

research

Documentaries are considered non-fiction organizing the complexity or multi-facets of a topic or person into a presentation that can reach many others. Documentaries craft complex topics into ideas and understandings accessible to others. They are either narrated or told in the actual words of the participants themselves (perhaps re-enacted dialogue) based on diaries, letters, journals, recordings and other artifacts.

five requirements to incorporate that were adapted from Michael Weinberger's definition of a documentary:

It must attempt to tell the truth – that includes providing multiple perspectives on the topic or event. Like the nine blind men and the elephant metaphor, it takes more than one perspective to provide the “whole” truth.

It must appear to do so by present only factual evidence – a good documentary starts with rigorous, in-depth research – the author is dedicated to NOT inventing but building understanding and perspective by the art of arranging the facts into a pattern of understanding.

It must not attempt to re-create or distort the truth – taking poetic license (imaginative interpretation), constructing intentional bias or developing a singular perspective threatens the credibility of a good documentary moving into more fiction or slanted truth than fact.

It must be objective – that doesn't mean you can't have a strong and overt point-of-view – in fact a personal reflection of how the topic matters and connects either to individuals, communities or humanity is essential in order to push the body of information beyond summary reporting -- but these embedded perspectives must be ethically grounded in accuracy.

It must present all factual evidence in its original context and form – an abundant amount of primary sources needs to be incorporated, documented and credited as part of the product – this builds credibility for the documentary.

<http://www.digitales.us/resources/documentary.php#documentaries>