

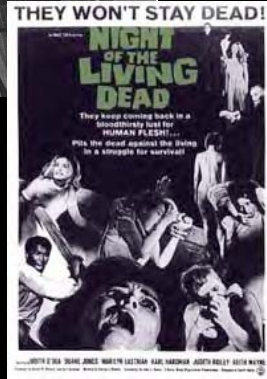
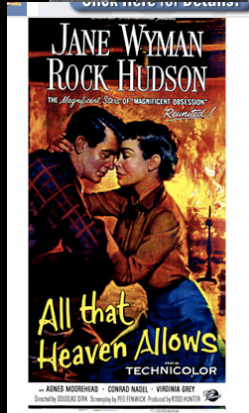
Documentary - Non Fiction Film and Video Making

Representing Reality

Professor Giovanna Chesler
George Mason University

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)
- *March of the Penguins*, Luke Jacquet, 2005

<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=ztXuCv5-4D4> – 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/>

High School, <https://vimeo.com/65241039> –Frederick Wiseman, 1968

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>