

OFFERED ONLY THIS SUMMER!

# The Other Half of Cinema

## French Documentary Films 1895-1985

A COURSE CROSS-LISTED AS:

ROML 4120/6120 • CMLT 4210/6210

FILM 5481/7481

SUMMER SHORT SESSION I • 11:45 - 2:00 DAILY

TAUGHT BY FRANKLIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR

## Stéphane Audeguy

(Novelist, Film Critic, and Co-Editor, *Nouvelle Revue Française*)

This course will examine one hundred years of documentaries in French cinema. Documentary has always been the poor relation of narrative cinema, and thus often underestimated, considered a simple recording of reality, necessarily a slave to the ideological and aesthetic constraints of institutional or private promotional films. And yet, from the first Lumière brothers' films to the present day, documentary film has possessed a true *mise en scène*, and is remarkably sophisticated in terms of the aesthetic, political, and social issues it deals with.

We will study in chronological order the developments of documentary art, which are punctuated by technological inventions. From 1895 through the twenties and thirties, documentaries are silent and must articulate their discourse through images alone. With the invention of direct sound in the fifties and sixties we have the golden age of "verbal" documentary and the "camera-pen." Today, videos and digital cameras have again multiplied the possibilities of "cinema of the real." Since the history of cinema is cosmopolitan, we will occasionally leave France for the Soviet Union, the United States, and Canada, studying in particular Dziga Vertov, Richard Flaherty, and Michel Brault.

Documentary is a rich and complex entity, maintaining subtle relationships not only with fiction, but also with the essay, the political tract, and the plastic arts. It weaves multiple threads with what is commonly called reality, truth, and ideology. To fully appreciate the richness of French documentary, one must take a multidisciplinary approach, in which questions of genre, identity, and colonialism will play a role, observed through the lenses of philosophy, sociology, ethnology, and of course, cinematography.



**Stéphane Audeguy** is a prominent French novelist and film critic. Since 2005 he has been publishing regularly with Gallimard, France's leading publishing house. His first novel, *The Theory of Clouds*, which won the Académie Française's "Maurice Genevoix" Prize, has been described as "a poetics of meteorology as dizzying in content as it is majestically triumphant in form." Of his 2006 novel *Fils unique*, a fictional account of the life of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's older brother, the *New York Times Book Review* wrote that "it's quite an achievement, this picaresque adventure, which reads without any false notes of anachronism and in John Cullen's translation

harmonizes beautifully with the cadence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's style." His 2009 novel, *Nous autres*, was hailed as "an initiatory novel in the fantastic vein, ... a long poem whose successive chants one could follow like a kind of Aeneid." Dominique Fernandez of the Académie Française describes his 2011 novel, *Rom@*, as "a fantasy at the same time charming and cruel, a 'caprice' that blends the somber gaiety of Goya and the comic ferocity of Daumier." Mr. Audeguy is currently co-director of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, France's most distinguished literary magazine.



*This course is made possible through the Summer 2012*

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