**Curated History: Found Footage in Documentary Cinema**

M.A. Seminar, 2 Credits

Winter 2023, CEU, History Department

**Oksana Sarkisova**

Research Fellow, Blinken OSA at CEU

Visiting Professor, History Department

[sarkisovao@ceu.edu](mailto:sarkisovao@ceu.edu)

Office Hours: by appointment

This course invites students of history and those in related fields interested in visual analysis, memory studies, and audio-visual material to survey classical and experimental documentary films and discuss their approaches to working with found footage. Introducing the basics of film analysis, the course puts special emphasis on the use of historical arguments through analyzing film structure, editing, sound, use of archival materials, and other means of constructing an argument by visual means. The students are invited to discuss how found footage is used to make or support historical claims and how compilation films confer historical credibility on, or challenge, established historical accounts, how they contribute to public debates and engage with memory politics. The course also introduces hybrid, cross-genre works that blur the borderline between fiction and non-fiction, engaging with questions of ethics in historical documentaries and their affective impact. Special attention is paid to the appropriation and redefinition of visual imagery in different contexts. Last but not least, it develops analytical, rhetorical, and visual skills and enhances students’ visual literacy and their ability to expand their research in new, interdisciplinary ways.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop critical analytical skills of contextual visual analysis for studying the means and modes of visual expression that shape historical argument

- Acquire knowledge of historical and contemporary documentary productions

- Promote the ability to critically analyze concepts relating to documentary, construction of historical argument, and visual memory politics

- Advance students' visual literacy skills and critical thinking about questions of historical representation

- Develop understanding of editing and sound design as well as ethical implications of using found footage

 - Practice writing skills for working with historical arguments in visual form.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:

Class participation means regular attendance, in-class comments and questions related to the weekly topics and readings.

Upon agreement with instructor, course assignments could be incorporated to the students’ final project. Students are welcome to request individual consultations to clarify their methodology and the structure of the final paper and seek advice regarding relevant literature. Recommended readings in the syllabus might give some orientation but do not substitute individual research. Rules of academic honesty apply.

Film review: Choose a compilation film (either on your own or the one not yet discussed in class) and write a 2 page review, discussing the narrative construction of the film, choices of editing, sound, and commentary.

Final paper: The final paper is ca. 10 pages in length (double-spaced, font 12) and should be based on original research addressing a particular historical theme or period represented in compilation films or films strongly relying on found footage. The theme and choice of films should be agreed upon with the instructor. The paper should be written and submitted individually. The analysis should demonstrate your ability to analytically approach the visual form of a historical argument, and to critically review the films’ narrative construction and engagement with the conventional representation of the given historical theme.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

Participation in class discussions 20%

Group presentation 10%

Film review 25%

Final paper 45%