

## **FREN 250/CINE 250—French Cinematic Experiences**

**MWF 3:30-4:20pm, Screening: M 7-10pm; King 343**

**Prof. Grace An**

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Having recently celebrated the first centennial of cinema, we have come to understand the act of experiencing of the world through the filmic camera and image as a modern source of pleasure and thought. The filmmakers featured in this course each developed cinema as an art form in order to provide audiences with a variety of visual or audio-visual experiences, inspire reflection on the specific nature of the cinematic medium, and negotiate the ways in which cinema mediates our relationship to life. Over time, their films have been subjected to reflections on the aesthetic, psychological, historical, and ideological effects of these filmmaking and viewing practices. Nevertheless, what has been French about French Cinema over the past 100+ years? Which experiences does French Cinema specifically have to offer?

These questions will serve as our guiding points of interrogation as we undertake a historical survey of French cinema, starting with Méliès and the Lumière Brothers, and working through Surrealism and Impressionism, 1930s Poetic Realism, the Occupation, the New Wave, the 1990s, and the beginning of the digital age. Historical contextualization will be balanced with close film analysis of narrative, documentary, and experimental forms. We will also discuss the history of French film culture, the French film industry, and cinema's relationship to the other arts (literature, photography, theatre, and painting). As we try to discern what may be specifically French about French cinema, we will also reflect on the stakes involved in understanding French film as a national cinema.

Taught in English. Enrollment limit: 30 students. CINE 101 is recommended but not required. Students interested in working in French should consult Prof. An at the beginning of the semester.

### List of films (all subtitled in English):

Georges Méliès, selected films

Lumière Brothers, selected films

Fernand Léger, *Ballet Mécanique*

Man Ray, *L'Étoile de Mer (Starfish)*

Germaine Dulac, *La Coquille et le Clergyman (The Seashell and the Clergyman)*

René Clair, *L'Entr'acte (The Intermission)*

Jean Renoir, *La grande illusion (Grand Illusion)* and *Une partie de campagne (A Day in the Country)*

Marcel Carné, *Le Jour se lève (Daybreak)*

Robert Bresson, *Pickpocket*

Henri-Georges Clouzot, *Le Corbeau (The Raven)*

Bertrand Tavernier, *Holy Lola*

François Truffaut, *Les 400 coups (The 400 Blows)* and *Jules et Jim*

Jean-Luc Godard, *À Bout de souffle (Breathless)* and *Le Mépris (Contempt)*

Jean Rouch, *Chronique d'un été (Chronicle of a Summer)*

Alain Resnais, *Nuit et brouillard (Night and Fog)* and *L'Année dernière à Marienbad (Last Year at Marienbad)*

Mathieu Kassowitz, *La Haine (Hate)*

Jean-Marc Jeunet, *Un Long dimanche de fiançailles (A Very Long Engagement)*

Catherine Breillat, *Romance*

Michael Haneke, *Caché*

### Readings (available at the Oberlin Bookstore):

Remi Lanzoni, *French Cinema: From Its Beginnings to the Present* (Continuum, 2002).

Susan Hayward and G. Vincendeau, eds. *French Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (Routledge, 2000).

Articles on e-reserve, as indicated by "e-res" on the syllabus.

Grade Distribution:

Two 5 page papers: 40%  
 One 10-minute presentation: 10%  
 In-class writing assignments: 15%  
 Final take-home exam: 20%  
 Class participation (discussion, Blackboard): 15%

Assignments:

- 1) in-class writing assignments, on **Fri 9/15** and **Wed 9/26**
- 2) 1<sup>st</sup> 5-page paper, due **Mon, 10/9, in class**
- 3) 2<sup>nd</sup> 5-page paper, due **Mon, 11/20, in class**
- 4) one 10-minute presentation, on either a film clip (available on Blackboard) or on a secondary reading
- 5) final take-home exam, due **Fri, 12/15**, at Prof. An's mailbox (Cinema Studies Office, Rice 130) **by 5pm**

Viewing:

Films will primarily be shown during the Monday evening sessions (NOTE: Be prepared to attend the full three hours) and sometimes in class. You will also be asked to see a couple of films during the weekend, but that is for your optional self-edification. Films will be available for viewing and re-viewing in Mudd Library. They are listed in the course reserve for FREN/CINE 250. It is highly recommended that you see each film *at least* twice.

Special Guest Lecture

Guest lecture by Lynn Higgins, Professor of French, Dartmouth College  
 Title: "From Fiction Film to Documentary and Back."  
 Thursday, 11/2, 4:30pm. ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED.

Blackboard Participation:

Every 2 weeks, you will be asked to engage with each other on a question or film clips that I will put on Blackboard. The question or clip will be available on Friday, and each student will respond to that question (as well as to contributions made by your classmates) by Monday at 9am. This use of Blackboard is in place to provide students with another forum of participation and engagement, as well as to supplement the discussion in class. You will be graded at the end of the semester on your contributions to this on-line debate.

Attendance Policy:

You are required to attend all three MWF sessions each week AND the Monday night screening. If you are unable to make the Monday night screening, then you may not enroll in this course. Each absence after the third absence will result in an automatic reduction of your final grade, and more than seven absences will result in a failing grade for the course. Regular lateness will also result in the reduction of your final grade.

Students with Disabilities:

If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know in the first week the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities in Peters G-24.

Honor Code:

The success and interest of this course rely on the respectful and thoughtful participation of each and every member of the class. I hope that you will all find your own way to engage with the material that has been selected for your experience of French cinema, as well as with your peers. We are here to learn from one another. As such, *all work that you submit for this course must be your own*: papers, presentations, exams, etc. The claiming of someone else's work as your own will not be tolerated. *All written work handed in must include your written pledge to have followed the Honor Code in the completion of the assignment.*

If you have any questions, ideas, or concerns, please don't hesitate to come talk to me during office hours.

I wish you an enjoyable semester.

## I. The Beginning of (French) Cinema: Georges Méliès and the Lumière Brothers

- W 9/6 Introduction and in-class screening: films by Georges Méliès and the Lumière Brothers.  
 F 9/8 Lanzoni, pp. 23-39.  
 Richard Abel, "The Cinema of Attractions," *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896-1914*. (e-res)

Recommended Reading (ALL suggested reading materials are on reserve for FREN/CINE 250):

Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896-1914*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1994.

## II. Silent Film and Surrealism — Visual Experimentation and Defining the Seventh Art

- M 9/11 Lanzoni, pp. 45-55.  
 Screening: Fernand Léger, *Ballet mécanique*, 1924.  
 Man Ray, *L'Étoile de mer (Starfish)*, 1928.  
 René Clair, *L'Entr'acte (The Intermission)*, 1924.  
 Germaine Dulac, *La Coquille et le Clergyman (The Seashell and the Clergyman)*, 1928.  
 W 9/13 Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, Chpt. 2 "Dulac in Context: French Film Production in the 1920s,"  
*To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema*. (e-res)  
 F 9/15 In-class writing assignment.

Recommended Reading:

Rudolf Kuenzli, ed. *Dada and Surrealist Film*. New York: 1988.

Paul Hammond, ed. *The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2000.

Marcel L'Herbier. *Intelligence du cinématographe*. Paris, 1946.

## III. The Advent of Sound and the Transition to Narrative Cinema — the 1930s & Poetic Realism

- M 9/17 Lanzoni, pp. 55-75.  
 André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," *What Is Cinema?*. (e-res)  
 Dudley Andrew, "Poetic Realism," *Rediscovering French Film*. (e-res)  
 Screening: Jean Renoir, *La Grande Illusion (Grand Illusion)*, 1927.  
 Jean Renoir, *Une partie de campagne (A Day in the Country)*, 1936.  
 W 9/19 Dudley Andrew, "Chpt. 9: Jean Renoir: Adaptation, Institution, Auteur," *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*. (e-res)  
 F 9/21 Guest Lecture on WWI by Libby Murphy, Asst. Professor of French.

Recommended Reading:

Jean Renoir, *Renoir on Renoir: Interviews, Essays, and Remarks*. Trans. Carol Volk. Cambridge and NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Dudley Andrew, *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

*Rediscovering French Film*. Ed. Mary Lea Bandy. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1983.

## IV. Between the Popular Front and the Occupation: Marcel Carné

- M 9/24 Lanzoni, pp. 75-102.  
 Screening: Marcel Carné, *Le Jour se lève (Daybreak)*, 1939.  
 W 9/26 Maureen Turim, "Poetic realism as psychoanalytical and ideological operation: Marcel Carné's  
*Le jour se lève*," *French Film: Texts and Contexts*.  
 F 9/28

Recommended Reading:

Dudley Andrew and Steven Ungar, *Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture*. Harvard UP, 2005.

## V. French Film During the Occupation

- M 10/2      Lanzoni, Chpt. 3.  
Lecture on French Cinema during the Occupation.
- Screening: Henri-Georges Clouzot, *Le Corbeau (The Raven)*, 1943, with special introduction by Loïc Thommeret, Lecturer in French and Director of the *Maison Francophone*.
- W 10/4      Naomi Greene, "Battles for Memory: Vichy Revisited," *Landscapes of Loss: The National Past in Post-War French Cinema*. (e-res)
- F 10/6      Judith Mayne, "Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Le corbeau* and the Crimes of Women," *Sites: the Journal of 20<sup>th</sup> century/Contemporary French Studies*. (e-res)

### Recommended Reading:

Henry Rousso, Introduction and "The Dark Years and the Silver Screen," *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944*. (e-res)

André Bazin, *French Cinema of the Occupation and Resistance: the Birth of a Critical Aesthetic*. New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1981.

**\*\*1<sup>st</sup> 5-page paper due on Monday, 10/9 in class**

## VI. Robert Bresson: A Paradigm for French Filmmaking

- M 10/9      Lanzoni, pp. 183-194.
- Screening: Robert Bresson, *Pickpocket*, 1959.
- W 10/11
- F 10/13      Susan Sontag, "Spiritual Style in the Films of Robert Bresson," *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York, NY: Picador, 2001. (e-res)

### Recommended Reading:

Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*

Keith Reader, *Robert Bresson*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

André Bazin, "Le Journal d'un curé de campagne and the Stylistics of Robert Bresson," *What Is Cinema?*

## FALL BREAK

## VII. Post-WWII French Film: The Birth of the Nouvelle Vague (New Wave)

- M 10/23      Lanzoni, pp. 143-167.  
Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of an Avant-Garde Cinema: the Caméra-Stylo." (e-res)  
François Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," in Bill Nichols, ed.  
*Movies and Methods*. (e-res)  
Recommended weekend viewing: François Truffaut, *Les 400 coups (The 400 Blows)*, 1959.
- Screening: François Truffaut, *Jules et Jim*, 1962.
- W 10/25      Anne Gillain, "The Script of Delinquency: François Truffaut's *Les 400 coups* (1959)," *French Film: Texts and Contexts*.
- F 10/27      André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," *What is Cinema?*. (e-res)

### Recommended Reading:

Michel Marie, *The French New Wave: An Artistic School*. MA: Blackwell, 2003.

Richard Neupert, *A History of the French New Wave Cinema*. Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

Antoine de Bacque and Serge Toubiana, *François Truffaut*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000.

Richard Roud, *A Passion for Films: Henri Langlois and the Cinémathèque Française*. NY: Viking, 1983.

## VIII. Jean-Luc Godard, French Cinephilia, and Film Culture

- M 10/30 Lecture on Godard, Cinephilia, and French Film Culture.  
Lanzoni, Chpt. 5.
- Screening Jean-Luc Godard, *À Bout de souffle (Breathless)*, 1959.  
Bertrand Tavernier, *Holy Lola*, 2004.
- W 11/1 Michel Marie, “‘It really makes you sick!’: Jean-Luc Godard’s *A bout de souffle*,”  
*French Film: Texts and Contexts*.
- F 11/3

**\*\*Special Event: guest lecture by Lynn Higgins, Professor of French at Dartmouth College:  
“From Fiction Film to Documentary and Back,” Thursday, 11/2, 4:30pm. ATTENDANCE IS  
REQUIRED.**

### Recommended Reading:

- Jean-Luc Godard and Tom Narboni, *Godard on Godard*.  
David Sterritt, ed. *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998.  
*Cahiers du Cinéma, 1960-68: New Wave, New Cinema, Reevaluating Hollywood*. Ed. Jim Hillier.  
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.  
*Cahiers du Cinéma, the 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*. Ed. Jim Hillier. Cambridge, MA:  
Harvard University Press, 1986.  
Antoine de Baecque. *La cinéphilie: invention d’un regard, histoire d’une culture 1944-1968*. Paris:  
Fayard, 2003.

## IX. Cinéma-Vérité and Post-WII Documentary in France

- M 11/5 Reflections on Lynn Higgins’s talk, and Lecture on filmmakers Jean Rouch, Chris Marker,  
and Alain Resnais  
Sam Di Iorio, “Border Crossing,” *Film Comment*, May-June 2005. (e-res)
- Screening: Jean Rouch, *Chronique d’un été (Chronicle of a Summer)*, 1961.  
Chris Marker, *La Jetée*, 1962.
- W 11/9 Jean Rouch, “The Camera and Man,” *Ciné-ethnography: the essays of Jean Rouch*. (e-res)
- F 11/11

### Recommended Reading:

- Steven Feld, ed and trans. *Cine-ethnography: the essays of Jean Rouch*. Minneapolis: University of  
Minnesota Press, 2003.  
Nick Eaton. *Anthropology, Reality, Cinema: the Films of Jean Rouch*.

## X. Fiction, Documentary, and the Nouveau Roman (New Novel)

- M 11/13 In-class screening of Alain Resnais, *Nuit et brouillard (Night and Fog)*, 1955.  
Sigmund Freud, “Screen Memories.” (e-res)
- Screening: Alain Resnais, *L’Année dernière à Marienbad (Last Year at Marienbad)*, 1961.
- W 11/15 Lynn Higgins, “Figuring Out: *L’Année dernière à Marienbad*,” *New Novel, New Wave, New  
Politics: Fiction and the Representation of History in Postwar France*. (e-res)
- F 11/17

### Recommended Reading:

- Jean-Louis Leutrat, *L’année dernière à Marienbad (Last Year at Marienbad)*. BFI, 2001.

**\*\*2<sup>nd</sup> 5-page paper due, Mon 11/20 in class**

## **XI. The Cinéma du Look, or the Beginning of Banlieu Cinema**

- M 11/20 Discussion of Cinéma du Look.  
 Ginette Vincendeau, "Designs on the *Banlieue*: Mathieu Kassowitz's *La Haine*,"  
*French Film: Texts and Contexts*.  
 Screening: Mathieu Kassowitz, *La Haine (Hate)*, 1995, followed by discussion.  
 W 11/22

## **THANKSGIVING**

## **XII. Popular French Cinema: the Success Story of Jean-Marc Jeunet**

- M 11/27 Lecture on Jeunet and discussion of clips from Caro and Jeunet, *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain/Amélie*.  
 Lanzoni, Chpt. 8.  
 Screening: Jeunet, *Un Long dimanche de fiançailles/A Very Long Engagement*, 2004.  
 W 11/29  
 F 12/1

## **XIII. Sex and Cinema for Catherine Breillat**

- Screening: Catherine Breillat, *Romance* and *Une vraie jeune fille*

## **XIV. "French Cinema" Now**

- Screening: Michael Haneke, *Caché*, 2005

**\*\*Final take-home exam due Fri 12/15 in Prof. An's mailbox in the Cinema Studies Program Office (Rice 130) by 5pm.**