

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

FILM 409.16 L01/B01
SPECIAL TOPICS IN FILM STUDIES:
ANIMATED DOCUMENTARY

FALL 2022: September 7 – December 7 (excluding Sept. 30, Nov. 9 and Nov 11)

Lecture, Friday: 2:00 – 3:50 pm, SS012, in-person

Lab (film screening), Wednesday: 12:00 – 2:45 pm, SS203, in-person

Instructor:	Anastasiia Gushchina
Office:	SS 250
E-Mail:	anastasiia.gushchina@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (available through MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Thursday, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm, or by appointment; in person or on Zoom

Course Description

The course will examine the phenomenon of animated documentary – a seemingly contradictory genre in film that has gained prominence over the last two decades. The course will introduce students to the history of animated documentary and its main practices. Students will also critically consider theoretical problems that arise from combining an animated form with documentary content.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, students should:

- Have a firm grasp of the history and literature of animated documentary;
- Gain an understanding of theoretical concepts that affect how we think about animated documentary (e.g. “indexicality,” “performance,” “realism,” etc.);
- Develop observational and analytical skills to engage with elements specific to animated documentary (i.e. the use of various animation techniques, etc.);
- Perform critical analyses using film-specific terminology and write well-crafted arguments about visual culture.

Textbooks and Readings

There is no textbook required for this course. All readings (articles, book chapters, and links to online sources) will be made available in D2L. They will also be accessible through the university library.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L. Please note that required readings should be read prior to the lecture for which they are assigned.

Email

I need up to two full business days (defined as Monday to Friday between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.) to reply to email. I do not reply to email on weekends or holidays.

Notes on Attendance and Absences

If you miss a day of class, please make up the material by getting notes from a classmate. I will not supply you with notes or a summary of what you missed. When possible, I will upload to D2L material from lecture; but this will not always happen. Please plan accordingly.

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

The use of electronic devices is permitted but is strictly limited to interactions with the course materials. Please also carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed component	Due	Grade
25%	Discussion boards	Weekly, Wednesdays 8 am starting Sept. 21 D2L → Communication → Discussions	Letter grade
15%	Discussion questions	Weekly, Fridays starting Sept. 23 In class Please discuss your questions with me a week prior to your presentation.	Letter grade
15%	Participation	Weekly – assessed at the end of the term In class	Letter grade
15%	Final project presentation	Nov. 30 + Dec. 2 In class	Letter grade
30%	Final project (essay OR alternative format – see description below)	Dec. 16, 11.59 pm D2L → Assessment → Dropbox	Letter grade

Description of assignments

Discussion boards, ongoing, starting Sept. 21: 25% (letter grade)

Starting in week 2, you will be asked to write a response to the week's readings and post it to D2L. These responses must be posted by 8 a.m. on Wednesdays. Formal requirements for the board posts: min. 250 words, engaging with at least one of the readings assigned that week. Please answer at least one of these guiding questions when writing a blog post:

- What are the main concepts/ideas of the reading/readings that you're discussing?
- Why are these concepts/ideas important in the context of this course? What do they add to our understanding of what animated documentary is?
- Can you use these concepts/ideas to analyze films that you watched in class or on your own?
- Are these concepts/ideas similar or contradictory to other readings of this course or writing in film studies that you're already familiar with?
- Is there anything that stayed unclear after you finished the readings?

These responses will help inform our discussion, and you are free to use your response as the basis for your participation. This assignment will also provide me with an opportunity to give you ongoing feedback.

You must submit at least 4 responses to qualify for full marks (each report will be evaluated by letter grade).

Discussion questions, ongoing: 15% (letter grade)

Each student will sign up for a week in which they will present (possibly with a partner) 3 discussion questions for the week. These questions should, as a whole, cover both the film and the readings. They should prompt the class to examine the readings and film in detail. The person presenting the questions will also be facilitating the discussion (with my help).

Please make your questions open-ended (they should NOT be answered with simple "yes" or "no"). What should these questions cover:

- Readings assigned for the week (think about similarities and differences between the readings, their approaches, and language they use);
- Main concepts of these readings and their potential applications to the topics of the course;
- How these readings can enrich our analysis of animated documentaries screened in the course.

When presenting your questions, please give some context about what parts or ideas of the readings prompted them. You might also want to define key concepts used in the readings.

Please discuss your ideas about these questions with me a week prior to your presentation – I will guide you in the process of writing them.

Participation, ongoing: 15% (letter grade)

As this is a small class group, participation will be essential for class discussion. You will be expected to take active part in each week's discussion, ready to discuss the week's reading and film in detail. Come to class with at least one comment or question on the week's material. Participation is marked as a whole at the end of the term. Participation will be assessed at the end of each seminar – please see the participation rubric in D2L.

Final project presentation, (Nov. 30 + Dec. 2): 15% (letter grade)

At the end of the term, students will make a 5-7-min presentation about the topic and approach of their final essay. The presentation should include a brief description of your major research questions or arguments, and roughly how you plan on executing them. It should also mention your potential bibliography and explain the reasoning behind the choice of these texts.

Final project, (Dec. 16, 11.59 pm to Dropbox): 30% (letter grade)

Your major assignment for the course will be an essay (8-10 pages, double-spaced, Time New Roman, MLA citation style) that further explores some topic from the course. Formal requirements for the essay will be posted on D2L by Nov 16, 11.59 pm. While one of this course's objective is teaching you how to speak and write about film, you are more than welcome to complete your final assignment in an alternative format.

Options:

- an animated documentary + 1-2-page curatorial statement
- a pitch for an animated documentary + 3-page curatorial statement,
- a script for an animated documentary + 2-3-page curatorial statement
- a storyboard for an animated documentary + 2-3-page curatorial statement
- a video essay about one of the course topics + 2-3-page curatorial statement OR a written essay that the video is based on

If you have other ideas in mind, I would be more than happy to discuss them with you. Formal requirements for the essay will also apply to curatorial statements. Please let me know in advance if you consider an alternative format for your final assignment.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Note: You do not have to complete all the assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

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*. 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/. 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 should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

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: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

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. In this course, letter grades will be used to assess all assignments. Final grades are reported as letter grades.

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

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

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 copy-right 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 <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

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://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

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/desire2learn/home/students>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Students will find the weekly schedule of readings posted on D2L. A tentative schedule, subject to change, is included on the following pages.

Schedule

Screenings are happening on Wednesdays, readings are due on Fridays

Week 1 (Sept 9) – Introductions (no screening on Sept 7)

Week 2 (Sept 14+16) – Introductions cont'd

Screening: *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2008, 87 min)

Readings:

Introduction, *Animated Documentary*, pp. 1–16.

Optional: Abeel, Erica. “On the verge between reality, fantasy and dreams: “Waltz with Bashir” director Ari Folman.” *IndieWire*, 18 Dec. 2008, www.indiewire.com/2008/12/on-the-verge-between-reality-fantasy-and-dreams-waltz-with-bashir-director-ari-folman-7115.

Week 3 (Sept 21+23) – Definitions of animated documentary: what, when, how, and why

Screening: *The Wanted 18* (Amer Shomali and Paul Cowan, 2014, 75 min).

Readings:

Parts of Chapter 1 – Representational Strategies, *Animated Documentary*, pp. 22–40. – begin at “How animation is used in animated documentary”

Chapter 1 – Why Now? *Animating Truth: Documentary and Visual Culture in the 21st Century*, pp. 27–47.

Week 4 (Sept 28) – Definitions of animated documentary cont'd: the use of animation in a non-fiction context (no lecture on Sept 30)

Screening:

To Demonstrate How Spiders Fly (F. Percy Smith, 1909, 1 min).

The Sinking of the Lusitania (Windsor McCay, 1918, 12 min)

Action of the Human Heart (Francis Lyle Goldman, c.1920, 6 min).

Neighbors (Norman McLauren, 1952, 8 min).

Interview (Caroline Leaf and Veronika Soul, 1979, 13 min).

The Last Day of Freedom (Nomi Talisman and Dee Hibbert-Jones, 2015, 32 min).

Reading (optional):

Mihailova, Mihaela. "Before Sound, there was Soul: The Role of Animation in Silent Nonfiction Cinema." *Drawn from Life: Issues and Themes in Animated Documentary Cinema*, edited by Jonathan Murray and Nea Ehrlich, pp. 31–46.

Week 5 (Oct 5+7) – Challenges of animated documentary: indexicality

Screening: *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (Werner Herzog, 1997, 74 min).

Reading:

Chapter 1 – How Can We Define Documentary? *Introduction to Documentary*, 3 ed., pp. 1–28.

Week 6 (Oct 12+14) - Challenges of animated documentary: indexicality cont'd

Screening: *Chicago 10* (Brett Morgen, 2010, 110 min)

Reading:

Rosenkrantz, Johnathan. "Colourful Claims: Towards a Theory of Animated Documentary." *FilmInt.Nu*, 6 May 2011, www.filmint.nu/colourful-claims-towards-a-theory-of-animated-documentary/.

Week 7 (Oct 19+21) – Animation techniques in animated documentary: rotoscoping

Screening:

Grasshopper (Bob Sabiston, 2004, 15 min).
Tower (Keith Maitland, 2016, 98 min).

Readings:

Joanna Bouldin. "Cadaver of the real: animation, rotoscoping and the politics of the body." *Animation Journal*, vol. 12, A J Press, 2004, p. 7–31.

Paul Ward. "Rotoshop in context: computer rotoscoping and animation aesthetics." *Animation Journal*, vol. 12, A J Press, 2004, p. 32–52.

Week 8 (Oct 26+28) – Animation techniques in animated documentary: stop-motion, under-camera animation

Screening:

It's Like That (Southern Ladies Animation Group, 2003, 7 min).
Mend and Make Do (Bexie Bush, 2017, 9 min).
Four Faces Of The Moon (Amanda Strong, 2016, 12 min).

Truth Has Fallen (Sheila M. Sofian, 2013, 60 min).

Readings:

Wells, Paul. "Chairy Tales: Object and Materiality in Animation." *Alphaville*, no. 8, University College Cork, 2015, pp. 6–23.

Miner, Joshua D. "Experiments in Hybrid Documentary and Indigenous Model Animation." *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 16, no. 1–2, SAGE Publications, 2021, pp. 6–20.

Week 9 (Nov 2+4) – Animated memories and memoirs

Screening:

In the Shadow of the Pines (Anne Koizumi, 2021, 9 min).

Flee (Jonas Poher Rasmussen, 2021, 89 min).

Reading:

Landesman, Ohad, and Roy Bendor. "Animated Recollection and Spectatorial Experience in *Waltz with Bashir*." *Animation*, vol. 6, no. 3, Nov. 2011, pp. 353–370.

Week 10 (Nov 9+11) – READING BREAK NO CLASSES

Week 11 (Nov 16+18) – Mental health conditions and traumatic experiences

Screening:

Ryan (Chris Landreth, 2004, 14 min).

Running in Darkness (Alan Jennings, 2007, 2 min).

Twiddly Things (Adara Todd, 2016, 6 min).

The Devil in the Room (Carla MacKinnon, 2013, 8 min).

Apart (Diana Cam Van Nguyen, 2018, 10 min).

Model Childhood (Tim Mercier, 2019, 19 min).

Reading:

Chapter 4 – The World in Here, *Animated Documentary*, pp. 106–138.

Optional: Caruth, Cathy. "Introduction." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, pp. 1–12.

Week 12 (Nov 23+25) – The making of animated documentaries

Screening:

A is for Autism (Tim Webb, 1992, 11 min).

Snack and Drink (Bob Sabiston, 2000, 4 min).
A Kosovo Fairytale (Anna-Sofia Nylund, 2009, 15 min).
The Making of *A Kosovo Fairytale* (2009, 7 min).
An Eye-ful of Sound (Samantha Moore, 2010, 10 min).
Music and Clowns (Alex Widdowson, 2018, 7 min).

Reading:

Moore, Samantha. ““Does this look right?” Working Inside the Collaborative Frame.”
Drawn from Life: Issues and Themes in Animated Documentary Cinema, edited
by Jonathan Murray and Nea Ehrlich, pp. 206–220.

Optional: Widdowson, Alex. “Animating Documentary Modes: Navigating a Theoretical
Model for Animated Documentary Practice.” *International Journal of Film and
Media Arts*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2018, pp. 56–77.

Week 13 (Nov 30+Dec 2) – Final projects presentations + peer-review session

Week 14 (Dec 7) – Conclusions and open feedback session