

Filming the Past – the case of Portuguese Documentary Film

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Fall Term, AY 2021-2022

M.A. level course

Credit value: 8 ECTS

Elective

Consultation: during office hours or by appointment at catcostacatarina@gmail.com

BRIEF INTRODUCTION:

The course will focus on the way the past and memories in the present have been represented in documentary film. We will use the case of Portuguese contemporary history in its relation with both the colonial past and other international circulation of people, migrants or refugees. This course will profit from Portugal's geographical, socio-political and historical positioning: as a historically connected and connecting country to other spaces, dialoguing with emerging epistemologies, such as those of Brazil, and articulating theoretical debates of both central and more recently developed anthropologies. Documentary film in its ideas of evidence, ethics and politics highlights historical discourses and uses of the past. We will deconstruct critically the rhetoric and forms of representation, as well as different levels of discourse about those historically constructed moments, focusing on the impact those representations have on individuals and communities. The films and the concomitant discussions focus on the cinematically constructed ambiguities of the world we live and lived in. Memory, the reconstruction of the past and the ideological rhetoric's will relate with specific events, social groups and places. The sessions will be organized together with Cinemateca, The Portuguese Film Archives (ANIM).

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to: {list ideally 4-6 outcomes connected to the course and program-level goals}:

- 1) better understand and critically define documentary cinema and its language as a field of studies;
- 2) recognize the specificity of non-fiction film a genre of cinema that constructed ideas of truth, authenticity and evidence;
- 3) understand and analyze the artistic, cultural and political contexts associated with non-fictional

film;

- 4) critically discuss how these films construct identity, memory, and historical knowledge;
- 5) understand the different forms of narration and the ways direct discourses are used;
- 6) locate the forms of cinematic rhetoric through considering how the research, camera work and editing were done.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS:

The course's learning activities will comprise seminar-style classroom discussions (based on the films) and will include visits to several film archives.

ASSESSMENT:

- Written reports from viewing films or visiting archives (3) 10% each
- One Final Essay Assignment: students will hand in a 4,500-5,000 word-final essay focused on one of the main topics of the course contents – 70%

COURSE MATERIALS:

Use this section to explain where materials will be available for students. E.g. explain if the course uses a textbook that students should borrow from the library, or state that readings will be available on the e-learning platform or in printed readers. Please indicate here a general list of readings that will be used.

- *Under Strange skies* (2002), Directed by Daniel Blaufuks (documentary)
- *Fantasia Lusitana / Lusitanian Illusion* (2010), Directed by João Canijo (documentary)
- *48* (2009), Directed by Susana de Sousa Dias (documentary)
- *Natureza Morta / Still Life* (2005), Directed by Susana Sousa Dias (documentary)
- *Cartas a Uma Ditadura / Letters to a Dictator* (2006), Inês de Medeiros (documentary)
- *Quem é Barbara Virgínia? / Who is Bárbara Virginia?* (2017), Directed by Luisa Sequeira (documentary)
- *Deus Pátria Autoridade* (1975), Directed by Rui Simões
- *As Armas e o Povo / Arms and the People* (1974), Directed by a Collective
- *Revolução* (1974), Directed by Anna Hatherly
- *Um Outro País / Another Country* (1999), Directed by Sérgio Treffaut (documentary)
- *Linha vermelha/ Red Line* (2011), Directed by José Filipe Costa (documentary)
- *Film Archives from the Ethnology Museum* (CEE with Gottingen Institute)
- *Falamos de António Campos/ Let's Talk about António Campos* (2009), Catarina Alves Costa (documentary)

- *Film Archives from the Ethnology Museum* (East Timor, Ruy Cinnatti, Brasil, Vitor Bandeira, Portugal, CEE with Gottingen Institute)
- *Li Ké Terra* (2010) João Miller Guerra e Filipa Reis (documentary)
- *Lisboetas /Lisboners* (2004), Directed by Sérgio Tréfaut.
- *Arquitecto e a cidade velha/ The Architect and the Old Village* (2003) Directed by Catarina Alves Costa
- *Terra Franca/ Ashore* (2019), Directed by Leonor Teles (documentary)
- *A Rua da Estrada / A Road as a Street* (2016) Directed by, Graça Castanheira (documentary)

CLASS SCHEDULE:

The course will discuss several cinematic rhetoric's related to different historical moments.

1. Nationalistic Representations: the case of II World War refugees

1.1. During the Second World War, Lisbon was a corridor for refugees going from occupied territories to America. This film tells two parallel stories about exile. Through a narrated memoir and photographs, the tale of a German Jewish family that decided to stay in Portugal is recounted. The larger, more sociological account of artists who used Lisbon's escape route is told as well, using historic footage and written memoirs by some of the era's leading intellectuals including Heinrich Mann (*The Blue Angel*) and Alfred Doebelin (*Berlin Alexanderplatz*). Excerpts from the film *Under Strange Skies* (2002), by Daniel Blaufuks.

1.2. Images and sounds that expose the duality of Portugal during the days of World War II: a peaceful, god-loving, rural country, providing an escape route for over one hundred thousand European refugees to the Americas; and a political and cultural elite that disguised their Nazi inclinations just enough to play its neutral role in international politics. Excerpts from the film *Lusitanian Illusion* (2010), by João Canijo.

2. Forms of resistance and Repression during Salazar's regime

2.1. Based on photographs taken on the arrest of political prisoners during the Portuguese dictatorship (1926-1974), *48* aims to convey the mechanisms by which a dictatorial regime seeks to self-perpetuate. What can a portrait photograph reveal about a political system? . Excerpts from the film *48* (2009), by Susana de Sousa Dias.

2.2. Within an image, another one is always hiding. Using only archive footage and without words, *Still Life* aims to rediscover and delve into the opacity of images made during the 48 years (1926-1974) of Portuguese dictatorship (news, war footage, propaganda documentaries, photos of political prisoners and also previously never seen rushes) in order to foster new interpretations. Excerpts from the film *Still Life* (2005), by Susana Sousa Dias (2005).

3. Women and gender narratives

3.1. A hundred letters written by Portuguese women during the Salazar dictatorship were found by chance in a second-hand bookshop. By confronting, today, the women who wrote these letters with the ghosts of the past, and revealing important archive material, the film takes us on an in-depth journey through the obscurantism that dominated Portugal for more than 50 years. Excerpts from the film *Letters to a Dictator* (2006), Inês de Medeiros.

3.2. A rescue of memories, a search in search of the filmmaker Bárbara Virgínia. This is a work of human and emotional archeology that brings to light the life and work of a woman who made much of the cinema culture and was forgotten. Barbara was the first Portuguese filmmaker to make feature film and the only woman to make a film in the Portuguese dictatorship. This film was in the competition in the first edition of Cannes in 1946. Excerpts from the film *Who is Bárbara Virginia?* (2017), by Luisa Sequeira.

4. Performing the revolutionary movement: activist cinema

4.1. The Carnation revolution of April 1974 was represented in a series of impressive films made by that time. The first report of the Revolution and an impressive depiction of its time was *As Armas e o Povo / Arms and the People* shot in 1974 and edited in 1975. The film was presented without directorial credit as a production of a group calling themselves “Workers for the activist cinema. All these films, also the one made by artist Anna Hatherly represented a form of cinematic activism. Excerpts from the films: *Deus Pátria Autoridade* (1975), by Rui Simões, *Arms and the People* (1974), directed by a Collective, *Revolution* (1974), by artist Anna Hatherly.

5. Artists, Filmmakers and the Media looking at the revolution

5.1. The Portuguese Revolution seen through the eyes of some of the most important photographers and filmmakers that witnessed the event. Their dreams and expectations and what came out of the revolution. With outstanding historical footage and interviews

that reflect on the theme, so many years after. Excerpts from the film *Another Country* (1999), by Sérgio Trefaut.

5.2. In 1975, Thomas Harlan's crew filmed Torre Bela's homestead occupation, in the center of Portugal. Three decades later, the film revisits this emblematic film of the Portuguese revolutionary period: in which way did Harlan interfere in the events that seem to naturally develop in front of the camera? What was the impact of the film on the lives of the occupants and the memory of that period. Excerpts from the film *Red Line* (2011), by José Filipe Costa.

6. Popular Culture, ethnography and rurality: a non-temporal landscape

6.1. In the Ethnology Museum in Lisbon we will find archives from Portugal's social life shot during the 1970's. These films represent the ways scientific missions represented the country as a rural, extemporal and melancholic place. Excerpts from the *Film Archives from the Ethnology Museum* (CEE with IWF Gottingen Institute).

6.2. A portrait of the filmmaker António Campos, a documentary filmmaker that portrayed the rural Portugal. Through interviews with its protagonists the film shows how cinema from the 1960's and 1970's objectified and represented popular culture and the nation. Excerpts from the film *Let's Talk about António Campos* (2009), Catarina Alves Costa.

7. Social Sciences, Archives and the colonial world

7.1. In the Ethnology Museum in Lisbon we will find archives from East Timor, Brazil, Mozambique, Angola. These films represent the ways scientific missions objectified and represented different social groups. Excerpts from the films from the IWF/ Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film.

8. The World we live on: Migration, the City

8.1. The story of two Cape Verdean immigrant descendants who live in Portugal but have no legal documents. They are torn between the desire to be a full Portuguese citizen and the obstacles they find in their day to day. Proud of being who they are they keep on dreaming of their future reflecting their wishes for a better life. Above all, Michael and Ruben lead us to one question: What kind of identity has a stateless person? Excerpts from the film *Li Ké Terra* (2010) João Miller Guerra e Filipa Reis.

8.2. The Lisboners are people from Brazil, Guiné-Bissau, Nigeria, China, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, Ukraine, Moldavia, Russia, and Estonia. The film challenges prejudice and

stereotypes and created forms of awareness and new patterns of thought to understand the presence of immigrant communities in Europe by giving voice to the multiple ways the diverse migrants' communities and individuals live and negotiate their way in the city and in Portuguese society, in pursuit of a migratory project, sometimes undefined, certainly adaptable and often endless. Excerpts from the film *Lisboners (2004)*, Directed by *Sérgio Tréfaut*.

9. Post-colonial reconfigurations: new and old relations

- 9.1. Alvaro Siza, a famous Portuguese architect, is called to coordinate the rehabilitation of the monuments and architectonic heritage of the colonial Old Village in Santiago, one of the African islands of Cape Vert. This project creates great expectations among the local population, who envisages it as a way of improving their quality of life. The film explores the relationship and the conflict between these two worlds, two cultures, with different ideas of what modernity and progress mean and reflects the idea that tradition is a new value of the modern era. Excerpts from the film *The Architect and the Old Village (2003)* by Catarina Alves Costa.

10. Contemporary Portugal: the peripheric becomes center

- 10.1. *Ashore* portrays the life of a singular fisherman in an ancient riverfront community near Lisbon. Divided between the quiet solitude of the river and the family ties that wash him ashore, the film follows Albertino Lobo, as nature renews itself with each season cycle.
- 10.2. A reflection on how landscape it's not constructed with the old dichotomies between rural and urban, industry / agriculture, the film travels around Portuguese roads, with its very peculiar landscapes - a seismograph of passing time. Excerpts from the film *A Road as a Street (2016)* by Graça Castanheira.