



# Art(ists) in Action: Selected Documentaries for the Arts & Resistance Theme Semester (2023)

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If you would like to include streaming links to individual film titles within a course Canvas site, please complete the [library's streaming film request form](#).

## Introduction

This selective bibliography is intended to offer U-M Ann Arbor instructors some recommendations of library-provided documentaries for consideration, to support Fall 2023 theme semester courses ([Arts & Resistance](#)).

The bibliography incorporates documentaries available at the Askwith Media Library, located in the Shapiro Library, and subscribed online video streaming platforms, including Kanopy Streaming Service, Academic Video Online, and Docuseek. The films cover various art forms, such as theater, music, public art, cartoons, architecture, and writing, and introduce artists from various countries with different identities and causes. These topics include but are not limited to war and peace, human rights, civil rights, racism, gender inequality, LGBTQ+ rights, consumerism, incarceration, and gentrification. These artistic acts of resistance can be individual expression, community engagement, direct political activism,

and more. Every documentary gives a unique look into the power of art in changing human minds and shaping the society toward justice and equality.

The annotated bibliography is organized in an alphabetical order according to the documentaries' titles. Each entry begins with the documentary title, with a link to its library catalog record, followed by director name, production company, publication year, running time, and format/platform. At the end of each annotation, there are keywords that summarize the documentary's topic from the following five dimensions: identity, cause, art form, association with art/social movement or social work, region. Note that not every dimension will be addressed in each annotation.

If you would like to include streaming links to individual film titles held at the Askwith Media Library within a course Canvas site, please complete the [library's streaming film request form](#).

## Annotated Bibliography

[16 Bars](#). Directed by Sam Bathrick, Lightyear Entertainment, 2018. Running time: 94 minutes. DVD.

This documentary centers on a rehabilitation project in a Virginia jail. Four inmates collaborated with video recording artist Todd Thomas to write and record their original music. Through music, they tell stories of their traumatic past and struggles to break through cycles of addiction, crime, and incarceration. The four incarcerated artists use songs as a way of self-expression, reconciliation, and redemption, demonstrating how art can be used to empower individuals and support restorative justice. This documentary reveals the under-told stories of the prisoners; it can be used for class discussion on topics around criminal justice systems, mass

incarceration, and the function of art in promoting restorative justice. This documentary is also valuable to facilitate students' community service actions for Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) in Michigan. The DVD includes four individual music videos of the featured incarcerated artists; duration varies from three minutes to seven minutes.

*Incarceration*

*Restorative justice*

*Performing art - music*

*Social work*

*U.S.*

[After Kony: Staging Hope](#). Directed by Bil Yoelin, First Run Features, 2011. Running time: 100 minutes. Academic Video Online:

<https://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://video.alexanderstreet.com/p/z69M6LwAq>

Since 1987, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony, has terrorized people of northern Uganda. This documentary follows a team of artists and activists who launched a theater project. They helped a group of youth in Northern Uganda to write and perform dramas based on their stories about war and AIDS. The drama performed by these youth demonstrates the healing power of theater as well as its role in passing out messages of peace, hope and forgiveness to empower the community. The film details the team's execution of the project, including cultural exchange activities, brainstorming and play writing, and rehearsal. It provides vivid examples of how human rights activists and artists conduct social work and community service. As friendship deepens among the team members, the youth account their experience under the threat of LRA, including abducting child soldiers and forced child-sex slavery. It offers rich information into the war in Northern Uganda, described as the world's biggest forgotten humanitarian crisis. Students interested in social work will find this documentary particularly enlightening.

War

Human rights

Performing art - drama

Social work

Uganda

[The AIDS Show: Artists Involved with Death and Survival](https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/11609213). Directed by Rob Epstein and Peter Adair, Kino Lorber, 1986. Running time: 57 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/11609213>.

Introduces The AIDS (Artists Involved with Death and Survival) Show, a performance which emerged in 1986 San Francisco during the AIDS epidemic and was performed by artists in the gay community. Through drama they voice their emotional turmoil and empower their community with strength, courage, and love. Combining performance excerpts and documentary interviews with the show's creators and performers, it provides an account of the early years of the epidemic and its influence. It also shows how art is an emotional outlet for people to process their mental and physical pain to survive through difficult times. The documentary offers an example of art and resistance through self-expression. The actors' touching dialogues are also useful for learning about performing for drama.

LGBTQ+

AIDS

Performing art - theater / drama

U.S.

[Alice Street](#). Directed by Spencer Wilkinson, Video Project, 2020. Running time: 69 minutes.  
Kanopy Streaming Service: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/11477626>

Follows two artists' mural project in downtown Oakland, San Francisco. Their mural celebrates the history of resistance and thriving of the Chinese and Afro-diasporic community though depicting their culture arts. Threatened by luxury condominium development shortly after completion, the mural also became the place where artists and activists came together to protest gentrification and displacement. Through their fight against destruction of minority culture, these artists demonstrate their role in shaping the cultural narrative of their community. It also shows the importance of protecting the artistic and cultural diversity of a community as a form of justice. Based on the context of the rapid urban development in San Francisco, the documentary fits into a curriculum with topics around gentrification and land development. The film also details the creation and execution of the mural, including initial ideation and sketches, mass meeting and critique from community residents, and negotiation with landowners and city departments. Students interested in public art will be able to learn about the complicated and challenging process of designing for public space. [Alice Street](#) official website provides more information about this project.

Race

Gentrification

Visual art - mural / public art

U.S.

[The Art of Un-war](#). Directed by Maria Niro, New Day Films, 2022. Running time: 62 minutes.  
Kanopy Streaming Service: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/12391559>

This documentary features Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko and a breadth of his public art intervention projects around the world, which focus on themes of war, trauma, and displacement. His works include temporary video projection of war

veterans and refugees on statues and monuments as well as projections on other architectural facades, in effort to challenge state-sanctioned militarization and war. His work also demonstrates the role of socially-engaged art to heal the trauma of individuals and the society at large. In the documentary, Krzysztof offers valuable analysis on the romanticizing and glorification of war in human history and its manifestation through architectures and monuments, connecting to the role of his art intervention in public space to deconstruct the culture of war. This is a valuable resource for public art case study and discussion on the relationship between architecture/monuments and human history/culture.

War

Human rights

Monument

Visual art - public art intervention / socially engaged art

[Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio De Janeiro](https://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://video.alexanderstreet.com/p/jYL1RvPw5). Directed by Ronaldo Jose Morelos, Contemporary Arts Media, 2005. Running time: 53 minutes. Academic Video Online. <https://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://video.alexanderstreet.com/p/jYL1RvPw5>

Augusto was a Brazilian theater practitioner and political activist, founder of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). This documentary takes place in 1994 when Augusto was elected to the Rio council. It features Augusto's detailed analysis about the concept of political theater, focusing on the functioning of forum theater and legislative theater, and how the practice leads to audiences' activism. The film also documents various theater activism performed by TO. It is a powerful look into the art of theater and its activism impact on individuals and the society. The film also serves as a broad introduction to the social and political environment in Brazil during the 1990s. Although the visual style and storytelling of this documentary is not very engaging, it is still strongly recommended for a theater course to help students establish a theoretical framework around political theater, street theater, and theater activism.

Civil rights

Performing arts - theater

Brazil

[Barefoot Gen's Hiroshima](#). Directed by Yuko Ishida, Tomo Corporation, 2011. Running time: 77 minutes. DVD.

Nakazawa Keiji was a Japanese manga artist and author of *Barefoot Gen*, a historical manga series loosely based on his own experience as a Hiroshima atomic bombing survivor. In this documentary, Nakazawa gave a detailed account of his experience during the atomic bombing in 1945, accompanied by graphics from *Barefoot Gen* that illustrates the bombing and its aftermath. This documentary offers knowledge on the historical event of that atomic bombing and the damage of nuclear weapons. The documentary is entirely narrated from the victim's personal perspective, making it heartbreaking and touching. It also shows the power of manga in visualizing the trauma caused by war and nuclear weapons, while passing out messages of peace and resilience to the younger generation. It matches well for a curriculum that intends to approach war and art from an individual, non-Western perspective. The DVD contains a shorter 32-minute version of *Barefoot Gen's Hiroshima* for educational purposes,

War

Nuclear

Visual art - comic

Japan

[Body Games: Capoeira and Ancestry](#). Directed by Richard Pakleppa and Matthias Rohrig, On Land Productions / Manganga Produções, 2013. Running time: 87 minutes. Academic video online:

<https://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://video.alexanderstreet.com/p/pZ7yZ6EWQ>.

Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian art that combines dance, combat, theatre and music, originated in Africa and carried to Brazil by Africans during the slave trade. This documentary follows the journey of capoeira master Cobra Mansa through Africa and Brazil in search of the historical roots of their art, thus exploring its relation with slavery, identity and society. The documentary shows art's power in transcending temporal and geographical barriers to resist the annihilation of an individual's cultural identity. Featuring a breadth of dance scenes across Africa and Brazil, this documentary captures capoeira as a type of dance and an African cultural and spiritual heritage. The storytelling and filmmaking style are rather plain, but it is a good example of a dance genre that is directly related to cultural resistance.

Race

Colonialism

Performing art - dance

Africa / Brazil

[China's Artful Dissident](#). Directed by Danny Ben-Moshe, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2019. Running time: 60 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/12454984>.

Badiucao is a Chinese political artist and activist in exile, whose art incorporates diverse mediums like cartoon and street art. This documentary gives a detailed account of his various art practices and internet campaigns that protest against the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian regime and abuse of civil rights. Badiucao's art and recollection of history offers insight into the political issues and social



problems in contemporary China, including the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. The documentary was shot while Badiucao and his family were receiving ongoing threats from the government, which vividly demonstrates the difficulty for artists to navigate under political oppression. Students will find it intense and thrilling to watch. The documentary is a powerful example for an art and activism topic under a digital studies dimension. It demonstrates how artists can use the power of the internet and social media to launch international art campaigns to convey political messages and provoke activism. [Badiucao's](#) official website gives a full account of his art and campaigns.

*Civil rights*

*Visual art - digital art / cartoon / street art / internet campaign*

*China*

[Come unto Me: The Faces of Tyree Guyton](#). Directed by Nicole Cattell, Naked Eye Productions, 1999. Running time: 30 minutes. U-M Licensed Videos: [https://um-licensed-videos.mivideo.it.umich.edu/media/t/1\\_lqt1xzch](https://um-licensed-videos.mivideo.it.umich.edu/media/t/1_lqt1xzch).

This film explores the history and evolution of the Heidelberg Project in Detroit, initiated by artist Tyree Guyton in 1986. He decorated desolate houses with paints and made colorful installations from trash and abandoned objects, in effort to help the community recover from destruction after the civil unrest in the 1960s and 1970s. The Heidelberg Project is an example of an art environment that incorporates large scale, decorative assemblages to bring spiritual experiences to viewers. Tyree's work demonstrates how artists can empower a local community and its residents to address issues of urban blight. . Thus, this example is valuable to arouse student awareness of local issues and activate their involvement in revitalization efforts . The documentary also exposed the negative reception and reaction by residents, which opens questions on the legal issues and challenges of making public art for class

discussion. See the [Heidelberg Project website](#) for details, history, and an interactive map.

Community renovation

Visual art - public art/ mixed media / installation

Detroit

[Culturejam: Hijacking Commercial Culture](#). Directed by Jill Sharpe, Right to Jam Productions, 2001. Running time: 50 minutes. Docuseek:

<http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://docuseek2-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/v/a/YPk/1/0/0>.

This documentary follows the work of three artists -- Carly Stasko, Reverend Billy, and Jack Napier -- who use culture jamming to subvert corporate advertisement space and protest against commercial culture and consumerism. For Carly Stasko and Jack Napier with his team Billboard Liberation Front, they display subvertisement graphics in various public locations. For Reverend Billy, he leads his theater activist group Church of Stop Shopping that carry out guerrilla theater activism in Disney stores. This documentary provides various examples of culture jamming, and the artists give thorough explanations on the characteristics and uniqueness of this art form as well as its significance in undermining corporate advertising and consumerist culture. Further, it shows the controversy of culture jamming, including legal issues and violation of public spaces. The documentary is a valuable resource to facilitate class discussion on the art of culture jamming, and these examples of artistic civil disobedience can stimulate student's own response and action. It also cultivates awareness of contemporary issues around commercial culture, corporate influence on mass media, and consumerism.

Consumerism

Commercial culture

Mass media

Visual art - culture jamming / subvertising

*Performing art - guerrilla theater*

*U.S. / Canada*

[Diego Rivera - I Paint What I See](#). Directed by Mary Lance and Eric Breitbart, New Deal Films, 1989. Running time: 58 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service:  
<https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/214632>.

A biographical film about the life and work of Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. It features his art education and involvement with communist politics, his leading role in the Mexican Muralism movement, his controversial mural projects in the USA as well as his personal life. Using Rivera's own writings and archival footage, the documentary shows how he used murals to celebrate Mexican history and culture with emphasis on the working class. In the U.S., Diego continued exposing his communist political ideology and criticism of capitalism through murals, putting those works at risk of destruction. The state/corporate-sponsored nature of Diego's mural projects shows the complex relationship between artist and their financial supporter, revealing the difficulty of balancing an opposition between one's artistic vision and desire to earn a successful art career. This realistic problem about money is important for students to understand. The documentary also serves as an introduction to Mexican Muralism art movement and Mexican revolution in the 1910s.

*Communism*

*Visual art - mural*

*Mexican Muralism Art*

*Mexico*

[Dykes, Camera, Action!](#). Directed by Caroline Berler, Frameline, 2018. Running time: 61 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/11203046>.

This documentary is about the U.S. lesbian filmmaking, starting from the 1970s feminism and LGBT movement, and narrated by lesbian filmmakers with their stories of coming out and breaking into the film industry. They navigated through an intersection of female and homosexual identity to produce films that bring visibility to lesbian experience in the mainstream media. It demonstrates how filmmaking can challenge the dominance of a male, heterosexual media culture and empower individuals to affirm and take pride in their identity. The documentary includes a breadth of excerpts from lesbian films with comments from critics, serving as a broad introduction to the history of U.S. lesbian filmmaking, rather than an in-depth exploration of these individual pieces and their creators.

LGBTQ+

Gender

Visual arts - film

U.S.

[Guerrillas in Our Midst](#). Directed by Amy Harrison, Women Make Movies, 1992. Running time: 35 minutes. DVD.

The Guerrilla Girls is a group of artists and activists who use disruptive visuals to expose gender and racial discrimination in arts and pop culture. This documentary features their art activism acts during the 1980s, which sought to challenge and undermine sexism and racism in the U.S. commercial art world. This documentary combines footage of their art and activism as well as interviews with Guerrilla girls themselves and key figures in the Manhattan art scene. It makes a clear explanation of the existing privilege and discrimination of a white, male-dominated art world, which is valuable as a critique on the art system. This artist collective is a great example for art and activism topics, especially for social justice causes around

feminism. [Guerrilla Girls](#) official website shows their ongoing activist efforts, which can supplement the documentary for course use.

Gender

Race

Visual art - graphic art / street art

U.S.

[I am not Your Negro](#). Directed by Raoul Peck, Kino Lorber Edu, 2016. Running time: 95 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/542400>.

Based on James Baldwin's unfinished manuscript, *Remember This House*, this documentary explores America's history of racism and contemporary racial issues through Baldwin's personal recollection of the lives and assassination of three civil rights leaders: Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. The documentary uses Baldwin's original words from his manuscript and archival material of his talks, which provides rich insight into Black history that connects the past of the Civil Rights movement to the present #BlackLivesMatter. Baldwin's beautifully composed writing, narrated throughout the film, shows a writer's role in awakening the public consciousness. The documentary could easily be included into a literature class as an example of writings with a social justice cause. The documentary also incorporates great visual storytelling and cinematography. It highlights how filmmaking can shape the cultural landscape by touching on issues of racism and social injustice. For a course that focuses on film studies, it is a valuable example of a social critique film essay for analysis. Also, it can be used to help students understand the roots of racial issues in America.

Race - African American

Literary art - memoir

*Visual art - documentary*

*Civil Rights Movement*

*U.S.*

[Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted Eyes, Feeling Heart](https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/4575174). Directed by Tracey Heather Strain, California Newsreel, 2017. Running time: 118 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/4575174>.

Chronicles the life and work of African American women playwright Lorraine Hansberry, from her family upbringing to the writing of her famous play *A Raisin in the Sun*, and her continual activism against racial injustice during the 1960s civil rights movement. With excerpts from the play and interviews of the play's casts, the documentary details the various challenges during the creation and production of a play centering around a working-class Black family. It shows the play's revolutionary role in opening a new chapter in a White-dominated America theater scene in the 1950s to include Black people. The film also includes Lorraine's personal papers, photos, archives, which draws connections of how the ongoing social issues like racial and gender discrimination shaped her identity and her works. The documentary is useful for students to explore the cultural activism function of plays and theater, as it demonstrates the importance of artists to bring minority experiences to center stage and to fight toward social justice. It can also be used to introduce the concept of intersectionality by portraying the artist's identity as an African American lesbian woman.

*Race - African American*

*Gender*

*Performing art - theater / drama*

*Literary art - play*

*U.S.*

[Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision](#). Directed by Freida Lee Mock, American Film Foundation, 1994. Running time: 105 minutes. Academic Video Online:

<https://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://video.alexanderstreet.com/p/w0kYmBGgr>

This documentary is about architect and sculptor Maya Lin, who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. at age 21 as a Yale undergraduate student. The first half of the film documents the various difficulties and controversy she faced after her design was announced to the public, including footage of government hearing, which reveals the unique challenges for designers to balance between personal artistic vision and other stakeholder's opinions. The second half of the film tracks a decade of her other creative designs, including the designs of the Civil Rights Memorial and Yale Women's Table. The documentary focuses on the conceptual framework behind each of her pieces, revealing the emotional and spiritual power of architecture to heal and address the major issues of human history. It also highlights the role of architects to mark history and shape cultural narratives through their design. Students will find this documentary empowering as Maya's journey proves the immense potential of a student to influence society.

History

Visual art - architecture / memorial / design

U.S.

[Naji Al-Ali: An Artist with Vision](#). Directed by Kasim Abid, Camera Image, 1999. Running time: 52 minutes. Docuseek2:

<http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://docuseek2-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/v/a/EgP/1/0/0>.

Life and work of Palestinian political cartoonist Naji Al-Ali. The documentary examines how the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict led to his early experience as a child

refugee in the 1940s and shaped his political and artistic vision, drawing connection to his political cartoons that critique the brutality of the Israeli army and the political oppression and dictatorship of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It portrays how artists can use their artmaking to represent the ordinary people and let their experience of repression and despotism be heard by a wider audience. The documentary provides students with a valuable look into the social and political tension in the Middle East from 1940s to 1980s, and the use of art for political activism.

*Human rights*

*Civil rights*

*Visual art - cartoon*

*Arab-Israeli conflict*

*Middle East / Palestine*

[Nefertiti's Daughters](#). Directed by Racha Najdi and Mark Nickolas, Mosaic Films, 2015.

Running time: 40 minutes. Docuseek2:

<http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://docuseek2-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/v/a/F7E/1/0/0>.

Documents the revolutionary role of street art and women artists during political uprising. Egyptian women artists recount their experiences during the 2011 Egyptian revolution and how they used the street as a canvas to fight for civil and human rights. Artist testimonies and footage provide rich information on this historical event. They also talk about the unique violence women face during state oppression and the importance of their continual fight for social and political justice, which connects to topics around feminism, politics, and violence. Expert commentaries offer a deeper analysis into the artistic choice of the women artists and the historical relation between street art and revolution. The documentary is a great resource for students to watch and learn about street art as an art form, and as a weapon for political activism.



*Civil rights*

*Feminism*

*Visual art - street art*

*Egypt*

[\*A New Color: The Art of Edythe Boone\*](#). Directed by Marlene Morris, Video Project, 2017.

Running time: 56 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service:

<https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/391290>.

Life and work of Edyth Boone, an African American muralist, activist, and educator. Edyth recalls how she was initially involved in art and politics during the civil rights movement and continued to use murals to protest racial injustice and police violence during the recent Black Lives Matter movement as well as gender inequality. The film also follows Edyth as she leads community programs with seniors and children to make murals and paintings that address themes of injustice and inequality. Her service demonstrates how artists can use art programs to empower individuals and their community. It can arouse student's interest in involving in local community service through creative art.

*Race - African American*

*Gender*

*Visual art - mural*

*Social work*

*U.S.*

[\*Pansy! Artist Paul Harfleet\*](#). Directed by Jean-Baptiste Erreca, Java films, 2015. Running time:

69 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/231429>.

Paul Harfleet, a London-based gay artist, established “The Pansy Project” in 2005 to fight against homophobia. This documentary follows his journey around France in 2015 where he met with gay people, listened to their personal stories, and planted pansies at the sites where they experienced homophobia. These gay people offered detailed accounts of the prejudice and discrimination they experienced in various social institutions, including family, education, and religion. Also, the artist gave clear explanations of his creative process and artistic choices, such as the symbol of pansy. The documentary is useful for students to establish a framework of the systematic oppression experienced by the homosexual community, while finding it intimate and engaging. It also fits as a case study of a socially-engaged, participatory art project where audiences are involved in the art making process. [The Pansy Project](#) official website offers more educational resources to facilitate the case study.

LGBTQ+

*Visual art - multimedia art / socially-engaged art*

Europe

[Paris is Burning](#). Directed by Jennie Livingston, Criterion Collection, 1990. Running time: 78 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service <https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/10910624>.

This documentary is a look into the drag-ball culture of 1980s New York, and the African-American, Latino, gay, and transgender communities involved in it. The film provides valuable documentation of this cultural art, including drag performances, dances, runway shows, contests, fashion, and make-ups. The documentary incorporates interviews with Mothers of the house, drag queens, and voguers, showing the various challenges they need to navigate through, including homophobia, transphobia, racism, AIDS, and poverty. This exposes questions around race, class, gender, and sexuality in 1980s America. Nevertheless, their vibrant performances demonstrate how people can use artistic expression to resist oppression from society, reclaim their identity, and build communities to support each

other. The drag-ball culture portrayed in the documentary makes it suitable for a course that is looking for a representative and classical artistic resistance example for LGBTQ+ issues.

LGBTQ+

Race

Performing art - drag / dance

Visual art - fashion

U.S.

[Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer](https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/10605027). Directed by Mike Lerner and Maxim Pozdorovkin, Roast Beef Productions, 2013. Running time: 88 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service:  
<https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/10605027>.

Pussy Riot is a Russian feminist punk rock group. This documentary follows the arrest and trial of three young women members of Pussy Riot for their activist performance in a Moscow Cathedral to protest religious and state patriarchy, and Putin government's repression of human rights and civil rights. Inspiring international protest against their arrest, these three artists show the power of art to arouse political activism against power and authority. The film helps students to learn about Russia's social and political environment, and Pussy Riot is a great example of the art and political activism in Russia. The film focuses on documenting the trials, which gives a unique look into how artists navigate through the legal system in the face of state oppression.

Civil rights

Feminism

Performing art - punk music

Russia

[Queercore: How to Punk a Revolution](#). Directed by Yony Leyser, Altered Innocence, 2017.

Running time: 80 minutes. DVD.

This documentary introduces Queercore, an art movement by the queer community in North America that originated from the 1980s punk subculture as a fabricated pseudo movement to the 1990s, in which it became a widespread artistic and cultural scene for queer artists to push against gay assimilation and homophobia. The film provides a holistic look into the art of queer punk, including zines, punk rock music, and filmmaking in a DIY style. From a pseudo art movement to a cultural/social movement that changed the cultural narrative of the 1990s in terms of gender and sexual identity, Queercore is an example of art as a means of cultural activism, with the power to bring about individual liberation and social justice.

LGBTQ+

Performing art - punk music

visual art - zine

Punk movement

U.S.

[Reclaiming the Body: Feminist Art in America](#). Directed by Michael Blackwood, Michael Blackwood Productions, 1995. Running time: 57 minutes. VHS.

Loosely based on the BAD GIRLS exhibition at The New Museum of Contemporary Art in Manhattan, this documentary introduces three generations of feminist artists from the 1960s to 1990s and their artworks. The artworks include performance, drawing, sculpture, and mixed media installations. The film provides various examples of artworks that challenge the society's notion of femininity, gender identity, and sexuality. It also discusses the unique artistic quality of feminist art that challenges the patriarchal art history and modernism aesthetics that are dominated

by male artists. This documentary serves as an introduction into the history of feminist art movement in the U.S., its connection with the different waves of the feminist movement, and the significance of a female art form in challenging the modernism tradition in the art world. There is no clear storyline in the documentary, but it is suitable for an art history class that investigates modernism and postmodernism art movements as well as any class that is looking for a holistic overview of feminist art-making.

*Feminism*

*Visual art*

*Performing art*

*Feminist art*

*U.S.*

[\*Sins Invalid: An Unshamed Claim to Beauty\*](#). Directed by Patty Berne, New Day Films, 2013.

Running time: 33 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service:

<https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/158896>.

This documentary introduces *Sins Invalid*, a performance project on disability and sexuality. The performers are artists with disabilities, especially those of color and queer identity. These artists use performance to celebrate the beauty of their body and explore the taboo topic of disability and sexuality. Documentation of their various performance pieces demonstrates their use of theater to push against invisibility and discrimination to cultivate a disability culture in the society. Interviews with the project initiator and performers gives further insight into the social stereotype and systematic oppression placed on the disability community. This documentary can be used to start conversations on disability justice and artistic response to combat oppression and injustice. The performer's expressive body movement is valuable for learning about acting in theater. The [\*Sins Invalid\*](#) official

website offers more educational resources, including principles of disability justices and the organization's other art projects.

*Disability*

*Performing art - theater*

*U.S.*

[Soundtrack for a Revolution](#). Directed by William Guttentag, Docurama Films, 2010. Running time: 82 minutes. DVD.

This is the story of the American Civil Rights Movement through music – freedom songs sung by African American protesters as they fought for racial justice and equality. The documentary incorporates archival footage of key events, such as the Montgomery bus boycott and the March on Washington, as well as interviews with civil rights leaders. The film introduces a range of freedom songs, such as We Shall Overcome, and No Turning Back, while providing context for this music within the movement.. Students will feel the striking spiritual power of music to unite the Black soul in the fight against racial oppression and injustice. The documentary serves as a holistic introduction to the history of the Civil Rights Movement and its protest music.

*Race - African American*

*Performing art - Music*

*Civil Rights Movement*

*U.S.*

[Through a Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People](#). Directed by Thomas Allen Harris, First Run Features, 2014. Running time: 93 minutes. DVD.

This documentary is an overview of generations of African-American photographers who use cameras and images to define themselves, their people, and their culture, drawing comparisons with historically racist and demeaning media representations of Blackness. The film incorporates the director's own family album, historical photography materials by African American photographers (covering for example, slavery, the Civil War, lynching, the Civil Rights Movement) as well as images made by contemporary photographers. It demonstrates the humanizing power of photography to bring self-love and affirmation of individual identity as well as shaping the cultural and political narrative in the society. Students will gain an overview of the history of image-making and the social function of image-making. Courses can also use the stark contrast of African Americans presented in mainstream media and their portrayal of themselves to introduce students to critique mass media.

Race: African-American

Visual art - photography

U.S.

[United States of Africa: Beyond Hip Hop](#). Directed by Yanick Létourneau, Périphéria Productions, 2001. Running time: 75 minutes. Docuseek2:

<http://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://docuseek2-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/v/a/Gss/1/0/0>.

This documentary follows the musical and political journey of African hip-hop artist Didier Awadi, in collaboration with other hip-hop art activists, to create his album *African Presidents*, which pays tribute to past African political leaders and advocates for their dream of establishing a united, independent Africa. Didier's music combines hip-hop with speech excerpts from prominent leaders, and is an effective educational tool for the African youth to learn about their history and gain pride in their identity. Didier visits different African countries and introduces their important political leaders, like Patrice Lumumba (Congo) and Thomas Sankara (Burkina Faso) and

connects with Africa's current social and political issues. It offers a look into the history and impact of colonialism and white supremacy on Africa. Performances by Didier and other hip-hop artists show how artists can combine art with activism to stimulate the political engagement of individuals.

*Civil rights*

*Colonialism*

*Performing art - Hip-hop*

*Africa*

[US vs John Lennon](#). Directed by David Leaf, Lions Gate Films / VH1, 2006. Running time: 96 minutes. DVD.

Story of singer and activist John Lennon, chronicling his evolution around the 1960s-1970s in response to key political events happening in the U.S.. The documentary features Lennon's many music and protests, such as Bed Peace Hair Peace, Give Peace a Chance, War is Over if You Want, and Imagine, illustrating the power of his music to convey a message of peace and love, and inspiring the anti-war movement during the Vietnam war. Lennon's outspoken opposition against the U.S. government and the attempts by the U.S. government to revoke his legal residency demonstrates how artists can exert immense influence on political movements and challenge government agendas.

*Human rights*

*Performing art - music*

*Vietnam war*

*U.S.*



[Waste Land](#). Directed by Lucy Walker, Joao Jardim, and Karen Harley, Arthouse Films, 2010.

Running time: 99 minutes. Kanopy Streaming Service:

<https://www.kanopy.com/en/umich/video/196818>.

Follows Brazilian artist Vic Muniz's journey to the world's largest garbage dump, Jardim Gramacho, located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There, he collaborated with pickers of the recyclable materials to create photographic images of themselves out of this garbage. Images of these workers reveal the untold story of the society's lower class, a message of despair but also pride and human dignity. The art project empowered these pickers to re-imagine themselves and provided funding to improve their living circumstances by selling the piece. Through the personal narrative from people in the lower class, the documentary provides insight into issues around poverty and landfill pollution. It also offers a valuable example of art that helps to raise public awareness of these issues and cultivate understanding of an underprivileged class. Also, Muniz's project is unique in utilizing the commercial art world in favor of his cause by monetizing his works to raise funding. It shows that commerce and art aren't always opposite of each other..

Poverty

Environment - landfill

Visual art - mixed media

Brazil