

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY  
FILM REVIEW FORM  
FOR  
DR. DONNA BUDANI'S CLASSES

SPRING 2009

**INTRODUCTION**

Anthropological films and videos provide one of the best ways to “experience” another culture without actually being there. Fieldworkers have used visual methods for years to record how other cultures operate. At the same time, students should be aware of major problems associated with visual representations. These problems include the following:

- ***Anthropological videos are not made to entertain.*** American audiences have been raised to think of films and videos primarily as an entertainment medium. That is often the first consideration many have about a film: Will I enjoy it? Certainly many anthropological films are entertaining; most are meant to document or teach.
- ***Are Anthropological Films boring?*** Again, they are not usually meant as entertainment. If you see them as that, then they probably will be boring. Ask yourself this: If someone were to make a film of my daily life, just how exciting will the film be?
- ***Watch for Biases!!*** Anthropologists and film makers (usually not one and the same!) are products of their cultures. They will have the same sort of direct biases, and you need to watch for them.
- ***Western ideas of good filmmaking interfere with good anthropology!*** Westerners have a peculiar idea that the most important part of the body is the head, the locus of speech and emotions that is quite visible. On the other hand, visual anthropologists promote the idea of “whole bodies-whole acts.” Consider that much more action goes on outside the frame of the video/film. What it could mean and what could it tell you about the people and events being film?

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING A FILM REVIEW

**PLEASE NOTE: Your review may be less than 10 paragraphs so long as you address all the questions listed below. Be sure your review is thorough!**

1. In upper left corner of the page, insert your name, the name of the video shown, the date the video was shown and your class e.g. Anthropology 101. Anthropology200 or Anthropology 330
2. All video/film reviews are typed. I will not accept a hand written review. If you do not own a computer there are several computers located in Smith Hall, downstairs for use by students. All reviews are handed in on Thursdays. If we watch a video on Thursday, then your review is not due until Thursday next, On the other hand, if we watch a video on Tuesday, then your review is due on the Thursday of that week.
3. Be sure you have the details about the film e.g., what is the name of the cultural group? How do they make their living? Is there a geographical location stated in the film? Does the film look recent? When might have the film been made? What is the geographical location where the video/film is set? What aspect of culture does the film focus on e.g. the family, marriage, family, globalization and what ever else?
4. Write a Title: catchy, A catchy title can indicate if review will be positive or negative; you can play with words to make it funny or different,
5. Paragraph 1: opening paragraph – can start to summarize the film and give early suggestions about your general view of the film (positive/negative)
6. Paragraph 2: Start or continue summary of film. Be sure to mention those details that made a strong impression on you – either negative or positive. State why your reaction was positive or negative.
7. Paragraph 3: Briefly compose the descriptive and non-judgmental message of the film/video. Why would this message be important to an anthropologist? To you as a student?

8. Paragraph 4 and 5: positive things you liked about the film, what did you like? Why? What did you learn that you did not know before? Use descriptive words, think about the story, setting, effects used, music used.
9. Paragraph 6: Anything (custom, belief, behavior) that strikes you as strange. Why? Would you say your reaction was ethnocentric? Did the filmmaker have any biases? How did you know and what were these biases. What belief, value, custom of your own culture made it difficult to appreciate the uniqueness of the culture portrayed in the video?
10. Paragraph 7 and 8: negative things you thought about the film, what didn't you like? Why? Comment on the same type of things that you mentioned in paragraphs 4 and 5.
11. Paragraph 9 and 10: Talk about the people/animals/early ancestors portrayed in the film. If the film is a biography, did the film present a multi-dimension approach? Are key turning points in the person's life presented? What are they? What did you like or dislike about how people and/or the culture/ or subject was presented? What do you think is the most important thing you learned and why is this important to you? Can you think of others who would like/dislike the film? Why? Who are they?
12. Paragraph 10: Final comments – general comments that summarize your view of the film, you might say something inspiring which would make me want to show the film again to another class or you might say something that would make me not want to show the video again. After the last paragraph, give the movie/video a star rating out of 5(excellent) to indicate your rating of the film

*Common words and phrases used in film reviews that you might want to use in your own review:*

**Spectacular visual effects, excessive violence, breathtaking, evocative mood, atmosphere, poorly, unsuccessful, irresistible, perfect, moments, story line, makes the culture less strange, because, wonderful, disturbing, can't make sense of....., wonderful, hilarious, unexpected action, behavior, belief, value, unbelievable, suspense, disappointing, confusion/confused, fake, imitation, unoriginal, typical, thrilled was a very moving portrayal, quality of the film, I was impressed by, credible, captivating**

