

Syllabus
The Mockumentary Film
Porter 80J, Summer 2015
MW 5:30-9 PM, Porter C118

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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 take two tests on the primary text *Faking It*, the articles in the course reader, and the films screened. Participants will also complete a final project: a mockumentary video or a script for a mockumentary along with an artist's statement describing the project's intentions/goals/thematic concerns.

Film Texts (see Schedule)

Readings:

Faking It: Mock-Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality

by Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight

Course Reader

The book and reader are available through the Bay Tree Bookstore on campus.

Workload: during the academic year, a ten-week 5-unit course requires approximately 10-15 hours/week of work, including time spent in the classroom. When compressed into a five-week summer school session, a five-unit class should require double that amount of time. This class meets for 7 hours/week and carries regular reading assignments; in my estimation, the work for the class is likely to fall near the lower boundary of hours per week for most students.

Grades

Course requirements include regular attendance and focused participation in all components of the class. Participatory activities include speaking in class discussion or in small group breakout sessions, leading discussions on readings, and taking notes on the films. I expect you to come to class on time. Although I would like you to come to all 10 class meetings, I understand that illness, emergencies, etc. may preclude perfect attendance. You should know, however, that **if you miss 2 classes**, you will need to attend all other classes on time and in full in order to receive credit for the class (i.e. attendance at 8 of 10 classes in their entirety is required to earn credit). This policy recognizes that much of the substance of the course occurs in our class discussions. **There will be no make-up tests in this class.**

Grades will be determined as follows (if attendance requirement is met):

20% attendance/participation

20% first test

30% second test

30% mockumentary project

Accommodation Requests: If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me, preferably within the first week of the Summer Session. Contact DRC by phone at [831-459-2089](tel:831-459-2089) or drc@ucsc.edu for more information.

Plagiarism/Cheating/Respect: Any student found plagiarizing or cheating will receive a failing grade for the course. Students and teacher agree to conduct themselves with respect in the classroom. This includes not talking while anyone else is talking, refraining from using electronic devices during class, etc. Students may be asked to leave the classroom (and considered absent for the class) if they disrupt class proceedings.