

## ABSTRACT

LAUREN PILCHER. *Man: A Course of Study*: Harnessing The Power of Classroom Film In Cold War America (Under the direction of Professor Marsha Gordon.)

*Man: A Course of Study*, a yearlong fifth grade social studies curriculum developed by Educational Development Center (EDC) in the late 1960s and funded largely by the National Science Foundation, was met with political controversy upon its release, which resulted in the curriculum being pulled from widespread distribution. Innovative in design, the MACOS curriculum centered around sixteen animal and ethnographic films instead of a traditional history textbook. Once implemented, MACOS inspired local unrest and eventually congressional debate concerning its educational merit. Finally, congress revoked the course's NSF funding, stopping the course. The design of the MACOS films, largely unexamined by scholars, was inevitably tied to the ideological debate that soon embroiled the program. This essay examines the pedagogical function of the MACOS films and their rhetorical significance in the course's controversial reception. Looking closely at the MACOS films, I first examine how developers hoped to re-envision social study in primary schools classrooms. Next, I analyze three key films of the course, explicating how they worked against the didactic educational filmmaking common in previous decades and confronted problematic issues with ethnographic filmmaking in order to provide students a space to chart their own visual analyses of human social behavior. Lastly, by surveying the national reception of MACOS, I argue that in their effort to innovate, the films positioned young learners away from conventionally accepted methods of instruction at that time. In so doing, EDC positioned the films within the ideological and political discourse at work in post-Sputnik America. The required MACOS films framed an open-ended, interactive inquiry on 'man' for students and simultaneously subverted conservative visions for adolescent education during the turbulent 1960s and early 1970s.