and approach: The course is focused in the studies of the history and styles of ethnographic cinema, avant-garde cinema and underground cinema of XX century until now, within the framework of cultural studies.

Course description:

Study and critical analysis of ethnographic cinema and its relationship with avant-garde cinema, demonstrating itself as a fertile territory and full of possibilities, but that continues on the margins, between art halls and museums and ignored by industry. Both ends touch each other. In the margins of usual production, creativity, dedication and social and cultural commitment survive. Both extremes are modes of representation of our culture and have many elements in common: their marginality, their creativity, a community of practitioners and followers, their influence on the cinematographic narrative of the real and fiction, and their questioning, in some cases, of the classic narrative.

The goal of this seminar is to provide the student with a basic, but professional, level of knowledge of Ethnographic and the, so called, experimental or formalist filmmaking. The seminar includes a practical exercise where the student can discover his particular way of seeing Catalan or Spanish reality. The seminar consists in theoretical lessons. During eleven weeks (two days per week; each class meeting for two hours) students and the tutor Ricardo Iscar will meet and discuss the history and situation of the contemporary ethnographic and Avant Garde filmmaking.

It is highly recommended that each student bring a hard drive or a pen drive for the practical exercises (minimum 500 GB).

Learning objectives:

At the end of this course the students:

Will have a general theoretical knowledge of the history and styles of the Ethnographic films and Avant Garde films.

Will learn how to improve his perception of reality and will have other narrative tools, different than the traditional ones.

Will participate in the shooting and editing of a short ethnographic or experimental movie, by themselves.

Teaching methodology:

The seminar consists of lecture lessons.

During lecture classes the professor will present the history of Spanish, Catalan and international Ethnographic films and Avant Garde or experimental films, more formalistic, and will set the theoretical basis for the production of a final exercise.

All lectures will be illustrated with the projection of films and videos

Students will choose between:

- Either they will work in small teams of four people to develop an ethnographic project suitable to be filmed (no longer than 15 minutes) and to be presented at the end of the course.
- Or, each one of the students will make a short formalistic experimental film (no more than 5 minutes)

Assessment criteria:

Student's final grade will be determined as it follows:

Final Project: 50%

Final exam: 40%

Class participation 20%

BaPIS absence policy

Attending class is mandatory and will be monitored daily by professors. Missing classes will impact on the student's final grade as follows:

Absences	Penalization
Up to two (2) absences	No penalization
Three (3) absences	1 point subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)
Four (4) absences	2 points subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)
Five (5) absences or more	The student receives an INCOMPLETE ("NO PRESENTADO") for the course

The BaPIS attendance policy **does not distinguish between justified or unjustified absences**. The student is deemed responsible to manage his/her absences.

Only absences for medical reasons will be considered justified absences. The student is deemed responsible to provide the necessary documentation. Other emergency situations will be analyzed on a case by case basis by the Academic Director of the BaPIS.

The Instructor, the Academic Director and the Study Abroad Office should be informed by email without any delay.

Classroom norms:

- No food or drink is permitted in class.
- Students will have a ten-minute break after one one- hour session.

Weekly schedule:**WEEK 1 HISTORY OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM****SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION (2 hours)**

A brief history: The beginnings with E. S. Curtis and *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (1914). Robert Flaherty and *Nanook of the North* (1922). Discussion of the reality versus fiction, taking special care of the manipulation and the limits of reality in the films.

SESSION 2 INFLUENCES (2 hours)

Going far away, from ethnographic to commercial. *Grass* (1925) and *Chang* (1927) from Meriam C. Cooper and Ernst. B. Schoedsack.

WEEK 2 HISTORY OF AVANT GARDE**SESSION 3 THE CINEMA WITHOUT A STORY (2 hours)**

The importance of how to look at reality and rediscover the world. An experimental film: *The 24*

Dollar Island (1927) de R. Flaherty.

Filmin the storm: *Rain* (1929) by Joris Ivens

Luis Buñuel. From Ethnography to surrealism: *Las Hurdes* (1932) and *Un chien andalou* (1929)

SESSION 4 THE CINEMA WITHOUT A STORY (2 hours)

The British Documentary Movement: Norman McLaren and the animation film. The european avant garde from 1920: Hans Richter, Moholy Nagy and Man Ray

WEEK 3 HISTORY AND STYLES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM**SESSION 5 FILMING THE REAL WORLD, BUT DIFFERENT (2 hours)**

The ethnographic cinema of Jean Rouch. The trance cinema and the pen camera. The shots with camera on the shoulder. The collaboration with the informant.

La pyramide humaine (1959), *Les Maîtres fous* (1954), *Moi un Noir* (1958),

SESSION 6 THE FOUNDATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (2 HOURS)

The sequential filming of John Marshall among the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. The construction of myths by action or omission. *N'ay, Story of a Kung Woman* (1978)

EACH GROUP (4 MEMBERS) SHOULD REHEARSE A SUBJECT IN BARCELONA, FROM AN ETHNOGRAPHIC POINT OF VIEW, AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, AND DISCUSS IT WITH THE REMINDER OF THE CLASS.

WEEK 4 THE AVANT GARDE IN EEUU**SESSION 7 FILMING DIARIES. The influence of Hans Richter (2 hours)**

The ethnography of the family itself in the form of avant-garde.

The filming of the family world. From the classic documentary to the filmed diaries. The work of Jonas and Adolfas Mekas. *The Brig* (1964), *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* (1969), *Reminiscences from a journey to Lithuania* (1972)

SESSION 8 THE AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE (2 HOURS)

Marie Menken according to Jonas Mekas. The poetical filmmaking. Maya Deren between the ethnographic and feminism: *Meshes of the afternoon* (1943).

Kenneth Anger and the gay, nazi world in *Scorpio Rising* (1963).

WEEK 5 HISTORY AND STYLES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM**SESSION 9 THE WORK OF TIMOTHY ASCH. ETHICS AND REPRESENTATION (2 hours)**

The sequential filming of Timothy Asch among the Yanomani. The problems of the representation

of the other. Between the construction and the reliability of the representation. *The feast* (1969) and *The ax fight* (1975)

FROM WEEK 5 ON THE STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO SHOOT THE FILMS OUTSIDE OF CLASS MEETING HOURS. THE PROFESSOR WILL OFFER TUTORIALS.

4

SESSION 10 ROBERT GARDNER. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ETHNOGRAPHIC AND ART (2 hours)

Robert Gardner's observational camera and the strength of the gaze. The construction of a myth, a narrative and an imaginary. Criticisms of orthodoxy. Between ethnography and the transcendental experience of *Forest of bliss* (1986)

WEEK 6 HISTORY AND STYLES OF THE AVANT GARDE**SESSION 11 FILMING DAILY LIFE (2 hours)**

David Perlov's diaries as an alternative to the classic narrative cinema. A style arises from need, a genre from style. The personal films from Chantal Akerman. The contemporary vanguard of New York: the diaries of Jem Cohen.

SESSION 12 PAINTING FILMS AND FILMING PAINTINGS (2 hours)

The art of looking according to Stan Brakhage. Paint the celluloid, scratch it and color it. A child's perception. The difficulty of the artist's survival. The structuralist cinema of Michael Snow in *Wavelength* (1967). The Video art from Bill Viola, the Brothers Quay and David Lynch.

WEEK 7 HISTORY AND STYLES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM**SESSION 13 FILMING FROM A BOAT (2 HOURS)**

From *Grantown trawler* (1934) to the films from Martín Solá like *Caja cerrada* (2008) going to the experimental horror ethnography of *Leviathan* (2012) by Lucien Castaing-Taylor and

Véréna Parave. Filming is creating atmosphere. The use of color and sound film in *The Fence* (2001), a film about tuna fishing by Ricardo Íscar.

SESSION 14 FILMING IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA (2 hours)

Denis O'Rourke's *Cannibal Tours* (1978) and the *Shark's Callers of Kontu* (1978). Filming the relation with the other, a prostitute in *The good woman of Bangkok* (1989).

The outstanding epic documentation of Papua New Guinea in *the Highlands Trilogy*, by Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson between 1980 and 1989.

WEEK 8 HISTORY AND STYLES OF THE AVANT GARDE

**SESSION 15 THE ESSAY FILM. USING EDITING AND VOICE OVER,
A REFLEXION ON REPRESENTATION. (2 hours)**

The work with archive material by Chris Marker and Harun Farocki. The images can lie. The words can reinterpretate factual footage.

SESSION 16 ARCHIVE MATERIAL AND CONTEMPORARY USE OF FOUND FOOTAGE (2 hours)

New lectures on old material. Between the proof of a former existence and the reinterpretation of the past. The use of archive material in a poetic form, using colors, music, titles and yuxtaposition in the works of Péter Forgács (Wittgenstein Tractatus and El perro negro) and in the films from Angela Ricci Lucchi and Yervant Gianikian. Between ethnography and experimental.

WEEK 9 HISTORY AND STYLES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM

SESSION 17 THE PARTICIPATION IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMS (2 hours)

The use of titles and subtitles and the reflexive films of David and Judith MacDougall with the turkanas. The work of Ian Dunlop, reconstructing the past among the aborigines. The ethnobiographies of Jorge Prelorán in Argentina (Chucalezna, Hermogenes Cayo).

SESSION 18 F OWN WORK (2 hours)

Filmin a ritual dance among the Evuzok in south Cameroon, *Dance to the spirits* (2008) by Ricardo Íscar. Filming the coal mines in north Spain (*Tierra Negra*) 2005. Examples of diary and experimental film in one's own work.

WEEK 10 HISTORY AND STYLES OF THE AVANT GARDE

SESSION 19 AVANT GARDE IN SPAIN. NOW AND THEN. (2 hours)

The school of Barcelona as a radical alternative to narrative cinema. the avant-garde ethnography of *Away from the Trees* (1971) by Jacinto Esteva. The filmic experiences from Pere Portabella. Between ethnography and art in the pioneer work of José Val del Omar.

SESSION 20 AVANT GARDE IN SPAIN. NOW AND THEN. (2 hours)

The experimental cinema in Spain, during the transition, in the works of Iván Zulueta and his influence in the contemporary works of Andrés Duque. Other alternatives: Los hijos, Manuel Hueriga, Kikol Grau, Frederick Amat and Virginia García del Pino.

WEEK 11 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

SESSION 21 FINAL CONCLUSIONS (2 hours)

Projection and analysis of the different projects.

SESSION 22 FINAL EXAM (1 HOUR)

Film viewings and written analysis.

COURSE CLOSURE

Last revision: August 2023.

Required readings:

There are not.

Recommended bibliography:

-Barbash, I; Taylor, L. (1997). *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking: A Handbook for Making Documentary and Ethnographic Films and Videos*: University of California Press

-Heider, K. G. (2007). *Ethnographic film*. Austin: University of Texas Press

-Jennings, G (2015). *Abstract Video - The Moving Image in Contemporary Arts*: University of California Press.

-Ramey, K. (2015). *Experimental Filmmaking: Break the machine*. Focal Press.

-Rees, A.L. (1999). *A History of Experimental Film and Video*. British Film Institute.