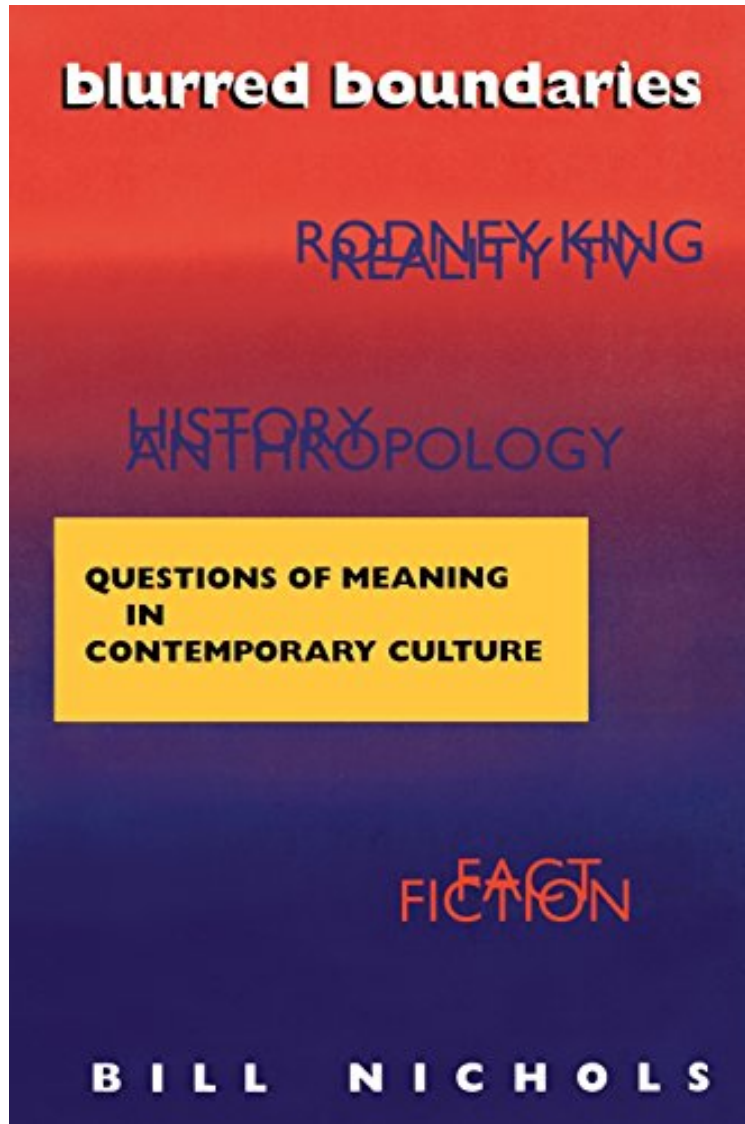


Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture

Bill Nichols

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Bill Nichols : Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. This book reconfigures the way we understand the relationship between media and "reality" By jaimie In response to the single scathing review of this book previously posted on , I

feel the need to say that this is one of the most important and insightful books about documentary that has been written thus far. Bill Nichols, one of the preeminent documentary scholars, theorizes the complex relationship between media and "reality" without ever reducing it to any simple conclusion. Sure, it is a "postmodern" book but we live in a postmodern world in which "facts" and "truths" are constantly put into question. If you have ever wondered if an image you are looking at is photoshopped then you, too, live in a postmodern world. Nichols writes beautifully and clearly about the difficulty of navigating through the contemporary world when the categories of "true" and "false" no longer hold absolute power. Nichols' discussion of the Rodney King tape is one that I teach all the time, and it helps my students think about how they come to "believe in" images or not. If you are interested in documentary or in questions of how we determine what is "true," this is the best book on the (virtual) shelf. 14 of 33 people found the following review helpful. Typical postmodern babble by one of its great practitioners. By A Customer This foul little book pretends to explain how fact and fiction can blur in the media. Sounds reasonable, but don't let that fool you; it's one of the most dense, awful examples of "postmodernspeak" I've ever read. Nichols seems to be improvising, writing beauties like "The indexical bond of point-for-point correspondence between photograph and source anchors an iconic sense of typicality . . . and a symbolic layer of connotation and ideology." No self-respecting writer--or writer who respects his readers--would spare that sentence the revision it begs for. Chances are you're a film student if you own a copy. DO NOT let it make you feel stupid. Nichols hides his ideas in such Byzantine prose so you can't identify them. If you can't identify his ideas, then you can't critique them. And that's just how he wants it. The price they're asking for this book is hilarious. Maybe I'll get my money's worth when I throw it at my professor.

Blurred Boundaries explores decisive moments when the traditional boundaries of fiction/nonfiction, truth and falsehood blur. Nichols argues that a history of social representation in film, television and video requires an understanding of the fate of both contemporary and older work. Traditionally, film history and cultural studies sought to place films in a historical context. Nichols proposes a new goal: to examine how specific works, old and new, promote or suppress a sense of historical consciousness. Examining work from Eisensteins Strike to the Rodney King videotape, Nichols interrelates issues of formal structure, viewer response and historical consciousness. Simultaneously, Blurred Boundaries radically alters the interpretive frameworks offered by neo-formalism and psychoanalysis: Comprehension itself becomes a social act of transformative understanding rather than an abstract mental process while the use of psychoanalytic terms like desire, lack, or paranoia to make social points metaphorically yields to a vocabulary designed expressly for historical interpretation such as project, intentionality and the social imaginary. An important departure from prevailing trends in many fields, Blurred Boundaries offers new directions for the study of visual culture.

About the Author BILL NICHOLS is Professor of Cinema Studies at San Francisco State University. He has edited two widely used anthologies, Movies and Methods I and II, and is the author of Ideology and the Image and Representing Reality.