Topics in Comparative Politics: Global Politics and Documentary Films
POS 469Z, Spring 2008
ERes Code, 469Z
Professor Erik P. Hoffmann

REQUIRED TEXTS (all paperbacks)
B. Nichols, INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTARY, Indiana, 2001
T. Christensen and P. Haas, PROJECTING POLITICS: POLITICAL MESSAGES IN
AMERICAN FILMS, M. E. Sharpe, 2005
E. Giglio, HERE’S LOOKING AT YOU: HOLLYWOOD, FILM, AND POLITICS, 2nd ed.,
Lang, 2007
M. Sachleben and K. Yenerall, SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE: UNDERSTANDING
POLITICS THROUGH FILM AND TELEVISION, Lang, 2004

WEEK
1/24 Introduction
Course objectives will be detailed, contentious issues will be raised, student expectations
will be voiced, and the first of many documentary films about 19th, 20th, and 21st-
century wars and the Cold War will be viewed and discussed.
Documentaries on the nature and lessons of war and on the Crimean and Spanish-
American Wars.

1/31 Documentary Films: Basic Questions
Nichols, INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTARY, Introduction and chapters 1-4.
Documentaries on the causes of World War I.

2/7 Documentary Films: More Basic Questions
Nichols, INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTARY, chapters 5 and 7-8 and pp. 179-190.
Documentaries on the conduct of World War I.

2/14 Typologies of Documentary and Nondocumentary Films
Nichols, chapter 6.
Christensen and Haas, Preface and chapters 1-3.
Documentaries on the consequences of World War I.

2/21 The Evolution of Documentary Films
Christensen and Haas, chapters 4-5 and 12 and pp. 291-332.
Documentaries on the causes of World War II.

2/28 More on the Evolution of Documentary Films
Giglio, Preface, chapters 1-3, and pp. 291-311.
Sachleben and Yenerall, chapter 1 and pp. 281-318.
Documentaries on the conduct of World War II.
3/6    Twentieth-Century Wars: An Overview  
Giglio, chapters 8-9.  
Christensen and Haas, chapter 6.  
Sachleben and Yenerall, chapter 7.  
Documentaries on the consequences of World War II.

3/13   The Nature and Origins of the Cold War  
A. Beichman, ed., CNN'S COLD WAR DOCUMENTARY: ISSUES AND  
CONTROVERSY, Hoover, 2000 (on main library reserve).  Read Forward,  
Introduction, and pp. 3-125 and 137-139.  
Documentaries on conceptualizations and causes of the Cold War.

3/20   The Cold War and Hot Wars (International and Civil)  
Christensen and Haas, chapter 7.  
Giglio, chapter 5.  
Documentaries on the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

3/27   NO CLASS (enjoy your vacation; no reading assignments)

4/3    Multifaceted Competition and Selective Cooperation between Cold War Superpowers  
Sachleben and Yenerall, chapters 2 and 3.  
Christensen and Haas, chapters 8-10  
Giglio, chapter 10.  
Documentaries on ideological and political rivalry and the strategic arms and outer space  
races, and on “peaceful coexistence” and “détente.”

4/10   The Interplay between International and Domestic Politics and the End of the Cold War  
Sachleben and Yenerall, chapters 5 and 8.  
Christensen and Haas, chapters 11 and 13.  
Documentaries on the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc.

4/17   NO LATER THAN THIS DATE EMAIL A DETAILED OUTLINE OF YOUR FINAL  
PAPER TO THE INSTRUCTOR FOR FEEDBACK; SEE WEEK 5/1 INSTRUCTIONS.  
Retrospect and Prospect  
Christensen and Haas, chapters 14 and 15.  
Giglio, chapter 11.  
Documentaries on terror and jihad in the post 9/11/01 era.

4/24   PREPARE FINAL PAPERS (review previous readings; no additional readings)  
Documentaries on the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars.
5/1 **LAST CLASS: FINAL PAPER DUE**

Your essay should present and defend YOUR VIEWS on the most important issues raised in the readings, lectures, documentaries, and postfilm discussions in this course. Your essay should be creative, reflective, and comprehensive and well-argued, well-organized, and well-documented (this is not a research project, narrative history, or descriptive summary of class materials). And your essay should include a typology of documentary and nondocumentary films; comparisons of different types of documentaries and of documentaries and nondocumentary films; and examples of all documentary and nondocumentary types (e.g., cf. Nichols, chapter 6 and Christensen and Haas, pp. 8-9).

Papers are to be a minimum 25 pages typewritten, double-spaced, and numbered with simple footnotes (e.g., Giglio, p. 5). NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED (unless you have a medical or family emergency, you notify the instructor before May 1, and you provide documentation to the instructor or dean soon thereafter).

**IMPORTANT NOTES**

**Course Objectives:** This course will explore the interplay between global politics and documentary films. We will focus on documentaries about World Wars I and II, the Cold War, and the post-Cold War years. The instructor’s chief objective is to develop students’ analytical and interpretive skills and students’ knowledge and understanding of the causes, conduct, and consequences of modern wars (e.g., global, international, regional, civil, proxy, nonstate). To achieve this objective we will critique many documentaries; compare their intent and content; and experience their visual and aural and intellectual and emotional effects. We will have postfilm discussions, occasional lectures, ample readings, and a major writing assignment.

**Course Requirements:** One analytical paper (25 pages minimum) based on the assigned readings, class discussions, lectures, and documentary films (see week 5/1 instructions for specifics). The paper will count 75-80% and class participation will count 20-25% of a student’s course grade. There will not be a final examination.

Regular and prompt class attendance is expected and essential to benefit from and contribute to this course. Class attendance WILL be taken, and students with more than TWO unexcused absences will have their final grades lowered TWO FULL GRADES for the third absence and ONE FULL GRADE for every absence thereafter (e.g., A to C, then C to D, and D to E). Excused absences must be documented in writing to the instructor or dean and may be for medical or family emergencies.

Keeping up with the readings on a weekly basis is also expected and essential. Students who are well prepared for class will benefit much more from the documentaries and will contribute much more to class discussions. Furthermore, students will be expected to incorporate into their papers key information presented and discussed in all classes. And students will be expected to view some documentaries outside of class.

It will be a VERY FIRM POLICY NOT TO GIVE “INCOMPLETES” in this course.
On the nature and consequences of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations), see the important UAlbany booklet, COMMUNITY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, 2007-2010, especially Appendix C.

All required texts should be purchased from Mary Jane’s or elsewhere as soon as possible. Remember that bookstores often return unsold books to the publisher before the semester ends. If necessary, split the expense with a fellow student.

The instructor’s email is eph@albany.edu and his office hours are: Mondays, 1:00-2:30 (downtown); Thursdays, 1:00-2:30 (uptown); and by appointment. The uptown office is the Rockefeller College contact office, Humanities 016 (call 442-3112 for an appointment); the downtown office is Richardson 284 (442-5376). If you cannot visit or call during these hours, simply talk to the instructor before or after class and arrange a mutually convenient time to get together—quite possibly over coffee or lunch. No calls at home, please.