I. Emile de Antonio, "America's foremost radical documentary filmmaker"... 

• 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

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

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

• he coined a technique known as the 'compilation documentary'
  → a 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

"[H]is 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 [...]."\[2\]
(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


\[2\] Ibid. p. 4.