

## **WJEC Film Studies GCE Specification (from 2010)**

### **FM4: VARIETIES OF FILM EXPERIENCE – ISSUES AND DEBATES**

This unit contributes to synoptic assessment. Understanding will be fostered through:

- studying complex films from different contexts, extending knowledge of the diversity of film and its effects
- exploring spectatorship issues in relation to a particular type of film
- applying key concepts and critical approaches

#### **(b) Spectatorship and Documentary:**

The study of the *impact on the spectator of different kinds of documentary* – for example, the overtly persuasive and the apparently observational film. Examples may be taken from both historical (such as 30s and 40s British Documentary or 60s Cinéma Verité) and contemporary examples, including work on video. A minimum of **two** feature-length documentaries should be studied for this topic.

## **AQA Media Studies Specification (from 2015)**

### **UNIT 1 – MEST1 – INVESTIGATING MEDIA**

The aim of this unit is to enable candidates to investigate the media by applying media concepts to a range of media products in order to reach an understanding of how meanings and responses are created. Candidates will firstly investigate a wide range of media texts to familiarise themselves with media language and media codes and conventions and then embark upon a cross-media study.

#### **The cross-media study**

The knowledge and understanding of media concepts and contexts gained through the investigation and comparison of individual media texts will then be developed by making a detailed case study chosen from a range of topics. Centres should choose a topic area that communicates with audiences across the media platforms; a topic which includes media products that can be classified, perhaps loosely, as a genre.

By making a detailed investigation of the texts themselves, their similarities and differences and the processes and technologies used to create them within different media, candidates will gain a deeper and broader understanding of the contexts of their production and reception.

#### **Documentary and hybrid forms:**

Candidates should investigate how documentaries are presented across the media, primarily in (audio-visual) broadcasting and cinema platforms, but *also the treatment of these in newspapers and magazines, the internet and portable electronic devices*. They should study the production and reception of documentary products including the ways in which audiences may consume, participate and respond to documentaries and their coverage.

## **FILM STUDIES A2 – Documentary & Spectatorship**

### **DOCUMENTARY MODES WORKSHEET**

#### **What are Modes?**

Based on the academic work of Dr Bill Nichols, they are basic ways of organizing texts (in this case, documentary film) in relation to certain recurrent features or conventions. Modes progress chronologically with the order of their appearance in practice, documentary film often returns to themes and devices from previous modes. Therefore, it is inaccurate to think of modes as historical punctuation marks in an evolution towards an ultimate accepted documentary style.

Modes are not mutually exclusive - there is often significant overlapping between modalities within individual documentary features and it is therefore difficult to find examples that adhere only to one mode.

**TASK; Investigate the examples given for each of the documentary modes (watch the clips / films and read the info) Provide another example for each mode with appropriate links and info.**

***Documentary film has six dominant modes:***

#### **Poetic Documentary**

The poetic mode will seem more allusive and use 'associative' editing to capture a mood or tone rather than make an explicit argument about the subject. Evoking a mood rather than stating or asserting things directly. Occasionally you may question whether you are indeed watching a 'documentary'!

1. Does not use continuity editing, sacrifices sense of the very specific location and place that continuity creates
2. Explores associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions
3. Opens up possibility of alternative forms of knowledge to straightforward transfer of knowledge

#### **Examples**



##### ***Rain* (1929)**

Directed - Mannus Franken & Joris Ivens

Information -

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rain\\_\(1929\\_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rain_(1929_film))

YouTube -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPD2COK3>

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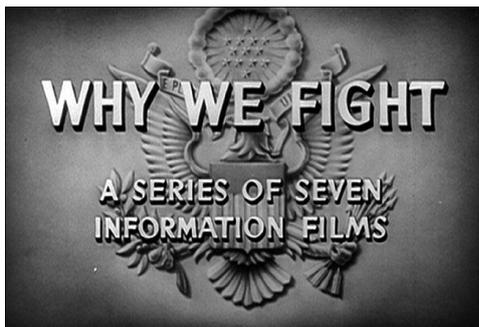
### **Expository Documentary**

Expository documentaries on the other hand do use explicitly rhetorical techniques in order to make points about aspects of actuality. This mode often uses voiceover and has a relatively straightforward 'show and tell' structure to guide the viewer through the material.

Many documentaries follow this template (especially TV documentaries) where the voice over provides the connection, the logic, between what might be disparate shots. The expository documentary is didactic in nature.

1. Arose from dissatisfaction with distracting entertainment qualities of the fiction film
2. 'Voice of god' commentary sought to disclose information about historical world & see that world afresh, even if ideas seem romantic or didactic
3. Addresses viewer directly, w/titles or voices
5. It takes shape around commentary directed toward the viewer; images illustrate with the verbal commentary building a sense of dramatic involvement around need for solution to a problem.
7. Editing generally establishes/maintains rhetorical continuity more than spatial/temporal

### **Examples**



**Why We Fight** (1942-45)

Director – Frank Capra

Information –

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Why\\_We\\_Fight](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Why_We_Fight)

YouTube -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mm3GsSWKyso>

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## **Observational Documentary**

The direct address of expository may be contrasted with the observational mode, where the documentary appears to take a detached 'neutral' stance towards its subject matter.

Overtly 'interpretive' techniques such as voiceover or music (common in other modes of documentary) are avoided in favour of an apparent capturing of reality as it unfolds.

1. Arose from available lightweight portable synchronous recording equipment & dissatisfaction with moralising quality of expository documentary.
2. It allowed filmmaker to record unobtrusively what folks did when not explicitly addressing the camera.
3. It stresses the non-intervention of filmmaker
4. Filmmaker concedes control of events more than any other mode.
5. Editing does not attempt to construct time frame or rhythm, but enhances impression of lived or real time.
7. It uses indirect address, speech overheard, synchronous sound, relatively long takes.

## **Examples**



### **Hospital (1970)**

Director – Fred Wiseman

Information -

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hospital\\_\(1970\\_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hospital_(1970_film))

YouTube -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMeHdf7baQ4>

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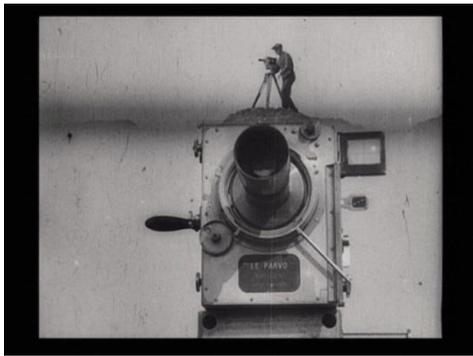
## **Reflexive Documentary**

The reflexive mode is a mode that attempts to offer a commentary on the means of representation. A reflexive documentary uses techniques that encourage the viewer to question the very idea of 'documentary as a category or mode.

This questioning can also lead to a critique of other things such as 'cinematic realism'.

1. It is the most self-aware mode - its reflexivity makes audience aware of how other modes claim to construct "truth" through documentary practice. i.e. it brings the attention to the artificial process of the film-making.
2. It uses many of devices of other modes but sets them on edge so viewer attends to device as well as the effect.
3. It tears away veil of filmmakers' illusory absence

## **Examples**



### **Man with a Movie Camera (1929)**

Director – Dziga Vertov

Information -

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man\\_with\\_a\\_Movie\\_Camera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_with_a_Movie_Camera)

YouTube –

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Fd\\_T4l2qaQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Fd_T4l2qaQ)

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## **Participatory / Interactive Documentary**

Participatory is a documentary mode where the filmmaker does not remain aloof from the subject matter, but actively engages with it- by openly participating or interacting with the people and institutions on show.

This documentary form is far removed from the detached (observational and poetic) or the straightforward didactic (expository).

1. This mode wants to engage with individuals more directly while not reverting to classic exposition interview styles
2. It allows filmmaker to account for past events via witnesses and experts whom viewer can also see
3. Archival footage becomes appended to these commentaries to avoid hazards of reenactment & monolithic claims of voice of god commentary

## **Examples**



### **Bowling For Columbine (2002)**

Director – Michael Moore

Information –

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowling\\_for\\_Columbine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowling_for_Columbine)

YouTube -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whL2LIRkhXk>

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## **Performative Documentary**

The most confusing of the modes (often confused with participatory) performative raises questions about filmmaker and subject performance – the notion of the filmmaker and their subjects *actively creating* the documentary by performing certain actions.

**The performance of the documentary maker is central to the way the documentary is constructed.**

1. Like Reflexive Documentary, it raises questions about knowledge
2. Endorses definition of knowledge that emphasises personal experience
3. Tries to demonstrate how understanding such personal knowledge can help us understand more general processes of society
4. May "mix" elements of various documentary modes to achieve link between subjective knowledge/understanding of the world, and more general understandings, i.e. historical ones.

### **Examples**



#### **Kurt & Courtney (1998)**

Director – Nick Broomfield

Information –

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt\\_%26\\_Courtney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_%26_Courtney)

YouTube -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAt04wID4Mo>

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**TASK;** after studying each mode, reflect on which one you feel is;

- a) the most interesting
- b) the most 'honest' method of working
- c) the most effective at achieving a sense of realism

*Please provide justification for our responses and examples from the texts you have looked at to support your ideas.*

**OBSERVATIONAL DOCUMENTARY – A Comparison**

Both of these documentaries can be broadly labelled as **observational**; however, the aims and techniques applied are entirely different. *Watch the following two scenes and write down the differences between both approaches. Does one appear to be more **mediated** than the other? Why?*



*Educating Yorkshire (2013)*



*Être et avoir (2002)*

**Camera (angle, movement, framing)**

**Editing**

**Sound (diegetic / non-diegetic)**

**Mise-en-scene**

**Spectator experience**

## A2 FILM STUDIES

### FS4 – Documentary & Spectatorship

#### Être et Avoir (To Be & to Have) (2002) Dir. Nicholas Philibert / France

*Être et Avoir* (2002) is a good case study because it employs traditional observational documentary techniques, which is unusual in contemporary documentary making. Nicholas Philibert's methods directly relate to those of the direct cinema movement, although his visual style perhaps draws inspiration from the poetic work of the Free Cinema Movement.



Director	.....	NICOLAS PHILIBERT
Photography	.....	KATELL DJIAN, LAURENT DIDIER
Sound	.....	JULIEN CLOQUET
Editor	.....	NICOLAS PHILIBERT
Music	.....	PHILIPPE HERSANT

**Synopsis** In a village schoolhouse in Auvergne, teacher Georges Lopez teaches 13 children, ages ranging from about four to 12. Against a landscape of mountains and farmland, from driving snow to rain to sun, the children gather in Lopez's warm and colourful classroom, to read, write dictation, cook, and sort things out. At home, the older ones do homework with parents after their chores. At year's end, they look ahead to the next, visiting the middle school and meeting the little ones coming in the fall. As they learn sums and adjectives, with Lopez's help, they also learn to live side by side.

[www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)

### FILM LANGUAGE & NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Before watching the whole film, you are going to analyse the use of film language and narrative techniques in *Être et Avoir*. In pairs, watch the first 20 minutes of the film (pausing after 10 minutes to clarify your notes). One member of the group should also time the duration of the shots in the opening three minutes.

#### **TASK ONE**

In pairs divide the questions 1-4 between you – *perhaps one person concentrates on sound and the other on images*.

- 1) Describe the type of shots used. Do any dominate? Where is the camera placed and why?



## Defeat for teacher who sued over film profits

*The Guardian 29<sup>th</sup> Sep 2004*

It was a moving portrayal of everyday life in the rural classroom, and became an huge and unexpected French cinema success when it was released in 2002.

And, as the star of the prizewinning documentary film, *Etre et Avoir*, Georges Lopez felt it was only fair that he should get a cut of the €2m (£1.3m) profits.

The director disagreed, triggering an acrimonious lawsuit which has raised uncomfortable ethical questions about the exploitative nature of fly-on-the-wall film-making. This week a Paris court ruled that the schoolteacher, who allowed his tiny one-class village school to be filmed in lessons and at play over the course of a year, had no grounds to demand a €250,000 (£170,000) payment.

Insistent that his rights had been abused, Mr Lopez said yesterday that he would appeal. Had Mr Lopez won, French film unions warned, the case would "spell the death of the documentary, undermining the crucial principle that subjects should not be paid to participate."

Mr Lopez's decision to sue the documentary's makers for a healthy share of the profits soured the popular image of him as a modest, selfless schoolmaster. But he claimed that the film's success rested entirely on his personality, and that his teaching methods, made famous by the film, were his intellectual property.

Mr Lopez said he felt exploited, and launched the legal suit in the face of "lack of respect shown by the cinema world". He refused a one-off payment offered by the documentary makers of €37,500, insisting he should be treated like an "actor" in the film and be properly remunerated.

A court in Paris ruled that Mr Lopez deserved no payment for taking part in the project. In a judgment which analysed what constitutes a documentary, the court decided that the teacher had no grounds to argue that he should be treated as an actor because he was filmed as he went about his everyday professional duties. The court also found he had given consent for his image to be exploited in accepting to be filmed. Mr Lopez could not be considered a "co-author" of the film because he had not taken part in decisions on how to shoot the documentary.

"The film revealed the great professional skill of the teacher, his thoughts on his profession and the effectiveness of his teaching methods," the court ruled, but none of these were "qualities that could be protected by intellectual property legislation". French film-making unions were relieved. The Association of French Film-makers said: "The nature and the economics of documentary are incompatible with any principle of remuneration."

The film's director, Nicolas Philibert, visited around 300 schools before selecting the classroom in the village of Saint-Etienne-sur-Esson, Auvergne, where he was impressed by Mr Lopez's dedication and deep attachment to his pupils. After the film came out, the prime minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, requested a private viewing. Philibert spent seven months filming Mr Lopez, 58, for *Etre et Avoir* (named after the two key French verbs, meaning to be and to have), and admitted feeling "very hurt and deeply distressed" by the legal action, which he viewed as a "betrayal".

French newspapers agreed, reporting the initial claim beneath the headline: "To be and to have: the teacher would rather have." Claire Hocquet, who represented Philibert, said after the ruling: "I am delighted the tribunal ruled that reality should not be paid for." She added: "To pay someone who appears in a documentary would be to treat them as an actor, and that would be the death of documentary film-making."

But the legal dispute over the film's profits is to continue later this year, when the families of seven of Mr Lopez's 11 pupils are going to court to seek payment of €20,000 each for their parts in it.

### Exam pointers for Documentary and Spectatorship.

Always answer the **question**.

**Discuss the question throughout the essay and don't feel the need to answer it in your first paragraph.**

Use the words from the question in your response.

Conclude by referring to the question.

Always demonstrate your **wider knowledge**.

When mentioning the modes of the documentary reference (Bill Nichols).

Discuss mediation within documentary and tie it in with notions of the 'real'.

When introducing a text for the first time give it some context. For example; *Hospital* - the Direct Cinema movement **OR** *Rain* –poetic cinema.

Always use **micro detail** and refer to a specific **scene**.

When discussing a specific scene mention the close-up shot and how it positions the spectator.

Discuss how the non-diegetic sound is used to influence the audiences' opinion (e.g. Philip Glass etc.)

Mention how images of reports and newspaper clippings are juxtaposed by talking head interviews (e.g. Biggie & Tupac).

Always use **film language** in your answer.

Expository documentary	Juxtaposed
Voice of God	Verisimilitude
Mediation	Point of view
Spectator/audience/viewer	Poetic mode
Direct cinema	Notions of the 'real'
Performative mode	Audience positioning

You know this already!

Always reference the director and release date.

Go into the exam with three documentaries ready to use and micro detail from two or three scenes from each film.

Respond with a confident voice. Don't doubt yourself!

**Good Luck!**

EXAM PREPARATION:

We have studied a variety of documentaries. You need to go into the exam with detailed knowledge of three of four of these documentaries. You will need to be able to recall and analyse micro detail from two scenes, from each of your chosen documentaries. It is now time for you to make the choice. Which three or four documentaries are you most comfortable in analysing with reference to an exam question?

Past Exam Question	Documentary example 1 Scene choice with micro detail.	Documentary example 2 Scene choice with micro detail.	Documentary example 3 Scene choice with micro detail.
‘A common experience for the spectator when watching a documentary is to be manipulated by the filmmakers.’ How far do you agree with this statement? [35]			
‘Documentaries should never be trusted.’ How important to the spectator is the sense that they should trust the documentary filmmaker? Refer to the films you have studied for this topic. [35]			
‘The best documentaries are the ones that make their point of view clear.’ How far do you agree? [35]			
To what extent can it be said that spectators approach documentary films with greater critical awareness than when they watch fiction films? [35]			

## Useful Resources

### Books

*Introduction to Documentary* – Bill Nichols

Indiana University Press; 2nd edition ISBN-13: 978-0253222602

*Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* - Erik Barnouw

OUP USA; 3 edition ISBN-13: 978-0195078985

*Documentary: The Margins of Reality (Short Cuts)* - Paul Ward  
Wallflower Press ISBN: 1904764592

*Imagining Reality* - Kevin Macdonald and Mark Cousins  
Faber & Faber Film ASIN: B0056HIOFU

*Teaching Film and TV Documentary (Teaching Film and Media Studies)* Ed. Sarah Casey Benyahia  
British Film Institute ISBN-10: 1844572234

### Websites

BFI Screen Online <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/education/id/1271387/>

MediaEdu <http://media.edusites.co.uk/>

Internet Movie Database <http://www.imdb.com/>

Nick Broomfield's Official website <http://www.nickbroomfield.com/>

The Quatsi Trilogy <http://www.koyaanisqatsi.com/>

Nicholas Philibert Official Website <http://www.nicolasphilibert.fr/>

The Guardian Documentary Site <http://www.theguardian.com/film/documentary>

Sheffield Doc Festival <http://sheffdocfest.com/>