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# INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTARY – PART ONE

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**CHAPTER**

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# AIM OF COURSE

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To provide an introduction to the theory and techniques used in documentary cinema.

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# LEARNING OUTCOMES

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- By the end of this session, participants should be able to:
  - Identify the six main types of documentary
  - Recognise some of the techniques that film-makers use to construct a documentary, using practical examples.
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# WHAT IS A DOCUMENTARY?

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- *'A creative treatment of actuality'* (John Grierson)
- *A constructed narrative reflecting reality'* (Bill Nichols)

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# WHAT IS A DOCUMENTARY?

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- *“There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylisation.”*

- (Werner Herzog)

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# WHAT IS A DOCUMENTARY?



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# THE 6 TYPES OF DOCUMENTARY

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- . Expository
  - . Poetic
  - . Observational
  - . Participatory
  - . Reflexive
  - . Performative
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# EXPOSITORY

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- Aka 'voice of God'.
  - Most common type of documentary.
  - Emphasises verbal commentary.
  - Speaks directly to the viewer.
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# EXPOSITORY



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# POETIC

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- Impressionistic
  - Creates patterns and associations
  - Evokes an emotional response
  - Emphasises mood or tone.
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# POETIC

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# OBSERVATIONAL

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- 'Fly on the wall'
  - Popularised in the 1960s
  - Events are filmed as they take place
  - Reality TV
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# OBSERVATIONAL

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# PARTICIPATORY

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- 'Interactive', style of film-making.
  - Film-maker usually appears in the film.
  - Elements of anthropology.
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# PARTICIPATORY

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# REFLEXIVE

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- Highlights the constructed nature of film.
  - Focus is on the film-maker.
  - The making of the film and its story unfold simultaneously.
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# REFLEXIVE



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# PERFORMATIVE

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- Subjective, personal account
  - Highlights the film-maker's perspective
  - Presents a different angle on a story.
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# PERFORMATIVE

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# ELEMENTS OF DOCUMENTARY

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- A documentary is made up of a range of different elements:
    - Voice-over
    - Interviews
    - Archive
    - Music
    - Actuality
    - Graphics
    - Re-enactment
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# SUMMARY

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- Most documentary films can be categorised into different types.
  - These types have developed over the years to address some of the issues inherent in the genre.
  - There are a range of different methods that film-makers use to tell their story. These are used to differing degrees between the types.
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# NEXT STEPS

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- Choose a documentary to screen and use part two of the resource to shape post-screening discussion.