U.S. documentary & the propaganda effort in WWII
U.S. 1941-1945

U.S. enters WWII after Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor – Hawaii
December 7, 1941

WWII brought English-language documentary together
  Great Britain   Canada   United States
Viewed one another’s documentaries
Exchanged materials – stock-shot library footage
  combat & captured enemy footage
Made compilation films & joint productions – “victory series”

Documentary & fiction filmmakers in these countries worked together

Four types of war films in the US
  training - not documentaries
  indoctrination
  records of battle
  social documentaries
1. The Indoctrination film

U.S. Armed Forces called them “orientation” films

Key series  *Why We Fight*  produced by Frank Capra

Capra & collaborators - no prior documentary experience

The Capra unit – attached to the Office of War Information – made other large scale orientation films

*Know Your Ally* – Britain  1943

*Here is Germany*  1945

*Know Your Enemy* – Japan  1946
**Why We Fight series 1942-1945**

Assumption – soldiers would be more committed & fight better if the causes for WWII were understood

Goal – explain reasons for U.S. participation in the war

Point of View – historical treatise
  - viewpoint of Roosevelt administration
    - New Deal Democratic

Structure - seven films
  - compilation of existing footage
    - newsreels, Allied & captured records of battle
    - U.S. fiction features, Nazi propaganda films
  - edited as a fiction film
  - voice-of-God narrator – guided commentary
Films in the series

_Prelude to War_  1942
 _The Nazis Strike_  1943
 _Divide and Conquer_  1943
 _The Battle of Britain_  1943
 _The Battle of Russia_  1943
 _The Battle of China_  1944
 _War Comes to America_  1945

Short features - 50 minutes
Shown to military personnel – obligatory viewing
Later released theatrically
Design of the series

Challenge - How to give \textbf{structure} to vast & disparate materials

\textbf{Strategies} - dramatic form

- exposition, conflict, climax, denouement
- each film can be broken into acts
- visual & audio resources
  - film clips, dramatization, animated diagrams
  - still photos, drawings & maps, headlines, printed titles
- soundtrack
  - narrator, quoted dialogue, music, sound effects editing
- narrative & expressive purpose
2. Records of battle

Most made by Hollywood veterans - John Ford  
  John Huston  
  William Wyler

Ford - film unit attached to the Navy
  *The Battle of Midway* 1942 won Academy award
  *December 7* 1943 recreation of Pearl Harbor attack

Huston - *Report from the Aleutians* 1943
  *The Battle of San Pietro* 1945

Wyler - *Memphis Belle* 1944
  *Thunderbolt* 1945
Other combat films

Made collaboratively by film crews of army, navy & air force

Notable films - war in the Pacific

*The Battle for the Marianas* 1944

*To the Shores of Iwo Jima* 1945

*Fury in the Pacific* 1945

*The Fighting Lady* 1944
3. The social documentary

Made by Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, federal agency
Designed as public relations tools to increase economic & political cooperation with Latin America

*The Bridge* 1944

*High Plain* 1943

*The Grain that Built a Hemisphere* 1943 - Disney studios

*Water – Friend or Enemy* 1944 - Disney

1942 Office of War Information
created to coordinate government information liaison with Hollywood studios through its Motion Picture Bureau
The Motion Picture Bureau

Divided in two sections

Domestic Branch
made films for U.S. civilians

Overseas Branch
for allies, neutral countries & those formerly occupied by Germany & Japan
distinguished production record
made by documentary veterans

Autobiography of a Jeep 1943
Pacific Northwest 1944
Hymn of the Nations 1944
The Case of *Let There Be Light* 1946

Directed by John Huston

Produced by the Army Pictorial Service

intended for civilian audiences

showed the mental & emotional casualties of war

Examined the rehabilitation of psychosomatically disabled soldiers

Released 40 years after it was made

Exposes the toll war takes on soldiers
Conclusions

By end of WWII – documentary had reached a pinnacle

Financial investment

Talent involved

Theatrical & non - theatrical releases