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Missile, Wiseman, Frederick, 1987

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Racetrack, Wiseman, Frederick, 1985

Basic training, Wiseman, Frederick, 1971

FREDERICK WISEMAN

Cinematheque Ontario is pleased to partner with the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival to present this extensive retrospective of Frederick Wiseman's films, an invaluable body of work which opens so many doors to understanding American society and thought. Frederick Wiseman will visit Toronto at the close of the retrospective to make several public appearances and receive a **Lifetime Achievement Award** from the Hot Docs festival.



JUVENILE COURT

"Composing an American Epic"

by Phillip Lopate

Who is the greatest American filmmaker of the last 30 years? Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, Stanley Kubrick, John Cassavetes, Woody Allen, Robert Altman all have their partisans. But if the criteria includes the most masterpieces, or the highest sustained level of accomplishment, maybe we should also be talking about Frederick Wiseman. Since 1967, when *TITICUT FOLLIES*, his portrait of a state prison for the criminally insane, made its debut, he has directed a total of 30 complex, disturbing, illuminating documentaries, on the average of one a year.

Why has this towering achievement been so under-recognized in the film world? Well, documentaries get little respect; Wiseman's have mostly been shown on television, rather than in theatrical release; and his style is demanding, presenting painful realities in an essentially unmanipulative way that makes the viewer work. Wiseman has been recently honored, however, by the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival (New York), with a Life Achievement Award, and a complete, retrospective of his work was shown at the Film Society of Lincoln Center in 2000.

If Walt Whitman's grandiosely democratic aim was to capture "the poem of these United States," then Frederick Wiseman, in a more diffident vein, is his one true grandson. "My goal is to make as many films as possible about different aspects of American life," Wiseman has said. He has tackled nearly every area: education, welfare, medicine, religion, the military, the workplace, leisure, retail, food, housing, the arts, community. Like Whitman, too, who wrote a single ever-thickening book, Wiseman regards his collected works as "all one long movie."

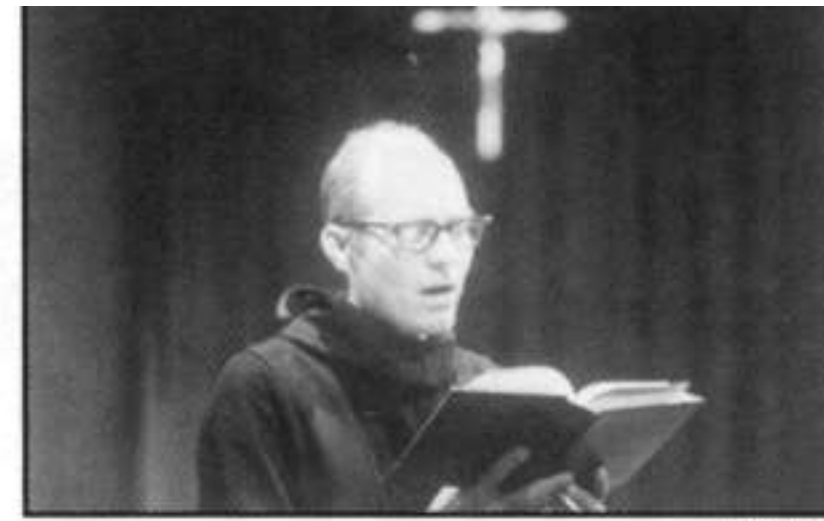
"Wiseman is one of my heroes," cheerfully confesses Errol Morris, himself a superb documentary filmmaker (his *MR. DEATH* opened in 1999). "One hallmark of a great filmmaker – Renoir, Hitchcock, Bresson, Wiseman – is to have created a body of work, a cosmos. Give up that old distinction between documentary and feature film. Call it what it is: a vision, a simulacrum of the world. No one has exceeded in scope and intensity the simulacrum that Wiseman has given us."



PUBLIC HOUSING



WELFARE



ESSENE



The Cambridge, Mass., filmmaker, now in his mid-sixties, grew up in an atmosphere of social concern. His mother was the administrator of a children's psychiatric ward and his father, a lawyer, served on hospital boards and charitable organizations. Wiseman himself attended law school at Yale and passed the bar but did not practice, though he taught academic law and married a law professor, naming his production company — Zipporah — after her. His first film, *TITICUT FOLLIES*, financed on credit, confirmed his hunch that contemporary life could be explored by focusing on institutions. It also got him into trouble (the film was censored for 25 years, as the State of Massachusetts did not take kindly to this exposure of Bridgewater Prison's cruelly inadequate facilities). Undaunted, he reeled off an unprecedented string of a dozen brilliant documentaries.

From the start, Wiseman appropriated the techniques of *cinéma-vérité* — synch-sound, lightweight portable equipment — plunging the viewer into the moment without explanatory voiceovers, mood music, interviews, reenactments, flashbacks, even identifying titles. The austerities encourage the impression that one is watching life as it happens, and force the viewer to make sense of scenes and relationships glimpsed in medias res. Of course, the "truth" in *cinéma-vérité* is still a highly artificial, selective fiction. What counts is that Wiseman has taken the journalistic technique of *cinéma-vérité* and elevated it to a personal expressionism.

Part of what makes Wiseman unique is that he follows location, not character. He shoots in one place for days, weeks, months, obeying the philosophy that reality is not in some glamorous "elsewhere," but wherever you happen to be. Wiseman insists that, Heisenberg's principle aside, his filming does not alter the subjects' behavior. The minimal crew consists of Wiseman himself, taking sound, and a cameraman whom the director instructs via ear-mike. A great deal must still be left to the cinematographer's discretion, and Wiseman has long had the benefit of two superlative cameramen, William Brayne and John Davy. Copious footage is shot. A four-hour event might be edited down to 10 minutes, yet give the impression of being in real time.

An acknowledged master editor, Wiseman is above all a storyteller, who can keep his finger on the pulse of a scene while letting it remain open. As he once said: "To take a simple example, you could just cut to the one-liner that's really good. But I think the one-liner that is really good is much better if it is submerged in a context, so the viewer has to grope for it a little bit by participating in the scene."

The early films — like *TITICUT FOLLIES*, *HIGH SCHOOL*, *LAW AND ORDER*, *HOSPITAL*, *WELFARE* — were initially received as muckraking social criticism, in line with sixties protest culture. But if Wiseman had a reformist axe to grind in the first two (he now concedes they were "too didactic"), he soon began to baffle his anti-Establishment fans by the even-handed treatment of police in *LAW AND ORDER* (1969) and by the portrait of the Army's professionalism in *BASIC TRAINING* (1971). Increasingly, one understood that his sympathies were not only for the schoolchildren, patients and criminals, but for the harried caregivers and peacekeepers trying to do their best.

Thirty years later, these films look a little different. We can appreciate more that they are about the fragility, suffering and resilience of the human condition. The jailers and jailed in *TITICUT FOLLIES* are both locked in together. Many of the life lessons the high school teachers are trying to instill in their charges actually make sense. The telephone confrontation in *HOSPITAL* between the bald male doctor and the unseen but infamous Miss Hightower, who refuses to put the doctor's ailing transvestite patient on welfare, captures the intractable flavor of our Age of Bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy is one of Wiseman's key subjects. His treatment of it reached an apotheosis in *WELFARE* (1975), perhaps his greatest film. The amount of thorny, complex reality it offered, without rushing to the resolution, was unique for television; the nearly three-hour length (it was the first of Wiseman's films to move beyond the tight 90-minute structure) gave it an epic dimension. Also, the piece had an over-the-top, operatic quality, with duets and arias, including the amazing soliloquy of the last client, who is both paranoid and eloquently sane in his rambling prayer. (Not surprisingly, *WELFARE* was turned into an opera years later.) One saw that underneath the social critic was a metaphysician: all these people in waiting rooms (who stand for us) are petitioning a silent God of Justice, as in Kafka's parable "Before the Law."

What to do about welfare? Wiseman refused to offer policy solutions. "I am incapable of pronouncing general truths," he insisted, aligning himself instead with "the complexity and ambiguity of human behavior." Whatever institutional reforms might ensue, we would still be suffering, craving an explanation and waiting to die.

Nowhere is that point made clearer than in the six-hour *NEAR DEATH* (1989), which takes place in a terminal ward. This fascinating, if excruciating, film has several long discussions between the medical staff and a patient's dazed family, who are told the pessimistic circumstances of their loved one and, indirectly, encouraged to pull the plug. It's as much a study about the uses of language as it is about medical technology and the final moments of life.

The film critic's tendency is to want to divide Wiseman's "one long movie" into triumphs, near-misses and duds. Certainly it is easy to isolate such masterworks as *WELFARE*, *HOSPITAL*, *TITICUT FOLLIES*, *LAW AND ORDER*, *JUVENILE COURT*, *NEAR DEATH*, and *PUBLIC HOUSING*, where the drama of suffering is the most tragic or comically appalling, the confrontation between servers and clients at its starkest — while taking potshots at his blander studies of fashion models, *ASPEN*, *CENTRAL PARK*, or the *COMÉDIE FRANÇAISE*. But even these less intense works inform us of a world, and he can be acutely observant with less overtly dramatic subject matter. *ESSENE* sustains the tension of a crackling intellectual argument from first to last, as notions of participatory democracy and group therapy are shakily introduced to the religious order. *MEAT* (1976), though the victims (cows and lambs) can't argue back, is an oddly touching, gruesome western.

"Most documentaries date, the further they get from their historic context," observes Richard Peña, the Film Society of Lincoln Center's director. "With Wiseman it's the opposite, the issues are still relevant, but now we can see the formal artistry and the poetic, abstract quality in them." In their beautifully composed cutaway shots and two-second vignettes, Wiseman's documentaries display a surprising affinity with the work of experimental filmmakers such as Ernie Gehr or Rudy Buckhardt.

Wiseman has always been a passionate devotee of theater, and there is a theatrical underside to his work. From the revue staged in *TITICUT FOLLIES* to the client at the end of *WELFARE* who even cites "Waiting for Godot," there is a focus on performance (how well or badly the bureaucrat disappears into his role, the healer into hers). Wiseman's institutions are not just sociological constructs, but stage settings inviting a theater of the absurd. Often some grim humor breaks through the surface. Whether it's the Dostoyevskian hippie on a bad drug trip, terrified of dying and vomiting for 10 minutes in *HOSPITAL*, or the technicians in *PRIMATE* masturbating the chimpanzee, or the sour-faced Brother Wilfred whisking the fly-swatter in disdain at the Abbott's New Age appeasements in *ESSENE*, or the ghetto-dwellers of *PUBLIC HOUSING* listening in silent disbelief to the black entrepreneur who tells them they should start an elevator-repair business, there is a surreal gap between need and response.

The critic Pauline Kael said about his unflinching camera, "You look misery in the eye and you realize there's nothing to be afraid of." But not only misery. In *CANAL ZONE* (1977) the Panamanian patients in a mental health clinic sit stolidly in the waiting room watching television, an Abbott and Costello film dubbed into Spanish. With puckish calm, Wiseman gives us more than a minute of this film clip, minus English titles, followed by a Kentucky Fried Chicken commercial. Of course we are welcome to interpret the scene as a commentary on cultural imperialism; but it is also a statement of our hopelessness before the entropic absurdity of life.

Several Wiseman works, such as *CANAL ZONE* and *MEAT*, end with a curious sense of diminuendo. "He addresses our greatest fear — stasis," notes Errol Morris, "everything grinding down slower and slower to some kind of sad halt."

There is also a meditative, almost pastoral side to Wiseman: the pleasure of looking at the world around us in all its surreal, debased contradiction. This contemplative manner is manifest in *BELFAST, MAINE*. It is a summation of everything Wiseman has done: it captures the rhythms of community, with scenes of lobstering, factories, moviegoing, emergency clinics, outreach care for elderly people, hunting, amateur theatricals, high school (a teacher gives us an impassioned defense of "Moby-Dick"), the after-effects of domestic abuse. Fastening with Bressonian closeups on everyday implements, the aging Wiseman, holding on, shows himself to be less an angry prophet than a grateful mystic of the materialist realm.

So many American movies are about desire, forbidden or otherwise. Wiseman's films are more about the reality principle: work, survival, illness, death. Yet underneath his stern drive to make us experience greater and greater doses of life as it is, lies a wonderment at reality's surreal forms. The fog-bound final images of *BELFAST, MAINE* suggest that life is also a dream.

— PHILLIP LOPATE

Phillip Lopate is a freelance writer best known to readers as an essayist and film critic. His most recent book is *Totally, Tenderly, Tragically: Essays and Criticism from a Lifelong Love Affair with the Movies* (Anchor Books, 1998). Lopate is currently working on a book on New York City's waterfront. His essay, "Composing an American Epic," was originally published in *The New York Times* and is reprinted here with permission of the author.

Cinematheque Ontario is grateful to the following individuals and organizations who have helped make this retrospective possible: Karen Konicek and Arnie Keddy, Zipporah Films, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and Karen Tisch, Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, Toronto. Programme notes draw from more extensive information on Frederick Wiseman's films found at the following website: <www.zipporah.com>.



HIGH SCHOOL

HIGH SCHOOL

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1968 75 minutes

"The high school is the very heart of America, and Wiseman has captured its strength and rhythm perfectly" (Edgar Z. Friedenberg, *The New York Review of Books*). The school system exists not only to pass on "facts" but ideally to transmit social values from one generation to another. *HIGH SCHOOL* documents how this social conditioning occurs. In a large, above-average urban high school, we witness a series of formal and informal encounters between teachers, students, parents, and administrators through which the ideology and values of the school emerge. "HIGH SCHOOL, a wicked, brilliant documentary about life in a lower-middle-class secondary school" (Richard Schickel, *Life*). "No wonder the kids turn off, stare out windows, become surly, try to escape. . . . The most frightening thing about *HIGH SCHOOL* is that it captures the battlefield so clearly; the film is too true" (Peter Janssen, *Newsweek*).

Friday, March 15 8:45 p.m.

RACETRACK

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1985 114 minutes

"Beginning with the birth of a thoroughbred and running through to the conclusion of the 1981 Belmont Stakes in which Summing upset heavily-favored Pleasant Colony, *RACETRACK* makes all other movies about horse races . . . look like a ride on a cute little merry-go-round" (Gene Siskel, *Chicago Tribune*). *RACETRACK* is about the Belmont Race Track, one of the world's leading race tracks for thoroughbred racing. The film highlights the training, maintaining, and racing of thoroughbred horses. Everyday occurrences are shown: in the backstretch — the grooming, feeding, shoeing, and caring for horses and the preparation for races; at the practice track the various aspects of training, exercising, and timing the horses; at the paddock — the pre-race presentation of the horses; and in the grandstand — betting and watching the races. "The film is not about winning or losing; the show is about an institution, an industry, and its rituals. In *RACETRACK*, the industry Wiseman reveals is a peculiar one, pervaded by both a romantic respect for the magnificent animals at its center and an almost corporate atmosphere" (Cathleen Schine, *Vogue*).

Saturday, March 16 8:15 p.m. (note early start time)



RACETRACK

FREDERICK WISEMAN



HOSPITAL

HOSPITAL

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1970 84 minutes

"The chief characteristic of all Wiseman's films — and the source of their tremendous emotional impact — is his instinctive sympathy for people who must confront the specific, human effects of vast, impersonal human social forces" (Richard Schickel, *Life*). *HOSPITAL* shows the daily activities of a large urban hospital with the emphasis on the emergency ward and outpatient clinics. The cases depicted illustrate how medical expertise, availability of resources, organizational considerations, and the nature of communication among the staff and patients affect the delivery of appropriate health care. "It is as open and revealing as filmed experience has ever been. You look misery in the eye and you realize there's nothing to be afraid of. . . . By the end we are so thoroughly involved . . . that tears well up, because we simply have no other means of responding to the intensity of this plain view of the ordinary activities in Metropolitan Hospital" (Pauline Kael, *The New Yorker*). Winner of two Emmy Awards in 1970 for Best News Documentary and Best Director.

Tuesday, March 19 6:30 p.m.

BASIC TRAINING

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1971 89 minutes

"Fred Wiseman makes documentaries better than Napoleon made war, and his latest — *BASIC TRAINING* — might even make Napoleon nostalgic" (Bud Collins, *The Boston Globe*). The film follows a company of draftees and enlisted men through the nine weeks of the basic training cycle. The varieties of training techniques used by the army in converting civilians to soldiers are illustrated in scenes of drills, M-16 and bayonet use, gas chamber, mines, night crawl, infiltration course and the many forms of ideological training familiar to millions of men and women who have served in the armed forces. "Wiseman uncovers human conditions in inhuman situations. . . . In the marching, the hand-to-hand combat, the loss of identity, Wiseman, without narration, conveys the humor and sadness of the situation. He not only imparts the essence of military basic training, he latches on to young men thrust into maturity, some before their time. It is a gripping experience" (*Variety*).

Wednesday, March 20 8:45 p.m.



MISSILE

MISSILE

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1987 115 minutes

"[*MISSILE*] does not frighten viewers with melodramatic scenes of atomic holocaust, nuclear winter or East-West confrontations. Instead, it merely documents the step-by-step training of the intelligent, responsible, sincere and likable men and women who have their fingers on the controls of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The officers selected for training and their instructors appear to be of high moral caliber. But the calmness, responsibility and intelligence with which they face the potential destruction of our civilization is what makes *MISSILE* so unnerving; it brings home that nuclear war could really happen. Wiseman continues his unique obsession to force viewers to experience — and reevaluate — American institutions at first hand" (Arthur Unger, *The Christian Science Monitor*).

Thursday, March 21 8:45 p.m.



BASIC TRAINING

ESSENE

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1972 86 minutes

ESSENE is about daily life in a Benedictine monastery and the resolution of conflict between personal needs and the institutional and organizational priorities of the community. In the Order, where the focus of life is the relationship of individual work and worship to the community as a whole, the brethren must cope with the same issues that arise in any community: rules, work, worship, values, love, and play. "ESSENE is one of the best religious films ever made. . . . Wiseman's *cinéma-vérité* look at life inside a monastery also studies the essential meanings inherent in any institutional framework. . . . Wiseman conveys humility without resorting to humble expressions, an awareness of profound piety without mock spirituality. . . . *ESSENE* raises the question of God urgently and eloquently" (Malcolm Boyd, *The New York Times*).

Thursday, March 28 8:45 p.m.



BASIC TRAINING



WELFARE



NEAR DEATH

Hot Docs, Toronto's annual documentary festival, will present several additional screenings of Frederick Wiseman's films between May 3-6, as part of its 9th annual edition, running April 26 - May 5. The programmes, co-presented by Cinematheque Ontario, will include Wiseman's most recent film DOMESTIC VIOLENCE and earlier classics, TITICUT FOLLIES and MODEL. Wiseman will also lead a Master Class and deliver a talk as part of *The Innovators* series. For more information, visit Hot Docs website at <www.hotdocs.ca> or call (416) 203-2155.

WELFARE

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1975 167 minutes

"WELFARE is an inside look at one of the key institutions around which society functions . . . and like his other films it is profoundly disturbing, especially for those with preconceptions. . . . As Wiseman's film shows, a welfare centre is a battleground with the poor fighting desperately against a complex web of Catch 22 regulations that can defeat even the strongest and cleverest . . . an amazing film" (Ken Wlaschin, London Film Festival). The complexity of the welfare system is examined by sequences illustrating the staggering diversity of problems that constitute welfare: housing, unemployment, divorce, medical and psychiatric problems, abandoned and abused children, and the elderly. These issues are presented in a context where welfare workers as well as the clients are struggling to cope with and interpret the laws and regulations that govern their work and life. "I wish all the public, as well as all legislators and politicians, could see this film. It could have been made in any urban area in the United States" (James R. Dumpson, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Social Welfare).

Please note: Special prices in effect due to the length of this presentation: \$7 (including GST) for seniors and members; \$10 for non-members.

Tuesday, April 2 7:00 p.m. (note start time)

ZOO

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1993 130 minutes

"ZOO is a brooding, poignant, poetic consideration of nothing less than the human condition. . . . The awe and wonder and the gratitude we all feel is up there on the screen, but it is humbling, because as Rabbi Wiseman shows us, we are not adequate to be keepers, no matter how hard we may try or how fervently we may pray for help and guidance" (David R. Slavitt, *Chronicles*). ZOO is a film about the zoo in Miami, where the collection includes 780 animals representing hundreds of species. The film shows the care and maintenance of the animals by the keepers, the work of the veterinarians and their staff, and the visits to the zoo by people from all over the world. The film presents the wide diversity of interests and activities at the zoo and the inter-relatedness of the animal, human, ethical, financial, technical, organizational, and research aspects of operating the zoo.

Wednesday, April 3 8:30 p.m. (note early start time)

BLIND

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1986 132 minutes

"BLIND brings us almost tactilely close to the students and teachers. . . . The big surprise is how wonderful the institution managers — in this case teachers and administrators — turn out to be. BLIND illustrates their care and dedication" (Terry Atkinson, *Los Angeles Times*). BLIND depicts the daily life of students from kindergarten through the twelfth grade at the Alabama School for the Blind. The School is organized around the effort to educate blind and visually impaired students to be in charge of their own lives. "There is a sense of discovery on the part of the viewer. Not pity, but revelation as to how the blind learn to overcome the obstacles facing them" (Arthur Unger, *The Christian Science Monitor*).

Tuesday, April 9 7:00 p.m. (note start time)

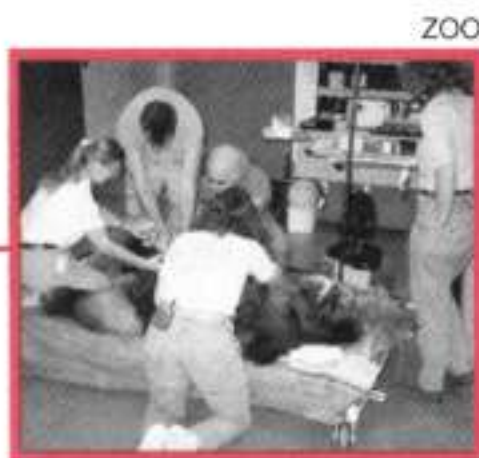
CANAL ZONE

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1977 174 minutes

"In the sunny landscape of a distant Army enclave in Panama, Wiseman finds a nightmare vision of America itself" (*Time Magazine*). CANAL ZONE is about the people who live and work in the Panama Canal Zone and shows both the operation of the Canal and the various governmental agencies — business, military, and civilian — related to the functioning of the Canal and the lives of the Americans in the zone. The film includes sequences of ships in transit, the work of special canal pilots, aspects of the civil government, work of the military, and the social, religious, and recreational life of the Zonians. "Canal Zone connects with his earlier works in disturbing ways: of all his films it is the saddest and, when you think about it, the most shocking" (David Denby, *The Boston Phoenix*).

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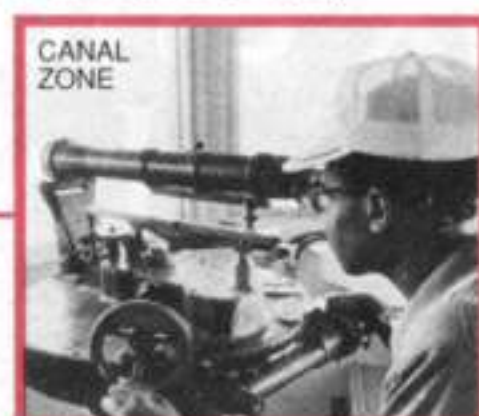
Tuesday, April 16 7:00 p.m. (note start time)



ZOO



BLIND



CANAL ZONE

NEAR DEATH

Director: Frederick Wiseman
USA 1989 358 minutes

"These are the unforgettably sobering sights and sounds of NEAR DEATH, Frederick Wiseman's great, fearless and monumental six-hour documentary chronicling the workings of the medical intensive care unit at Boston's Beth Israel Hospital" (Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*). The film presents the complex inter-relationships among patients, families, doctors, nurses, hospital staff, and religious, advisors as they confront the personal, ethical, medical, psychological, religious and legal issues involved in making decisions about whether or not to give life-sustaining treatment to dying patients. "They are the sorts of images that become grimly commonplace during the course of a film that is less a viewing experience than a total immersion. It isn't the running time that makes NEAR DEATH so overwhelming; it's the subject itself. But at this length, the film has time to carry its audience from an initially raw emotional response to a calmer consideration of the difficult issues raised here, and finally on to some sort of resolution" (Maslin).

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Sunday, April 21 1:00 p.m.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Director: Frederick Wiseman
USA 1997 195 minutes

PUBLIC HOUSING is a film about daily life at the Ida B. Wells public housing development in Chicago. "Issues that are all too familiar — drugs, crime, teenage pregnancy, the frustrations caused by government red tape — take on new immediacy thanks to the extraordinary intimacy of Mr. Wiseman's working methods. Through one revealing, well-

chosen episode after another, he succeeds in turning sad generalities into powerfully affecting specifics. As ever in the work of this towering documentary filmmaker . . . what starts out as a distant generality becomes flesh and blood. . . . Although Ida B. Wells has a large population, PUBLIC HOUSING is so selective in its scenes that it takes on a small-town flavor by the time it is over. Occasional brief glimpses of people congregating . . . help to capture the texture of everyday life. Mr. Wiseman's work has the depth and breadth to make that texture unforgettably real" (Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*).

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Tuesday, April 23 7:00 p.m.
(note start time)

JUVENILE COURT

Director: Frederick Wiseman
USA 1973 143 minutes

"Literally and figuratively, Wiseman opens the doors of perception in the daily routine of a juvenile court" (*The Boston Globe*). The film chronicles the complex variety of the cases before the Memphis Juvenile Court: foster home placement, drug abuse, armed robbery, child abuse, and sexual offenses. The sequences illustrate such issues as community protection vs. the desire for rehabilitation, the range and the limits of the choices available to the court, the psychology of the offender, and the constitutional and procedural questions involved in administering a juvenile court. "The film's chief impact stems from its graphic, often grim glances at the unforgettable subjects who are brought before the court. . . . Juvenile Court does not attack the institution it explores, nor does it suggest new or different solutions to age-old human problems" (David Sterritt, *The Christian Science Monitor*).

Tuesday, April 30 6:30 p.m.

FREDERICK WISEMAN IN PERSON!

BELFAST, MAINE

Director: Frederick Wiseman • USA 1999 245 minutes

"Of all of Wiseman's movies, none is more probing or intelligent than BELFAST, MAINE, a four-hour-plus film that ranks with his greatest work" (David Sterritt, *The Christian Science Monitor*). A film about ordinary experience in a beautiful old New England port city. It is a portrait of daily life — a microcosm of American society at the end of the twentieth century — with particular emphasis on the work and cultural life of the community. Wiseman observes the work of lobstermen, tug-boat operators, shopkeepers, city counselors, judges, doctors, teachers, and social workers and captures the town's spirit in the tradition of Thorton Wilder's *Our Town*. "BELFAST, MAINE . . . conveys a deeply emotional sense of place, season and time of day. In contrasting the breathtaking landscape with the troubled lives of many of those living there, it reminds us that the fleeting beauties of the natural world — the simple pleasures available to all — are among life's deepest consolation" (Stephen Holden, *The New York Times*).

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Thursday, May 2 6:30 p.m.

