

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**FILM 409 (L01): Special Topics in Film Studies: Documentary as Vocation**

**Spring 2025: May 1 to May 7 (excluding May 3-4)**

**Lecture: Th,Fr,Mo,Tu,We 9:00 to 17:00**

*The University of Calgary, located in the heart of Southern Alberta, both acknowledges and pays tribute to the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which include the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprised of the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta (districts 5 and 6).*

<b>Instructor:</b>	Jennifer Baichwal
<b>Office:</b>	SS 250
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:ahwatts@ucalgary.ca">ahwatts@ucalgary.ca</a> – Andrew Watts, TA
<b>Web Page:</b>	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
<b>Office Hours:</b>	TBA

### **Course Description**

Jennifer Baichwal is a world-renowned documentary filmmaker who has been in practice for over 25 years. In this course, Baichwal will teach students about the challenges, theories, and lessons that she has learned from making over ten feature films. The course format will consist of screenings, wide-ranging discussions, and one major project, written and filmed. Students will also learn techniques of cinematography, filming, and lighting.

### **Additional Information**

Students are expected to attend a mandatory screening of *Watermark* (Baichwal, 2013) at the Globe Cinema Sunday May 4, at 2:00pm. If you are not able to attend this mandatory screening, please contact the instructor to make alternate arrangements.

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

### **Objectives of the Course**

By the end of this course, students should be able to

- To critically assess documentary images
- Understand basics of lighting and sound capture for small crew documentary projects

### **Textbooks and Readings**

No required textbooks or readings.

### **Learning Technologies and Requirements**

In order to complete courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for online synchronous courses only).

If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See <https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it>

### Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

**Laptops or tablets are fine for in-class activities but not during screenings. No phones allowed during screenings or discussions.**

Please familiarize yourself with the University's policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at <https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/4ba66d5bd43b422ba2e9ab3d6331d5b0>, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

### Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due	Grade
10%	<b>Participation:</b> Students are expected to both lead group discussions after screenings as well as actively engage with discussions in class. Preparing and leading a group discussion for an assigned film will amount to the majority of the participation grade. Please see last pages of course outline for details on group assignments.	ongoing	Letter grade
20%	<b>Media diary:</b> Following each full day of classes, students will write a one-page, informal response to the screenings, readings, and/or lectures. These reflections will be written on students' own time and provide the opportunity to meditate on the complex problems addressed in the course. You may try to work through a concept that you found especially generative or confusing. Citations and direct references to the readings are not necessary for this assignment (unless you're quoting a reading word-for-word). Think of this assignment as a journal for yourself, and a space to work through your ideas. I recommend spending no longer than half of an hour to an hour maximum on each entry.	May 4	Pass/fail
35%	<b>Short film:</b> Building on insights from class, including discussions, screenings, and camera/sound workshop, students will make a film <b><u>no longer</u></b> than 5 minutes using their phone for image, sound, and editing. Films will be screened in class on Wednesday May 7.	May 7	Letter grade
35%	<b>Final paper:</b> 6-8 page double spaced paper that elaborates on one of the themes from discussion and/or the film(s) screened.	May 21	Letter grade

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

**Note:** You must complete all assignments and exams or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

If you are going to miss a required course component, please reach out to the instructor or TA as soon as possible.

### **Submission of Assignments**

Please submit all assignments by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox. Include your name and ID number on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act* <https://www.ucalgary.ca/hr/work-compensation/working-ucalgary/freedom-information-and-privacy-act>. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

### **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

### **Student Accommodations**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/). Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students may provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. The decision to provide supporting documentation that best suits the situation is at the discretion of the student. Medical documentation is not required and cannot be requested as a form of documentation from a student; however a student may choose to provide it. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: <https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/uofcregs/university-regulations/additional-regulations>

### **Expectations for Writing**

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/2c2d1ce47b8c4d008aec9cc3da49876e>

### **Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale**

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For

components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, *letter grades will be used for written assignments, participation, as well as students' final films.*

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding performance	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent performance	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>	Approaching excellent performance	<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>	Exceeding good performance	<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good performance	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>	Approaching good performance	<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>	Exceeding satisfactory performance	<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory performance	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>	Approaching satisfactory performance	<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	0 - 49.99%	0%

\* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

## Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages, A.I. content generators, or visual media.

Students must adhere to the instructor's course policy regarding the use of A.I. generated content in course work. Unsanctioned use of A.I. generated content in course work may be reported as academic misconduct.

**Unless specified in assignment description, the use of A.I. is not permitted for this course.**

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end**

**and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

### **Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation**

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

### **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/eb50d7931bba4da5942de21f51d1f514>

### **Research Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

### **Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal**

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/3488b21e33da4a5cae45d287808e93d5>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see  
<https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/c53034e7579d4455815e37ce1c1f80da>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see  
<https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/uofcregs/university-regulations/reappraisal-term-work>

### **Student Support Services and Resources**

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

## Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

### May 1

Introductions from Jennifer Baichwal and students. Screening: *The True Meaning of Pictures: Shelby Lee Adams' Appalachia* (Baichwal, 2002). Post film discussion led by Jennifer.

Break for lunch

Screening: *Manufactured Landscapes* (Baichwal, 2006). Post film discussion led by group one

### May 2

Screening: *Payback* (Baichwal, 2012). Post film discussion led by group two.

Break from lunch

Screening: *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch* (Baichwal, 2018). Post film discussion led by group three.

### May 4

Free (mandatory) screening of *Watermark* (Baichwal, 2013) at the Globe Cinema. Screening begins at 2pm.

### May 5

Camera and lighting workshop

### May 6

Day to make and/or edit short films

### May 7

Presentation and discussion of students short (max 5 minute) films.

### **Group 1 – Manufactured Landscapes**

Shafiq Bhura

Jenna Frake

Gracie Heeg

Cooper Wilkinson

## **Group 2 – Payback**

Quinn Thompson

Myla Daem

Jordyn Moss

Eric Shearer

## **Group 3 – Anthropocene**

Mustahseem Chowdhury

Kian Samavati

Hazel Cochrane

Esther THOMPSON

Aubrey BAUX

## **Guiding questions**

The group leading the discussion is responsible for considering the following questions. The group is expected to come up with additional questions and observations to help facilitate discussion for the rest of the class.

- Overall themes raised and explored: what do you think these are? What did you learn?

What ideas/questions/problems did these themes raise for you personally?

- Relation of form and content— how does the content influence the filmmaking style? And vice versa: does style or aesthetic influence the content? Is one primary? If so, why?

- Critique— what works well? Why? What doesn't work? Why? Can you think of what might have worked better?