

WST 100 / FMS 105: Introduction to Women's Studies
Women's Personal Cinema

Fall 2015, Tuesdays, 2:00-3:15 PM, Lattimore 540

Instructor: Joel Neville Anderson

Email: joel.neville.anderson@rochester.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 PM and by appointment, Lattimore 538

Screenings: Mondays, 5:00 PM, Lattimore 540

Course Description:

This course approaches issues in women's studies through the heterogeneous genre of personal cinema, understood as autobiographical documentary, autoethnography, diary, and first-person cinema. Women's access to the technological means of cinematic production has historically been limited due to patriarchal systems of commercial media and entertainment, however female artists and filmmakers have produced extensive bodies of work. Often utilizing amateur equipment (16mm and 8mm film, consumer video cameras) and found footage, these sophisticated works interpenetrate private and public spheres and subvert dominant practices to produce new meaning. Examining films, videos, and photographic projects by women in different national and cultural contexts, we will ask: how does the production and consumption of still and moving image media contribute to the formation of modern social subjects? How can memory, identity, gender, and sexuality be interrogated through cinematic forms? Can personal cinema produce spaces of aesthetic possibility, personal expression, and political resistance? We will consider these questions through forms transgressing the categories of narrative, documentary, and avant-garde, in addition to critical texts from the fields of cinema and media studies, feminist theory, and art history.

Reading and Viewing Assignments:

All texts are downloadable as PDFs via Blackboard, with the exception of photo books on reserve at the Art & Music Library. Please bring a printout of PDFs to class to reference during discussion. Weekly screenings of the assigned viewing material will be held the evening before class (Mondays, 5:00 PM, Lattimore 540). In addition, all viewing material is available on DVD on reserve at the Art & Music Library, or linked from the syllabus to online streaming platforms. If you cannot attend weekly screenings, whatever device you choose to watch the viewing material on I encourage you to do so in an environment free of distractions so you may concentrate on the artists' work. Texts and film/video under "Recommended" are optional and meant for students with a particular interest in the weekly topic. Full print copies of many texts on the syllabus are also available on reserve at the Art & Music Library for your reference.

Journals:

Students are expected to keep a journal in which to express their thoughts on the screening material and readings. I will discuss questions to consider for your journals each week and post prompts to Blackboard under the tab "Journal Prompts." Your journal entries should be informal,

offering thoughtful observations and questions. Hard copies of journal entries are due every week at the end of class, and should be one to two pages in length (either handwritten on lined looseleaf paper or printed). I will return these to you with comments on a regular basis throughout the semester. Out of the eleven possible weekly journals, students must submit at least ten to receive full credit. If you miss a journal entry please discuss makeup assignments with me.

Final Essay:

Students are required to write a final essay for the class exploring a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor (8-10 pages, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, Chicago Manual of Style citations). I will distribute a prompt with suggested topics and further guidelines, and set up meetings with each student to discuss topics. Students will be free to choose which films, artists, and theoretical models they engage with. The “Recommended” readings each week will be useful in furthering students’ original research. Due December 15 via email to joel.neville.anderson@rochester.edu as Pages or Word document.

Presentation:

In the final two weeks of class, students will present on the topic they have chosen to write about for their final essay. I will distribute further guidelines and assign which of the two days students will present on. Presentations should be approximately seven to ten minutes, depending on the number of students in the class. Students are encouraged to prepare images or clips to share with the class using Keynote, Powerpoint, or other software. As an alternative to a presentation on the final essay, students may also choose to produce a short film/video inspired by or in reaction to ideas explored in the class. Please meet with me in advance to discuss interest in this option.

Policies and Guidelines:

- Attendance: Your attendance at each class is mandatory, and repeated absences will result in a lowered grade. Please clear any expected absences with me in advance, and provide appropriate documentation (such as record of a medical visit). If you do miss class, please check with me or your peers to catch up on assignments and handouts.
- Preparation and Participation: Approximately one and a half to two hours of screening material, in addition to one to two articles or book chapters will be assigned each week. Students are expected to review the material in detail, and come prepared to participate in discussion. Your thoughts are valuable to me and your fellow students.
- Classroom Technology: No laptops, mobile phones, or tablets are to be used during class unless otherwise discussed. Laptops or tablets may be used during your class presentation.
- Office Hours: Email me at joel.neville.anderson@rochester.edu for scheduling meeting times outside my set office hours if you are not available at that time, or for any questions or ideas you may have regarding the class.
- Correspondence: Please check your university email and Blackboard regularly for announcements and updates to the syllabus and assignments.

Grading:

Attendance/Participation: 25% of final grade

Journals: 20%

Presentation: 20%

Final Paper: 35%

Additional Assignments for Students Registered for Class at 4 Credits:

Read all weekly recommended readings. Write four additional journal entries throughout the semester that are about the recommended readings (due September 29, October 27, November 10, November 24). Submit a midterm essay exploring a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor that is 6-8 pages long (due October 20). (This midterm essay should conform to the same formatting described above in the “Final Essay” section, and counts toward half of the students’ final paper grade.)

Academic Honesty:

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester’s Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available online at <http://www.rochester.edu/College/CCAS/AdviserHandbook/AcadHonesty.html>. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Disabilities Notice:

If you require any assistance or accommodations, or have questions related to accommodations for testing, note takers, readers, etc., please speak with me as soon as possible. Students may also call Disability Support (585.275.9049) for additional information about services available at The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). More information is available online at <http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/disability.html>.

Religious Accommodations:

If you require academic accommodations for a religious observance, please speak with me as soon as possible to consider a reasonable modification.

Course Schedule:

(Note: all readings/screenings should be completed *before* the class for which they are assigned)

Week 1 (September 1): Course Overview and Introduction

Week 2 (September 8): Feminism and Documentary

Watch: *Harlan County USA* (1976, 103 min., Barbara Kopple).

Read: Janet Walker and Diane Waldman, “Introduction,” in *Feminism and Documentary*, ed. Walker and Waldman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 1-35.

Recommended: Paula Rabinowitz, “National Bodies: Gender, Sexuality, and Terror in Feminist Counter-documentaries,” *They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary* (New York: Verso, 1994): 176-204.

***** First weekly journal entry due today and each following week *****

Week 3 (September 15): Perspectives in Documentary

Watch: *Far from Poland* (1984, 109 min., Jill Godmilow).

Read: Bill Nichols, “Ch. 7: How Can We Describe the Observational, Participatory, Reflexive, and Performative Modes of Documentary Film?” in *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010): 172-211.

Recommended: Nichols, “Ch. 6: How Can We Differentiate among Documentaries? Categories, Models, and Expository and Poetic Modes of Documentary Film,” 142-171.

Week 4 (September 22): Domestic Material: Photo Albums and Home Movies

Read: LaToya Ruby Frazier, *The Notion of Family* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 2014) including interview by Dawoud Bey and essays by Laura Wexler and Dennis C. Dickerson (photo book on reserve at Art & Music Library—interview/essays also available on Blackboard).

Watch: “LaToya Ruby Frazier Takes on Levi’s” (performance documentation, 2011, 7 min., [watch online](#)).

Recommended: LaToya Ruby Frazier’s talk “Framework: Activism, Memory and the Social Landscape” (May 3, 2014, Black Mountain — Models of Creativity, Freie Universität Berlin, 67 min., [watch online](#))

Week 5 (September 29): The Personal is Political

Watch: *The Ties That Bind* (1984, 55 min., Su Friedrich), *Sink or Swim* (1990, 48 min., Su Friedrich).

Read: Michael Renov, “Domestic Ethnography and the Construction of the ‘Other’ Self,” in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, eds. Michael Renov and Jane Gaines (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 140-155.

Recommended: *Damned If You Don’t* (1984, 41 min., Su Friedrich). Su Friedrich, interview by Scott MacDonald, “Daddy Dearest: Su Friedrich Talks About Filmmaking, Family, and Feminism,” *The Independent*, December 1990, 28-34.

Week 6 (October 6): No class—enjoy fall break

Week 7 (October 13): First Person Plural

Watch: *The Electronic Diaries* (1986-1994, 75 min., Lynn Hershman Leeson), *Desire Inc.* (1990, 26 min., Lynn Hershman Leeson), *Life Squared* (2007, 4 min., Lynn Hershman Leeson).

Read: David E. James, “Lynn Hershman: The Subject of Autobiography,” in *The Art and Films of Lynn Hershman Leeson: Secret Agents, Private I*, ed. Meredith Tromble (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 144-157.

Recommended: Patricia R. Zimmermann, “Reinventing Amateurism,” *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995): 143-157. Rosalind Krauss, “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism,” *October* 1 (1976): 50-64.

Week 8 (October 20): Through the Screen

Watch: *November* (2004, 25 min., Hito Steyerl, [watch online](#)) *Lovely Andrea* (2007, 30 min., Hito Steyerl, [watch online](#)).

Read: T. J. Demos, "Traveling Images: The Art of Hito Steyerl," *Artforum* 46, no. 10 (2008): 409-413, 473. Hito Steyerl, "Documentary Uncertainty," *Re-Visiones* 1 (2011).

Recommended: Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *e-flux* 10 (2009), [download here](#).

Week 9 (October 27): Forms of Address

Watch: *News from Home* (1977, 85 min., Chantal Akerman).

Read: Kenneth White, "Urban Unknown: Chantal Akerman in New York City," *Screen* 51, no. 4 (2010): 365-378.

Recommended: *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975, 201 min., Chantal Akerman). Ivone Margulies, "The Politics of the Singular," in *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996): 1-20.

Week 10 (November 3): Fact vs. Fiction: Suppressed Narratives

Watch: *Suzanne Suzanne* (1982, 30 min., Camille Billops and James V. Hatch), *Finding Christa* (1991, 55 min., Camille Billops and James V. Hatch).

Read: Valerie Smith, "Reconstituting the Image," *Callaloo* 37 (1988): 709-719. Valerie Smith, "Photography, Narrative, and Ideology in *Suzanne Suzanne* and *Finding Christa* by Camille Billops and James V. Hatch," in *The Familial Gaze*, ed. Marianne Hirsch (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999): 85-98.

Recommended: Valerie Smith, "The Documentary Impulse in Contemporary African-American Film," *Black Popular Culture*, ed. Gina Dent (New York: Dia Center for the Arts, 1992): 56-64.

Week 11 (November 10): Traumatic Memory

Watch: *Halving the Bones* (1995, 70 min., Ruth Ozeki), *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (1991, 34 min., Rea Tajiri), *The Body Beautiful* (1991, 23 min., Ngozi Onwurah).

Read: Julia Erhart, "Performing Memory: Compensation and Redress in Contemporary Feminist First-Person Documentary," *Screening the Past* (2001).

Recommended: Diana Adesola Mafe, "Misplaced Bodies: Probing Racial and Gender Signifiers in Ngozi Onwurah's *The Body Beautiful*," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 29, no. 1 (2008): 37-50. Rocío G. Davis, "The Asian American Family Portrait Documentary: Multiplying Discourses," in *Relative Histories: Mediating History in Asian American Family Memoirs* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011): 116-139.

Week 12 (November 17): Fissures and Creation (visiting filmmaker: Yuki Kokubo)

Watch: *Kasamayaki* (2014, 78 min., Yuki Kokubo) in public campus Rochester premiere screening November 16 (time/venue TBA).

Read: Joel Neville Anderson, "Cinema in Reconstruction: Japan's Post-3.11 Documentary," in *Film on the Faultline*, ed. Alan Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press/Intellect, 2015): 215-231.

Recommended: Kyoko Hirano, "311: Documenting a catastrophe as a national experience," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 18, no. 3 (2014): 378-390.

Week 13 (November 24): Documentarian/Apparatus

Watch: *Birth/Mother* (2006, 43 min., Naomi Kawase), *The Mourning Forest* (2007, 97 min., Naomi Kawase).

Read: Rie Karatsu, "Questions for a Women's Cinema: Fact, Fiction and Memory in the Films of Naomi Kawase," *Visual Anthropology* 22 (2009): 167–181.

Recommended: *Embracing* (1992, 40 min., Naomi Kawase). Teresa de Lauretis, "Rethinking Women's Cinema: Aesthetics in Feminist Theory," in *Multiple Voices in Feminist Criticism*, eds. Diane Carson, Linda Dittmar, and Janice R. Welsch (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994): 140–161.

***** Final journal entry due *****

Week 14 (December 1): Final Presentations Part 1

Week 15 (December 8): Final Presentations Part 2

***** Final essays due December 15 *****