



Know Your Rights: Citizenship, Surveillance and Democracy in Post 9/11 America

Curriculum Unit 16.03.06
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“While I pray that public awareness and debate will lead to reform, bear in mind that the policies of men change in time, and even the Constitution is subverted when the appetites of power demand it. In words from history: Let us speak no more of faith in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of cryptography,” Edward Snowden.

Section One: Introduction

1.1 Statement of Context

Metropolitan Business Academy (MBA) is an interdistrict magnet high school that has adopted many of the ideals of the Regional Educational Support Center (RESC), the Center for 21st Century Skills. Like many of the smaller high schools in New Haven, it is moving towards Mastery Based Standards and Grading with emphasis on Project Based Learning (PBL). It is my aim that students who complete this unit through either of my courses (i.e. senior level English, Introduction to Film elective) will have a deeper understanding of American citizenship and democracy. Students will critically assess “Americans” struggle against forces of oppression, especially in the context of present day post-9/11, post-Katrina America.

During the 2011-2012 academic year MBA introduced its film studies elective [insert shameless plug for Best Video and Cultural Center here]. From day one the class has been filled to capacity (27 students per section, few of the initial cohort arrived with any academic interest in the subject). My aim was to impart my love of film while teaching critical thinking. I soon discovered that introducing too many technical film terms and too much industry jargon was counterproductive. Compelling storytelling and a surfeit of text-dependent questions proved to be more fruitful. By criticizing film rather than passively absorbing it, my students discovered film to be a medium to engage beyond summer blockbusters. By the end the course, most students grasped that Introduction to Film was neither Video on Demand nor an easy “crip” course (e.g. “Rocks for Jocks,” an easy science credit for those who are less academically inclined), but a gateway to

enjoying film as an academic and thought-provoking art form for the rest of their lives.

Not only did students change their film experience from passive absorption to active critique, but their newfound excitement for the medium fueled their writing which in turn improved their skills. They produced more and better quality analysis. At the end of year one, I began booking computer lab time and initiated a class blog; although the blog was arguably a failure this first year, student feedback advocated future curricular inclusion. Three years later both the quality of the posts and the traffic on the site have improved. At the time of this writing, the site is just shy of 12,000 page views. The elective produced outstanding critical pieces, showing an improvement in long-form writing and higher-order thinking.

Building on research and curriculum writing I have completed through my involvement in past Yale New Haven Teacher Institute seminars (led by professors Kathy Dudley, John Gaddis, Lanny Hammer, Matt Jacobson, Pericles Lewis, Mary Liu, and Annabel Patterson), my aim is to use documentary and feature-length films to facilitate and broaden students' understanding of America's recent past and present and to have them think critically about such concepts as democracy and citizenship, especially in terms of rights and surveillance culture. I believe the subject matter is vital for students in 21st century America and film is an outstanding means of teaching while eliciting complex analysis and increasingly sophisticated writing skills.

1.2 Descriptive Overview

While my primary areas of interest and the focus of the courses I teach are literature and film, I was and continue to be intrigued by the passage in Professor Gerken's outline regarding "Citizenship, Rights, and the Times of Emergency." Last year, before participating in Professor Matt Jacobson's seminar "American Culture in the Long Twentieth Century," I envisioned constructing a unit that would focus on the surveillance culture and lost liberties in post 9/11 America and in the wake of hurricane Katrina.

My students will benefit from such a unit, especially as it takes into consideration their interests. An increasing number of my students display interests in social justice and activism, two areas that should be at the heart of "Citizenship and American Democracy." This unit encourages critical thinking and facilitates the production of student-generated projects that aim to either bring about change or raise awareness.

Initial research questions revolve around surveillance culture (SC): is today's SC a byproduct of the post-9/11 era or a carryover from the Cold War? How much further back in time do its roots go?

Where can I find out more about COINTELPRO [a portmanteau that carries COunter, INTELLIGENCE, PROgram, and refers to FBI attempts to infiltrate, surveil, disrupt, and discredit domestic political organizations (e.g. the Black Panther Party, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Nation of Islam (*see a pattern emerging here?*) et al) by means of covert and at times illegal methods] and how do I make that material relevant to my students? What are the implications and lasting effects of Guantanamo and the expanded roles of the NSA?

What rights and privileges are guaranteed to citizens under the constitution? If times of 'emergency' require a suspension, a limitation, or alteration of these rights and privileges, how do we know what an "emergency" is during a period in which we wage wars on drugs as well as terror, and in which the "War on Terror" has lasted for more than a decade? Does the requirement need amending in times of seemingly endless conflict/war, or is a state of emergency temporary by definition?

This last query has essentially gone unanswered. Although the Supreme Court has wrestled with the issue, they have shied away from providing a definitive answer. The Court's hesitation is just one more justification

for having my students think about it.

1.3 Rationale

Stephen Apkon in his book *The Age of the Image* makes the claim that before being able to graduate from our public high schools, students should be able to write a script for a short video segment; shoot coherent narrative film that correctly incorporates literate elements of expression; edit raw footage into a persuasive argument; access an audience through appropriate channels of distribution including the Internet; and critically deconstruct and demonstrate an understanding of visual media. Not only do I agree with Apkon's assertions, but I also find it interesting how they relate to the ideas of John Howard Lawson, which found their way into print half of a century ago. Lawson stated, "The problems of film today are problems of world communication. Human survival is a global question- it relates to the nature of man, his creative will, his ability to face the future." Lawson goes on to question the relation between the film image and reality. He questions whether or not the documentary film is closer to the truth than the narrative film; whether there's a connection between film and other arts, especially theatre and literature; and how the moving image is able to express psychological truths and states of feeling. His observations are quite salient to my attempts to use historical dramas and biopics to both illustrate and illuminate ideas, historical periods, and movements that have contributed to the development of American culture over time. My challenge now is not to justify the inclusion of one mode over the other, but rather to find ways to promote student acceptance of 'nonfiction' film and to make such artifacts appear relevant.

At present I include only two documentary features in my Introduction to Film Studies curriculum, both Academy Award-winners, James Marsh's *Man on Wire* and Leon Gast's *When We Were Kings*. It is interesting to think of both of these films in the larger context of this unit. Philip Petit's high-wire act between the Twin Towers, now impossible for obvious reasons, would also be less likely regardless of site-specification if only for the heightened security measures in a post 9/11 world. The narrative of *When We Were Kings*, Ali as underdog versus Foreman in 'The Rumble in the Jungle,' would not be nearly as compelling were he not stripped of his title and his freedom in a 'time of emergency' for refusal on religious grounds to serve in Viet Nam. I include this information because I am aware of the challenges of engaging students with non-fiction films, especially with its genre conventions of talking heads and heavy reliance on infographics.

Man on Wire and *When We Were Kings* work in large part because they focus on feats of physical activity that is quite different from, if not the polar opposite of, the static that is Edward Snowden, waiting for the other shoe to drop while he is holed up in a Hong Kong hotel, or former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, waxing poetic with his seemingly endless collection of 'aphorisms and apothegms' as he evades his interviewers' questions and constantly looks for what former AP and UPI reporter Pam Hess has described as 'exit ramps.' In an interview with filmmaker Errol Morris for *The New York Times*, Hess explained, "We're there as reporters, trying to assemble a public record. You had to have all your ducks in a row to ask a question and to be able to keep pursuing it, because he [Rumsfeld] would find any weakness and take it apart. I thought of them as exit ramps. I tried not to give him exit ramps in my questions."

A challenge will be to present such highly politically charged materials to students in a way that avoids bias (mine) and therefore cannot be confused with indoctrination. My aim is to have my students critically assess and analyze the films and writings and to draw their own conclusions about political power, individual rights, and the tensions between them.

Section Two: General Guide

2.1 Special Issues

Although I teach high school seniors almost exclusively, which means that the lion's share of my students are seventeen or over, some of the materials being represented have received a Restricted (R) rating from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). I do believe that it is ridiculous that Poitras's Best Documentary feature from 2014 received such a rating for its inclusion of "the f word eight times" (IMDB Parents Guide).

Errol Morris's film *The Unknown Known: The Life and Times of Donald Rumsfeld* received a PG-13 (Parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13) for its inclusion of disturbing images of war and specifically its use of photographs from Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

Objectionable material is scant in the two films that are the main foci of this unit. Nonetheless, as noted above, it will be a challenge to get all students to engage with not only nonfiction films, but films that may be categorized as chamber pieces. The bulk of *Citizenfour* takes place within the confines of a Hong Kong hotel room, and *The Unknown Known* consisting largely of Rumsfeld's first-person interaction with the interrottron (see more on this in section 3.1.3 *The Unknown Known: Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld Takes on the Interrottron*). Despite Armond White's (*The National Review* and *Out*) dismissal of the film review aggregator *Rotten Tomatoes* -- , both my students and I generally agree that it gets it right. -- *Citizenfour* rates a 96% on the 'Tomatometer' and *Unknown Known* rates an 83%.

It may be worth noting that I have recently become aware of a September release date for a docudrama by filmmaker Oliver Stone featuring Joseph Gordon-Levitt in the titular role of Snowden. Ironically Gordon-Levitt played the role of Philip Petit in last year's *The Walk* , director Robert Zemeckis's CGI (Computer Generated Image) fest re-enacting the high-wire act between the Towers. Although my students did not critically view *The Walk* , they did respond to its trailer with much consternation, questioning the film's very existence especially in light of their experiences with Academy Award-winning documentary *Man On Wire* on which it was based.

2.2 Aims: Objectives and Goals

By completing this unit of study, students will demonstrate proficiency in the following areas: analytical and argument process writing, accessing and analyzing information, and problem solving and creativity; communication and collaboration, demonstrating audience awareness, practicing web publishing, and responding to written and verbal feedback from both teachers and peers.

Section Three: Unit Description

3.1 Outline: Texts and Methods

Students will engage with such texts as Dave Egger's non-fiction *Zeitoun* , Cynthia Brown's *Lost Liberties* , documentary film including but not limited to the award-winning *Citizenfour* , and graphic novels ranging from *The 9/11 Report* and *AD: After the Deluge* . The unit will pair some of these works with the case law that

served as the crux of this year's seminar.

3.1.1 The Curious Case of Ellison's "Battle Royal"

Seminar Leader Professor Jill Campbell made multiple references to Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* while delivering a talk on literature and identity. ¹ Although I am unsure (actually I am pretty sure) if I have as yet to make it through the work in its entirety, I do often teach its first chapter: "Battle Royal," which was originally published as a stand-alone short story. The reason I make mention of this is because this is where my mind turned when reading Danielle Allen's prologue to *Our Declaration*, especially her discussion of the Mitt Romney anecdote where the then-presidential candidate referenced this foundational text all but omitted "all men are created equal." For those unfamiliar with Ellison's work, the narrative centers on a young black man, a recent high school graduate, who is being 'honored' by the town's elite (white males). Having been lured to a 'smoker' under the pretense of receiving accolades, Ellison's protagonist is subjected to unfathomable abuses and humiliation. Finally, when all but hope is lost, he is called back to deliver his address. Beaten and bloodied he stands and delivers his speech to a roomful of drunken power-brokers. At one point he misspeaks; whereas, his original text included the phrase 'social responsibility,' he uses the phrase 'social equality.' He is then badgered and harangued into 'correcting himself' before being presented with a new leather satchel that contains a scholarship to the state university for 'Negroes,' where presumably he will acquire the requisite leadership skills to keep his 'community' acquiescent.

Although the narrative of Ellison's story neither deals with surveillance nor questions of national security directly, it does explore the themes of race, citizenship, and democracy. Prior to the myriad humiliations the protagonist must endure, he recounts the story of his grandfather, who on his deathbed made the following statement:

Son, after I'm gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open."

This in turn reminds me of the important work that Booker T. Washington was doing behind the scenes on behalf of the Black community, and as discussed in seminar Civil Rights leaders Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. et al were the subjects of FBI (and in the case of X possibly CIA as well) surveillance and wiretaps during the reign of J. Edgar Hoover. One may wonder how much less these great men would have been able to accomplish in their short lives were they subject to the level of scrutiny possible through contemporary methods of meta data collection used by the NSA and other security organizations.

3.1.2 Citizenfour AKA "Sometimes It feels like Somebody's Watching Me"

Senior English students are required to create writing portfolios that demonstrate competency across three distinct modes of writing: narrative, analysis, and argument. While Snowden's insisted that his own story should remain separate from the larger narrative of governmental abuses of power and subversion of individual constitutional rights, Poitras's film begs to be both analyzed and argued on these grounds. The best support for this claim is a clip appears in the third act. President Obama is asked by a reporter whether or not he believes Snowden is a patriot.

“Just because you’re paranoid, don’t mean they’re not after you,” Kurt Cobain.

IRONY- under government surveillance the film’s director went into self-imposed exile in Berlin, former East Germany, to complete the film. Additionally, the film ends with Snowden taking refuge in Russia, in the former USSR and the home of both Stalin and the KGB, symbols and stalwarts of secret government repressions. One way to incorporate this material into a lesson, especially for advanced students and those that attend Metrocinematek: The Film Society of MBA (meets every Wednesday in the lecture hall) is to present the work of and background information on Soviet filmmaker extraordinaire Sergei Eisenstein (he is credited with conceiving the cinematic technique of *montage*. “The Odessa Steps” from his early feature *The Battleship Potemkin* is oft imitated; notable homages to this scene are included in director Brian De Palma’s *The Untouchables* and *The Naked Gun 33 1/2: The Final Insult*). Eisenstein’s magnum opus *Ivan the Terrible: Parts I and II* is particularly relevant. Although the production of these films would not have been possible were it not for the fiscal and material support of the

Stalin regime, Eisenstein was eventually blacklisted and imprisoned after Stalin viewed *Part II* and believed that it was a social critique of the then contemporary USSR.

Snowden faces three felony counts of espionage under an Act that originated during World War I. According to the filmmakers, the Act predates claims of the rights of whistleblowers and fails to disambiguate disseminating of government secrets to the press to further the greater good and trading information for money with foreign powers. The DOD’s joint publication Dictionary of Military and Associated terms that Rumsfeld relishes as a reference source does not contain the term ‘whistleblower.’

3.1.3 The Unknown Known: Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld Takes on the Interrotron

“In writing if it takes over 30 minutes to write the first two paragraphs select another subject” (Raymond Aron) from “Rumsfeld’s Rules.”

During Donald Rumsfeld’s final six-year run as Secretary of Defense, he dictated and sent out tens of thousands of memos often referred to by him and others as ‘snowflakes.’ Most of the ‘snowflakes’ I have read bear the FOUO (For Office Use Only) classification, which is “a DoD dissemination control applied to unclassified information when disclosure to the public of that particular record, or portion thereof, would reasonably be expected to cause a foreseeable harm to an interest protected by one or more of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Exemptions.” They have since become ‘declassified’ and serve as a jumping off point for Academy Award-winning filmmaker Errol Morris’s documentary. Morris won the Oscar for his film *The Fog of War* which centers around the life and ‘accomplishments’ of another former defense secretary, Robert McNamara, oft-cited as a key architect of the US’s policy in Vietnam.

When Errol Morris first set out to make *The Unknown Known* his primary purpose and goal was to discover the root causes that led to the invasion of Iraq and the Global War on Terror. Morris reportedly conducted 33 hours of interviews with the former Defense Secretary. In addition to making the film he wrote a four-part essay for *The New York Times Opinionator* entitled “The Certainty of Donald Rumsfeld.”

Rumsfeld is fond of the term “a lack of imagination;” this is his reasoning for our failure to properly anticipate and adequately prepare for both Pearl Harbor and the attacks of September 11, 2001. He is also well-known for his missive about the “unknown unknown,” things that we don’t know that we don’t know. This raises an essential question(s): are Rumsfeld and his cronies correct in their assertions and policy decisions? Or is he [are they] capable of committing to falsehoods with such conviction that he ultimately accepts and believes

his alternate narrative?

Moving from content to form, I have read conflicting reports on whether or not documentary filmmaker Errol Morris did in fact invent the “interrotron,” he has both perfected its use and has a patent pending. His wife, art historian Julie Sheehan, coined the term, a portmanteau that blends the concepts of both interview and terror. Ironically Morris claims that his device, essentially a teleprompter that streams a live video image so that the interviewee is simultaneously looking directly into the camera and having the experience of making eye contact with the interviewer, does not make people uncomfortable:

People, if anything, feel more relaxed when talking to a live video image. My production designer, Ted Bafaloukos, said, ‘The beauty of this thing is that it allows people to do what they do best. Watch television.’ We often think of technology as working against the possibility of intimacy. But there are so many counter-examples. The telephone is a good counter-example. There are things we can say to each other on the phone that we would never say if we were in the same room.... The Interrotron is like that. It creates [both] greater distance and greater intimacy. And it also creates the *true first person* . Now, when people make eye contact with me, it can be preserved on film (Morris).

SPOILER ALERT! At the film’s conclusion Rumsfeld makes the claim that many of Bush’s policies that were once condemned by Obama are given legitimacy by their continued practice under Obama as Commander-in-Chief; these policies include but are not limited to: Guantanamo Bay, drone strikes, the USA Patriot Act, use of ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ and ‘indefinite detentions.’ See more on this in the Other Print Texts section esp. Kate Martin’s “Secret Arrests and Preventive Detentions.”

3.1.4 Zeitoun

Author David Eggers award-winning book *Zeitoun* was to go into development as an animated film project directed by Jonathan Demme in 2009; however, its protagonist has experienced both personal and legal troubles since the time of its publication which has called his character into question and hence the film project has floundered in pre-production. Regardless of the accuracy of its portrayal of Zeitoun the man, a Syrian born painting contractor who chose to stay in New Orleans during and in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the book’s description of the ‘emergency’ prison facility erected at the city’s transportation hub is both fascinating and disturbing. One gets to witness the seemingly overnight conversion of the depot into what was a stockade under the control of various state and federal agencies ranging from but not limited to the National Guard, Louisiana Department of Corrections, and the Department of Homeland Security.

It is a cautionary tale of the increased militarization of our civilian police force and the treatment of US citizens as enemy combatants. Was the preparation and expenditure of resources misguided? Were the national and local governments prioritizing law and order and the criminalization of a significant swath of the population rather than preparing and providing timely relief to disaster victims? *Zeitoun* as presented ties in with *Lost Liberties*. *Lost Liberties* connects with a recent New York Times article focused on Secretary Clinton’s use of an unencrypted email server. This will be discussed in greater detail in Section 3.15. *Other Print Materials* .

3.1.5 Other Print Materials

There have been a number of comparisons made between presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's handling of classified information and that of other former cabinet members, David Petraeus, and even Edward Snowden. In *The New York Times* article "Public Scolding of Clinton Fits a Pattern of Taking on Power," there is a shift in focus. The article moves from the Clinton affair (her use of a privately owned unencrypted web server to send emails, some of which contained classified information and materials related to national security and international policies) to how now FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) director James Comey was once deputy Attorney General under John Ashcroft and "the center of a dramatic dispute with administration officials in 2004. He is famous for refusing to re-authorize a secret NSA (National Security Administration) wiretapping program put into place after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks."

Apparently Comey believed that the program of warrantless wiretapping was illegal. His refusal to comply led two top Bush aides to visit Attorney General Ashcroft's hospital room in an attempt to coerce him into signing the order. Although *The Times* fails to comment on the resolution of the matter, the Patriot Act is as of the time of this writing still in effect. I believe this points to both larger ongoing issues and to dangers of having a small cadre of wonks shaping America's policies both international and domestic over a long period of time.

Rumsfeld came to work for the Executive Branch during the Nixon administration, was a powerbroker under president Gerald Ford as his Chief of Staff before becoming the youngest person to hold the office of Secretary of Defense and then later the only person to hold the post twice. His second term as Secretary of Defense came during the presidency of George W. Bush. During this final stint at the Pentagon, Rumsfeld attempted to resign not once, but twice (both attempts were rejected by Bush). Eventually, however, he became so embattled over the DOD's (Department of Defense) 'enhanced interrogation' methods and the 'quagmire' that Iraq had become that he was ultimately fired and replaced by Robert Gates, former director of the CIA under George HW Bush.

Reg Whitaker's essay "After 9/11: A Surveillance State?," [t]he security-industrial complex has a stake in joining with government in pumping up the threat level just as defense interests and the government pumped up anxiety over the soviet threat in the past including "missile gaps" that never were." Although not mentioned by Whitaker, Rumsfeld had a hand in increasing the perceived threat of thermonuclear war and the ramping up of American defense spending from the 1970s onward. ²

Whitaker goes on to suggest that the mastermind and 'true visionary for a post-9/11 surveillance state' may have been Vice Admiral John M. Poindexter of Iran-Contra notoriety not John Ashcroft or another head of an existing intelligence gathering agency. The position of director of the Information Awareness Office within the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) was created with Poindexter in mind. DARPA scientists were those responsible for the development of the computer communications network known as ARPANET which over time has morphed into the civilian Internet.

There is something decidedly missing here. It is hard to decide where to stop waxing poetic on history that I have experienced firsthand. My good friend from grammar school went to high school at Woodberry Forest with the son of Oliver North. I remember being at a Cub Scout meeting when Reagan was shot. I was riding the B-61 bus from Red Hook, Brooklyn to Brooklyn Heights when American Airlines flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of World Trade Center (WTC). I spent 9/11 on the island of Manhattan and walked home that night across the Brooklyn Bridge. Although I saw Tower Seven fall in real time I have to question our country's continued response. When I first started teaching my students had memories of that fateful day; next year my seniors will have been three at the time of the attacks. Regardless what conclusions my students come to it is of utmost importance that they consider their rights especially in terms of citizenship, surveillance, and

democracy in post-9/11 America.

3.2 Details: Sample Lesson Plans

3.2.1 When National Security Trumps Human Rights

Journal/Motivation (Initiation Set):

Students in small groups brainstorm lists and word-webs (large format chart paper/'post-it' style preferred) around the central ideas of 'national security,' 'human rights,' 'times of emergency,' citizenship and democracy. Consider where these ideas and related concepts intersect and are in opposition to one another.

Share. This may be done as a series of short group presentations; however, if time is an issue (which it almost always is) consider using a 'gallery walk.'

Aims and Objectives: SWBAT (Students Will Be Able To...):

1. Participate in diverse conversations demonstrating ability to communicate and collaborate.
2. Read and analyze a variety of nonfiction texts.

Workshop (Activity)

Students in small groups *jigsaw* a number of short readings. Small groups (ideally three to four students) are assigned selected shorts from *Lost Liberties* and *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* . Although students are individually responsible for reading their passages, they are also expected to take on a group member role such as facilitator, recorder, or reporter.

Groups are asked to analyze their texts. They must identify the thesis or controlling idea and find evidence in support. Next, they are to refer to the guiding questions of the unit, both those included in Section 1.2 Descriptive Overview as well as any students add to the list. Finally, they are to draw conclusions and generate questions for further research.

Group reporters share findings with whole class.

Summary/Review

Materials:

Jacobson, Sid and Ernie Colón. *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* . London:

Viking, 2006. Print.

Lost Liberties: Ashcroft and the Assault on Personal Freedom . Edited by Cynthia Brown. New York: The New Press, 2003.

3.2.2 The Unknown Known

Aims and Objectives: SWBAT (Students Will Be Able To...):

Workshop (Activity)

Students critically view and discuss the nonfiction film *The Unknown Known* (approximately two block class periods of 87 minutes each; this should provide ample time for students to complete initiation sets/warm up activities, discuss major themes and genre conventions pre- and post-viewing film sections).

Homework:

Write a blog post of 250 words or more that includes elements of both analytical and argument writing. You are to consider the film's subject as much, if not more, than the methods by which documentary filmmaker Morris presents ideas.

Summary/Review

Materials:

The Unknown Known: The Life and Times of Donald Rumsfeld . Dir. Errol Morris. Feat. Donald Rumsfeld (himself). History Films, 2013.

Available streaming for rent or purchase via Amazon; DVD may be ordered or rented from Best Video Film and Cultural Center, Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT.

3.2.3 Citizenfour: Edward Snowden Hero or Zero?

Journal/Motivation (Initiation Set):

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a whistleblower is one who reveals wrongdoing within an organization to the public or to those in positions of authority: "The Pentagon's most famous whistleblower is ... hoping to get another chance to search for government waste" (Washington Post).

First, individually jot lists of either known whistleblowers or injustices that have been exposed through the practice. Next, turn and talk with a neighbor. Expand your lists to include examples that your partner came up with that you did not.

Share with whole group.

Aims and Objectives: SWBAT (Students Will Be Able To...):

1. Demonstrate an understanding of process writing.
2. Write an argument on a compelling idea or topic that is supported by text based evidence.
3. Participate in diverse conversations demonstrating ability to communicate and collaborate.

Workshop (Activity)

Students critically view and discuss the nonfiction film *Citizenfour* (approximately two block class periods of 87 minutes each; this should provide ample time for students to complete initiation sets/warm up activities, discuss major themes and genre conventions pre- and post-viewing film sections).

While engaged in critical viewing, students are encouraged to take notes. One means that has proven effective in past classes is the creation of a three-columned chart: What I saw/What I noticed/What this means...; Why this is important. Students may find this method to work best if they fill mostly column one (What I saw/What I noticed) and backfill the other two columns during post viewing discussion and as

prewriting/collecting toward their blog posts [see both Homework and “A Guide to Evaluating Blog Posts” (Section Four: Assessment)].

Homework:

Write a blog post of 250 words or more that includes elements of both analytical and argument writing. You are to consider the film’s subject as much, if not more, than the methods by which documentary filmmaker Poitras presents ideas.

Summary/Review

Materials:

Citizenfour . Dir. Laura Poitras. Feat. Edward Snowden (himself), Glenn Greenwald, and William Binney. HBO Documentary Films, 2014.

Available streaming for rent or purchase via Amazon; DVD may be ordered or rented from Best Video Film and Cultural Center, Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT.

Section Four Assessment

In addition to enhancing student interactions with fictional works, this unit incorporates a variety of non-fiction readings and films. The unit includes a culminating project-based learning activity where students apply newly acquired knowledge especially as it relates the development of their own visual and cultural literacy.

Students blog regularly while critically viewing the films. Samples of previous Metropolitan Business Academy film studies student work may be found at <http://introfilmatmetro.blogspot.com/>.

A Guide to Evaluating Blog Posts

From this point forward Introduction to Film at Metro will adopt the language of the 21st Century Skills Rubric for evaluating written work i.e. blog posts: Exemplary, Competent, Emerging, and Novice. In crafting blog posts students primarily engage in three types of writing: narrative (tells a story, e.g. Prior Film Experience One and Two), expository (analysis; the American Dream in *Rocky* and *Sugar* ; suspense and genre conventions in *Man On Wire* and *Touch of Evil*), and argument (critique; evaluating all films critically viewed; contemporary appeal of one or more Universal Monsters).

What does an exemplary or competent blog post look like? A competent blog post must meet the following requirements:

1. The post involves more than summary, recall, and retell. The post presents the ideas and opinions of the student based on critical observations and in class discussions; a polished blog post will have a clear thesis

statement. Here are two examples: 1. In their Academy Award-winning feature *Rocky*, director John G. Avildsen and screenwriter/actor Sylvester Stallone explore the state of the American Dream in 1976. 2. The independent sleeper *Sugar* (2008) is an appropriate choice for Hispanic Heritage Month; it is an example of social realism that examines both our obsession with and treatment of professional athletes, as well as, the plight of Spanish speaking migrants in the twenty-first century.

2. The post cites text evidence in support of its ideas. For example: In addition to giving its viewers an insider view of life in the Minor Leagues, *Sugar* is a coming of age tale. We see its protagonist grow over time, when first asked by a teammate who his favorite player is, Miguel responds, "Robinson Cano," a contemporary Dominican success story. Later, near the film's conclusion Miguel adopts Roberto Clemente as his favorite player, citing his humanitarian works off the field in addition to his accomplishments on the diamond. He goes as far as to quote Clemente saying, "Any time you have an opportunity to make a difference in this world and you don't, then you are wasting your time on Earth."

In addition to citing examples from the text, the blog specifically refers to characters, actors, filmmakers, and other film elements by name.

3. The post meets the minimum length requirements (250 words or more), flows logically, and follows the rules of Standard Written English.

4. The post includes a relevant image that reflects its author's ideas and properly cites sources. For example:

Rocky . Dir. John G. Avildsen. Perf. Sylvester Stallone (Rocky), Talia Shire (Adrian), Carl Weathers (Apollo Creed), Burgess Meredith (Mickey), and Burt Young (Paulie). United Artists, 1976.

Although regular blog posts will determine one's homework grade, the Exit Portfolio for Introduction to Film will consist of six published process pieces (posts that have gone through all five steps of our writing process: pre-writing/collecting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing), two per trimester, with accompanying 21st Century Reflections.

Notes

1. Jill Campbell, "Literature and Identity" (talk, Yale New Haven Teachers Institute, New Haven, CT, March 29, 2016).
2. Errol Morris, *The Unknown Known* , Film (2013; History Films), streaming video.

Appendix: Standards Addressed by Unit

Reading

1. Read and analyze to determine the meaning and how meaning develops in a text, identify literary structures and their impact, and examine an author's purpose.
2. Synthesize information from a range of texts and sources.

3. Independently and proficiently read, interpret, and analyze literary fiction and nonfiction texts.

Writing

4. Develop a range of writing including narrative, informative, explanatory, and argumentative, that reflects authentic writing in that genre and takes a stance on an issue of personal or universal importance.

5. Employ the writing process in the production of academic writing.

6. Demonstrate command of appropriate standards of English grammar, usage, conventions, and content specific vocabulary.

Speaking & Listening

7. Prepare for and participate in formal and informal conversations, discussions, and presentations by building on others' ideas and expressing original ideas clearly and persuasively.

Works Cited and Reading List:

Apkon, Stephen. *The Age of the Image: Redefining Literacy in a World of Screens* . New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2013.

Citizenfour . Dir. Laura Poitras. Feat. Edward Snowden (himself), Glenn Greenwald, and William Binney. HBO Documentary Films, 2014.

Jacobson, Sid and Ernie Colón. *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* . London: Viking, 2006. Print.

Golden, John. *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom* . Urbana: NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), 2001.

Golden's book is a practical guide for anyone who is just getting started moving away from using movies in the classroom as reinforcement and beginning to use films as texts. In addition to having chapters on terminology and cinematic effects, film and reading strategies, and analysis, Golden includes his approach to teaching a number of complete films including John G. Avildson's *Rocky* and Spike Lee's *Crooklyn* . The book also includes a number of reproducible activity sheets.

Lawson, John Howard. *Film the Creative Process: The Search for an Audio-Visual Language and Structure* . New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.

Lost Liberties: Ashcroft and the Assault on Personal Freedom . Edited by Cynthia Brown. New York: The New Press, 2003.

This collection of essays remains a seminal text in the study of surveillance culture. It covers a wide array of topics including Civil Liberties, racial profiling, and "The War on Terrorism: Guantanamo Prisoners, Military Commissions, and Torture."

Maynard, Richard A. *The Celluloid Curriculum: How to Use Movies in the Classroom* . Rochelle Park, New Jersey: Hayden Book Company, 1971.

Although one might assume that a book on using film in the classroom from the 1970s may be dated and obsolete, this could not be

further from the truth. Yes, much has changed since Maynard wrote the chapter "A Practical Guide to Teaching with Films"; however, his anecdotes about teaching in Philadelphia public schools seem all too familiar to today's veteran teacher (almost half of a century later). Additionally, Part II of the book "The Movie as the Message- Film as a Historical and Social Object of Study" includes seven chapters on topics ranging from "American Cinematic Interpretations of War," "The Great Depression on Film," and "Movies and McCarthyism." Maynard's chapter on "Movies and Literature" also retains significance.

Morris, Errol. "The Certainty of Donald Rumsfeld (Parts 1-4)." *Opinionator* . The New York Times, 25-28 Mar. 2014. Web. 08 July 2016.

Errol Morris: Eye Contact . FLM Magazine, Dec. 2004. Web. 07 July 2016.

Neufeld, Josh. *A.D.: New Orleans after the Deluge* . New York: Pantheon, 2009. Print.

The Unknown Known: The Life and Times of Donald Rumsfeld . Dir. Errol Morris. Feat. Donald Rumsfeld (himself). History Films, 2013.

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