

Code: FLMD-312.46 // FLMD-314E.46

Course title: Human Rights and Contemporary Documentary Cinema

Course convenors: Beja Margitházi

Class time and place: Wednesday 12:30-14:00, Múzeum krt. 6-8., lower level, room 34

Course type: seminar / Max. 9 + 9 ppl.

Course content: The course is part of 'UniVerzió' educational project of 20th **Verzió International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival** (Budapest, November 22–29., 2023). '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 such topics as 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 to explore the way these films can evoke empathy and solidarity, and trigger social action, bringing about real change. We are also interested in the community building power of the festival format, and its relations to different forms of activism.

Classes will imply four main activities:

- (1) reading and interpreting some key theoretical texts for introduction to theories of human rights and documentary film formats
- (2) weekly preparation of individual reflections on the films watched
- (3) in-class analysis and group discussion of the selected films
- (4) interviewing directors and/or writing short reviews for the festival blog about the documentary 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** (Canvas activity). Students should watch the selected film for the respective class and send their notes and/or questions previously. Attention: the condition of attendance is sending the notes by the deadline.
3. **Group work:** During the semester each participant has to join a small group (2-3 students) and prepare background materials related to a selected film. The type and topic of these will be specified together with the instructor.

Grading: 30% (in-class activity) + 30% (previous notes) + 40% (reviews and/or interviews, preparation of background materials).

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 Best Films*. 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 UP, 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.