Course Description
This seminar explores the history and evolution of ethnographic film as a genre for representing “reality”, anthropological knowledge and cultural processes, as well as the broader issues of cross-cultural representation it has raised. We begin by examining how the progenitors of ethnographic film emerged in a particular intellectual and political context. Then, we study the key works that have defined and altered the genre. Ethnographic films have evolved drastically: from representing to attempting to speak alongside the “Other” to representing and/or interrogating the self—shifts in self-reflexivity and practices of knowledge production that in many ways preceded similar advances in written ethnography. We will chart this evolution and analyze its ramifications. Throughout the course we will keep several things in mind: the properties of film as a signifying practice; its place within the larger project for representing culture; the cultural and social contexts in which such films are shot, distributed, and seen; and the ethical and political concerns raised by representing and/or communicating across cultural boundaries.

Requirements
(1) Class Participation (15% of your final grade). This is an advanced, intensive seminar that requires your energetic participation in class discussions, as well as your active in-class viewing of films. You must thoroughly read the assigned readings before class, and demonstrate thoughtful consideration of these readings and in-class screenings in class discussions. While films are being screened, you must demonstrate your active attention, taking rigorous notes and remaining alert and respectful of the film and your classmates. Active viewing practices will be introduced in your first class session.

(2) Reading Responses. (15% of your final grade). By 9:00 pm the night before class, you must post to Sakai a reading response in which you elaborate on a question or point that you hope to engage while watching the film in class. The responses should be 1-2 pages in length (double-spaced). Come to class with your response printed out, and be prepared to discuss it in light of the screening(s).

(3) Papers: Three short theory/review essays and a final research paper. More specific instructions will be handed out closer to the due date. These will consist of:

1. Paper I: History of Ethnographic Film (15% of your final grade). Due Fri. Oct. 21 by 5:00 pm. 4-6 pages. What is ethnographic film? How has the genre emerged and changed, especially since the 1920’s? What sorts of representational and ethical issues does it raise, and how do these speak to written anthropology
and other forms of representation? Discuss at least three films that we have seen so far in the course.

2. Paper II. (20 % of your final grade). Due Friday Nov. 18 by 5:00 p.m. 6-8 pages. Review the work of one filmmaker/unit presented thus far in class. Analyze at least one film in the context of the issues raised by the relevant readings and the history of ethnographic film.

3. Final Research Paper: (25 % of your final grade). Due Mon. Dec. 12 by 5:00 p.m. Proposals of topics due Mon. Nov. 7. 15-20 pages. Explore one ethnographic filmmaker/movement in light of the themes, dilemmas, and trends of the genre that we have studied in class. You may choose to explore in depth a filmmaker or movement we have discussed in class, in which case you will need to research additional in-depth materials and the filmmaker must be different from the one you discussed in essay 2. Alternately, you may choose a filmmaker/movement not discussed in class, in which case, you will need to analyze the subject in relation to the films/filmmakers discussed in class.

(4) Presentation of Final Research Project (10% of your final grade). In class presentation, including well-selected clips from ethnographic films you're analyzing, on Dec. 5.

Guidelines/Regulations
• Laptops, iPads/Pods, cell phones, and other electronic devices may NOT be used in the classroom. All electronic devices must be switched off for the duration of class (not just silenced).

• If dissatisfied with your grade on Paper I and/or II, you may rewrite it, as long as you hand in the revised paper no more than two weeks after the original graded paper has been returned to you. You are encouraged to discuss the essay with your professor and/or a writing tutor. The grade for the revised paper will be your final grade for the assignment; that is, even if the revised paper is of inferior quality to the original, its grade will count rather than the original grade. You may not rewrite your Final Research Paper.

• If not explained by a doctor’s note or a notification of a legitimate religious observance or family emergency, each absence will result in a 2-point reduction in your participation grade.

• Late work will not be accepted, nor will I grant extensions or incompletes; there is no January Option for this course.

• Students must abide by the Wellesley Honor Code. Plagiarism will be adjudicated by the Wellesley Honor Code Council. Please be aware that improper citation can constitute plagiarism. Take care to learn and follow the proper citation practices. See Wellesley’s Citation 101 at www.wellesley.edu/GeneralJudiciary/citation101.html

• Papers will be graded according to the Wellesley College Writing Program’s standards.
• Students with disabilities who require disability-related accommodations are encouraged to work with Jim Wice, the Director of Disability Services. Find Jim on the third floor of Clapp Library. If you have a disability, including a learning disability, that is undocumented, Jim will arrange for you to be tested, and for appropriate accommodations to be made.

Course Schedule

1. Wed. Sept. 7  
   Introduction

   What is Ethnographic Film? What was the context of its emergence? What are some of the central themes and dilemmas of the genre?
   
   Screening:  
   *Cannibal Tours* (1987) 70 min. Dennis O'Rourke

   Readings for today:


3. Mon. Sept. 19  
   Romantic Primitivism and the Flaherty Tradition

   Screening:  
   *Nanook of the North* (1922) 79 min. Robert J. Flaherty  
   *Nanook Revisited* (1990) 60 min. Claude Massot (selections)

   Recommended Film: (to view outside of class.)  

   Readings:  

   Huhndorf, Shari. 2000 “Nanook and His Contemporaries:
Imagining Eskimos in American Culture, 1897-1922.”  *Critical Inquiry* 27.


**Recommended Reading:**


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**4. Mon. Sept. 26.**  

**Scientific Cinema:  Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead**

**Screening:**

Margaret Mead on 1950 NFC program *Four Families*
http://barnard.edu/sfonline/mead/four.mov

*First Days In the Life Of A New Guinea Baby* (1951) 19 min

*Bathing Babies in Three Cultures* (1951) 9 minutes

*Karha's First Years* (1950) 19 min.

*Trance and Dance in Bali* (1951) 22 min.

**Readings:**


Worth, Sol.  1981.  “Margaret Mead and the Shift from `Visual Anthropology' to...

Screenings:
N’um Tbai 1966 (20 min.) John Marshall

Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Documentary Educational Resources N!ai Study Guide.


Screenings:
The Feast (1970) 29 min. Timothy Asch and Napoleon Chagnon
The Ax Fight (1975) 30 min. 
Jero on Jero (1980) 17 min. Tim Asch, Patsy Asch, Linda Connor

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


**Recommended Reading:**


**Friday Oct. 21. *** Paper I Due ***

**7. Mon. Oct. 24**

Jean Rouch: Cine-Transe and Ethno-Fiction

**Screenings:**

*Les Maitres Fous* (1955) 35 minutes, Jean Rouch (clips)

*Moi, Un Noir* (1958) 70 min., Jean Rouch

**Recommended:**

*Rouch in Reverse* (1995) 60 min. Manthia Diawara (To be seen outside of class)

**Readings:**


Rouch, Jean


“On the Vicissitudes of the Self: The Possessed Dancer, the Magician, the Sorcerer, the Filmmaker, and the Ethnographer.” (in Ciné-Ethnography).


*Film Quarterly* 31 (3).
Look back at Russell Ch. 8 from week 4.

8. Mon. Nov. 7  
Jean Rouch: Provoking Truths and Anthropologie Partagé

***Proposal for Final Research Project Due***

Screening:

*Chronique d’un Été (Chronicle of A Summer)* (1961) 90 min. J. Rouch and E. Morin

Readings:


9. Mon. Nov. 14  
The Unprivileged Camera: David & Judith MacDougall

Screenings:

*To Live With Herds* (1973) 70 min. (selections)


Readings:


Chapter 4. Beyond Observational Cinema.

Chapter 9. “Unprivileged Camera Style”


Chapter 4. “Social Aesthetics and the Doon School”

Chapter 5. “The Doon School Reconsidered.”

Friday. Nov. 18  
***Paper 2 Due***

10. Mon. Nov. 21  
Indigenous Media: The “Natives” Take on Ethnographic Film

Screenings:

Navajo Film Themselves (selections):
Intrepid Shadows (1968). 18 min. Al Clah
The Spirit of the Navajo (1968). 21 min. Maxine and MaryJane Tsosie
Two Cars One Night (2004). 11 min. Taika Waititi (Maori)

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


11. Mon. Nov. 28
With Postcolonial Eyes: Ethnographic Impulses in Non-Western Documentary Film

Screenings:
Lakshmi and Me Nishtha (2007). 60 min. Nishtha Jain

Readings:


12. Mon. Dec. 5
***Student Presentations***

Mon. Dec. 12
***Final Research Papers Due***