



The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary

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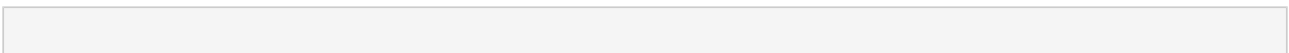
The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary

The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary explores the most visible and volatile element in the 2004 presidential campaign—the partisan documentary film. This collection of original critical essays by leading scholars and critics—including Shawn J. and Trevor Parry-Giles, Jennifer L. Borda, and Martin J. Medhurst—analyzes a selection of political documentaries that appeared during the 2004 election season. The editors examine the new political documentary with the tools of rhetorical criticism, combining close textual analysis with a consideration of the historical context and the production and reception of the films.

The essays address the distinctive rhetoric of the new political documentary, with the films typically having been shot with relatively low budgets, in video, and using interviews and stock footage rather than observation of uncontrolled behavior. The quality was often good enough and interest was sufficiently intense that the films were shown in theaters and on television, which provided legitimacy and visibility before they were released soon afterwards on DVD and VHS and marketed on the Internet.

The volume reviews such films as Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*; two refutations of Moore's film, *Fahrenhype 9/11* and *Celsius 41.11*; *Unprecedented: The 2000 Presidential Election*; and *George W. Bush: Faith in the White House*—films that experimented with a variety of angles and rhetorics, from a mix of comic disparagement and earnest confrontation to various emulations of traditional news and documentary voices.

The Rhetoric of the New Political Documentary represents the continued transformation of American political discourse in a partisan and contentious time and showcases the independent voices and the political power brokers that struggled to find new ways to debate the status quo and employ surrogate “independents” to create a counterrhetoric.



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