
Course title: Human Rights in Contemporary Documentary Films

Course convenors: Beja Margitházi

Class time and place: Tuesday 10:45-12:15, Múzeum krt. 6-8., lower level, room -135

Course type: seminar / **Max. 16 ppl.**

Course content: The course is part of 'UniVerzió' educational project of 18th Verzió International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival (Budapest, November 9-21., 2021). Verzió is the only festival of its kind in Hungary, organized on an annual basis since 2004. Its mission is to promote open society, democratic values, rule-of-law, freedom of expression, political and cultural pluralism, and to expose abuse and global human rights violations "through creative, quality documentaries".

By raising awareness to different forms of violations of human rights, the seminar plans to discuss some selected films of the festival's actual program on the topics of war zones, environmental exploitation, political injustice, sexual abuse and LGBTQ+ rights around the world. We aim to understand the idea of human rights through the lens of documentary films, and also the way these films can evoke empathy and solidarity, and in this way trigger social action and bring about real change. We are also interested in the community building power of the festival format, and its relations to different ways and forms of activism. The course is based on student presentations and group discussions.

Classes will imply four main activities:

- (1) reading and interpreting some key theoretical texts for an introduction to theories of human rights, documentary film and festivals
- (2) weekly preparation of individual reflections on the films watched
- (3) in-class analysis and group discussion of the selected documentary films
- (4) interviewing directors and/or writing short reviews for the festival blog about the selected films

Requirements:

1. **Class participation:** Continuous attendance and active participation in the group discussions is required (e.g. meaningful questions, notes, observations).
2. **Preparatory notes.** Students should watch the selected film for the respective class and send their notes and questions previously. Attention: the condition of attendance is sending the notes by the deadline.
3. **Group presentations:** During the semester each participant has to join a small group and prepare one in-class presentation related to a selected film. The type, exact topic and method of these presentations will be specified together with the instructor.

Grading: 30% (previous notes) + 30% (group presentation) + 20% (reviews and/or interviews) + 20% (in-class activity).

Four or more absences result in an incomplete for the course. Attention:

*A delay of 10 minutes results in an invalid presence.

*No student will receive a final grade if their class presentation is missing or they have not submitted all their preparatory notes.

*First class on the first week!

Selected Reading:

- *Gibney, Mark: *Watching Human Rights: The 101 Best Films*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- *Iordanova, Dina–Leshu Torchin eds.: *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*. St. Andrews Film Studies, 2012.
- *Nichols, Bill: *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.
- *Presence, Steve–Mike Wayne–Jack Newsinger, eds.: *Contemporary Radical Film Culture: Networks, Organisations and Activists*. Routledge, 2020.
- *Roy, Carole: *Documentary Film Festivals: Transformative Learning*,

Community Building & Solidarity. Vol. 1. Springer, 2016.

*Savic, Obrad ed.: *The Politics of Human Rights*. Verso, 1999.

*Tascon, Sonia M.: *Human Rights Film Festivals: Activism in Context*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

*Tascon, Sonia M.–Tyson Wils eds.: *Activist Film Festivals: Towards a Political Subject*. Intellect, 2017.
