

Summer Reading for students entering Civic Life & Documentary Film

We are excited that you will be part of this year's Civic Life class. This course began with just a few students several years ago and has grown larger with each passing year. In that time Housatonic's students have made dozens of prize-winning documentaries, and screened their films for audiences in legislative buildings, performance halls, drive-in movie theaters (and those with roofs), and, of course, the high school's auditorium.

The course's goal is to make you engaged and informed citizens and skilled documentary filmmakers. Together, you and your classmates will explore important social and civic issues through the lens of documentary movies. You will travel to a wide variety of settings, interviewing people from of diverse backgrounds who are working in careers you may not even know exist. You will thoroughly research topic that you consider vital, interview experts about this subject, and make a film that is designed to get people thinking and move them to take action.

To prepare for an exciting year, we would like to get you thinking about how documentaries work and the types of subjects that great documentaries examine. Between now and the first day of class, watch any one of the documentaries from the list below. Most of these titles can be found on Netflix, Amazon Prime, HBOGO, iTunes, Google Play, or other online streaming services. Alternately, many of them are available in our school library, so if you need (or prefer) a DVD of the film, contact Mr. Osora (dosora@hvrhs.org) or Mr. Lizzi (jlizzi@hvrhs.org) and we can make sure you get a copy.

After you have finished viewing the documentary, compose a two-part written reflection of approximately four pages (typed and double spaced) in which you respond to the prompts below. You need not answer every single question, as long as your writing reveals significant thought and analysis on your part. Be sure to organize your ideas into distinct paragraphs, incorporate specific examples from your viewing, and remain mindful of spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Part One: *What are the most important social, economic, and/or political ideas present in this documentary? What is the message the filmmakers are trying to convey? Do you agree with that message? Do you detect any bias? What, if anything, is missing from this documentary that you would have liked to have seen included? Do the filmmakers imply, directly or indirectly, that there is something you can do to impact the issues discussed in the documentary? (approximate length: 2 pages)*

Part Two: *Documentary filmmakers use various techniques to examine the subjects of their films.. Typically, these include newly conducted interviews, archival news footage and photographs, statistical information, graphics, text, and animation, as well as music and voiceover. What conscious decisions, in terms of technique, do you believe the filmmakers made? What did you see or hear that had the greatest impact on you as a viewer? What was the single most persuasive or powerful scene in the movie? What made it so? What might the filmmakers have done differently that would have made the film even more effective for you or have changed the message or meaning the movie conveyed? (approximate length: 2 pages)*

Your reflection must be submitted to Google Classroom on or before the first day of class. You will receive an invitation to the page over the summer. You should arrive to class prepared to briefly discuss the film you watched and what you liked (or didn't like) about it.

We look forward to seeing you in August. Enjoy your viewing and writing!

Recommended Documentaries for Summer Viewing (2017)

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| Citizenfour (2014) | 13 th (2016) |
| Bully (2011) | The Red Pill (2016) |
| Killing Them Safely (2015) | Trapped (2016) |
| Peace Officer (2015) | I Am Not Your Negro (2016) |
| (T)error (2015) | Zero Days (2016) |
| True Cost, The (2015) | Tower (2016) |
| Under the Gun (2016) | The White Helmets (2016) |
| West of Memphis (2012) | Hoop Dreams (1994) |