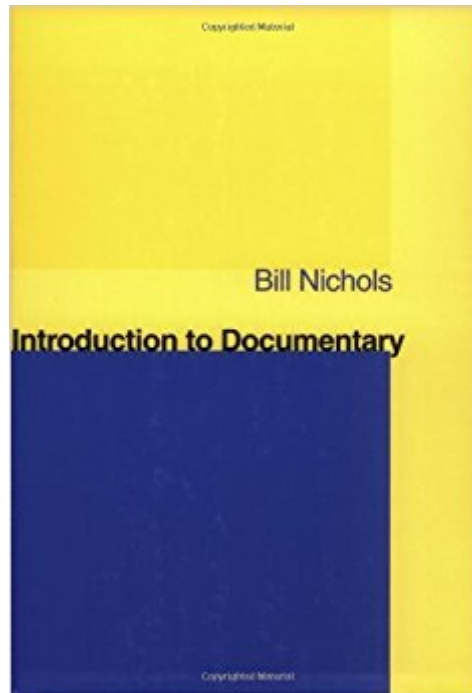




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# **Introduction To Documentary:**



## Synopsis

Introduction to Documentary provides a one-of-a-kind overview of the most important topics and issues in documentary history and criticism. Designed for students in any field that makes use of visual evidence and persuasive strategies, from the law to anthropology, and from history to journalism, this book spells out the distinguishing qualities of documentary. A wide-ranging and freewheeling form of filmmaking, documentary has not yet received a proper, written introduction to its public, or its future makers. Introduction to Documentary is not organized as a history of the form although its examples span a century of filmmaking. Instead, this book offers suggestive answers to basic issues that have stood at the center of all debate on documentary from its very beginnings to today. Each chapter takes up a distinct question from "How did documentary filmmaking get started?" to "Why are ethical issues central to documentary?" These questions move through issues of ethics, form, modes, voice, history and politics, among others. A final chapter addresses the question of how to write about documentary in a clear, convincing manner. Introduction to Documentary provides the foundational key to further explorations in this exceptionally vital area of filmmaking today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"There is a large literature on the scholarship and pedagogy of documentary film, much of it published in the last decade and much of it indebted to Nichols's previous work in the field, notably *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (CH, Jul'92). Nichols (Univ. of Rochester) organizes the present wonderful book by eight basic questions -- for example, How Do

Documentaries Differ from Other Types of Film? and What Types of Documentary Are There? -- each answered with clarity, with plenty of examples and visual illustrations drawn from a century of documentary film, and with a degree of sophistication belied by the straightforward, functional prose. Students will appreciate Nichols's fondness for categories (for example, his seven modes of documentary) and will enjoy his instructions for writing about documentary film, embedded in invented student essays on Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922). Although scholars in film studies will find much of the content and analysis familiar, this engaging, thoughtful, accessible, and comprehensive work will stimulate many. An essential volume for libraries and an instant classroom classic, this book is recommended for readers at all levels." -- W. Graebner, SUNY College at Fredonia, Choice, May 2002

A comprehensive introduction to the issues and concepts that characterize documentary film and video production.

Nichols provides a concise explanation of the history and development of documentary films, as well as their roles in society. He covers the wide range of what we call "documentary", from propaganda to agenda films, and he lists excellent examples that the reader will want to watch for better context. I use select chapters in a freshmen writing class that works with documentary film and nonfiction writing--really encourages discussion. I look forward to Nichols' new book, "Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies", as an explanation of how we view the importance of film in society. His writing style is clear, yet he raises many questions for the viewer to consider: Who funded this film? How was this film edited and presented? What are the audience responses? How does this film fit in the historical/social context of its time, our present time?

I highly recommend this text for undergraduate students. I've used chapters in Nichol's book in my Documentary Research class for several years. I find the chapters on ethics and voice especially helpful for students, immersed in commercial media, to consider the their roles and responsibilities in media making as they begin to develop (hopefully) a social justice ethic.

If you use this book for a class, PLEASE talk about it too. My professor had us read it, but we never really discussed the book in class. It's not a hard read, but it was hard to apply some of the things in the book with the classroom format.

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