

## Document Citation

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# The Films of Frederick Wiseman

November 7-9, 1972



## Titicut Follies (1967)

Wiseman's first film was shot at the State Prison for the Criminally Insane at Bridgewater, Mass. Although it begins at an apparently flat, uninvolved study of an insane asylum, *TITICUT FOLLIES* ultimately becomes a true horrifying film. Wiseman slowly descends into the Dante's Inferno of the asylum, and into the hellish existence of the prisoners. The State of Massachusetts attempted (unsuccessfully) to block the release of *TITICUT FOLLIES*, although it was initially filmed with the authorities' consent and assistance. First prizes, Mannheim Film Festival and Festival dei Popoli, Florence. Shown at the 1967 New York Film Festival.

## The Films of Frederick Wiseman

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Wiseman came to cinema fairly late in life (in 1967), from the law. In six years, he has made as many films. All are *cinema-verite* documentaries, in black-and-white, without music, narration, or explanation. Wiseman inevitably shoots in 16mm, with direct sound. The apparent simplicity of the films is a function of what Pauline Kael called "probably the most sophisticated intelligence to enter the documentary field in recent years." The films all deal with institutions; respectively, an insane asylum, a high school, a hospital, a police force, an army training camp, and a Benedictine monastery. These are all institutions which *contain* people; limit them; cut them off from society. Most deal with society's "undesirables" (including, yes, the students in *HIGH SCHOOL*). Wiseman's method — shooting hours of film, which he edits down to a final 90-minutes — is an analytical one. More than many directors, he is able to articulate his choices and decisions. Wiseman has achieved what Jean-Luc Godard has so often spoken of: he makes "film essays." We are proud to have him as a guest of the Eighth Chicago International Film Festival and to present him our Gold Hugo for his contributions to film. Mr. Wiseman will be present at each screening to discuss his films with the audience.

Tuesday, November 7th: *TITICUT FOLLIES* at 3:00 in the afternoon  
*HIGH SCHOOL* at 4:00 in the afternoon

Wednesday, November 8th: *LAW AND ORDER* at 3:00 in the afternoon  
*HOSPITAL* at 4:00 in the afternoon

Thursday, November 9th: *BASIC TRAINING* at 8:45 in the evening  
*ESSENE* at 9:45 in the evening

(Prints courtesy of Zipporah Films, Boston; except for *TITICUT FOLLIES*, which is courtesy of Grove Press, New York)



## Hospital (1970)

A documentary look at a metropolitan hospital in New York City, a gripping study of one day's activities from major surgery to the hospital chapel, patients and staff at the mercy of an institution incapable of fulfilling all the demands made on it. Wiseman feels that in this film you can see all of the larger society's problems "through a medical prism."





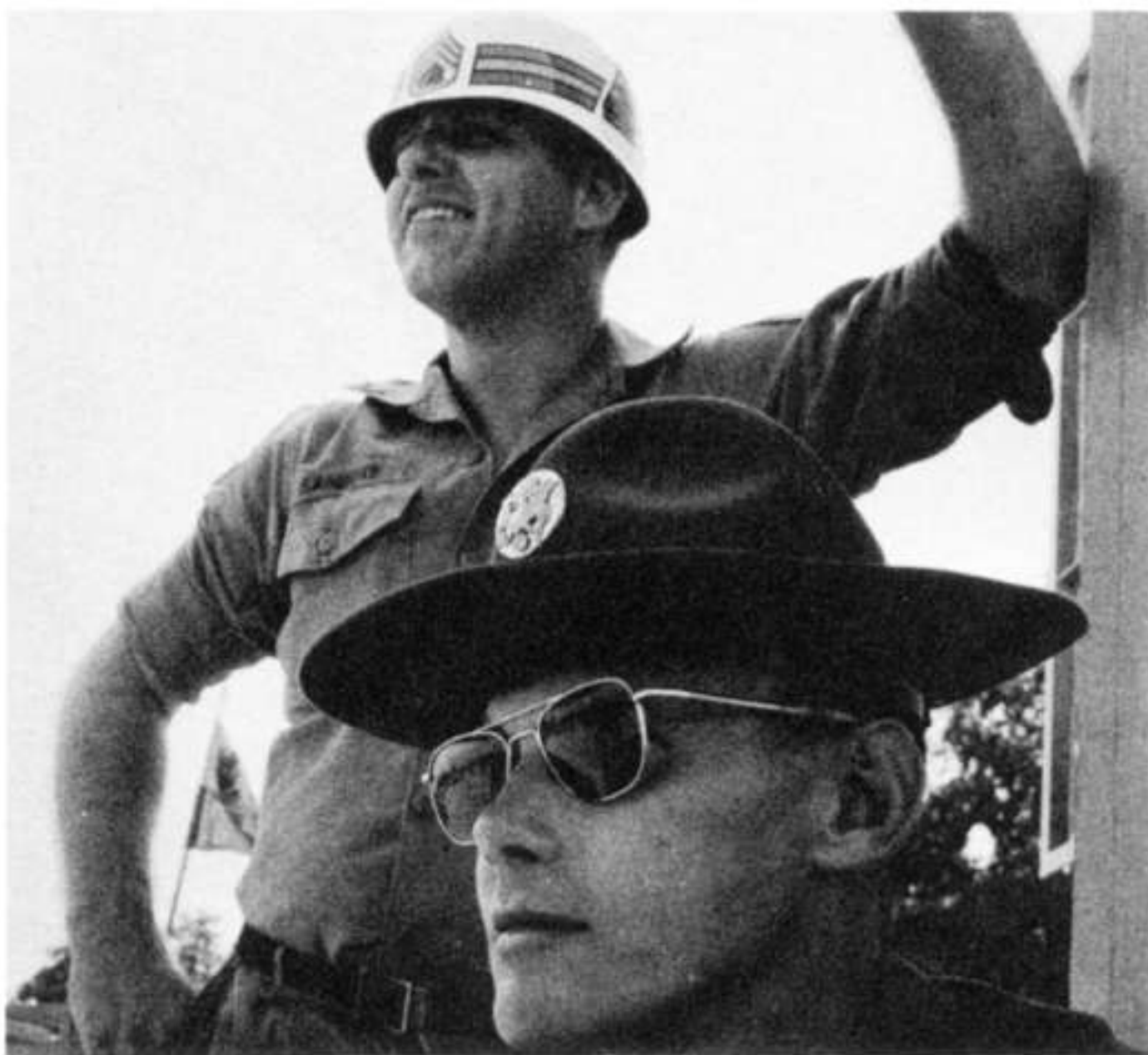
### High School (1968)

Considered by some critics as Wiseman's finest film, this documentary look at Northeast High School in Philadelphia is a quite extraordinary close-up examination of one of the central American institutions. The boredom, the teachers, the petty tyrannies, the ultimate ineffectiveness of the institution are just as valid as ever for adults and their memories of school.



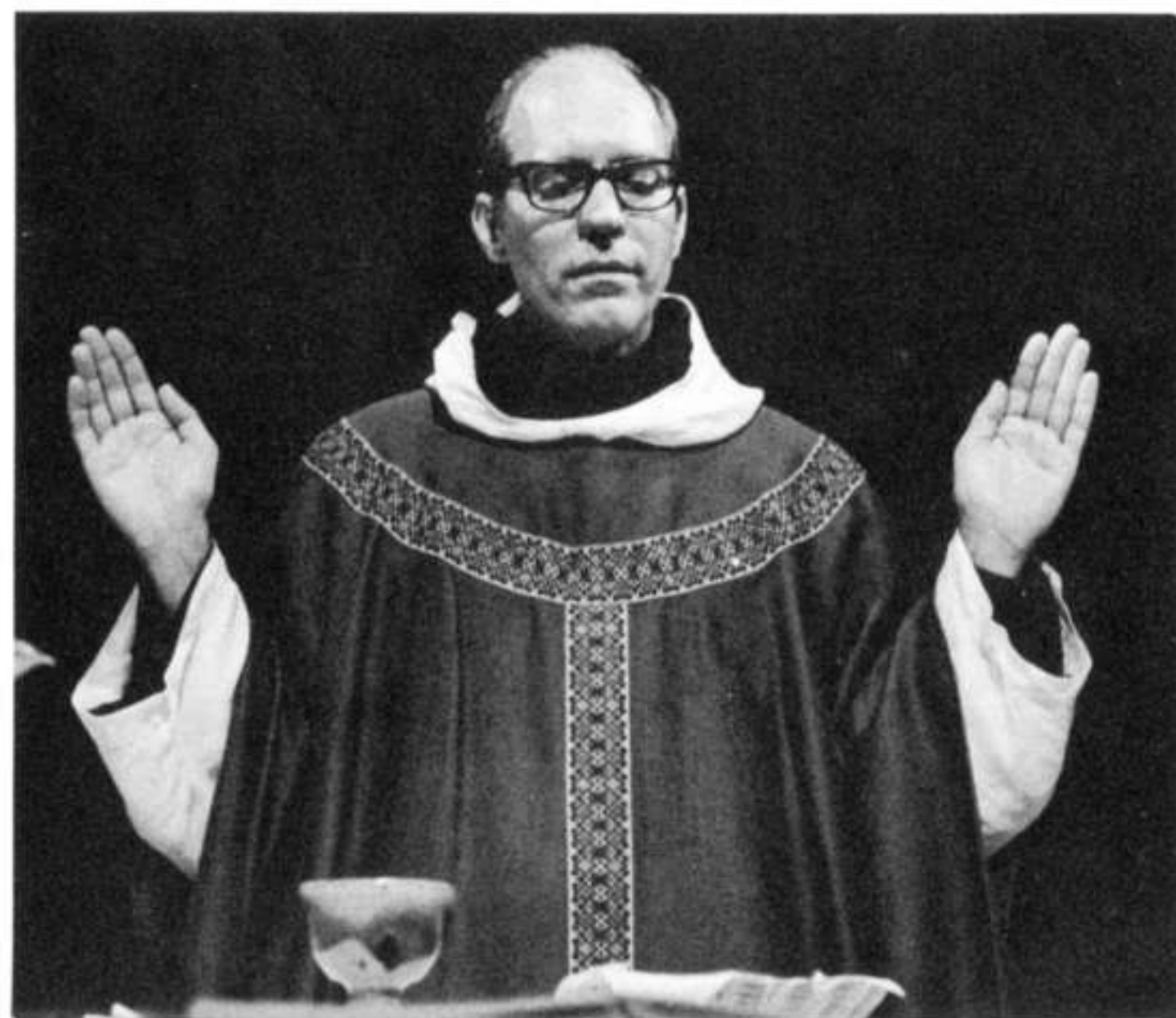
### Law and Order (1969)

A study of the Kansas City, Missouri, police department in action, shot over a six-week period, and showing police involved with prostitutes, vomiting drunks, outraged landladies, abandoned children and gun-toting kids. Wiseman says he watched the cops doing rotten things and good things "but what struck me wasn't so much 'police brutality' as the brutalities people in the street were committing against one another."



### Basic Training (1971)

Wiseman's camera follows a group of U.S. Army trainees at Fort Knox, Kentucky, as they are changed from a bunch of ordinary young men into accomplished craftsmen in the arts of killing and war. He says the film "breaks down the cliché that there's something peculiar about men who choose to be soldiers" as it reverses the notion that the Army forces alien values on young men by teaching how to kill.



### Essene (1972)

Wiseman's latest film, which has just been finished, is a study of an institution which might at first sight seem less relevant to America today than his other documentaries. But Wiseman is himself discovering as he films rather than trying to find film to fit pre-conceived notions. This film concerns a monastery and shows monks and novitiates in their daily routine, praying, singing, contemplating.