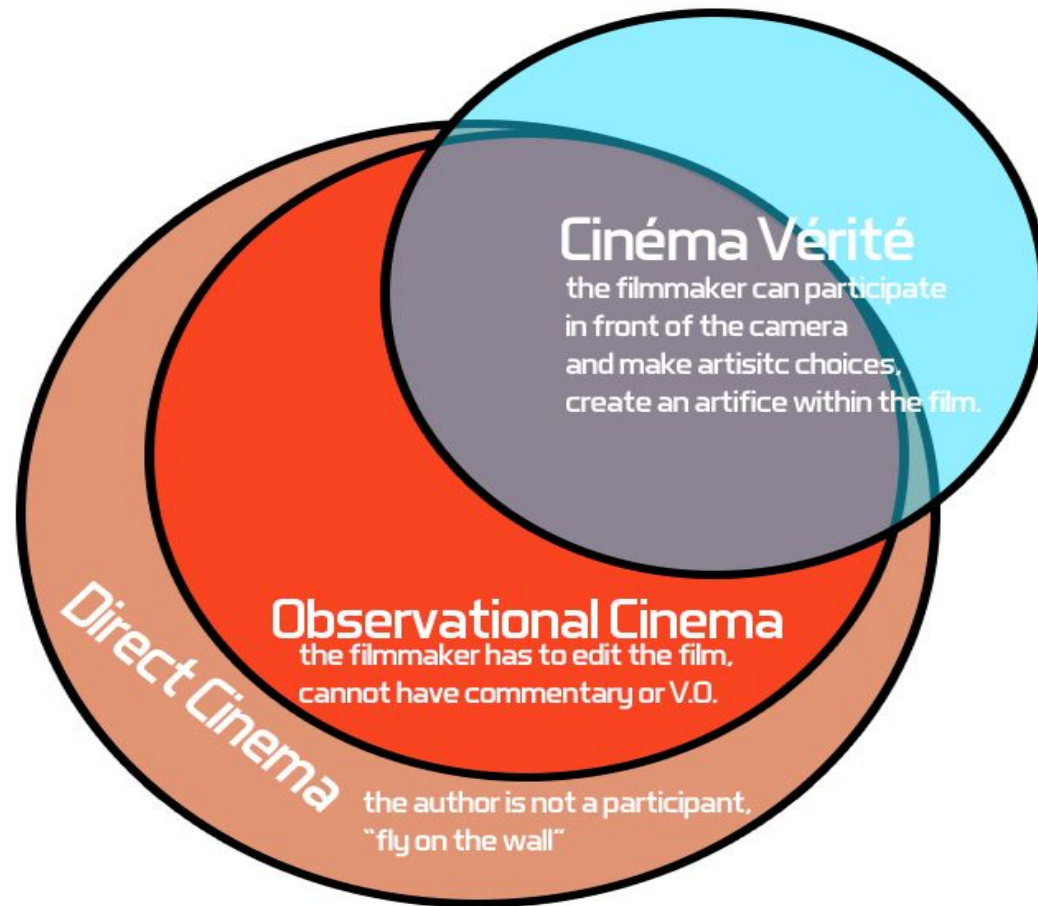




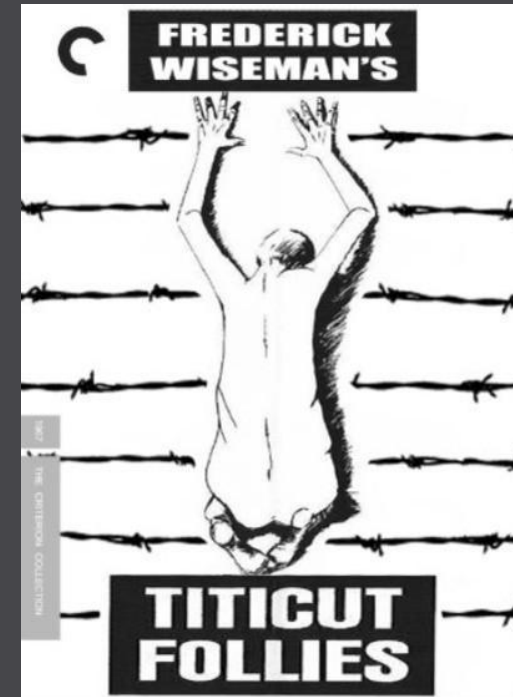
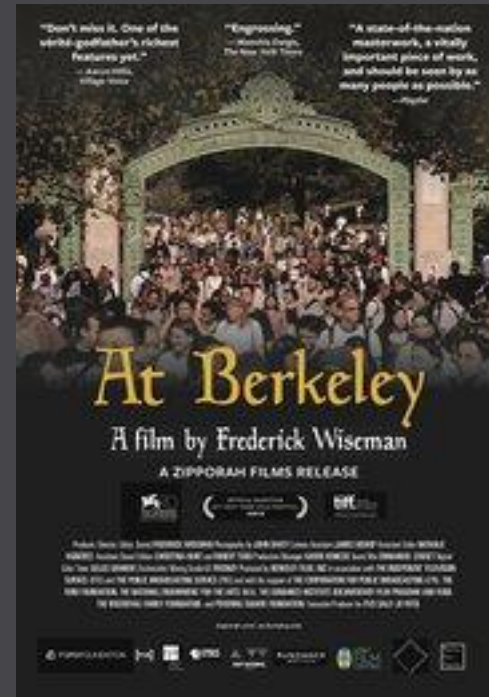
Frederick Wiseman

Frederick Wiseman's films are considered to be a part of observational cinema



“What I try to do is edit the films so that they will have a dramatic structure, that is why I object to some extent to the term observational cinema or cinéma vérité, because observational cinema to me at least connotes just hanging around with one thing being as valuable as another and that is not true. At least that is not true for me and cinema vérité is just a pompous French term that has absolutely no meaning as far as I'm concerned” (Frederick Wiseman)

For the last 50 years he investigates a single institution within his film (Titicut Follies, Hospital, Primate, Public Housing, La danse, At Berkeley etc.



- “...looking at American institutions that affect a lot of people.”
- presents people who don't talk for themselves
- When approaching new documentary doesn't necessarily have a structure or an idea of a final project.

Titicut Follies (1967)

- “Whatever the American Government doesn't like, they use the - they foist on this term "communist". I am communist cause I expound my views about the world condition?.(Patient)
- - “I wanna get help, but I don't know where I can get it.” (Patient), - “You can get it here, I guess.” (Doctor).
- -”Do I believe in God? How many times I go to the toilet? I mean how ridiculous this test get?” (Patient on the mental health test at the institution).



Hospital (1970)

“Blue shield (medical insurance company) would not take me, because I have diabetes. (Patient)

“Government doesn’t want to support our health”
(Patient)

Wiseman's point of view

- Most of the time “**hang out and collect material and figure out the editing after**”.
- “I like making film but don't like to explain it”
- “**All aspects of documentary filmmaking involve choice and are therefore manipulative. But the ethical ... aspect of it is that you have to ... try to make [a film that] is true to the spirit of your sense of what was going on.** ... My view is that these films are biased, prejudiced, condensed, compressed but fair. I think what I do is make movies that are not accurate in any objective sense, but accurate in the sense that I think they're a fair account of the experience I've had in making the movie”
- “I think **I have an obligation, to the people** who have consented to be in the film, ... to cut it so that it fairly represents what I felt was going on at the time in the original event.” Wiseman
- “I don't go in with a thesis I try to prove or disprove. **The shooting of the film is the research.** My response to that experience is what the final film is about”.
Wiseman

Approach to work

- 4-6 weeks to shoot
- In average collects 300 hours of footage.
- barely have what could be considered a distinct climax and conclusion
- no consistent human characters with whom the viewer is expected to identify.
- admits to **manipulating his source material to create dramatic structure**, and indeed insists that it is necessary to "make a movie."
- a lot of drama in ordinary experiences.
- **complete lack of expository** (narration), **interactive** (interviews), or **reflexive** (revealing to the viewer some part of the filmmaking process) **elements.**
- Uses radio mike occasionally. "It's useful when you're shooting several people who are going to be separated to mike someone."
- Try to think about cutaway if someone looks at the camera.
- He is still using his old **Steenbeck to edit**, because he doesn't want to spend money on Avid and doesn't want to learn how to use it.

His ability to create a feature-length (sometimes even longer) film that is engaging and interesting, without the use of any voiceover, title cards, or motion graphics, while still being "fair", is the reason why Wiseman is seen as a true master of documentary film.

