Annotated Film Bibliography

Diablo Valley College – POLSC 250 (International Relations)


A stunning sensory experience and cinematic meditation on humanity’s massive reengineering of the planet, Anthropocene: The Human Epoch is a years-in-the-making feature documentary from the award-winning team behind Manufactured Landscapes (2006) and Watermark (2013) and narrated by Alicia Vikander. The film follows the research of an international body of scientists, the Anthropocene Working Group who, after nearly 10 years of research, argue that the Holocene Epoch gave way to the Anthropocene Epoch in the mid-twentieth century as a result of profound and lasting human changes to the Earth. From concrete seawalls in China that now cover 60% of the mainland coast, to the biggest terrestrial machines ever built in Germany, to psychedelic potash mines in Russia’s Ural Mountains, to metal festivals in the closed city of Norilsk, to the devastated Great Barrier Reef in Australia and massive marble quarries in Carrara, the filmmakers have traversed the globe using state of the art camera techniques to document the evidence and experience of human planetary domination. At the intersection of art and science, Anthropocene: The Human Epoch witnesses a critical moment in geological history — bringing a provocative and unforgettable experience of our species breadth and impact.


With all of the problems facing the world today, people are longing for meaning. Many find answers in religion or spirituality, but as a result faith and religion are often hijacked by those seeking to enhance their own power. With this dichotomy in mind, Beyond Our Differences calls upon key religious leaders, politicians, and luminaries in their fields and it asks what it is that inspires them to affect positive change.


Filmmaker David Kaplowitz leads us on an eye opening journey, questioning the effects of U.S. foreign policy over the past 50 years. Revealing a pattern of intervention, the film focuses on Guatemala, Vietnam, East Timor, El Salvador, and Palestine/Israel. Archival footage, photographs and media tidbits are dynamically interwoven with personal eye-witness accounts and commentary from academics – such as Noam Chomsky – religious leaders and politicians. In Whose Interest? is informative and disturbingly honest, yet upbeat, with twists of irony and humor.


Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers War Report Project, LLC, is the story of what happens to everyday Americans when corporations go to war. Acclaimed director Robert Greenwald takes you inside the lives of soldiers, truck drivers, widows and children who have been changed forever as a result of profitfeering in the reconstruction of Iraq. *Iraq for Sale* uncovers the connections between private corporations making a killing in Iraq (Blackwater, Halliburton/KBR, CACI and Titan) and the decision makers who allow them to do so.


Ireland: www.oilsmokeandmirrors.com

*Oil, Smoke & Mirrors* offers a bleaker view of present global circumstances than many of us would dare consider. It deals with issues that are largely marginalized, if not ignored, in the discourse of mainstream media and politics. However, as the film argues, it may well be that mediated political culture itself which, by sideling some of the most challenging questions of historical truth in our time, poses the gravest threat to our future.


*Soldiers of Conscience* is a dramatic window on the dilemma of individual U.S. soldiers in the current Iraq War – when their finger is on the trigger and another human being is in their gunsight. Made with cooperation from the U.S. Army and narrated by Peter Coyote, the film profiles eight American soldiers, including four who decide not to kill, and become conscientious objectors; and four who believe in their duty to kill if necessary. The film reveals all of them wrestling with the morality of killing in war, not as a philosophical problem, but as soldiers experience it - a split-second decision in combat that can never be forgotten or undone. *Soldiers of Conscience* is not a film that tells an audience what to think, nor is it about the situation in Iraq today. Instead, it tells a bigger story about human nature and war. The film begins with a little-known fact – after World War II, the Army’s own studies revealed that as many as 75 percent of combat soldiers, given a chance to fire on the enemy, failed to do so. The studies showed that soldiers, despite training, propaganda and social sanction, retained a surprising inhibition when it came to taking human life. The statistics surprised and alarmed America’s generals, who developed training techniques to overcome the reluctance to kill. But if the military found a solution to its problem, the moral contradiction for the individual soldier remained. The mental and emotional burdens carried by soldiers who have killed ripple across America’s families and communities after each of its recent wars. As this film shows, every soldier is inescapably a “soldier of conscience.”


Global poverty did not just happen. It began with military conquest, slavery and colonization that resulted in the seizure of land, minerals and forced labor. Today, the problem persists because of unfair debt, trade and tax policies -- in other words, wealthy countries taking advantage of poor, developing countries. Renowned actor and activist, Martin Sheen, narrates The End of Poverty?,
feature-length documentary directed by award-winning director, Philippe Diaz, which explains how today’s financial crisis is a direct consequence of these unchallenged policies that have lasted centuries. Consider that 20% of the planet’s population uses 80% of its resources and consumes 30% more than the planet can regenerate. At this rate, to maintain our lifestyle means more and more people will sink below the poverty line. Filmed in the slums of Africa and the barrios of Latin America, The End of Poverty? features expert insights from: Nobel prize winners in Economics, Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz; acclaimed authors Susan George, Eric Toussaint, John Perkins, Chalmers Johnson; university professors William Easterly and Michael Watts; government ministers such as Bolivia’s Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera and the leaders of social movements in Brazil, Venezuela, Kenya and Tanzania. It is produced by Cinema Libre Studio in collaboration with the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. Can we really end poverty within our current economic system? Think again.


To those who watch television in the developed world, there doesn’t seem to be a better system on earth than the capitalist system. We are experiencing the longest economic expansion in modern history. Soviet Communism has been defeated. But make no mistake, as we will demonstrate in this program, capitalism is surprisingly vulnerable. The moment of capitalism’s greatest triumph is the moment of its greatest crisis, its “Moment of Truth.” In fact, capitalism is not working for the vast majority of humanity that lives on the planet. Two thirds of the world’s population has been locked out of the global economy, forced to operate outside the rule of law, they have no legal identity, no credit, no capital, and thus no way to prosper. To unlock The Power of the Poor is to change the world. If we fail, these people will turn against capitalism as they have turned against other failed economic systems, and that could make for a very difficult, violent time. Filmed on location from Latin America to Africa, The Power of the Poor will demonstrate how free markets, individual freedom and especially the right to property can transform the poor into the most powerful resource in the world. At its heart is the potential triumph of capitalism as a system.


[Documentary]. United States: NAFTC Studios and First Run Features.

Famed Charles Manson prosecutor and New York Times bestselling author Vincent Bugliosi makes the most powerful, explosive, and thought-provoking argument of his storied career. In The Prosecution of an American President, Bugliosi presents a meticulously researched legal case that proves George W. Bush took our nation to war in Iraq under false pretenses and is therefore, under the law, guilty of murder for the deaths of 4,500 young American soldiers who fought and died there. Bush’s unlawful war also cost the United States over a trillion dollars; alienated many of our allies; caused the deaths of over 100,000 innocent Iraqi men, women, and children; and pushed a previously tranquil nation into unending civil war, atrocities and chaos. As a prosecutor dedicated to seeking justice, Bugliosi delivers a non-partisan argument based on hard facts and pure objectivity. This searing indictment also outlines a legally credible pathway to holding our highest government officials accountable for their actions, thereby creating a framework for future occupants of the Oval Office. Ultimately, Bugliosi calls for the United States to return to the great nation it once was.
The major portion of the film is spent addressing excerpts from the countless memos, nicknamed 'Yellow Perils' by his first Pentagon staff and 'Snowflakes' by the second, that Rumsfeld wrote during his time as a congressman and advisor to four different presidents, twice as United States Secretary of Defense. It also focuses on a response Rumsfeld gave to a question at a U.S. Department of Defense news briefing on February 12, 2002 about the lack of evidence linking the government of Iraq with the supply of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups. The content of the memos are varied, covering everything from the aftermath of Watergate, to the torture and abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, to the definition of the word "terrorism". Morris returns to the motif of snowflakes swirling within a globe throughout the documentary as he discusses the memos with Rumsfeld, the contents of which the Defense Secretary allowed him limited access while preparing the film, and several of which Rumsfeld agrees to read aloud on camera. At the beginning of the documentary, Rumsfeld argues that a major purpose of the Department of Defense is to evaluate "unknown knowns," or "the things you think you know, that it turns out you did not," to anticipate hostile actions before they take place. Illustrating his point, Rumsfeld suggests that the failure of the United States to anticipate the attack on Pearl Harbor was a failure of imagination. As the interviews proceed, the director is able to catch his subject lying on camera, though when he does, Rumsfeld does not acknowledge it, with Morris finding the politician unwilling or unable to engage in self-reflection. When the director asks him about the lessons he learnt from the Vietnam War, for example, Rumsfeld replies tersely: "Some things work out, some things don't; that didn't." Rumsfeld also expresses good-natured surprise at the list of torture techniques — including hooding, stress positions, and nudity — that he personally approved for use on Guantánamo detainees, stating, "Good grief! That's a pile of stuff!" In follow up, Morris questions him about the so-called "Torture Memos" describing enhanced interrogation techniques. When Rumsfeld replies that he never read them, Morris responds in disbelief, "Really?" When asked if the Iraq War was a mistake, Rumsfeld replies, "I guess time will tell." In the penultimate scene, Morris questions him again about "unknown knowns," and the definition given by Rumsfeld has inverted, a discongruence the director is quick to point out, and which Rumsfeld acknowledges: "unknown knowns" are "things that you know, that you don't know you know." As the documentary closes, Morris asks Rumsfeld why he agreed to the interviews. Rumsfeld responds, "That is a vicious question. I'll be darned if I know."