Several years ago, I produced and directed a feature-length documentary film about artisans in Mexico; it has been screened in Mexico, Spain, and France (with French subtitles), and, with the recent insertion of English subtitles, is now ready for release in Anglophone countries. Here’s the description:

The Work of Art / El Oficio del Arte
This beautifully filmed documentary explores the works and lives of six highly skilled artisans working with traditional methods in the region of Lake Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, México, an area renowned for its rich “folk art” (artesanías or artes populares). The focus of the film is the process of creation itself. It features three artisans who carefully buy their materials, working them into beautiful saleable products, and three Grand Masters, who dominate every aspect of the process, from extracting clay with pickaxes in the nearby hills, to creating their own colors from earth and plant materials, to pounding red-hot copper disks. The cinematography invites viewers to feel as if they are right there with the artisans, seeing their worlds in everything from intimate close-ups to grand and scenic panoramas. In the course of showing artistic process, the film also reveals the importance of family, the hazards of their work, the difficulties of pricing, the Juried Competition system used throughout Mexico to promote and encourage the making of artesanías, the artisans’ thoughts on clients—completely in their own words, with no voice-over narration, no external experts, and using only local sounds and music. Produced and directed by Shelly Errington, photographed and edited by José Luis Reza. In Spanish with English subtitles. 1 hr. 23 min.

In this Colloquium, I’ll situate this film within the history of “ethnographic” film in the Anglophone world in the second half of the twentieth century and will discuss what differentiates ethnographic film in the 21st century from its earlier history. How I came to make this film, my current views concerning aesthetics and practicalities in documentary work, my plans for a future documentary—are among the topics that I’ll explicate and answer questions about.

This talk will be illustrated with clips from The Work of Art
The complete documentary will be shown on campus on Thursday, February 13 @ 7:15pm in 75 Soc Sci 2.