Documentary

- Fascination with reality
- People, places, events, issues……
- “In Feature films the director is God. In Documentary films God is the director”
  --Hitchcock
Examines Reality through actuality

• Actuality: that which is real: existing conditions or facts
• “Documentaries explore actual people in actual situations” .................Rabiger
• uses actuality to examine some aspect of reality
• “creative treatment of actuality” ........Grierson
What makes a good documentary

• Good Idea
  • rooted in reality
  • interesting
  • accessible, makeable
  • relevant
  • you care about it (a lot )
Documentary Elements
-Albers

- People--compelling and engaging
- Issues--that resonate
- Events--that excite and are meaningful
- Created Elements--explain complex ideas
- Good, well organized story
Documentary Elements

- Image
  - Technical
    - Exposure
    - Color
    - composition
  - Aesthetic
    - Creates environment
    - Enhances content
Image

John Corigliano
Academy Award Winning Composer
Documentary Elements

• Sound
  Technical
  Presence
  Clarity
  no distortion
  Aesthetic
  Creates environment
  Reinforces content
Sound
Joe Lulloff and Deborah Moriarty
Cesar Franck Violin Sonata Excerpt
People

• Interesting
• looks
• what they say
• how they say it
• Unusual, unique
People

- Quality/ability
- Available
- Notoriety
- What happens to them
People

‘Please allow me to introduce myself’

‘Human kind cannot bear very much reality’
‘Please allow me to introduce myself’

Lyric from Sympathy with the Devil by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards
What happens to them
‘Human kind cannot bear very much reality’
“Please Allow Me to Introduce Myself”
Characters

• Persona
• What they represent
• what they do/achieve
• what they can tell us
• notoriety
• credibility
Other Characters:
from “A Gift of Hope”
Other Characters: from Arabs, Jews, and the News
Karl Gude
In the Moment
Elderly Instruments: All Things Strings
Stan Werbin-Owner

Stan Werbin
owner and co-founder
Issues

• May be socially critical
  • some say must be..................

• What matters to you ?

• What do you really care about ?
Issues

- unfolding evidence
- may be contradictory
- objectivity vs point of view
- interpret events
- cannot avoid
- “a subjective construct”...........Rabiger
Issues

• need for fairness
  • present opposing points of view
  • strengthens your assertions
• Issues usually involve/affect people
  • we use characters to illustrate/humanize
Arabs, Jews, and the News: Open
AJN Open--a premise

• Obama’ speech to the Arab world 2009
  • Easier to start wars than end them
  • Easier to blame others than to look inward
  • Easier to see what is different about someone than to find the things we share
AJN Open-complexity

- American people know what Islam is?
- Don’t go to Fox or CNN for what Arabs think
- “Encourage Jews to go after me”
- Palestinians “lust for Jewish blood”
- Never thought we’d see it again
- Israel was “justified”
- Chanting “death to the Jews”
- Hateful things being said at that rally
- This is America-people should be able to say whatever they want
Argument

• Present elements of the issue to promote understanding
• if x, then y
• both sides promotes understanding
• complexity is difficult in media
• keep the argument simple
Some assumptions for Arabs, Jews and the News

- Assume some audience knowledge of the war
- Very Complex situation
  - Not try to explain the complexities
- But may need to add explanation/context
Arabs, Jews, and the News
Argument In Arabs, Jews, and the News

• Context
  • July 16 2006 (need graphic) Gates of Hell CNN
  • Lebanon 5th straight day artillery and air strikes
  • Waltzer Criticizes International Media
  • Map, standup identifies Beirut, Hezbollah
  • 2 soldiers --Lailah Farah
  • LBC 20 killed, 50 wounded one attack,
    • 130 killed, 300 wounded overall
  • Performer dramatizes the effect of bombing
  • Waltzer -- Israel strategy--attack Hezbollah wherever it was
  • We see civilian damage-radio station
  • Waltzer--explains Hezbollah using civilian shields
  • Sarah....Bombing destroys your soul..........................
Arabs, Jews, and the News
Argument In Arabs, Jews, and the News

- Start at 3:02
- Lailah presents dates of previous wars
- Waltzer explains situation (Israeli Point of view)
  - rockets
  - war crime
  - justifies Israeli action
- Rap about israel attack (Arab point of view)
  - defensively
  - only terrorists
  - democracy--Holocaust
- Israeli official--eliminate Hezbollah on Northern border
- Waltzer Israel justified, but “not done well”
Moments

- That which illustrates
- makes the abstract concrete
- the idea of a-roll
- we wait and watch
- recognize and react
Moments

• No Control--unlike fiction film
• cannot recreate the moment
Moments

• Prepare
  • lights, audio, camera--prepared
  • understand the event/issue/person

• Need good crew
  • recognize the moment
  • capable of reacting
  • not lazy or disinterested
Moments

- Explain for previous clip:
  - That which illustrates
  - makes the abstract concrete
  - the idea of a-roll (let the piece breathe)
  - we wait and watch
  - recognize and react
Created Elements

- Essential Story Elements
  - More complex than single event
  - Interpretation of events
  - Requires connections
  - Not immediately visible
- Themes--abstract
  - Must be created through editing
Phrasing
from Inside Jazz
Abstract Ideas about Phrasing structure

• start idea-stop idea

• do it when we talk--push out certain words

• **Actuality**--breath “bo,do, do woo.........................”

• dictated in the music

• jazz you just have to know

• “your” interpretation-feel the lyric

• in phrase, lots of things articulated

• **Actuality** “You ........don’t know...............”
Abstract Ideas about Phrasing structure

- Can be taught, can be passed on, is passed on
- **Actuality** of teaching---class w/ Wynton Marsalis
- Like you talk---shape ideas
  - what’s wrong with you/I love you
- **Actuality**--Power of silence
  - with humor, but a powerful idea
- Most crucial in any music
- **Actuality**--Greatest living trumpeter demonstrates with virtuosity
- “A million ways
Created Elements

• Variety of sources
  • interview multiple persons - same topic
• examples
• breaths
## Traditional Story Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Context/Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>Plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compelling characters</td>
<td>Rising tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protagonist-hero</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antagonist</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not necessarily all elements.
Exposition

- Setup—often in beginning
- Info needed to follow the story
- who, what, where, when, why
  - just enough ..........
  - usually in beginning
  - Can be sprinkled throughout—usually is
Exposition/Context

- dialogue
- narration
- visually
- Sound/music
- text
Exposition in non fiction

from

Trouble the Water

by

Tia Lessin and Carl Deal
Exposition in non fiction

Trouble the Water

by

Tia Lessin and Carl Deal

Sundance Best Doc 2008

• Tell story inside out, not outside in
• Filmed by inexperienced citizen
• Just a camcorder
• We learn about them from what they do.....and what they say
• Intercutting narrative VO with actuality
• footage inside the storm
Exposition in non fiction

*Trouble the Water*

by

Tia Lessin and Carl Deal

Sundance Best Doc 2008

- When
- 300,000 refugees
- Levees
- Race
- Intro shooters
- Hurricane imminent
- Mandatory Evacuation
- No Public transportation
Exposition in non fiction

*Trouble the Water*

Inside the storm
Trouble the Water

- Context
- Theme(s)
- Rising Action/tension
Trouble the Water
is Democratization of the Media
JJ Abrams TED Talk
Narrative Spine--Train

- What moves the story forward
  - move train forward and then detour for
    - exposition
    - characters
    - explanation/understanding
  - The “middle”
The Train
Compelling Characters in Man on Wire
Man on Wire--Phillippe Petit

- Twin towers fascination
  - this is the narrative spine
- we learn about his story-the Hero
- we see reactions
- we begin to see his motivation
- Storyteller gradually reveals.....................
Man on Wire
Sydney Harbor
Flirt with Death
How to tell it

• Showing is preferable to telling
• Begin strong/powerfully/interestingly
• unfold events
  – reflect the plot and the theme
• through behavior reveal the character and conflict
• Keep it simple
How to tell it

- Modulate tempo, mood
- Emphasize relationships
- Unpredictable
An Intimate Thing
Intimate Thing from *Inside Jazz*

- No Narration........setup through events and interview
- Great Music--top of the jazz world
- Relationship
  - friendship-connection--love
    - intimacy
    - listening
- Conflict
  - not be selfish
Ending
Inside Jazz
Ending/Resolution

- build to end
- Tie things up
- “reprise” themes
  - love, family, hangin’, history, performance
- revisit characters
Inside "story" we can recognize and understand our own motivations, because we are the people in the stories.

When we enter into "story" we find the story inside ourselves.

"Story" defines humanity.

— Universal Mirror

Livo and Rietz