Filming the Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis
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This inter-disciplinary course is designed to introduce students to the history of the Black freedom struggle in St. Louis and to the complex and multiple ways historic narratives are constructed. We will explore the political, economic and cultural history of Black St. Louisans who challenged racial segregation in housing and work, fought white mobs in city streets, and battled the destruction of Black communities by federal urban renewal and public housing policies. Students, working with a historian and a filmmaker, will research and make a documentary film on a piece of St. Louis’ crucial contribution to the Black Freedom Struggle in America. With a thematic focus on the African American battle for rights, this course aims to uncover multiple narratives of the city’s history.

You are NOT required to attend the Labs on Tuesdays. But you can stop by to get advice on using cameras, lights, and other technology, and on story-telling with film.

You are REQUIRED to attend the seminars every Thursday. Come to seminar having read and thought about the assigned reading for that week.

The Black freedom struggle took place in the courts, but also in workplaces, churches, public parks, city streets, and private homes. David Harvey, writing about “the right to the city,” calls for collective efforts “to change ourselves by changing the city.” The Black freedom struggle in St. Louis, stretching from the battle over segregation ordinances in the teens through the public protests over police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, is a powerful example of the profound connections between urban space, public narratives, and political struggles.

This course will provide students with the opportunity to write history through visual sources, to construct a historical narrative on film. Students will be introduced to the technical skills involved in making a documentary film, and to the archival research and oral history skills required to document the past. Students will gather evidence—they will interview sources, explore key sites of political activism in the city, and trace documents in archives—and use film to chronicle a past event. The course will introduce students to a variety of archives, including the Hampton film archive and the Missouri History Museum archives. Students will learn to make history into a visual narrative.

We are bringing together documentary filmmaking and history research to draw attention to the multiple narratives (many long-neglected) of African American and urban history, and to the multiple approaches to presenting history. Sources for urban history often are highly visual; documentary film is a useful and creative medium to explore the
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complexity of narrative and visual sources. Through this course, students will learn history by making films.

Course Requirements:

This course consists of a weekly seminar and a lab class.

You are NOT required to attend the Lab class on Tuesdays. You are REQUIRED to attend the weekly seminar on Thursdays.

Each week, two students will lead seminar discussion of the required readings. Discussion and class participation will count for 20 percent of your final grade.

You are expected to attend all seminars and to come to class prepared to discuss the week’s assigned readings.

Assignments:

1. Zine: Due: Week 2

2. A review essay. Please write a 2- to 3-page review of one of the books, a secondary source, we have read. In your essay, explore how the book might pertain to your final film narrative. The paper should include proper citations—footnotes or endnotes—for all direct quotes, paraphrases, or ideas taken from primary and secondary sources. Due: week 6.

3. Documentary Films
   a. Due: week 4 - bio pic
   b. Due: week 15 - final history narrative (with assigned drafts due as noted.)

Plagiarism is a serious offense. It is the submission of another person's work or thought as if it were one's own, either by direct copying or by insufficient acknowledgement of the source of a quote or of ideas, even if paraphrased. Copying sentences or ideas from the internet is plagiarism, even if the website does not state a source. All use of ideas and texts, whether the source is a book, an article, an essay, a website, a professor or any other source, must be cited in footnotes or endnotes. Plagiarism is explicitly prohibited by this and all other major universities.

Students are bound by the University policy on academic integrity in all aspects of their coursework.
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Grades:
  Class Participation: 20%
  Review Essay: 20%
  Bio pic: 10%
  Film: 50%
Tentative Syllabus:

Week 1:
1. Seminar: Image & representation
   - Introductions, Read Syllabus
   - Representations and the Question of Truth

Week 2: What is History? What is documentary film?
1. Lab Class:
   Documentary film structure
   - Demo: Adobe Premier
   - Due: test clips
2. Seminar:
   Zine presentations
3. What is truth? What are facts?
   - Read:
     - E.H. Carr, What is History (Chapters 1-4)
     - Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History. (Chapters 1 and 3)

Week 3: Local Organizing, Mobilizing Activists
1. Lab Class:
   Working with camera, Signing Out cameras, Consultation on Bio-Pics.
2. Seminar:
   **Due: Story Structure Worksheet**
   Gwen Moore presentation
   - Read:
     - Clarence Lang, Grassroots at the Gateway, chapters 2-5
     - John Dittmer, Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi (selected sections)

Week 4: Collecting Stories
1. Lab class:
   Organizing Files
   - Demo: Adobe Premier
   - Due: BIO PIC draft
2. Seminar: Grassroots Protests
   Introducing a topic: Emmet Till films
   - Read:
     - John Dittmer, Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi (selected sections)
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- Lois M. Christensen and Barbara Hatcher, Oral History: Learning About History Through First Account Narratives
- John Wright, Disappearing Black Communities and Discovering African-American St. Louis

Week 5: The Struggle in St. Louis
1. Lab Class:
   Audio, Work on Bio-Pic
2. Seminar: Class Trip: Griot Museum
   Read:
   Clarence Lang, Grassroots at the Gateway, chap. 6.
   Keona Ervin, Gateway to Equality, chap. 2

Week 6: Sources and Evidence
1. Lab Class:
   **Due: Story Structure**
2. Seminar:
   Field Trip: Missouri History Museum Archives

Week 7:
1. Lab Class:
   Logline, Work on Bio-Pic
2. Seminar:
   Show Bio-Pics

Week 8: Black Power
1. Lab Class: NO CLASS, Fall Break
2. Seminar:
   Show Film Clips
   Read:
   - Huey Newton Talks to the Movement about Black Panther Party, Black Panthers Speak, ed. Phillip Foner

Week 9:
1. Lab Class:
   Independent editing: Individual Meetings
2. Seminar
   Individual Meetings
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Week 10: Beyond Black and White
1. Lab Class:
   Special Effects
2. Seminar
   - Eyes on the Prize Selections

Read:
- Stanley Alten, Audio in Media (selected chapters)
- Miguel Melendez, We Took to the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords (selected sections)
- The American Indian Movement: Hearing Before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Internal Security Act

Week 11: Policing and Surveillance
1. Lab Class:
   Close Captions
2. Seminar:
   - Due: second draft of film

Read:
- Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, “Birmingham: People in Motion” (1966) in Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader
- Wiretap transcript of Phone Conversation b/w Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King (1963) in Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader

Week 12: Decline of the Movement
1. Lab class:
   Independent editing
2. Seminar:
   Watch film

Read:
Lang, Grassroots at the Gateway, chap,8

Week 13: No Class—Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: Post-Civil Rights Economy
1. Lab Class:
   Log line due
   Individual Meetings
2. Seminar:
   Individual Meetings
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Read:

Week 15:
1. Lab Class: Film Screenings and Discussion
2. Seminar: Film Screenings and Discussion

Public Film Screenings: TBA