

VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY – Concordia University – Dr. Maximilian Forte
Winter 2007 – Final Exam

Preamble:

Disagreements and suggested solutions abound in debates about what makes a film ethnographic, the techniques for constructing an ethnographic film, and the relationship between film and anthropology. Embedded, even if in a subtle manner, within the competing visions about ethnography and its relationship with film is the question of whether our mission as anthropologists ought to be primarily oriented toward depicting **reality**, or uncovering fundamental human **truths**.

Focus:

In the middle of these above debates, and indeed doing much to add fire to the debates, came two films, both experiments, both severely judged and highly praised in different quarters. Those films, *Chronicle of a Summer* (Rouch & Morin, 1961) and *Forest of Bliss* (Gardner, 1986), challenged prevailing ethnographic forms of representation on film, found new ways of constructing ethnographic film, and at the same time raised new questions and generated new debates about the anthropological enterprise.

The question:

This exam question does not ask you to argue that one film is better than another, or to simply compare and contrast the films. Indeed, the assumption is that in some fundamental respects these two films are very much in the same camp.

Please **discuss** the ways in which these two films should be viewed as closely related partners on one side of a debate about what makes a film ethnographic/how to make an ethnographic film, and what the mission of the anthropologist ought to be. You may discuss the differences between the films, but only to the extent that they serve to highlight the primary themes set out here.

Hint #1: there are no easy answers. You really will need to dedicate yourself to thinking about these issues before beginning to write.

Hint #2: This exam covers diverse materials from session 1 and sessions 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12.

What will the evaluators look for?

While, as always, the best papers help to structure the assessment of other papers in the course, clearly the evaluators must come to the exercise with an idea already formed in mind of what makes some papers “the best.” Essentially, we are looking for papers that show some advanced insight into course content, some creative and logical thinking, and excellent essay writing. Both films should receive an equal amount of coverage in your discussion. Both dimensions of the debate underlined above should receive roughly the same coverage. We are not looking for *extensive* use of course materials as much as we are hoping for *intensive* and *thoughtful* engagements with course content (including class discussions of course). Of the 30 points for the

exam, points will be assigned in the following manner:

- 5 points for effective essay writing (strong introduction, clear structure, conclusion)
- 10 points for discussion of representation issues
- 10 points for discussion of “mission” issues
- 5 points for allowing equal coverage of both films and how they closely relate to one another

Evaluators will write a paragraph of commentary on each paper, and note how points were distributed. Only if a student requests will the commentary be sent by email, after the course grades have been submitted in late April. The only marks that may appear on the exam itself are areas highlighted in red (factually incorrect), in yellow (problematic, ambiguous, unclear), or green (superb point), and these will be sparingly applied.

Mandatory format:

- ◆ name at the top of the first page
- ◆ all pages must be numbered
- ◆ 1 inch margins on all sides
- ◆ double-spaced
- ◆ Times New Roman 12 pt. font
- ◆ *No* footnotes or endnotes
- ◆ Use parenthetical references (see the style guide on the Assignments page of the course website) to refer to readings
- ◆ There is no need for a bibliography, unless you use any materials beyond assigned readings (which is not expected, nor necessarily credited)
- ◆ Essay format (no bullet points; complete sentences are required; introduction, main body, conclusion; proper grammar, correct spelling, absence of typographic errors)

Length:

No more than 2,000 words.

Grade & Points:

This exam is worth **30%** of the final course grade and will be marked out of 30 points. Five percent of the points will be deducted for any neglect of any one of the above guidelines.

Due date and time:

Your exam is due by **email on Friday, April 20, 2007, by 5:00pm at the latest**. No late exams will be accepted. (Anticipate possible setbacks and prepare backup plans: loss of computer files; damaged computer; inability to print at one given location--no computer-related, work-related nor transport-related issues will be accepted as excuses for a late exam. See the syllabus for all other relevant details concerning late exams.)

Please send your exam, by email, in either Word or PDF format, to:
mforte@alcor.concordia.ca