



## Derrida (2003)

Reviewed by [Jamie Russell](#)

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**Jacques Derrida is not the most obvious choice of subject for a biographical documentary.** An acclaimed philosopher, Derrida is an austere figure, unused to the frivolity of either celebrity or the camera lens.

Born in Algeria in the 30s, Derrida's academic career in France and America has had a provocative effect on literature, philosophy, ethics. It's even challenged all conventional modes of Western metaphysics.

**Only a brave filmmaker would chance an interview. And only a foolish one would attempt a biography.**

Filmmakers Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman follow their subject through lectures, seminars, and at home with his family. **They capture a side of Derrida that few would have ever expected to see..**

"Have you read all the books in here?" Kofman asks Derrida as they wander through his library. "No," he replies impishly, "only four of them. But I read those very, very carefully".

It's a frivolous moment in what is otherwise **an obtuse, yet deeply fascinating, documentary.**

Regularly provoking their subject (though not as badly as the television interviewer who asks him to compare deconstruction with Seinfeld), the filmmakers quiz Derrida about his personal life.

**Immensely sceptical of the biography format, Derrida proceeds to run circles around them,** claiming that the only thing there is to say about any philosopher is "he was born - he thought - he died".

To their credit, the directors recognize the irony in trying to capture the essential Derrida.

They produce **an enthralling, playful film that constantly frustrates our desire to know the "truth" about this man,** while deconstructing the very format of the biography in a manner that Derrida would doubtless give his blessing to.

### End Credits

**Director:** [Kirby Dick](#), [Amy Ziering Kofman](#)

**Stars:** [Jacques Derrida](#)

**Genre:** [Documentary](#)

**Length:** 84 minutes

**Cinema:** 31 January 2003

**Country:** USA