Fauci

STUDY GUIDE

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Fauci is a glimpse into the life and legacy of Anthony Fauci, the Infectious Disease Specialist and director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID). A world-renowned infectious disease specialist and the longest-serving public health leader in Washington, D.C., he has overseen the U.S. response to 40 years’ worth of outbreaks, including HIV/AIDS, SARS and Ebola. Crafted around unprecedented access to Dr. Fauci, this revealing portrait and overview of Fauci’s career unpacks the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the past 40 years of American history through the lens of public health crises. A class screening of this documentary compliments history, science, and sociology curriculums. 

CO-DIRECTOR
Janet Tobias

CO-DIRECTOR
John Hoffman

(USA 2021) English, 104 mins

Teaching the Film

Through a nuanced character portrait of Anthony Fauci, we learn of his history with deadly epidemics, including HIV/AIDS, SARS, Ebola, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Working to advise and oversee the U.S. response and save millions across the world, we witness the tragedy of those who die and survive from deadly infectious diseases. This class guide is intended to contextualize and analyze the main themes of the documentary including public health and the importance of public service careers.

Recommended for grades 6-12

Subject Areas

- Government
- Health
- History
- Journalism
- LGBTQ+ Studies
- Peer/Youth Issues
- Science
- Social Studies
- World/Current Issues
Presenter Bios

Director/Producer **John Hoffman** is a six-time Emmy® Award-winning filmmaker whose most recent films include *The Antidote* (Amazon Prime, 2020); *Out of Many, One*, which premiered at the New York Film Festival in 2018, followed by Netflix; and *Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017, followed by Discovery. Much of Hoffman’s work as a filmmaker has focused on the key health issues of our time, and all have been produced in partnership with the NIH, including *The Weight of the Nation* (HBO), *Addiction* (HBO), *The Alzheimer’s Project* (HBO), *Sleepless in America* (National Geographic) and *First in Human* (Discovery) — a six-hour series set in the world’s largest research hospital, the NIH’s building 10. In addition to making films, Hoffman has also been a network executive. He was the executive vice president of Documentaries and Specials for Discovery from 2015-2018, after nearly two decades at HBO, where he was the vice president of Documentary Programming.

Director/Producer **Janet Tobias** is an Emmy® and Peabody Award winner and a two-time Writers Guild of America nominee. Tobias made her feature documentary debut in Toronto in 2012 with *No Place On Earth*, which Variety called “a substantial contribution to Holocaust cinema.” In 2017, *Unseen Enemy*, a prescient look at the 21st-century threat of epidemics, debuted at CPH:DOX and has since been broadcast on six continents in over ten languages. Tobias’ most recent feature, *Memory Games* (Netflix), debuted at DOC NYC in 2018. A long-time journalist, Tobias’ career includes stints at NBC, ABC and PBS, covering a range of domestic and international stories. In 2019, she co-founded the nonprofit Global Health Reporting Center (GHRC), which is dedicated to covering the key health issues of our time. In the last year and a half, GHRC has produced 11 pieces for “PBS NewsHour” and a feature television documentary *Race For The Vaccine* for BBC/CNN that reviewers called “gripping and inspiring” (Telegraph), “strikes the right balance between stories and science” (Sunday Times), and “unmissable” (Daily Mail). Among Tobias’ awards are an Emmy, a Peabody, two American Bar Association Silver Gavels, two Cine Golden Eagles, two Casey Medals, the Jackson Hole Science Media Award, a National Headliner Award, a Sigma Delta Chi Award, and honorable mention RFK Journalism and Overseas Press Awards. Tobias was nominated for WGA Awards for her writing on both *No Place On Earth* and *Unseen Enemy*. 
Discussion Questions

Pre-Viewing Topics / Pre-Screening Questions

To prepare the class for discussions of public health and infectious disease research relevant to the documentary film *Fauci*, understand what comes to the mind of students when they think of public health, whether it be in their classwork or their own everyday life. (It should be noted that these topics in this film and in these pre-screening questions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and queerphobia may have impacted someone in your class and should be treated with care.)

1. What is the definition of public health? What are some important examples of public health careers? How are these careers different from medical careers?
2. What are Anthony Fauci’s responsibilities as an advisor in the US Government?
3. What are the responsibilities of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID)?
4. What does it mean to be a public servant? What are examples of public servants in your community? What are their ethical responsibilities?
5. How does empathy play a role in medical care? At your local doctor’s office? At the federal institutes of public health?

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. How did the film make you feel? What are your immediate thoughts about it?
2. Did it change how you think about your experiences with pandemics or epidemics? Why or why not?
3. Does this film make you reconsider public service as a career path?

Themes and Context

Crucial to the context of Dr. Fauci’s career is the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States, a deeply traumatic global epidemic that not only affected everyone but exacerbated the discriminations and deaths of LGBTQ+ people. In this film, Dr. Fauci’s experience as a public servant during this epidemic is a point of comparison for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic Fauci is fighting in at the moment of the documentary’s filming.

1. How does Dr. Fauci change his medical approach after meeting with HIV/AIDS activists?
2. How did the work of the HIV/AIDS activists change the course of pandemic?
3. How does the legacy of HIV/AIDS activists continue to shape public health?
4. Who is Peter Staley? His important friendship with Dr. Fauci is shown throughout the film. Why do the filmmakers highlight their conversations and what is the significance of their relationship to the documentary and Dr. Fauci’s life?

Writing Prompts

1. In a passage of the documentary, Dr. Fauci walks through the National Mall’s temporary art exhibit titled *In America: Remember* that memorializes those who have died due to COVID-19 through over 630,000 white flags, he cries and says “In a race to stop a horrible disease, you always feel like you aren’t doing things quickly enough.” As the filmmakers relate to Dr. Fauci, Dr. Fauci works to relate with his patients and the public. How does empathy inform and guide the film?
2. Research Bill Nichols six models of documentary: poetic, expository, reflexive, observational, performative, and participatory. Using this framework, classify this film as one of these documentary genres and defend your argument.
3. Throughout the film, the filmmakers sometimes speak or depict their own camera on screen. How does this self-reflexive method contribute to the film’s meaning?
What is a Documentary?

A documentary is a film whose goal is to capture truth, fact or reality as seen through the lens of the camera. But there are many kinds of documentaries, and not everyone’s idea of truth is the same. The Scottish filmmaker John Grierson coined the term “documentary” in 1926 to describe American filmmaker Robert Flaherty’s romanticized culture studies, but nonfiction filmmaking dates back to the earliest motion picture reels.

The definition of documentary expanded as filmmakers experimented with technology and the goals of nonfiction. Avant-garde documentarians, like Dziga Vertov in the 1920s, believed that the mechanical eye of the camera gave a truer image of reality than the human eye and pointed his lens at newly industrialized cities. Leni Reifenstahl’s propaganda films from Nazi Germany used the nonfiction form to convey a genocidal political message not rooted in truth.

The international cinema vérité or observational movements of the 1960s attempted to remove authorship from the documentary. The observational filmmaker hovered like a “fly on the wall” watching the world without commentary. However, no film is ever made in a vacuum, and even observational documentaries will portray the biases of the filmmaker(s).

Modern documentaries often seek to raise awareness about a social, environmental or political issue, guiding their audiences toward civic in which they are all edited together.

While watching a documentary, it is important to remember the core concepts of media analysis: who made the film, for what audience and why? The nonfiction format can be deceptively subjective, as all filmmaking involves an inherent selection process: in the images that are shot, the music and narration that accompanies them and, most significantly, the way in which they are all edited together. Media literacy means always analyzing a documentary for its message and authorial intent.

Even though they are nonfiction films, most modern documentaries structure their content around a traditional story arc, with a beginning, middle and end, as well as characters, and a conclusion, theme or thesis to impart to the audience. Documentary filmmakers begin their projects with an idea or an issue that they wish to explore more deeply. Through research and planning, they develop a comprehensive plan before they begin shooting.
A Brief Timeline of Documentary

1895 - The Lumiere brothers develop the first motion picture film reels, capturing brief unedited clips of life around them called ‘actualities.’

1900-1920 - Travelogue or ‘scenic’ films become popular showcasing exoticized images from around the globe.

1919 - Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov issues a manifesto calling for a new style of cinematic reportage that documents real life. Rather than relying on fanciful scripts and artificial acting, Vertov insists that the future of cinema depends on reporting the truth.

1922 - Robert Flaherty films Nanook Of The North, generally cited as the first feature-length documentary. The film employs many of the conventions of later documentary and ethnographic filmmaking, including use of third-person narration and subjective tone, and a focus on an indigenous person as the film’s hero.

1926 - Dziga Vertov, with the Soviet Kino Pravda movement, released the experimental nonfiction film, Man With A Movie Camera. The film uses experimental editing techniques and cinematic innovations to portray a typical day in Moscow from dawn to dusk. Rather than simply recording reality, however, Vertov attempts to transform and enlighten it through the power of the camera’s “kino-glaz” (cinéma eye).

1935 - German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl is commissioned by Adolph Hitler to film the annual Nazi Party rally of 1934. The resulting film, Triumph of the Will, is a landmark both in documentary technique and in the use of film as an astonishingly powerful propaganda medium.

1939 - John Grierson collaborated with the Canadian government to form the National Film Board of Canada, with the initial goal of creating Allied propaganda in the support of war.

1960s - The ‘cinema vérité’ movement began in Europe. Portable cameras and sync sound allowed filmmakers to move freely and capture intimate footage.

1968 - The Argentine film, La Hora de los Hornos, opened the door to activist cinema of the 1970s, using film as a tool to counter capitalist politics.

1968 - Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) established.

The late 60's and 70's and later decades see shifts in the narrative approach of many documentaries. Although cinéma vérité, third-person narrative and other earlier documentary forms continue, first-person video storytelling, fueled by the flood of camcorders into the marketplace in the 1970's and after, begins to emerge as something of a unique genre.

1973 - PBS series, An American Family, the precursor of what would later be called “reality TV” shows, provides a close-up, vérité view of Loud family.

1990 - Filmmaker Ken Burns’ eleven-hour documentary series, The Civil War is aired on five consecutive nights on PBS. The series achieves the highest ratings ever for PBS, averaging more than 14 million viewers each evening.

2000s and Beyond
The widespread use of social media, digital cameras, and editing softwares continues to make the documentary medium more affordable and accessible to independent filmmakers all over the world. The term ‘documentary’ has come to encompass a wide range of nonfiction filmmaking.
Activities

Understanding Public Health

Public health organizations and institutions represent integral parts of our communities. With students, name and discuss the various ways in which public health shapes our daily lives (https://www.cdcfoundation.org/what-public-health). Using this context, prompt students, either alone or in groups, to consider a public health issue they are curious about. Students should then research a current public health issue and craft a presentation that analyzes the issue and proposes important policy and principles in combating the problem. Include a general overview and history of the public issue as it is today. Catalogue efforts to combat the issue now and use historical evidence (with cited sources) to support any additional proposed solutions.

Watch and Respond

Watch Dr. Fauci’s TED Talk with TEDMED recalling the importance of scientific flexibility as principle in meeting the emergent needs of HIV/AIDS patients and activists. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHkE7kvczq4&t=2s)

In Fauci, activist Peter Staley says of Dr. Fauci’s visit to the ACT UP meeting, "It is... the first and only time I think anybody in government came to us." In Dr. Fauci’s TEDMED talk linked above, Dr. Fauci makes note that one activist invited to his office observes that “that was the first time a government official had ever spoken to them much less engaged in a dialogue.”

The role of stigma played a major role in the HIV/AIDS epidemic and continues to play a role today. Consider a speaker series (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fd2Mz6vBykl) or exhibits (https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/aids-activists-public-private) designed to unpack the complexities of the ongoing concerns with HIV/AIDS.

Public Health Education

Connect, research, and support local public health organizations protecting us and our communities from HIV/AIDS like the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. To better understand local contemporary advocacy and public health resources, consider screening this San Francisco AIDS Foundation Video (https://vimeo.com/358863457) defining the principles behind their health justice model.
Common Core Standards

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

**College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1-3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7-9

**College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1-2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4-9

**College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1-6

**Reading: Informational Text**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6-12.1-3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6-12.6-9

**Writing**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.1-9

**Speaking & Listening**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-12.1-6

**Language**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6-12.3-6

**History/Social Studies**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.1-9

**Science & Technical Subjects**
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-12.1-2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-12.7-9
Media Literacy Resources: Screening with Meaning

We live in a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information. Every projected image, every word published on a page or a website, and every sound from a speaker reaches its audience through the medium, through the language of the device. The ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Most students already have a keen understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive. Analysis of a media message—or any piece of mass media content—can best be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

1. **Medium**: the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered
2. **Author**: the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination
3. **Content**: the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys
4. **Audience**: the target audience to whom it is delivered
5. **Purpose**: the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and critical thinkers.

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### MEDIUM

*All Media Is Constructed.*
- What is the message, how is it delivered and in what format?
- What technologies are used to present the message?
- What visual and auditory elements comprise the media content?
- What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?

#### AUTHOR

*All Media Is Constructed by Someone.*
- Who is delivering the message?
- Who originally constructed the message?
- What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?

#### CONTENT

*Media Is A Language For Information.*
- What is the subject of the media message?
- What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?
- What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?
- To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?

#### AUDIENCE

*All Media Messages Reach an Audience.*
- Who receives the message?
- For whom is the message intended?
- What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- How might others perceive this message differently? Why?

#### PURPOSE

*All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.*
- Why was the message constructed?
- Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?
- To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?
- What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?