

## I. Emile de Antonio, "America's foremost radical documentary filmmaker"<sup>1</sup>...

- born in Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1919; died in New York in 1989
- he went to Harvard, served in the military during WWII, entered the avant-garde art scene in NY in the mid-50s, befriended artists such as Warhol and Rauschenberg
- he led a bohemian life in NY and is described as a radical leftist intellectual
- he entered the film world as distributor of the Beat classic 'Pull My Daisy' in 1959
- from the early 1960s onwards until his death he pursued his passion of documentary filmmaking
- due to his controversial and provocative films he was under FBI surveillance for a great part of his career



### His Ten Most Important Documentaries (Director+Producer)

- Mr. Hoover and I (1989)
- In the King of Prussia (1983)
- Underground (1976)
- Painters Painting (1973)
- Millhouse: A White Comedy (1971)
- America is Hard to See (1970)
- In the Year of the Pig (1969)
- Rush to Judgement (1967)
- That's Where the Action Is (1965)
- Point of Order (1963)

## II. ... and American political filmmaking

### Political Documentary, ...

- his work brought radical politics back into the medium of documentary filmmaking for the first time again since the Depression-era documentaries
- his films feature highly controversial political and social events at the time of the Cold War  
→ the Warren Report, the Senate Army-McCarthy Hearings, the Vietnam War, Eugene McCarthy's presidential campaign, Richard Nixon's political career

### ...Independent Film,...

- de Antonio pursued independent nonfiction film productions and had to take care of the financing himself
- he raised funds from private investors
- he could thus realize his own personal artistic vision and his films bare his handwriting

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1 Lewis, Randolph. *Emile de Antonio: Radical Filmmaker in Cold War America*. p. 3.

### ...Style...

- he coined a technique known as the 'compilation documentary'  
→ mix of original video footage and contemporary interviews assembled in a filmic collage
- content and the audio component played an essential role in his documentaries
- he recognized the camera's unavoidable subjectivity and used it to exhibit a conscious political orientation

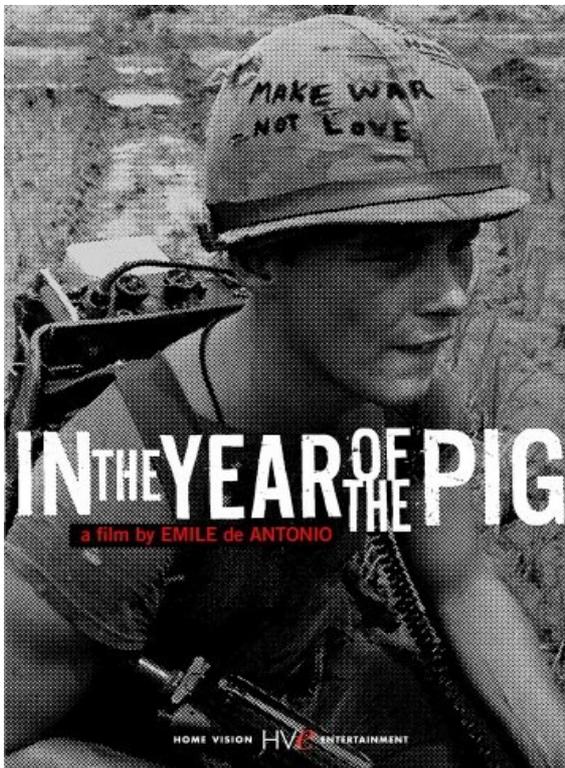
### ... & the Ideal of Enlightenment

"[I]n his hands 'the documentary became a genuine instrument of historiography, a medium [...] relying on visual documents in the same way that the traditional writing of history relied on written documents [...]."<sup>2</sup>

(Thomas Waugh, film critic)

- Antonio carried out a sociopolitical and historiographical aim  
→ he recognized the film's capacity as a medium of historical analysis and a tool of enlightenment
- he aimed at provoking public thought and stirring awareness for the delusive character of the media

## III. De Antonio's Vietnam War



- his Oscar-nominated Vietnam epic is one of the first documentaries about the Vietnam War
- de Antonio was strongly opposed to the U.S. military involvement
- he was enraged and dissatisfied with the TV coverage of the war; he called it propagandistic and devoid of any historical context
- he wanted to enlighten the American public about the happenings in Vietnam and gave them their "[...] recent history right smack in the face, like a napalm pie, [...]"
- 'In the Year of the Pig' is a cool-looking, informative, black-and-white, chronologically organized filmic collage covering almost forty years of the struggle in Southeast Asia
- it is composed of archival footage, interviews de Antonio conducted himself and a soundtrack made by a student composer of John Cage
- confrontation and polarization are the catchphrases that accompany his movie  
→ he illuminates the historical and political basis of the tragedy, confronts his audience with U.S. atrocities and wrongdoings and provokes heavy antiwar sentiments

## IV. Selected Bibliography

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2 Ibid. p. 4.