

070.346 – Cinema and Ethnography

Johns Hopkins University, Spring 2014

Anand Pandian, Department of Anthropology* / TA: Gustavo Valdivia†

Seminars Fridays 1:30-3:50 PM, Gilman 377

Screenings Wednesdays 8:30-10:00 PM, Hodson 211

A stroll down the street, words with a lover, the sound of a sudden explosion: over the last century, films have changed the very way that we imagine ourselves, relate to each other, inhabit the world around us. Everything feels, so often, like it already happened in a scene from some film whose name you can't quite remember. This phenomenon, so widespread in the contemporary world, is one of particular interest to anthropologists, who devote themselves to a careful examination of ordinary, sensory, and intimate life. In this course, we move back and forth between cinematic and ethnographic evocations of experience. We will pay close attention to the narratives and characters that animate ethnographic films, and the visual and sensory qualities that enliven ethnographic writing. Our goal, in thinking and working between these two media, is to develop a sense of the techniques that compose their experiential worlds.

Materials – There are five books required for the course (Agee, Taussig, Gardner, Sasikumar and Helmreich), all but one of which (Sasikumar) are at the campus bookstore. Other readings for the course will be available under “Course Content” on the course Blackboard site. Eight weeks over the course of the semester, there will be film screenings on Wednesday nights.

Requirements (and % of overall grade) – Attendance at all course meetings and scheduled film screenings is required, as is active participation in class discussion (20%). Be forewarned: at some point over the course of the semester, I will call on you to kick things off! By midnight each Thursday, you will post a brief paragraph (<200 words) on Blackboard, broaching a topic of discussion on the week's films/texts (20%). You will write three essays (4-5 pp 2x space) over the semester (20% each): the first two on assigned topics, and the third comparing an ethnographic book and film of your choice. All assignments are due on Blackboard by midnight on their due date (instructions to follow); no extensions or excuses, and late assignments will be marked down 10% per day. On academic integrity, please consult ethics.jhu.edu.

Schedule

Friday, January 31	Introduction <i>Buffet: All You Can Eat Las Vegas</i> (dir. Schull, 2006, 26 min.)
Wednesday, February 5	<i>The Ax Fight</i> (dirs. Asch & Chagnon, 1985, 30 min.)
Friday, February 7	Kirsten Hastrup, “Anthropological Visions” Lucien Taylor, “Iconophobia” Bill Nichols, “A Reassessment of <i>The Ax Fight</i> ” Anand Pandian, “Imagination: Cinematic, Anthropological”
Wednesday, February 12	<i>Nanook of the North</i> (dir. Robert Flaherty, 1922, 79 min.)

* Office hours Tuesdays 1:30-3:30 PM, Macaulay 111 / pandian@jhu.edu

† Office hours Thursdays 1:00-3:00 PM, Gilman Atrium / gvalco@gmail.com

- Friday, February 14 Bronislaw Malinowski, "Subject, Method, and Scope"
 Robert Flaherty, "How I Filmed *Nanook of the North*"
 Anna Grimshaw, "The Innocent Eye: Flaherty, Malinowski,
 and the Romantic Quest"
Nanook Revisited (dir. Claude Massot, 2004, 55 min.)
- Friday, February 21 James Agee, *Let Us Praise Famous Men*
- Wednesday, February 26 *To Render a Life* (dir. Ross Spears, 1992, 90 min.)
- Friday, February 28 Agee (continued) and Spears
 FIRST PAPER DUE
- Friday, March 7 Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*
 George Marcus, "The Modernist Sensibility in Recent
 Ethnographic Writing and Cinematic Montage"
- Wednesday, March 12 *Forest of Bliss* (dir. Robert Gardner, 1986, 90 min.)
- Friday, March 14 Readings from the *Visual Anthropology Review* debate over *Forest
 of Bliss* (Vols. 4-5, 1988-89)
- Friday, March 28 Robert Gardner and Akos Ostor, *Making Forest of Bliss*
- Wednesday, April 2 *Les Maitres Fous* (dir. Jean Rouch, 1954, 29 min.)
- Friday, April 4 Jean Rouch, *Cine-Ethnography*, selections
 Paul Henley, *The Adventure of the Real*, selections
 SECOND PAPER DUE
- Wednesday, April 9 *Subramaniyapuram* (dir. M. Sasikumar, 2008)
- Friday, April 11 M. Sasikumar and A. Pandian, *Subramaniyapuram: The Tamil
 Film in English Translation*
- Wednesday, April 16 *Leviathan* (dirs. Castaing-Taylor and Paravel, 2012, 87 min.)
- Friday, April 18 Karen Nakamura, "Making Sense of Sensory Ethnography"
 Selected reviews and interviews regarding *Leviathan*
- Friday, April 25 Stefan Helmreich, *Alien Ocean*
- Wednesday, April 30 *Christmas Birrimbirr* (Miyarrka Media, 2011, 42 min.)
 Interview with *Birrimbirr*'s Australian aboriginal filmmakers
- Friday, May 2 Jennifer Deger, "In-Between" and "The Jolt of the New:
 Making Video Art in Arnhem Land"
- Monday, May 12 THIRD PAPER DUE