Documentary - Non Fiction
Film and Video Making

Representing Reality
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High School by Frederick Wiseman, 1968
Fiction Film and Genres

- Musical
- Western
- Gangster
- Sci Fi
- Bio-pic
- Film Noir
- Horror
The Genres (or Modes) of Documentary

• *Documentaries are representations of reality* - Bill Nichols
• *Documentaries are the creative treatment of actuality* - John Grierson
• *Documentaries are performed reality* - Stella Bruzzi
The Voice of Documentary

I speak about *them* to *you*.

It speaks about *them* to *us*.

I or We speak about *us* to *you*.
Styles of Documentary

- Expository
- Poetic
- Observational
- Reflexive
- Participatory
- Performative

These are the six categories by Bill Nichols
Expository Documentary

- Verbal commentary
- Argumentative logic
- One perspective
- Addresses the viewer directly
- Image sound relationship - images respond to sound
- Evidentiary editing

- *The River*, Pare Lorentz, 1938 (WPA)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7tWNwhSocE – March of the Penguins
The River, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpz0XI6U97U
Poetic Documentary

• Lyrical rather than didactic
• Poetic rather than argumentative
• Stylized / aestheticized
• Modernist avant garde

• Rain, Joris Ivens, 1929
• New York, NY Francis Thompson, 1957
• Koyaanisqatsi, Godfrey Reggio, 1983

https://vimeo.com/42491972 – Rain
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztzuCv5-4D4 – New York, NY Francis Thompson
Koyaanisqatsi - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9kd0H6KPz8
Observational Documentary

- No voice over commentary, filmmaker “invisible”
- Direct Cinema
- Editing: Duration of events

- *High School*, Frederick Wiseman (1968)
- *Primary*, Drew and Associates (1959)
- *Election Day*, Katy Chevigny, 2004

Election Day: http://www.pbs.org/pov/electionday/
Participatory Documentary

- Cinema Verite
- Engage with the subject - interview on camera
- Filmmaker embodied, audible, visible
- Jean Rouch: “Sometimes the greatest lie results in the greatest truth.” *Chronicle of a Summer* (1960)
- Michael Moore, *Bowling for Columbine* 2002
- *Blue Vinyl*, Judith Helfand, 2002

Blue Vinyl - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jE7zFQvJUp0
Reflexive Documentary

- Apparatus Revealed
- The text is about viewer / filmmaker relationship
- Reveals the perspective of the filmmaker - perhaps his or her own voice and body
- Readjust assumptions, no new “information”
- Reflexive from Formal and Political perspectives

- Reassemblage, Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1978
- Human Remains, Jay Rosenblatt, 1999
- Land without Bread, Luis Bunuel, 1932
- Stories We Tell, Sara Polley, 2012

https://youtu.be/ytq4VZ2Nyxg - Stories We Tell
Human Remains - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA5JdrLgphM
Performative Documentary

- I speak about us to us
- Embodied knowledge
- The personal is expertise
- Elements of performance in the film itself

- *Tongues Untied*, Marlon Riggs, 1990
- *Gleaners and I*, Agnes Varda, 2000

https://youtu.be/tWuPLxMBjM8 – Tongues Untied
http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/kfortmueller/clips/the-gleaners-and-I