

# NARRATIVE URBANISM

# **NARRATIVE URBANISM:** DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING FOR DESIGNERS AND PLANNERS

FACULTY:

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Fridays 11-1

Avery 115

All designs and plans are representations. Before designers and planners can intervene in urban space, they must learn the tools to observe and interpret urban dynamics and to create documentary evocations of existing conditions. This course focuses on developing qualitative tools of analysis and representation, informed by a deep dive into the history of mutual influence between documentary media and urban discourse over the past century.

Compelling narratives require recognizing and developing the specificity of your own perspective, your understanding of intended audience and context, and your politics. In this course, we will study a variety of documentary work produced in support of particular strategies of urban reform in the past century — especially films and videos, but also essays, oral and graphic presentations, and data visualizations — that have been conceived variously as art, journalism, marketing, or propaganda. And we will discuss student works-in-progress in a supportive workshop environment that will hone each student's voice and approach to narrative urbanism.

Working with data and material from work in studio, thesis research, or original research and documentation, each student will create a documentary project that explores some aspect of the relationship between the physical form and the social experience of cities and places and that focuses on conditions that cannot be captured by quantitative analysis or traditional data.

The first hour of each class will consist of a discussion of the previous week's reading and viewing in a seminar format. The second hour will consist of a workshop of fellow students' final projects in progress, with demonstrations and case study examples on particular techniques. Techniques, formats, and rhetorical strategies discussed will include: in-depth interviews, photography, videography and video editing, and the incorporation of text, graphics, and archival material. Each student is expected to take an active part in providing feedback on classmates' works-in-progress.

The primary medium and format we will be learning about is documentary film, but students are welcome to apply the lessons learned from the study of documentaries to other non-fiction formats, including but not limited to a non-linear video installation, illustrated essay, audio podcast, guided tour, or exhibition proposal. Potential topics for your project are wide open; please come to class with some ideas of what you might like to explore. Revising or expanding work from previous courses or studios is allowed, in consultation with the instructor (see Requirement #4). Original work conceived specifically for this course is encouraged; we will work collaboratively on defining the scope for final projects that can be realistically completed by the end of this course.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Provide students with an in-depth look at the mutual influence of urbanism and various traditions of documentary practice.
2. By the end of this class, each student will have created a work of creative non-fiction based on original research.
3. Each student will leave this class equipped to interpret, critique, and discuss documentary media of all kinds, especially as it relates to architecture, real estate, and urban planning.

## REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attendance at all classes is mandatory. Participation in group discussion and workshops is required and will be considered as part of your final grade.
2. Completion of weekly assignments, including entries in an online journal, in which you will write informal responses to readings and screenings and detail your developing plans for your final project.
3. Completion of a short work of creative non-fiction that explores some aspect of the relationship between the physical form and the social experience of cities and places. Each student will produce his or her own individual project, but everyone is required to serve as crew for a fellow classmate's production at least twice — recording sound, assisting with on-camera interviews, etc.
4. Revising or expanding work from previous courses or studios is allowed. However, if previous work has been assessed for credit, each student must present the work in its final graded form to the instructor before beginning the revision process. The scope of revision must be commensurate with the effort necessary to produce a wholly original piece of work.

## SEMINAR SCHEDULE

09.06.19	Urban Narratives & Narrative Urbanism
09.13.19	Montage City & Montage Cinema
09.20.19	Nonfiction & Social Reform
09.27.19	Verité & Dérivé / Production Workshop
10.04.19	Film as Evidence
10.11.19	Midterm
10.18.19	Film as Exploration vs Film as Placebranding
10.25.19	Guest Lecture
11.01.19	Return of the Real
11.08.19	The Future of Non-fiction Media (in architecture, planning, and design practice)
11.15.19	Postproduction Workshop: From a Rough Cut to a Fine Cut to a Final Cut
11.22.19	Desk Crits
12.06.19	Final Review



**SEMINAR  
SCHEDULE**





АРТЮР ПУКОВ. ДЗИГА ВЕРТОВ

Е. СВИЛОВА  
ПО МОНТАЖУ

ДВ ФИЛЕМ

СЛОВ

Г. ОПЕРАТОР

АССИСТЕНТ

КАЧЕВСТВО

# ЧЕЛОВЕК С КИНО АППАРАТОМ

ПРОИЗВОДСТВО  
ПРОИЗВОДСТВО  
ГОСКИНО  
ФАБРИКА  
ВУФКУ

2СТЕНБЕРГ2

# 1 URBAN NARRATIVES & NARRATIVE URBANISM

## **Part 1. Lecture / Discussion**

Course overview. Theoretical and historical introduction to narrative non-fiction and its relationship to urban discourse

## **Part 2. Workshop**

Discussion of expectations and requirements for final projects. Group brainstorming on potential project topics and approaches

# 2 MONTAGE CITY & MONTAGE CINEMA

## **Assignment** (complete before class)

Watch: *Manhatta* (1920) by Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand  
*Berlin: Symphonie der Grossstadt* (1929) by Walther Ruttmann  
*Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) by Dziga-Vertov

Read: "First Principles of Documentary" (1932-34) by John Grierson  
"Montage and Architecture" (1937-40, 1989) by Sergei Eisenstein and Yve-Alain Bois  
"The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction" (1930)  
by Walter Benjamin

## **Part 1. Lecture / Discussion**

Theory and practice of montage in film and urbanism

## **Part 2. Workshop / Demonstration**

Video editing technique: how to shoot like an editor

# 3 NON-FICTION & SOCIAL REFORM

## **Assignment** (complete before class):

Watch: *Housing Problems* (1930) by Edgar Anstey  
*The River* (1939) by Pare Lorentz  
*For the Living* (1949) by Leo Seltzer

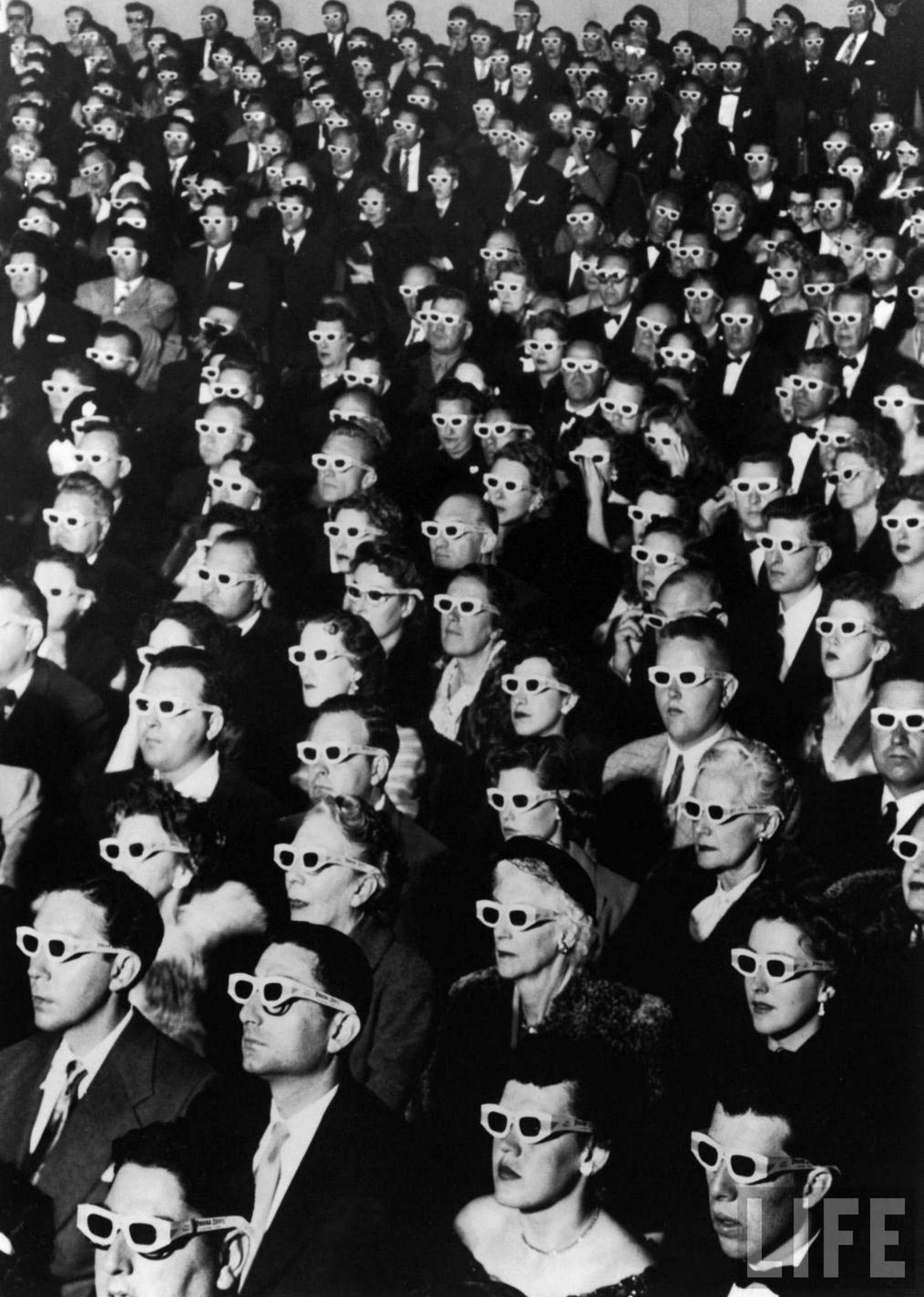
Read: pp. 151-173 of *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History* by Richard Barsam (1992)  
Assigned excerpts from *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) by Jacob Riis  
and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) by James Agee and Walker Evans

## **Part 1. Lecture / Discussion:**

Documentaries to change the world: regional planning on film

## **Part 2. Workshop / Demonstration:**

Preproduction technique: outlines / storyboards / scripts



LIFE

## 4 VERITÉ & DÉRIVÉ

### **Assignment (complete before class)**

Watch: *Chronique d'un été* (1961) Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin

Read: pp 1-69 in *The Situationist City* (1999) by Simon Sadler

### **Part 1. Lecture / Discussion**

Techniques, technologies, and politics of Cinema Verité, Direct Cinema, and other genres of observational documentary

### **Part 2. Workshop / Demonstration**

Text and the moving image: interviews, voiceovers, titles, and archival imagery

## 5 FILM AS EVIDENCE

### **Assignment (complete before class)**

Watch: *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980) by William H Whyte

Read: *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980) by William H Whyte

### **Part 1. Lecture / Discussion**

Technologies of verisimilitude: environment-behavior research, timelapse, surveillance

### **Part 2. Workshop / Demonstration**

Dealing with data: incorporating data visualization, infographics, and other forms of animation

## 6 MIDTERM REVIEW

Each student will present works in progress. Format for presentation should incorporate raw footage, edited sequences, an illustrated outline, and a work plan for the remainder of the semester

## 7 FILM AS EXPLORATION VS FILM AS PLACEBRANDING

### **Assignment (complete before class)**

Watch: *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles* (1971)  
*Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2006)

Read: assigned excerpts from *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (1971) by Reyner Banham

### **Part 1. Lecture / Discussion**

Reading a city "in the original" : how methods of observation and analysis influence representation. Techniques of marketing cities: case studies from Olympic bids and real estate and tourism advertising

### **Part 2. Desk Crits**

**All students should plan attend the Urban Design Program's Storytelling Symposium, 3pm in Wood Auditorium**



## 8 GUEST LECTURE

## 9 RETURN OF THE REAL

### **Assignment (complete before class)**

Listen: *99% Invisible* podcast episode on the design for the Mexico 1968 Olympics (2016) by Roman Mars

Watch: *Call it Home* (1996) by Keller Easterling and Rick Prelinger

### **Part 1. Lecture / Discussion**

Documentary craft after reality television. Contemporary non-fiction formats: multimedia journalism, podcasts, exhibits

### **Part 2. Workshop**

Group feedback session on works-in-progress

## 10 THE FUTURE OF NON-FICTION MEDIA

### **Assignment:**

Continue work on final project

### **Part 1. Lecture / Discussion**

The uses of video in architecture and planning practice: business development, community engagement, government relations, and more

### **Part 2. Workshop**

Group feedback session on works-in-progress

## 11 POSTPRODUCTION WORKSHOP

## 12 DESK CRITS

Desk crits with instructor and scheduled peer review with classmates in pairs

## 12 FINAL REVIEW

Screening / presentation of student work with invited guest critics



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