



Tentative Schedule and Syllabus

The Mockumentary Film

Porter 80J, Summer 2012

Bob Giges

Week I

Stretching the Contemporary Documentary

UCSC student-made mockumentary (screened at the opening of each class meeting)

Illustration of documentary film modes (clips)

Halving the Bones (1:10, Ruth Ozeki Lounsbury) VT5615

Mockumenting the Creative Process, Part I: Staged Theatrics

Waiting for Guffman (1:24, Christopher Guest) VT 5747

<http://guffman.warnerbros.com/>

<http://members.tripod.com/~cityofblaine/guffman.html>

Documentary/fiction film correlates: Looking for Richard [VID779](#),

Running Fence VT 5970, The Music Man [DVD643](#)

Week 2

Mockumenting the Creative Process, Part II: Faux Rockumentary

This is Spinal Tap (1:22, Rob Reiner) [DVD967](#)

<http://www.spinaltapfan.com/>

Documentary/fiction film correlates: Don't Look Back [DVD748](#) ,

Gimme Shelter [DVD1861](#) , The Last Waltz [DVD1581](#)

Faux Rockumentary (cont.)/Ersatz Newsreel

Bad News Tour (:30, Sandy Johnson), Zelig (1:19, Woody Allen) VID 47

Mockumentary/fiction film correlates: Hard Core Logo [DVD1619](#) , Fear of a Black Hat,

Take the Money and Run, Husbands and Wives [VT3159](#)

Week 3

Mockumenting the Cinematic Process, Part I: Invented Ethnography

Forgotten Silver (:52, Peter Jackson) DVD1075

<http://www.waikato.ac.nz/film/mock-doc/fs.shtml>

Babakiueria (:28, Don Featherstone) VT5994

Documentary film correlate: Cliff Mummies of the Andes [VT9400](#)

Mockumenting the Cinematic Process, Part II: Verité Lies
Real Life (1:39, Albert Brooks) VT 2817
Documentary film correlate: Episode Two of *An American Family* (Craig Gilbert, 1973)

Week 4

Political Mockuments

Bob Roberts (1:41, Tim Robbins) VID 575

Documentary/mockumentary correlates: Man with a Plan, War Room [DVD686](#) ,
Don't Look Back [DVD748](#) (quoted in This is Spinal Tap [DVD967](#))

Political Mockuments (cont.)

Watermelon Woman (1:19, Cheryl Dunye) [DVD1458](#)

A Day Without A Mexican (:30 version, Arau/Arizmendi) VT5920

Tanner '88 (excerpts, Robert Altman) [VT3924](#), [VID764](#)

Week 5

Edges of the Mockumentary

David Holzman's Diary (1:14, Jim McBride) VT3373/VID 1138

Coming Apart (excerpts, Milton Moses Ginzberg) [DVD777](#)

Documentary/mockumentary correlate: Sherman's March (Ross McElwee) [VT1824](#)

Presentations of your mockumentaries scripts and videos

Syllabus

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The documentary film has been a staple of film studies curriculum for decades. Its evolving form has generated interesting conversations about mediation and subjectivity inherent in all cinematic reflections of history--no matter how transparent a film claims to be. The mockumentary film grows out of the documentary tradition, often satirizing its formal conventions. Instead of pretending to capture reality, the mockumentary blatantly distorts in an effort to comment on the historical world, but also to critique attempts to capture "reality" in a singular, essential way. The mockumentary consequently provides the film viewer with a unique yet parallel terrain in which to explore the nature of documentary film and its problematic claims of factual representation.

In this course, class participants will come to understand these issues by viewing mockumentaries, as well as clips of documentary film correlates. Theoretical readings will center on movements in documentary film, especially concerning issues of representation and subjectivity. The class will get at the range of styles and approaches in documentary (e.g. cinema verité, the ethnographic film, the personal narrative) in part by looking at their mockumentary equivalents. Supplementary readings will address the context and content of the mockumentary films screened.

In addition to regular attendance/participation and timely preparation of assigned readings, class participants will be expected to respond in writing to the primary text *Faking It*, to articles in the course reader, and to the films screened. Participants will also complete a final project: a mockumentary video or script. Grades and evaluations will reflect class participants' performance in all of the above arenas.

Porter 80J General Education Codes: Interpreting Arts and Media (IM); Humanities and Arts or Social Sciences Topical (T5) and the Arts (A)

Course Readings

Primary Text:

Faking It: Mock-Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality—Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight

Course Reader Excerpts:

Documentary Modes—Bill Nichols

A Short Guide to Writing About Film (excerpt)

Notes on Representation and the Nonfiction Film

Gimme Shelter

Rockumentary as Metadocumentary: Martin Scorsese's Last Waltz

Gender, Power, and a Cucumber: Satirizing Masculinity in

This is Spinal Tap

Interviews:

Ruth Ozeki

Christopher Guest

Woody Allen

Mapping, Not Tracing (from *Mapping Jewish Identities*)

Zelig (Film Quarterly)
American Jewish Filmmakers (on Woody Allen)

Fictional Seductions: The Watermelon Woman

Forgotten Silver (American Historical Review)

“A Bastard Union of Several Forms”: Style and Narrative in
An American Family—Jeffrey Ruoff

Bob Roberts (American Historical Review)

Images (David Holzman’s Diary)