

## ANTHROPOLOGY 483: SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY

Fall 2010

Friday 9:30-12:30

*If it were possible to say it with words, the films would be useless.*

Artavazd Ashoti Peleshyan

### Professor

Lisa Stevenson

Office Hours: T/TH 11:30-12:30

214 Peterson

This course will explore ways of knowing made available through ethnographic and experimental film (e.g. *Forest of Bliss*, Robert Gardner; *Wedding Camels*, David and Judith MacDougall, *Reassemblage*, Trinh T. Minh-ha; *Okay Bye-Bye*, Rebecca Baron)—we will ask what and how such films communicate. Does ethnographic film generate different forms of knowledge than the ethnographic text? Or better, *how* do such films convey (in ways that complement and challenge written anthropological texts) the embodiment of the human subject and thus take seriously forms of sensory experience often missed in textual accounts? And what is it about film as an iconic and indexical mode of representation that allows a particular kind of access to that embodied experience? The fact that the primacy of language and text is subverted in many of the films we will study lead us to question the role of the senses and emotions in knowledge production more generally. Attending to potentially non-word based, non-propositional forms of knowing poses some risks to received epistemologies and we will ask why, in the end, the visual causes so much anxiety within the discipline of anthropology.

### General Information

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)) for more information).

If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss the situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 398-6009 (online at [www.mcgill.ca/osd](http://www.mcgill.ca/osd)) before you do this.

### Course Materials

The Course Packet is available from Copie Nova, 1015 Sherbrooke. Additional (recommended) readings can be found on Web CT.

*Cross-Cultural Filmmaking: A Handbook for making documentary and ethnographic films and videos* by Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor is available at Paragraphe Books.

### **Course Requirements**

Attendance at all classes is required, as is close reading of all assigned course material by the class date in question. The class is conducted as a seminar, rather than a lecture series. As such, regular attendance and your contributions to class discussions **and WebCT discussions** are extremely important and will constitute **25% of your grade**.

In addition to your participation in class there are two assignments:

1. A film journal, to which you must contribute six short reviews throughout the semester. This journal will constitute. You should write one-or-two page double-spaced critical reviews for four of the films that we see, relating the films to the themes and the reading of the course as a whole, and especially to the reading of that week. Rather than attempting the impossibility of summarizing the film *in toto* you should hone in on a particular moment in, or aspect of, a film: a cut, a shot, a sequence, a character, a line of dialogue, a title, the cinematography, the editing etc. The “closer” **and more descriptive** your review, the better. You are encouraged to quote from the reading. By way of preparation for these reviews, it is crucial that you take detailed notes as you watch the films, and that you write the reviews as soon as possible after seeing the films (and having completed the accompanying reading), as films rarely stay fresh in the mind. Wherever possible the films we will see are on reserve at the Humanities Library.

Reviews are due a week after viewing the film. Make sure the name of the film you are reviewing is in your title. Also note that students have the right to write in French. The film journal will be worth **25% of your grade**.

2. A “sensory” ethnography. This project will be discussed in detail in class. Your sensory ethnography will be accompanied by a 4-5 page artist’s statement that should relate the project to the themes of the class. You may choose to do an ethnography in sound, film or photography or, alternatively, to interview someone of your choice. The sensory ethnography will be worth **50% of your grade**.

**In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.**

### **Guidelines for Submission of Written Work**

Word process all written work; handwritten papers will not be accepted.

Double-space, using 1 inch margins

Number your pages.

Staple your pages together.

At the top of the first page include your name, date, and essay title.

Proofread and spell-check before turning in papers.

### **Absences and Lateness**

If you have to miss class it is your responsibility to get materials, assignments, and class notes from other students. Please do not be late to class. It is disruptive and will be noticed.

### **Use of Electronic Devices**

The use of all electronic devices is strongly discouraged. If laptops must be used, please use them in such a way that you do not disturb your neighbour.

### **Office Hours**

Office hours and office locations of the teaching assistants will be provided during the first weeks of class.

### **General Outline**

The following is a general outline of the course. Some modification may occur in the course of the semester.

Friday September 3rd	Introduction
Friday September 10 <sup>th</sup>	Not Possible to Say
Friday September 17 <sup>th</sup>	Anthropology of Sound
Friday September 24 <sup>th</sup>	Iconophobia
Friday October 1 <sup>st</sup>	Feminist Revisionings
Friday October 8 <sup>h</sup>	Ecstatic Experience
Friday October 15 <sup>th</sup>	Another way of Telling
Friday October 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Time and Experience
Friday October 29 <sup>th</sup>	Silence
Friday November 5 <sup>th</sup>	Memory and Senses
Friday November 12 <sup>th</sup>	Uncertainty and Knowing
Friday November 19 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Class Cancelled</i>
Friday November 26 <sup>th</sup>	Presentations
Make-Up Class TBA	Presentations

**There will be evening screenings at 7 pm at 3475 Peel Street, Room 101, Cultural Studies Building on the following dates:**

Thursday September 23rd  
 Thursday October 21st  
 Thursday November 4th

### **Detailed Outline**

**Friday September 3<sup>rd</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

Films:

Gardner, Robert, "Forest of bliss." (DS486 B4 F6 DVD)

### **Friday September 10<sup>th</sup> Not possible to Say**

#### **Films:**

Marshall, John, "Joking Relationship." (DT1058 K86 S56 DVD)  
 Appel, Ariel, "Minor Keys"  
 Leocha, Anna, "Flow Child"  
 Duong, Ashley "TBA"

#### **Readings:**

Stoller, Paul, "The Scholar's Body."  
 MacDougall, David, and Lucien Taylor, "Visual Anthropology and the Ways of Knowing."  
 Robert Gardner package  
 Barbash, Ilisa, "Out of words; A conversation with Robert Gardner."

### **Friday September 17<sup>th</sup> Anthropology of Sound**

#### **Soundscapes:**

Steven Feld, *The Time of the Bells*  
 Gillian Chilibeck  
 Nicole Rigillo

#### **Readings:**

Feld, Steven, and Donald Brenneis, "Doing anthropology in sound."  
 MacDougall, David, and Lucien Taylor, "Subtitling ethnographic films."  
 Conner, Steven, "Edison's teeth: touching hearing."  
 Calvino, Italo, "A King Listens"

### **Friday September 24<sup>th</sup> Iconophobia**

#### **Films:**

Mini-lecture by Eduardo Kohn *Signs and Sensory Ethnography*  
 Baare, Barbash, Steiner, Taylor, "In and Out of Africa" (GREEN VHS I025)

#### **Screening:**

Taylor, Lucien, "Sweetgrass" (SF375.4 M9 S94 DVD)

#### **Readings:**

Jackson, Michael, "Knowledge of the Body"  
 Taylor, Lucien, "Iconophobia"  
 Lane, Anthony, "Hard Days and Nights"  
 Interview with Lucien Taylor--Link on WebCT

### **Friday October 1<sup>st</sup> Feminist Revisionings**

#### **Films:**

Trinh, Minh-Ha, "Reassemblage." (RED R054)  
 Fake Fruit Factory - Chick Strand (PN1997 A1 T734 DVD)

#### **Readings:**

Sacks, Oliver W., "To see and not see."  
 Chen, NN, "Speaking Nearby."  
 Leimbacher, Irena, "An introduction to the films of Chick Strand."

Leimbacher, Irena, "An interview with Chick Strand: Irina Leimbacher."

### **Friday October 8<sup>th</sup> Ecstatic Experience**

**Films:**

Rouch, Jean, "Les Maitres Fous" (RED M130)

Deren, Maya, "Meshes in the Afternoon." (RED E016 VHS)

**Readings:**

Mauss, Marcel, "Techniques of the Body"

Stoller, Paul, "Artaud, Rouch, and the cinema of cruelty."

Taylor, Lucien, "A conversation with Jean Rouch."

### **Friday October 15<sup>th</sup> Photography: Another Way of Telling**

**Films:**

Baron, Rebecca, "How little we know of our neighbors."

MacDougall, David and Judith, "Photo Wallahs"

**Readings:**

Berger, John, Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling*

### **Friday October 22<sup>nd</sup> Time and Experience**

**Films:**

MacDougall, David, and Judith MacDougall, "To Live With Herds"

**Screening:**

Vertov, Dziga, "The Man With the Movie Camera"

Menken, Marie, "Go! Go! Go!"

**Readings:**

Barbash, Ilisa, et al., "Reframing ethnographic film."

Benjamin, Walter, "The storyteller"

Vertov, Dziga, "We: Variant of a Manifesto"

"The Man with a Movie Camera"

"From Kino Eye to Radio-Eye"

Taussig, Michael, "Tactility and Distraction"

**Menken, Marie reading**

### **Friday October 29<sup>th</sup> Silence**

**Film:**

Sevcikova, Jana, "Old believers." (DJK28 R87 S83 DVD)

**Screening:**

Baillie, Bruch, "Here I am" – See Link on WebCT

**Readings:**

Kidron, CA, et al., "Toward an Ethnography of Silence."

Basso, Keith, “ ‘To Give up on Words’: Silence in Western Apache Culture”

**Friday November 5<sup>th</sup> Memory and Senses**

Film: TBA

Screening: Kohn, Eduardo, Lisa Stevenson, “El Reflejo”

Readings:

Marks, Laura, “The Memory of the Senses”

Seremetakis, Nadia C., “The Memory of the Senses, Part I: Marks of the Transitory”

Crapanzano, Vincent, “The Life History of Anthropological Fieldwork”

**Friday November 12<sup>th</sup> Uncertainty and Knowing**

Films: Baron, Rebecca, “The Idea of North.”

Baron, Rebecca, “Okay Bye Bye.”

Readings:

Tagg, John, “Evidence, truth and order.”

Mitchell, WJT, “What Do Pictures "Really" Want?”

**Friday November 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Friday November 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Make-up Class TBA**

**Class Cancelled**

**Presentations**

**Presentations**