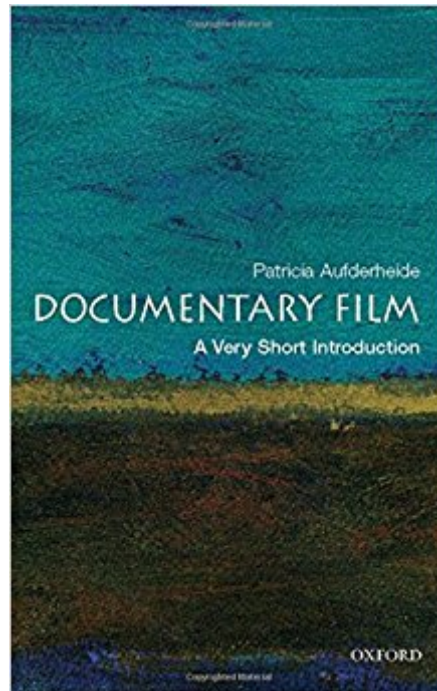




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# Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction



## Synopsis

Documentary film can encompass anything from Robert Flaherty's pioneering ethnography *Nanook of the North* to Michael Moore's anti-Iraq War polemic *Fahrenheit 9/11*, from Dziga Vertov's artful Soviet propaganda piece *Man with a Movie Camera* to Luc Jacquet's heart-tugging wildlife epic *March of the Penguins*. In this concise, crisply written guide, Patricia Aufderheide takes readers along the diverse paths of documentary history and charts the lively, often fierce debates among filmmakers and scholars about the best ways to represent reality and to tell the truths worth telling. Beginning with an overview of the central issues of documentary filmmaking--its definitions and purposes, its forms and founders--Aufderheide focuses on several of its key subgenres, including public affairs films, government propaganda (particularly the works produced during World War II), historical documentaries, and nature films. Her thematic approach allows readers to enter the subject matter through the kinds of films that first attracted them to documentaries, and it permits her to make connections between eras, as well as revealing the ongoing nature of documentary's core controversies involving objectivity, advocacy, and bias. Interwoven throughout are discussions of the ethical and practical considerations that arise with every aspect of documentary production. A particularly useful feature of the book is an appended list of "100 great documentaries" that anyone with a serious interest in the genre should see. Drawing on the author's four decades of experience as a film scholar and critic, this book is the perfect introduction not just for teachers and students but also for all thoughtful filmgoers and for those who aspire to make documentaries themselves.

**About the Series:** Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, *Very Short Introductions* offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Questions for Consideration and Discussion: What are the obligations of a documentarian to provide the viewer with a balanced picture? How do you know what a documentary looks like? What are those conventions that define a documentary? Are their associations positive or negative for you? Documentary filmmaking is an art form as well as an informative medium. How much does documentary differ from other informative genres such as journalism or nonfiction books in this regard? Documentarians often have extended relationships with their subjects. How has this relationship been defined by ethnographic filmmakers, who work with subjects in very different cultures from their own? In many countries, documentary filmmaking has been subsidized with tax dollars. What has motivated these governments to support filmmakers? What have been the effects of government subsidy on production? What's the difference between a point-of-view public affairs documentary and an advocacy film?

"Before you start an Oedipal quest for the identity of your documentary, take a look at Patricia Aufderheide's *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction* published by Oxford University Press. Aufderheide tackles almost everything you need to know about the different genres and styles of documentaries, with a range of both historical and contemporary examples." --Film Arts: The Magazine of the Independent Filmmaker "This is probably the best general and most concise introduction to documentary that has been written to date...scholarship at its best." --Cahal McLaughlin, Senior Lecturer in Media Studies, School of Media, Film & Journalism, University of Ulster "A provocative book... [Aufderheide] manages to bring together an expansive and exciting variety of works to illustrate the complex nature of documentary's representation of reality. This book is not superficial." --Cineaste "An efficient overview of documentary film... This is just the right supplementary book for a class that deals with some forms of documentary and needs a quick survey." --Chuck Kleinhans, *Jump Cut* "This is the first book about documentary I've encountered that tackles its identity, history, evolution, and major controversies enjoyably and in brief. I marvel at how much ground Pat Aufderheide covers and the clarity she brings to documentary's many functions, paradoxes, and contradictions. Maybe religion alone has more." - Michael Rabiger "A vivid survey, Aufderheide's book reminds us how crucial content and purpose are to the power and appeal of

documentaries. When other films help us escape the world, these films return us to it with clarity and passion. This book lets us see how that is so."-- Bill Nichols, author of Introduction to Documentary, Professor of Cinema and Director of the Graduate Program, San Francisco State University

This got me through class and got me the credits - fun read actually

I nice small concise book, it was required reading for a class, so I had no choice. It's ok, it wasn't expensive, and it's ok.

I'm constantly looking for new ways to expand my portfolio and directing a documentary film is definitely a project I'm considering. This book has been a great introduction to the goals/execution of making a documentary.

I read the whole book in 2 sittings. Very well written and organized. A good read for documentary film lovers. Especially beginners.

Short.Sweet.Easy to comprehend.Doesn't give you a complete visual, but manages to give you a taste of docs.

I really like the way that he outlines documentary film types, but I think that certain examples could use a lot more description.

Aufderheide's small book is packed with information, but so beautifully organized you can actually find what you're looking for. Tight, cogent prose makes it both an excellent history of, and an inviting introduction to documentary film. And once you've read it, you have a nifty little handbook!

Good book to read, easy to understand, one of the better books I read for college.

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