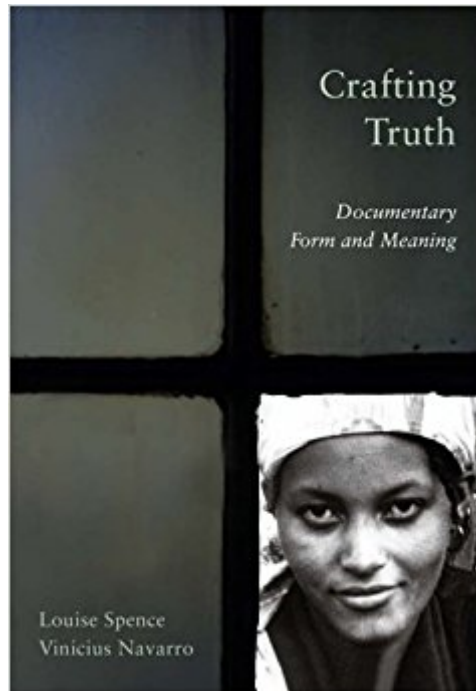


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# Crafting Truth: Documentary Form And Meaning



## Synopsis

Documentaries such as Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman's *Born into Brothels*, Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Jeffrey Blitz's *Spellbound*, along with *March of the Penguins* and *An Inconvenient Truth* have achieved critical as well as popular success. Although nonfiction film may have captured imaginations, many viewers enter and leave theaters with a naive concept of "truth" and "reality"-for them, documentaries are information sources. But is truth or reality readily available, easily acquired, or undisputed? Or do documentaries convey illusions of truth and reality? What aesthetic means are used to build these illusions? A documentary's sounds and images are always the product of selection and choice, and often underscore points the filmmaker wishes to make. *Crafting Truth* illuminates the ways these films tell their stories; how they use the camera, editing, sound, and performance; what rhetorical devices they employ; and what the theoretical, practical, and ethical implications of these choices are. Complex documentary concepts are presented through easily accessible language, images, and a discussion of a wide range of films and videos to encourage new ways of thinking about and seeing nonfiction film.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Spence and Navarro create a beautiful, accessible synthesis of the ideas underpinning documentary thinking, the key scholars addressing these ideas, and a diverse filmography representing those texts. It sets the foundation for understanding the form as it has developed so far and provides a starting point for understanding the form as it will evolve in the future." (Studies in Documentary Film 2012-01-01)"Highly recommended. Perhaps mandatory for students of film,

mass communication, and journalism." (Choice 2011-11-01)"Crafting Truth delivers an intelligent and inspiring introduction to documentary studies through an original framework that powerfully attends to the complex politics, aesthetics, ideas, and forms at the heart of the genre." (Alexandra Juhasz co-editor of *F is for Phony* and documentary videomaker 2010-08-06)"Crafting Truth addresses all the main issues involved in studying the documentary, cleverly illustrated by recent examples while not forgetting necessary consideration of the canon – a very valuable account." (Brian Winston University of Lincoln, UK 2010-07-26)"Crafting Truth introduces readers to some of the basic questions guiding contemporary discussions of the documentary. Authors Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro structure their book around thoughtful considerations of general concepts like authenticity, evidence, and responsibility; structural organization of rhetoric and argument; and formal techniques like editing, camerawork, and sound in order to ask: how do documentaries proclaim themselves authentic?" (Cineaste)"A novel and illuminating introduction to key concepts in documentary. The distinctive cast to the book makes it an extremely welcome contribution to the field." (Bill Nichols author of *Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies* 2010-01-28)

LOUISE SPENCE is a professor of cinema studies at Kadir Has University in Istanbul and the coauthor of the award-winning *Writing Himself into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films, and His Audiences* (Rutgers University Press). VINICIUS NAVARRO is an assistant professor of film studies at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

There are many more insightful texts for a documentary syllabus, such as the rare interviews of Werner Herzog, or the provocative writings of Ranciere. This book is SO BAD! Chapter after chapter spent on the most obvious and dull issues. But the worst part are the example films presented. For example, the book discusses in detail David Holtzman's *Diary*, which is an unremarkable, obscure, and not particularly interesting film. And of course, the book is older and misses some of the most groundbreaking documentaries of recent years: *Act of Killing*, *Searching for Sugarman*, *Grizzly Man*, and *the Square*, to name a few.

I bought this book because it was required for my history of documentary film course. It is an excellent overview of basic documentary film elements. What I enjoyed about it most is its inclusion of analysis and application of many famous and not-so-famous documentary films...their discussion of some films made me run to netflix and stream/order a copy! My only gripe with this book is its

somewhat repetitive nature; perhaps this is just me though, I realize that some modes of analysis of film overlap with each other and thus concepts are similar but named differently. But in general, I enjoy this book and it was one of the more enjoyable books of my collegiate career :)

Great product and quick delivery.

I used this book for the first time this semester for an undergrad course in documentary, and I've been very pleased with it. The authors deal with the complexities of constructing reality in the doc ("crafting" is a wonderful term for this, much more successful than texts that take the "representing" route) with clear and lucid prose. One of my major beefs with many doc texts--the habit of referring to a ton of films one does not have and/or cannot see or obtain without adequate description--is not at all a problem here; each film discussed is carefully described in just enough detail such that even without seeing the film, my students can understand the point. I also like the organization of the book, and am especially grateful for the last section, on editing, mise-en-scene, and sound--makes this a great text for classes in which students complement reading and screening with filmmaking projects--not a technical guide, those are a dime a dozen--but a conceptual guide to how those elements signify and this can be manipulated. I'm very pleased, and the students seem to enjoy the book, too. It's just what I needed.

Great book! Very insightful. If you are a documentarian or simply someone who wants to know more about documentaries in general, I highly recommend this book.

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