



Jay Ruby

The Center for Visual Communication

The Teaching of Visual Anthropology at Temple University - 1967 to 2004¹

Abstract

The following is a first person historical and critical account of the development of undergraduate and graduate courses of study in visual anthropology (the anthropology of visual communication) at Temple University in Philadelphia, P.A. USA. It discusses not only the courses offered but the activities surrounding the program that students could avail themselves and brief biographies of some of the graduates. Finally there is a critical comparison of this program with so-called visual anthropology offerings in the U.S. as well as Europe.

Keywords

Anthropology of visual communication, Teaching, Visual anthropology

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¹ This essay was originally written for a book on The Teaching Visual Anthropology to be edited by Peter Crawford. The book was never completed.

The following essay is a first person historical and critical account of the development of undergraduate and graduate courses of study in visual anthropology or as I prefer, the anthropology of visual communication at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. USA². This essay is partially based upon earlier efforts to describe the program – see Ruby 1989. It discusses not only the courses offered but the activities surrounding the program that students could avail themselves. Finally there is a critical comparison of this program with so-called visual anthropology offerings in the U.S. as well as Europe.

In 1967 I was hired by the anthropology department at Temple University with the understanding that I would develop my interests in ethnographic film into a course and related activities. For several years prior to that, the department had an annual "Ethnographic Film Festival" organized by professors Jake Gruber and Elizabeth Tooker in which films were screened that the faculty thought might be useful in their teaching. In the Spring of 1968, I taught my first undergraduate seminar in visual anthropology. I continued to teach that course annually until the mid-1970s They were well attended classes. Eric Michaels was among these students.

I organized an "Anthropological Film Festival" in May, 1968 featuring Sol Worth who showed and discussed recently completed films by Navahos. Ray Birdwhistell explored his use of film in the study of body movement. A number of other films were screened and discussed including Asen Balicki's Netsilik Eskimo series. The festival was attended by students interested in ethnographic film as well as the public. The response encouraged me to plan more conferences.

Over the years, the film festival evolved into the Conference on Visual Anthropology (COVA)³ co-directed by myself, Denise O'Brien and various members of the Temple film school. It became an internationally renowned event attended by hundreds of people. COVA featured film and video screenings often with the filmmakers present, photographic exhibitions, scholarly paper sessions, hands-on workshops in video and photography, and organized discussions about funding, distribution and training⁴. COVA lasted until 1980. It had a major impact upon the formation of the field of visual anthropology. According to Faye Ginsburg, "the COVA conferences were an astonishing revelation to me as a graduate student. In most programs in anthropology departments, there was absolutely no attention to the range of work that was displayed at those yeasty and sometimes contentious but always lively and creative events. They conveyed the energy of a field in formation, with things at stake that mattered... I was hooked." (personal Communication, 2010). Visual anthropology

² A draft of this essay was sent to Richard Chalfen and Bapa Jhala for comments. They declined to do so.

³ <http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/temple/>

⁴ <http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/vatu/covareview.pdf>

students benefited by having a chance to view many films they might otherwise not be able to see and to discuss these works with the makers.

In 1970, I assumed responsibility for the Program in Ethnographic Film (PIEF) (<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/temple/>), the first professional organization in the U.S. devoted to film and anthropology. PIEF was founded by Robert Gardner and Asen Balicki at Harvard in response to a request by Jean Rouch's Comité du Film Ethnographique. PIEF published Karl Heider's *Films for Anthropological Teaching* (which is now in its 8th edition). The organization was instrumental in convincing the American Anthropological Association to include film screenings as part of the scholarly program during their annual meetings. These screenings continue today under the auspices of the Society for Visual Anthropology. Temple students were active in PIEF and the newsletter I co-edited with Carroll Williams of the Anthropology Film Center in Santa Fe.

In 1971, the department added Richard Chalfen (www.richardchalfen.com), a student of Dell Hymes and Sol Worth, who specialized in the anthropological study of the "home mode" of visual communication. Chalfen and I designed a graduate course of study that included not only ethnographic film but also the anthropological study of all forms of visible and pictorial communication (More commonly called today, Media Anthropology.). It was founded upon the ideas first developed by Sol Worth⁵.

Our original conception remained the core of the program for more than 25 years. I quote, at length, from a 1973 document:

We should initially state an obvious point: visual anthropology has been intimately tied to the production of still and motion pictures as visual ethnographies of exotic cultures. Without neglecting the importance of this work and the many valuable contributions to date, it is our feeling that visual anthropology is much more.

Visual anthropology should be conceptualized broadly enough to include, (1) the study of human nonlinguistic forms of communication which typically involves some visual technology for data collecting and analysis, (2) the study of visual products, such as films, as communicative activity and as a datum of culture amenable to ethnographic analysis, and (3) the use of visual media for the presentation of data and research findings—data and findings that otherwise remain verbally unrealized...

While recognizing the importance of technology for visual anthropology, we regard the acquisition of competence in film production as a technical skill that some students may need to acquire in order to pursue their research and teaching goals. As a technical skill, film production is viewed like other skills such as statistics, a field language, or contour map making— they are simply tools which have potential utility provided a research design calls for them. We realize that a basic understanding of film theory, construction and filmic conventions are necessary for an understanding of film as a communicative medium. We think of the film medium in terms of its limitations, advantages, functions,

⁵ astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/worth/worth.html

what it can and cannot be expected to accomplish and where the use of film is an indispensable aide to specific research interests.

The general question that must be repeatedly asked is, what have you gained after using a visual medium that you would not have gained without it? Significant scientific research problems for an anthropologist do not consist of how to get a better sound track, why a particular tripod does not swivel in the Arctic, or what is the best distribution company for my film. These technical questions become relevant after research has been designed which demands a methodological approach involving visual technology.

Let us now mention several types of problems in visual anthropology that are intimately tied to the use of film.

Micro-analytic studies of human interpersonal behaviors...are generally aided by some form of visual evidence...

Visual technology may also be used in the study of macro-units of human behavior. Reference here is made to the production, for example, of motion picture footage of particular rituals, ceremonies, technological and/or artistic processes, socialization practices, subsistence patterns, warfare, and so forth. In this context, any visual manifestation of a culture is relevant subject matter.

(3) Third, the visual products of both professional and nonprofessional camera-use can be studied as cultural artifacts. Images here are treated as data of a particular culture. This interest becomes more important to anthropology as an increased number of societies begins to produce their own sets of mass mediated messages. Research interests may necessitate the use of content analysis for the study of themes, plots, or the construction of realities in media drama-work... As more societies begin using the technology of mass media, the entire process of visual communication may be studied as a culturally structured stream of expressive and symbolic activity. This emphasis must include behavioral observations of the process, the artifacts per se, and the audiences for specific productions. This perspective may apply to the creation and reception of a photograph; a film, and a television program, as well as to the creation of an art object, the study of dance, and other folkloric performances.

(4) A fourth and final problem is the dissemination of research findings, i.e., in developing the most effective strategy for using film or other visual forms to present anthropological statements. This problem encompasses not only the types of research mentioned above, but potentially all phases of anthropological inquiry. Here we wish students to explore film as a communication system in order to discover whether a set of filmic conventions can be developed that are somehow uniquely suited for the display of anthropological concepts.

There are some obvious consequences to our program. Being anthropologists we are primarily concerned with developing a rigorously anthropological approach to the study of visual communication. We are not training people who will become exclusively anthropological filmmakers, or dance ethnologists, or nonverbal specialists, or even

sociolinguists. Rather we are in the business of producing anthropologists who will be able to integrate their interest in a particular communicative mode into a broad spectrum of a communication approach to anthropology. We are more concerned with training anthropologists whose primary interests are in developing a visual approach to the anthropological study of humanity than in producing anthropologists who occasionally collaborate with professional filmmakers to produce educational documentaries as an adjunct to their own research.

We feel that this approach is necessary in light of the traditional neglect of nonlinguistic communication forms by anthropologists and the corresponding tendency of anthropologists interested in this field to become peripheral to their own discipline. Our knowledge of humans as a multi-modal communicator is slight, We lack an understanding of the relationship between various codes, and in some instances the nature of the codes themselves. We feel that anthropology because of its unique holistic view of humans is in a critical position to provide an opportunity to study human communicative behavior as an integrated whole.

In 1972 a National Science Foundation grant allowed myself along with Sol Worth, Karl Heider and Carroll Williams to conduct a Summer Institute in Visual Anthropology (SIVA) at William's Anthropology Film Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Twenty graduate students, some from Temple, and beginning assistant professors were selected for an intense summer workshop. Steve Feld and Larry Gross were among the students⁶. The guest lecturers included Tim Asch, Ray Birdwhistell, Edward Hall, and Alan Lomax. During SIVA, the groundwork was laid for the creation of The Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication (<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/temple/>) and a journal, *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*. Sol Worth served as the first editor. After Worth's death in 1977, Larry Gross and I became the editors. With the generous support of Walter Annenberg, the journal's scope was broadened and its name shortened to *Studies in Visual Communication*. It ceased publication in 1985.

When Asen Balicki, then Commissioner of Visual Anthropology decided that an international journal was required, I was invited by Balicki to be *Visual Anthropology's* first editor. The journal continues under the editorship of Paul Hockings⁷. Having one of the editorial offices at Temple provided students with some insight into how academic journals function.

In the 1980s, SAVICOM became The Society for Visual Anthropology (<http://societyforvisualanthropology.org/>) and started a journal, *Visual Anthropology Review*. It moved away from Temple. From its inception I was at odds with the intentions of SVA and

⁶ Larry Gross became Sol Worth's colleague and co-author of an important their of social communication (Worth 1981). He is currently the Director of the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communication and co-editor with me of *The Complete Sol Worth*. Steve Feld became an ethnomusicologist and linguist and authored a book about Jean Rouch (2003).

⁷ <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/gvanauth.asp>

its overemphasis on ethnographic film. I have not been an active participant in its activities, although I did encourage my students to organize AAA panels for SVA and to publish in their journal. Too many of SVA's board members are not trained anthropologists. One is a film distributor with no training in or real knowledge about anthropology. SVA seems often to ignore that they are a section of the American Anthropological Association and select films for screening that are "ideologically correct" but with little anthropological value. I have for some 30 years been arguing that ethnographic film should be narrowly defined as films made by anthropologists based upon their field research. (See Ruby 2000 for more details.)

As a result of SIVA, I developed an MA degree program in ethnographic film at Temple (MVA). Students spent one year at Temple studying anthropology and one year at the Anthropology Film Center, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, learning filmmaking. When a thesis film was completed, an MA degree was to be awarded. It was hoped that this program would be one of the first to allow students to submit a film alone for their degree. This program, with its emphasis upon production, remained until 1992. Soon after the MVA was in place, it became increasingly clear that program was not succeeding in that few students completed their degree and almost none of them continued on to become anthropologists (Susan Levine, currently a professor at the University of Cape Town is one of the exceptions). While I never did any follow-up to ask why these students left before obtaining their degree, my hunch is that they grew more and more interested in becoming filmmakers and less in becoming anthropologists. This is a problem Temple shared with other programs which appear to produce more people who end up working in the media rather than in anthropology.

By the late 1970s I became disillusioned with the MVA as my interest was in the production of visual anthropologists who would work within the academic world and not in the training of media workers. In addition, I found myself at odds with my colleagues and the department about this program and its future. I withdrew from participation in the MVA but continued to teach a graduate and undergraduate seminar in film and anthropology.

By 1975 Chalfen became the director of the MVA and initiated the Working Papers in Culture and Communication, a program newsletter, Visual Anthropology Internships, a Graduate Lecture Series in Visual Anthropology, the Richard Cross Gallery in the Department of Anthropology, and Richard Cross MA Thesis Grants. When the Ph.D. program was developed, Chalfen took over the responsibility for the undergraduate track in visual anthropology.

When Jayasinhji Jhala, a filmmaker and anthropologist interested in art, aesthetics, and indigenous media, joined the department, he did so to see if there was a way to revitalize the department's offerings in visual anthropology and to act as a mediator between the warring faculty members. He succeeded and we decided to transform the MA program into a Ph.D. course of studies in the anthropology of visual communication in which students who need some technical media training could receive it from Temple's Radio-Television-Film department (Later its name was changed to Film and Fine Arts). In addition, Jhala developed

a collaborative mode of video production in which he co-produced works with several students, including "Whose Paintings?" (distributed by DER). Although limited by the funds available, we were able to develop a Media lab and still photographic darkroom with production and editing equipment, maintained by a graduate student media technician. Our intention was to demonstrate to students that an acceptable ethnographic video could be made for very little money and that high production values are not relevant to anthropologists.

From the beginning, I was able to create a good working relationship with the film school since Ernest Rose, an old friend, came to Temple to establish a film program shortly after I arrived in the late 1960s. The film department actively assisted in organizing COVAs as well as being supportive of our efforts to expand our offerings in the anthropology of visual communication. Several FFA faculty have served on our students' dissertation committees, e.g., Paul Swann and Warren Bass. That relationship continues until today as Rod Coover, anthropologist and filmmaker has joined the film school faculty (<http://astro.temple.edu/~rcoover/>). In addition, many of our students have taken production courses in the film school and many of their students took visual anthropology seminars. As our intention was to have students pursue a broad range of interests, faculty members from Dance, Radio-Television-Film, American Studies, Philosophy and other departments frequently served as members of student's degree committees. The exchange of ideas among the students and faculty was a benefit of all.

In addition to the three visual anthropologists - myself, Chalfen and Jhala⁸, several other anthropology faculty members became involved - Denise O'Brien, who was interested in the anthropology of art particularly in Oceania and Japan and Niyi Akinnaso, an anthropological linguist interested in semiotics, the relationship of images and words, and the ethnography of visual and verbal communication actively supported students in this program. More recently, Paul Garrett, a linguist, has been actively trying to revive the program after Chalfen and I retired in 2004. As of 2013 there are two non-tenured visual anthropologists on the faculty.

In addition to our Ph.D. program, we created an undergrad "track" for anthropology majors in visual anthropology. Students are required to take a series of courses that provide a well rounded liberal education and a good overall understanding of socio-cultural, biological, linguistic anthropology, and archaeology. In addition, they are required to take "Fundamentals of the Anthropology of Visual Communication, Anthropological Problems in Visual Production and Research in Visual Anthropology in preparation for their thesis. An additional six elective courses are required: Anthropology and Art, Indigenous Media, Anthropological Film, Anthropology of Feature Films, Anthropology of New Media, and the Anthropology of Photography. I believe it to be the only course of study in visual anthropology for undergraduates available anywhere. We regularly had Temple students

⁸ I wish to thank Siguron Hafasteinsson and Tinna Gretarsdottir for their careful reading of a draft of this paper and for their extremely useful comments. This article is better because of their suggestions.

change their majors to be participants and several students transferred from other institutions.

From 1994 until 2004, over 60 percent of the inquiries about graduate school received at the department were from students interested in the visual program. Approximately 40 percent of the entering class during these years began as visual students. We actively discouraged students from applying for the M.A. as we saw it as having little value in securing employment in anthropology. It merely serves to prolong the time students needed to complete their Ph.D. In the U.S. the average time it takes students to complete a Ph.D. in anthropology after their B.A. is ten years.

When an applicant was accepted, the prospective student was encouraged to examine a web page which described program, faculty and other relevant information (<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/vatu/visuals/index.html>). As we maintained very high and demanding standards, some students left the program after one year, some to explore other aspects of cultural anthropology and others simply left the university. Our critics argued that this attrition was evidence of a flaw in our program. We regarded it simply as proof that we wished to train only the best students. There was one additional factor, this course of study was unique which made it difficult for prospective students to fully understand its scope and demands prior to coming to Temple. Visual Anthropology is still popularly assumed by many to be a fancy term for ethnographic film. Consequently, when some students entered the program they discovered that it did not meet their needs and left. In 1996, Peter Biella, a Temple Ph.D., wrote a critical evaluation of the program that correctly identified its strengths and weakness for the AAA's Newsletter. (<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/vatu/biella-rev.pdf>).

All Ph.D. students in the anthropology department at Temple University were required to take a total of sixteen graduate seminars. Four were reviews of the four major fields in U.S. anthropology - socio-cultural, linguistics, biological and archaeology. There were final exams in these seminars which served as a form of preliminary examination. Students in the anthropology of visual communication program, were also required to take two anthropology of visual communication seminars, Anthro. 408 (<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/vatu/an408.htm>) and Anthro. 409 (<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/vatu/an409.htm>) were required. The remaining ten seminars were elective. Among the visual seminars offered were photography and anthropology, indigenous media, the anthropology of reception, the anthropology of museums and an advanced seminar in visual production. Had this program continued we would have added seminars in "new" media as well as the production of digital multimedia ethnographies.

During these years there were usually 20 or so students in residence. They became an active group often organizing panels and presenting papers at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) as well other professional meetings. They created the Graduate

Association in Visual Anthropology (GAVA) and organized a conference, "The Future of Visual Anthropology" that ran during the AAA meetings⁹.

With the aid of several graduate students I constructed a listserv, VISCOM which in 2010 has over 400 subscribers, and web site, Web Archive in Visual Anthropology(WAVA) (<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/>) where we made available the out-of-print works of Sol Worth and Hortense Powdermaker as well as unpublished dissertations of several Temple students, Eric Michael's unpublished dissertation(Michael's studied with me at Temple.) and some documents relevant to the history of visual anthropology. For a time I published a program newsletter – See <http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/vatu/newsspring99/index.html> for the Spring 1999 as an example.

As is often the case in academic departments with innovative programs of study, there were some basic and unresolved disagreements among the faculty most closely involved. In addition, several cultural anthropologists in the department actively opposed the idea of teaching visual anthropology at all. The conflict was more personal than intellectual and, in the end, caused the demise of the program. When Chalfen and I prematurely retired in 2004, we were not replaced for five years. In 2009 through the efforts of Paul Garrett, the department began to rebuild its visual anthropology offerings. Although I am clearly prejudiced, I believe that when it was functioning, Temple's program was the most comprehensive in the world.

During the decade of so of its existence, the program produced a number of MAs and Ph.D.s (<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/vatu/tudegrees.htm>) including over a dozen Ph.D. students who were mentored by me. Among them are:

Matt Durlington is currently an associate professor at Towson University. His dissertation is titled "Discourses of Racialized Moral Panic in a Suburban Community: Teenagers, Heroin and Media in Plano, Texas" and will soon be published by Duke University press. In addition, he has produced several films including "The Record Shop." (<http://www.towson.edu/Sociology/popup/mdurlington.htm>)

Stephanie Takaragawa, is an assistant professor at Chapman College. Her dissertation is titled "Visualizing Japanese-America: The Japanese National Museum and the Construction of identity." She is involved in a film project in Africa. (<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/stephanie-takaragawa/5/134/258>)

Kathryn Ramey is an associate professor at Emerson College. Her dissertation is titled "Is the film avant-garde still avant-garde?: economic and culture of artisanal moving-image makers." She was and continues to be a renown experimental filmmaker as well as publishing scholarly articles.

⁹ See http://visualanthro.uh.edu/Announcements/Gradstudent_conference_05 for a description of the 2005 conference.

Milton Machuca is an assistant professor at Pitzer College. His dissertation was titled “Católico aquí y allá = Catholic here and there : Mexican migration and the Roman Catholic Church in southern Chester County, Pennsylvania.” He is currently co-producing “A Country Auction Revisited” with me.

(<http://www.pitzer.edu/academics/faculty/machuca/index.asp>)

Nora Jones is the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies and Senior Fellow in the Center for Bioethics, University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation is titled “The Mütter Museum: The Body as Spectacle, Specimen, and Art.

(<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/nora/index.html>)

JiKung Lee is professor at a Korean university. His dissertation is titled Film, Culture, and Generation Gap: An Anthropological Study of Chimhyang, A Korean Feature Film”

(<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/kijung/index.html>). He has produced a number of ethnographic films including Wedding Through Camera Eyes¹⁰.

Alex Baker was a curator of contemporary Art at the Pennsylvania Academy for the Fine Arts. His dissertation was titled *The Schuylkill River Park Public Art Process: An Ethnographic Focus on a Philadelphia Urban Park's Development* (2002).

(<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/alex/index.html>)

Sigurjon Baldur Hafsteinsson is assistant professor and director of a Museum Studies program at the University of Iceland. His dissertation title is “Unmasking deep democracy : aboriginal peoples television network (APTN) and cultural production” and will be published by Intervention Press. He has numerous scholarly and popular publications and several ethnographic films including “The Anthropology of Fear.” He is co-editor of *The Construction of the Viewer* (1996) and *Indigenous Screen Media in Canada* (2010).

Tinna Gretarsdottir is an instructor at the University of Iceland and has taught at the Icelandic Academy of the Arts. Her dissertation is titled *Art is in our hearts: Transnational complexities of art projects and neoliberal governmentality*. She has published several scholarly articles and is a co-producer of *The Anthropology of Fear*.

Michael Intintoli is a retired professor of anthropology. His dissertation was published as *Taking Soups Seriously*.

(<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/soaps/index.html>)

I have continued a professional relationship with several of my students inviting two of them, Matt Durlington and Kathryn Ramey, to write chapters in a book I co-edited with Marcus Banks (*Made To Be Seen*, University of Chicago Press, 2001). In addition, I coproduced a film “A Country Auction Revisited” with Milton Machuca (DER, 2012).

¹⁰ <http://www.der.org/films/wedding-through-camera.html>

Comparisons and Conclusions

It was clear to me that the program I developed at Temple was relatively unique but until I looked at what other course of study in visual anthropology I did not understand how unique. I examined the programs listed on the Society for Visual Anthropology's web site (<http://societyforvisualanthropology.org/>). Fourteen programs were noted. In addition, I searched the Visual Anthropology Network of the European Association of Social Anthropology Network's list compiled by Beate Engelbrecht. It displays twenty-one programs that offer certificates, M.A.s or Ph.D. and ten which offer courses of study at the undergraduate level. I was astonished at the number of programs and discouraged by the fact that most seemed to be simply a course of study in the production of documentary films, thus perpetuating the confusion over the parameters of the term, visual anthropology. In addition, few seemed to offer any serious discussion of film theory, visual communication or any other intellectual preparation that would enable students to think critically and anthropologically about such things as the wisdom of automatically assuming that the conventions of documentary realism are always the best for ethnographic film or attempting to understand how films communicate. From my point of view providing students with a few courses in anthropology and instruction in video production is unlikely to produce students who will continue their education and become academic anthropologists.

While I am not personally familiar with all of these programs, I do know about the University of Southern California's MA program (USC) under the direction of Tim Asch. This program has been recently revived under new leadership. It appears to be essentially the same as the course of study instituted by Asch. In addition, Manchester University's M.A. program, prior to their development of a Ph.D. and finally, Carroll Williams' Anthropology Film Center (AFC) in Santa Fe (closed with his death in 2005). Of the three I was personally involved with AFC's program since for a time we sent Temple's students there.

In all three programs, it is my understanding that the vast majority of their graduates did not continue their academic studies; did not obtain a Ph.D. in anthropology and do not pursue an academic career. In the case of U.S.C. about twenty percent of their graduates became academics (According to Jennie Cool, one of the leaders of the new USC program, personal communication, 2010). Even fewer of the Manchester's graduates became anthropologists

I am aware that my interests in this matter are narrowly defined if not parochial. I am concerned with ethnographic film programs designed to produce academic anthropologists interested in producing film that are the direct consequence of their field research. Moreover, from the descriptions available I cannot see how students can obtain an adequate knowledge of visual anthropology in these programs since that would include the study of all visible and pictorial aspects of culture (what some are now calling Media Anthropology.). I have had a running debate with Paul Henley, the director of the Manchester program, about this matter. Henley contends that my definition of a successful program is too narrow and that providing

students with some anthropological knowledge makes them more sophisticated media makers. My response is that media makers interested in knowing a little about anthropology should go to a university with a good film program and a good anthropology department and accomplish a similar result. I acknowledge that such a choice is easy in the U.S. and very difficult in the U.K. as there are many film schools in the U.S. and only few in the U.K. I simply do not know the situation elsewhere. I am basically not interested in assisting media makers in receiving some anthropological knowledge. Indirectly, I attempted to do that in my teaching of Temple's film students and fail to see that such an education has had any significant impact on their subsequent work. Finally I would contend that if a graduate program is located within a department of anthropology then its primary goal should be to produce anthropologists.

When we turn to Ph.D. programs, there seem to be two approaches - one that simply continues the approach found in an M.A. program and one that does not. University of Tromsø, Manchester and Harvard fall into the former category. Harvard offers students a chance to include a film with their written thesis. Nothing more. Apparently there is no theoretical discussion about visual media as communication or any of the knowledge that I consider essential for the development of a visual anthropologist who wishes to make films of an anthropological intent.

Here is how Harvard describe their program: "...the Department of Anthropology now offers a PhD in Social Anthropology (with Media) for students who wish to undertake practice-based research, and make substantial ethnographic use of audiovisual media in their doctoral work...In addition to their written dissertation, all media anthropology PhD candidates must produce an original creative work, or works, emerging from intensive ethnographic fieldwork, in an audiovisual medium or media such as film, digital video, CD-ROM, DVD, still photography, or phonography... The work must be accompanied by a Practitioner's Statement of two to three pages, outlining the intentions of the media work, and its relationship to the written dissertation".

Manchester has offered an MA in ethnographic filmmaking for some years and does at least mention some seminar work in "Theoretical issues in visual anthropology". I am unclear exactly what that means but I have informally asked former Manchester students who suggest this seminar fails to deal with most of the concerns I would consider essential. Recently, Manchester has expanded their offerings to include a Ph.D. in social anthropology with visual media. Similar to Harvard's program, this course of study simply allows students to add a film to a written dissertation. In both cases the visual work seems secondary to the more traditional written dissertation.

There are two places where the program offered is similar to that at Temple - New York University and Goldsmith College in London. Under the director of Faye Ginsburg, NYU's Center for Media and Culture, as it is called, is eighteen years old and produced over seventy graduates. The emphasis of the program is upon the anthropological study of all forms of media - visual and otherwise. There is a one year certificate in ethnographic film

offered in conjunction with Cinema Studies. Ph.D. candidates can select to make a film an integral part of their dissertation.

NYU's program is described as follows:

The Departments of Anthropology and Cinema Studies offer a specialized joint course of study leading to a New York State Certification in Culture and Media for NYU graduate students who are also pursuing their MA or PhD degrees in Anthropology or Cinema Studies. The program's philosophy takes a broad approach to the relationships between culture and media in a number of domains including: ethnographic film's significance for the fields of anthropology and cinema/media studies; problems in representation of cultures through media; the development of media in indigenous, Diaspora, and non-Western communities; the emerging social and cultural formations shaped by new media practices; and the political economy shaping the production, distribution and consumption of media worldwide¹¹.

Similarly, Goldsmith College in London offers both an MPhil and Ph.D. in Visual Anthropology (<http://www.gold.ac.uk/pg/mphil-phd-visual-anthropology/>). According to their web site, the course of study is described as

...research projects that centre on the study of visual cultures, such as various forms of media representation or art; and secondly, the use of specific visual methodologies as a central feature of the research project itself. The focus is on the visual as a vital and defining factor in the research project as a whole....It leaves the definition of visual anthropology wide open and considers various arguments about this sub-field, but also looks beyond immediate disciplinary concerns to enlarge the possibilities for a visual anthropology that is not only connected with the professional concerns of anthropologists, but also adequately presents anthropologically-informed representations to other audiences.

Temple's program in visual anthropology developed over a thirty-four year period from one undergraduate course in ethnographic film to a Ph.D. program in the anthropology of visual communication. The attempt was made to contextualize and problematize the production of ethnographic film within an anthropology of visual communication framework. The underlying assumption is that anthropology students should not be trained to be filmmakers any more than they should be trained to be writers. Rather the professional identity that should be fostered is that of a research oriented anthropologist who may choose to employ film and well as writing to convey research findings. In addition, Temple students were trained to understand film as a communication system with no one approach being automatically better than any other for the purpose of communicating anthropological knowledge. In other words, the conventions of documentary realism are viewed as nothing more than one possible aesthetic system.

¹¹ <http://anthropology.as.nyu.edu/object/anthro.grad.program.cultmedia>

While the proliferation of course offerings and programs described as being visual anthropology would seem to be an indication that this field is expanding and therefore a positive sign, I do not see it as an indication of progress. To begin many of these programs are titled “visual anthropology” when in fact they are merely courses in ethnographic documentary production. The “misuse” of the term visual anthropology only perpetuates a conceptual error. Visual anthropology has been much more than ethnographic film for some time as can be seen by a causal glance at the contents of the two major journals in the field – Visual Anthropology Review and Visual Anthropology.

I view the field of ethnographic film as confusing, confused and despite the several attempts to clarify the field by Banks and Morphy 1997 MacDougall 1997, 1998, and 2006 and myself (Ruby 2000). Most of the courses of study examined for this paper appear to automatically accept the notion that documentary realism, particularly observational style, is the best, perhaps only cinematic form, to use when making ethnographic films. There are few ethnographic studies of the production and the reception of ethnographic films (Wilton Martinez’s 1998 dissertation being one of the few). In addition, it seems to be a taken-for-granted assumption that the purpose of an ethnographic film is to serve as an audio-visual teaching aid and nothing more. Reviews in the *American Anthropologist* seem to focus solely on the quality of a film as a teaching device. The idea that a film can convey complex, sophisticated anthropological ideas and therefore can truly be considered as visualizing anthropology is seldom discussed – David MacDougall being a shining exception (1997 and 2006). If ethnographic film is to ever become a serious vehicle for the expression of anthropological knowledge, these programs will have to begin to address these issues in their teaching.

I personally find the majority of so-called ethnographic films that I have viewed in the past decade to be uninteresting, predictable and very conservative and with a tendency to “thinly” describe rather than employ a reflexive and a theoretical rich point of view. They seldom address any of the burning issues that one can find discussed in an anthropology that is written. I would submit that one of the reasons for the apparent lack of imagination is the result of the training young filmmakers have received. We need more ethnographic film programs of study embedded into a more sophisticated and theoretical framework that can be found in an anthropology of visual communication approach. We need more young visual anthropologists willing to push the boundaries and to question the undertheorized assumptions of their mentors. In short, I am arguing for more visual anthropology programs modeled along the lines of those found at N.Y.U., Goldsmith and Temple in which instruction in the production of ethnographic film is contextualized within the larger theoretical framework of an anthropology of visual communication.

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