

# The Poetic Mode

Communication Studies 133 – Documentary Film

CSUS – Spring 2022

# The Poetic Mode

- It shares a common terrain with the modernist avant-garde.
- It sacrifices the conventions of continuity editing and the sense of a specific location in time and place that follows from such editing.
- The filmmaker's engagement is with film form as much as, or more than, with social actors.
- This mode explores associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and special juxtapositions.
- Social actors seldom take on the full-blooded form of characters with psychological complexity and a specific view of the world.

- People typically function on par with other objects as raw material that filmmakers select and arrange (through editing) into associations and patterns of their choosing.
- This mode stresses mood, tone, and affect much more than displays of factual knowledge or acts of rhetorical persuasion.
- “Rhetorical.” The art of persuasion.
- The rhetorical element remains underdeveloped, but the expressive quality of the film is vivid.
- We learn through watching these films by affect or feeling, by gaining a sense of what it feels like to see and experience the world in a particular, poetic way.

- Although sound usually plays a very important role in all modes of documentary, music itself usually plays an extremely important role in this mode.
- **Common Use:**
- Create aesthetic experience in relation to some aspect of the historical world.
- **Examples:**
- *Song of Ceylon, Berlin: Symphony of a City, Koyaanisqatsi*, and today's film, *Samsara*.
- Also, *Lessons of Darkness* by Werner Herzog (Grizzly Man) showing, in a poetic way, the aftermath of the Gulf War.

- **Potential Ethical Issues:**

- Avoiding misrepresentations of others or of the obfuscation of historical events as a result of formal preoccupations.

- **Frequent Goals:**

- Encourage viewers to see the mystery, wonder, or beauty of aspects of the historical world, or to engage with difficult issues in an oblique way.