Study Abroad India: Documentary Production and Cultural Studies
Film 3202 (code 43813) (4 hours; 3 credits), International Documentary Production
TVRA 4849 (code 3513) Undergraduate Study Abroad India
TVRA 7749x (code 3421) Graduate Study Abroad India

Faculty Program Director:  Professor Annette Danto
Brooklyn College Film Department
2900 Bedford Avenue, 217 West End Building
Tel: 718-951-5664
adanto@brooklyn.cuny.edu;  anndanto@hotmail.com

This 21 day course will offer a meaningful combination of lectures, field trips, production work and sightseeing.  Students will learn about South Indian cultures, religions, history and cinema, with excursions to major cultural, historical and religious sights.

Hyderabad’s Ramoji Film City and Mahendra Ecole Central will provide the setting for studying documentary production within a South Indian context. Through a series of classroom lectures and screenings students will receive a comprehensive introduction to South Indian cinema, with an emphasis on documentary. CUNY students will work collaboratively with Mahendra Ecole Central students on the preproduction, production and post production of short documentary projects.

The production component of the course will involve on-going collaboration between CUNY students and Mahendra Ecole Centrale/Ramoji Film City students.  This will include: tech sessions, writing assignments, group exercises, research and development of a documentary topic, and the production and post production of that documentary.  Students with little or no background in documentary production will learn some of the basic technical skills required to operate digital cameras, sound equipment, as well as how to structure a short documentary.  All students will be expected to participate as crew members.  Those with a preference for non-technical crew positions will be able to work as: writers, script supervisors, production coordinators and assistants.

CUNY students will travel to the Dindigul District, including Madurai and Ambathurai.  In the heart of South India’s rural district,  students will visit the Gandhigram Institutions to learn about street theater and the use of traditional creative formats as a way of providing village audiences’ with information about health, environmental issues, and education.

Throughout this 21 day program, students will learn about the role culture, religion, and social structure play in media preproduction, production and post production. Students will learn the importance of cultural sensitivity when considering how we depict poverty and economic development.  Since we will be based in both urban and rural regions of India, the concerns of urban and rural development will be integrated in all course material, field trips and lectures.
Course Objectives:

- Students will learn the fundamentals of documentary production including: research and development, production and post production.
- Students will collaborate with Indian media production students on all aspects of pre-production, production and post production. Students will learn the 4-C’s: communicate, create, connect and collaborate.
- Students will reflect on their daily experiences through a final essay due at the end of the course.
- Students will gain an appreciation of the diversity of Indian cinemas, cultures and religions.
- Students will visit important historical sites in South India, including: Hyderabad, Madurai, Meenakshi Temple and the Gandhigram Institutions.
- Students will visit the Gandhigram Institute of Rural Health and Family Welfare, and learn about creative approaches to rural education and community outreach through digital media shows, street theater, and puppetry.
- Students will visit rural villages in the Dindigul District, and gain an understanding of urban vs. rural India.

Course syllabus and itinerary:

Pre-Departure Orientation Program: November 19th. Time: TBD
Brooklyn College West End Building, 2nd Floor, Room 230

Dec 30th:
- Depart JFK

Dec 31
- Arrive Hyderabad, Andrah Pradesh, South India

Jan 1
- Welcome reception/ sightseeing Hyderabad and Ramoji Film City

Jan 2
- Introductions and Welcome - Professors Hariharan and Danto
- 11:15 - 12:45 - Lecture: Indian Cinema and Its Unique Aesthetics - Professor Hariharan
- 12:45 - 1:45 - Lunch at Mahendra Ecole Central
- 1:45 - 3PM - Introduction to the Practical Aspects of Videography
- 3:15 - 5PM - Introduction to Sound Recording and Sound Mixing
- Evening - Music/Dance Performance

Jan 3
- 9:30 - 11AM - Lecture: Indian Cinema and Reflections of Social Issues
- 11:15 - 12:45 - Introduction to Indian Documentary Films Through An Editors POV
- 12:45 - 1:45 - Lunch at Mahendra Ecole
- 1:45 - 3PM - Visit to Ramoji Film City and Studio
- 4PM - Screening of Indian film
Jan 4th
9:30AM - 11:AM - Lecture: Documentary Realism of Satyajit Ray
11:15 - 12:45 - Documentary topics - Professor A. Danto
12:45 - 1:45 - Lunch
1:45 - 5PM - Group meetings, Lecture on Crew Collaboration, Crew Assignments, and Interpersonal Challenges - Professor Danto and Professor Hariharan
Evening: Group meetings and planning for location visits

Jan 5th
9 - 1PM - Location scouting and pre-interviews
1 - 2 Lunch at Mahendra
2 - 5 Group meetings and script development - draft of script should be completed
Evening: Script review with faculty, script approvals, prep for shooting

Jan 6th
6AM - Crews meet at the academy and check out equipment
1-2PM - Return to the Mahendra Ecole for lunch
2-5PM - Continue production
6PM Return equipment

Jan 7
Production continued

Jan 8
Post Production

Jan 9
Post Production

Jan 10
Post Production/ Sightseeing

Jan 11
Post Production

Jan 12
Final Screening and Reception

Jan 13
Depart for Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Jan 14
Meenakshi Temple and the Old City, Monkey Temple Visit

Jan 15
Pongal Village Visit/ Cultural Troupe Performance

Jan 16
Gandhigram Institutions

Jan 17
Depart for Chennai
Evening sightseeing

Jan 18
Depart for New York PM

Jan 19
Arrive NYC
Grades and Assignments:

- Grades will be based on student participation in all class lectures, production work, and field trips.

- All students are required to attend required course lectures and all guided sightseeing tours.

- All students are required to participate in a documentary project and to reflect on their preproduction, production and post production experience in a final essay.

- Final Essay 40%
- Classroom Lectures 20%
- Documentary Production Work 40%

Required Reading:

Huyler, Stephen  *MEETING GOD*  Yale University Press

Rabiger, Michael  *DIRECTING THE DOCUMENTARY* (photocopies to be distributed during second orientation program)

Recommended Reading:


The writer Jonah Blank reports on his candid conversations with Indians from many walks of life, interweaving brief themes from the Ramayana epic which is well known and revered today. His itinerary follows locations of major episodes in the epic

Well worth reading prior to the trip.  Elisabeth Bumiller is a journalist, frequently on CNN and other news shows as an invited commentator.  This book is a fascinating and very thorough series of interviews with women throughout India.  It is highly informative and will give you a strong understanding of the lives of women in India - in particular, the women of rural India.
Curran, Sheila. *DOCUMENTARY STORYTELLING FOR VIDEO AND FILMMAKERS*, Focal Press 2004  
A good introductory textbook on the fundamentals of documentary story structure.

and/or see any of his additional novels set in the fictive south Indian village of Malgudi, including *THE GUIDE; THE FINANCIAL EXPERT; PAINTER OF SIGNS; MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI; THE DARK ROOM.*  
In all of his Chekovian novels, Narayan's lively characters depict traditional culture and values. All are fun to read.

The author compares numerous aspects of life in India with those of Western countries. She also covers some topics that are particular to India, such as wearing saris and understanding the history of the caste system. While India is composed of hundreds of cultures and languages, Garcia addresses as broad a range as possible in a travel-sized book.

Asha Kasbekar discusses what is popular in India today, along with its social and economic implications

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Recommended films to see before leaving for India:

Includes 3 titles: Pather Panchali, Aparajito, The World of Apu

*Gandhi* directed by Richard Attenborough, 1982.  
feature film c. 190 minutes  

*The Namesake* directed by Mira Nair, 2006.

*Lagaan* directed by Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001


*Born Into Brothels* 2004.  
A documentary film by Ross Kauffman and Zana Briski

Additional films:

1. Man of Aran, directed by Robert Flaherty
2. Land Without Bread, directed by Luis Bunuel
3. Song of Ceylon, directed by Basil Wright
4. All My Babies, directed by George Stoney
5. The River, directed by Pare Lorentz
6. Titicut Follies, directed by Fred Wiseman
7. High School, directed by Fred Wiseman
8. Waiting for Fidel, directed by Michael Rubbo
9. Sad Song of Yellow Skin, directed by Michael Rubbo
10. Have You Killed a Jap Today?, directed by U.S. Army
11. Chronicle of a Summer, directed by Jean Rouch
12. Drifters, directed by John Grierson
13. Night Mail, directed by Harry Watt
14. Power and the Land, directed by Joris Ivens
15. Window Water Baby Moving, directed by Stan Brakhage
16. Olympia I and II, directed by Leni Riefenstahl
17. Man With a Movie Camera, directed by Dziga Vertov
18. Tarnation, directed by Michael Caoutte
19. Four Little Girls, directed by Spike Lee
20. The Civil War Series, directed by Ken Burns
21. Hoop Dreams, directed by Steve James
22. Bowling For Columbine, directed by Michael Moore
23. Farenheit 911, directed by Michael Moore
24. Best Boy, directed by Ira Wohl
25. 7 Up; 28 Up, directed by Michael Apted
26. Unzipped, directed by Douglas Keeve
27. Grey Gardens, directed by the Maysles Brothers
28. Land of the Deaf, To Be and To Have, directed by Nicholas Philibert

Web pages and links:

These links provide important background on cultural and artistic traditions, social customs and religious practices. Historical summaries and maps are also included for your reference.

Cultural and social customs
http://www.destinationsindia.com/india/society-culture.html
http://www.indianchild.com/caste_system_in_india.htm
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761565041/Caste_social.html

General history of India
http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107629.html
http://www.geographia.com/india/india02.htm
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/country_profiles/1155813.stm
Independence movement
http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-history/modern-history/indian-independence.html

Gandhi
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/gandhi_mohandas.shtml
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761575565_2/Gandhi.html

Trailer of film "Gandhi"
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVwCeGxTN-A

Gandhi images and archival audio recording of speeches
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSWzFz-tGrM&feature=related

Encyclopedia Britannica Documentary of Gandhi
http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3377542120612100235&hl=en

Nehru
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/nehru_jawaharlal.shtml

Ambedkar, leader of the dalit("untouchable") uplift movement
http://www.answers.com/topic/bhimrao-ramji-ambedkar

Indian religions
http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/history/history_1.shtml
http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/history/history_2.shtml
http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/history/history_3.shtml
http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/history/history_4.shtml

Introduction to each major religion
http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-religions/hinduism.html
http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-religions/buddhism.html
http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-religions/islam.html
http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-religions/sikhism.html
http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-religions/jainism.html

Hindu worship practices
(click on "next" to see all pages, and see videos)
http://www.asia.si.edu/pujaonline/puja/background.html
http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-pilgrimage/index.html

Hindu gods and goddesses
http://www.indiantemples.com/beliefs/daksha.htm
http://www.indiantemples.com/Ganga/ganga.html
http://www.hinduwebsite.com/siva/nataraja.asp
http://www.indianchild.com/hindu_goddesses.htm

Hindu temples
  http://www.indianchild.com/temples_in_india1.htm
http://www.indiantemples.com/Tamilnadu/tamilnatu_hist.html
http://www.indiantemples.com/Tamilnadu/Madurai/madurai.htm

Music and dance of South India
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/world/onyourstreet/thestreet/india/india_listen.shtml
http://www.musicindiaonline.com/music/carnatic_instrumental/
http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-dance/classical/bharatnatyam.html
http://www.bharatonline.com/tamilnadu/music-dance.html

Tamilnadu
http://www.cs.utk.edu/~siddhart/tamilnadu/index.html

Ayurveda
http://www.holisticonline.com/ayurveda/ayv-basis.htm

Cuisine
http://www.food-india.com/indianCuisine/1001_1050/1003_food_tour_india.htm

Women's issues and social services
http://www.indianchild.com/womens_health_india.htm

Facts and figures

Maps and demographics

India (states): (click at bottom to view older map; PRINT OUT older map)
http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/india-political-map.htm

major languages: (scroll down to see map)
http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/indianlanguages.htm

religious places:
http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/religious-places.htm

literacy rates:

sex ratios:
population density:

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http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/IndianEtiquette.html

http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/india-country-profile.htm