

WL 4365 Introduction to French Cinema

Professor: Dr. Rachel E. Ney

Office: 419 Clements Hall

Office Hours:

Meeting Times: 9:30AM-1:30PM



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I. Course Content and Objectives :

This course is an introduction to 20th century French film classics. The objective of this course is two-fold: to introduce students to key French historical moments spanning the 20th century and to the way seminal French movies aesthetically rendered their respective and original understanding of French historical events. In this course, students learn how to recognize and analyze the way the historical is approached and treated in French cinema through the acquisition of the tools germane to the analysis of cinema.

II. Student Learning Outcomes for *Language and Literature* :

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of how a symbolic system communicates meaningfully within its language community.
- 2a. Students will analyze or create text such as literature, films, or musical compositions.

Student Learning Outcomes for *Historical Contexts (Depth)*:

Students will be able to analyze both secondary and primary historical evidence.

III. Course Materials

Mandatory films:

Zero for conduct (1933) by Jean Vigo

The Grand Illusion (1937) by Jean Renoir

The Crime of Monsieur Lange (1936) by Jean Renoir

Daybreak (1938) by Marcel Carné

A Man Escaped (1956) by Robert Bresson
Mr. Hulot's Holiday (1958) by Jacques Tati
The Little Soldier (1960) by Jean-Luc Godard
Tout va bien (1972) by Jean-Luc Godard
Vagabond (1985) by Agnès Varda
La Haine (1995) by Matthieu Kassowitz

Proposed films for the Presentation and Final Research Paper

Napoléon (1927) by Abel Gance
Joan of Arc (1928) by Carl Dryer
À Propos de Nice (1930) by Jean Vigo
Port of Shadows (1938) by Marcel Carné
The Devil's Envoys (1942) by Marcel Carné
The Rules of the Game (1938) by Jean Renoir
The Battle of the Rails (1946) by René Clément
The Silence of the Sea (1949) by Jean Pierre Melville
Orpheus (1950) by Jean Cocteau
Hiroshima mon amour (1959) d'Alain Resnais
Léon Morin Prêtre (1961) by Jean Pierre Melville
Muriel, or the Time of a Return (1963) d'Alain Resnais
La Chinoise (1967) by Jean-Luc Godard
Inch'Allah Dimanche (2001) by Yamina Benguigui

Main readings from history survey manual, book chapters, and scholarly articles:

Andrew, Dudley. "The Literary and Artistic Sources of Poetic Realism." In *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Baxter, Peter. "An Iconography of Exclusion: Film in France, 1995." *Revue Canadienne d'Études cinématographiques / Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21:1 (Spring-Printemps 2012): 122-133.

Blum-Reid, Sylvie. "Vagabondages." In *Traveling in French Cinema*. New York: Palgrave, 2016.

Cardullo, Bert. "An Interview with Jacques Tati by André Bazin with the Participation of François Truffaut." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 19:4 (2002): 285-298

Fofi, Goffredo. "The Cinema of the Popular in France (1934-1938)". *Screen* 13:4 (Winter 1972-1973): 5-57.

Hill, Leslie. "Filming Ghosts: French Cinema and the Algerian War" *Modern Fiction Studies* 38:3 (Fall 1992): 787-804.

Jackson, Julian. "Politics: *La Grande Illusion* between the Popular Front and Vichy." In *La Grande Illusion*. London: Palgrave Macmillan (2009).

Kedward, Rod. *France and the French: A Modern History*. Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 2006.

Royer, Michelle. "Shaping and Reshaping WWII: French Cinema and the National Past." *Literature and Aesthetics* 16:2 (Dec. 2006): 227-239.

Smith, Alison. "May in the Cinema." In *French Cinema in the 1970s: The Echoes of May*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.

Sorlin, Pierre. "How to Look at an Historical Film." In *The Film in History: Restaging the Past*. Totowa and New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books, 1980.

Strebel, Elizabeth G. "French Social Cinema and the Popular Front," *Journal of Contemporary History* 12: 3 (Jul. 1977): 499-519.

Tarr, Carrie. "*Beur* and *banlieue* cinema in 1995." In *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France*. New York: Manchester University Press, 2005.

IV. Course Assessment/Grading System

Participation/Preparation/Class Etiquette (13)	10%
Screening Reports (5)	15%
Movie Reviews (2)	15%
Film Quizzes (12)	10%
In-class exams (2)	20%
Presentation (1)	15%
Final Research Paper (1)	15%

V. Description of Course Components

a) Participation, Preparation & Class Etiquette

See section *Attendance* of this course syllabus.

b) Screening Reports

For each movie, students prepare a screening report and answer 2 to 4 short questions. 1 or 2 questions address a specific film sequence while the other 2 questions are related to the movie as a whole. The screening report is a short writing piece there to help students prepare for class discussions. This is a “first stage” report there to guide through the first viewing of the movie. These screening reports are descriptive and briefly identify essential cinematic techniques and themes related to the historical/cinematic study of movies. The purpose of screening reports is to train students’ eye to read the moving image. These screening reports also will serve as review sheets for exams. These screening reports will be considered as homework (to be printed and brought to class as preparatory notes to class discussions). Students will turn in at least of their screening reports. Students will choose which ones to turn in before coming to class. Moreover, if students wish to turn in more than 5 screening reports, I will count only the five highest grades.

c) Movie Reviews

Students will write 2 movie reviews on 2 movies studied in class. Each movie review will be 2 to 3 pages long. For this assignment, students analyze 2 films by writing critically about them. Projecting themselves into the role of film critics writing for SMU campus newspaper, students’ movie reviews aim at presenting a movie unlikely seen by the audience on campus. In doing so, students will provide an overview (a summary) of the movie’s plot and make an evaluation of it. With their readership in mind, students will choose the tone, style, vocabulary, and length to use for their reviews. The movie review has 2 parts. In the 1st section of the review, the student reviewer cites the title, director, genre, and main actors playing in the movie. Students then present the plot synopsis to readers without disclosing fully some key elements of the plot itself (such as the ending). Then,

students develop one or two aspects of the movie that have had a significant impact on them. In the 2nd part of the review, students make the case (or not) as to why the movie is worth seeing (or not). In this section, students' evaluation or recommendation will need to be made in a logical manner and be substantiated by convincing arguments and facts. Students choose and develop their recommendation around one subject/aspect addressed in the movie (its political or historical content, ideology, the use of cinematic techniques, the director's style, the plot, acting, a theme, or an idea). There will be no rewrite for these film reviews.

d) In-Class Exams

There will be two in-class exams. For each exam, students will be given 3 tasks: first, to define 2 film techniques reviewed in class, second, to give a comprehensive summary of a specific French historical period (main protagonists, events, and issues raised at that time) and finally, to respond analytically on how a movie from that specific historical period reflects and treats these historical events.

e) Presentation

Students prepare either a video document or PowerPoint (with voice over) on the *mise-en-scène* of a movie not seen in class. The Presentation will be 5 minutes long. Page 2 of the present syllabus contains the list of proposed movies to choose from. The presentation will establish students' ability to analyze the realism of a film through their demonstrated understanding of how a film stages or renders the real (lighting, costumes, sets, or acting ...). The study of the theatrical features of a movie further develops students' understanding of how cinema engages with history and how the *mise-en-scène* partakes in the making of meaning in cinema.

f) Final Research Paper

Students will write a 6-7 page final research paper on a movie chosen from the provided list for their presentation. However, students will pick a movie other the one on which they will have done their presentation. For this research paper, students need to demonstrate and formalize their critical expression by analyzing a movie set in a specific historical/filmic period. In their research paper, students are expected to use the previous knowledge they have as the base to build their thesis upon (course content, lectures, or screening reports for instance). In addition, students will draw on external scholarly sources (at least one historical book and two cinema articles or books) to develop and support their thesis. Students may select their own subject in consultation with the professor or else select their subject from a list of topics given to them.

VI. Attendance

Students should prepare and attend class regularly. No more than 4 absences are permitted and students may be dropped from the class if they exceed 4 absences. Missing 5 or more classes for any reason will result in an F as a final grade. Attendance, however, is not equivalent to participation. Participation is graded on the basis of meaningful, voluntary, and active participation in class discussions. Although attendance is not equivalent to participation, an absence is the equivalent of a zero in participation since you can't participate if you are not in class. 10% of the final grade is based upon class participation. Participation is graded on a rubric, available on Blackboard. Students will assess their own participation using the rubric, taking into account the amount of participation, the

quality of the participation, and the degree to which participation demonstrated preparation and mastery of the material. The professor will review each student's participation and enter a grade based upon both the professor's and the student's assessment of participation.

The participation grade may be penalized up to 100% for any of the following behaviors: sleeping in class, treating class members with disrespect, treating the professor with disrespect, engaging in behavior that is disruptive to the class, engaging in behavior that is intended to suggest boredom, indifference, annoyance with classmates, the professor or the class. Two participation grades will be dropped at the end of the semester. Please note, participation IS NOT equivalent to attendance.

VII. Disability Accommodations

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

VIII. Excused Absences

- a) **Religious Observance** Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. The last day to request an excused absence for the observance of a religious holiday is February 3rd, 2015. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)
- b) **Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities** Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity will be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)
- c) In case of a health emergency, students need to contact their professor right away. For absences due to serious or extended illness, a written notice from your doctor is required.

VII. Make-ups and Late Works

Films must be screened before coming to class on the day they are listed for discussion and quiz day. All homework and/or assignments must be completed before coming to class on the day they are listed on the course schedule for discussion. Since the purpose of homework/assignments is to help students process class discussions and class content better, no screening reports can be made up or turned in late.

VIII. Academic Integrity

Students at SMU are expected to maintain the highest of academic standards and should follow the SMU Honor Code both in class and when completing course assignments. Any suspected misconduct, cheating, or plagiarism will be reported and dealt with according to established university procedures. The Modern Language Association defines plagiarism as “using another person’s ideas, information, or expressions without acknowledging that person’s work” and “passing off another person’s ideas, information, or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage” (MLA Handbook, page 66).

IX. Honor Code

The Honor Code requires you to pledge that you have neither given nor received help on any assignment. That includes work done outside of class: Screening Reports, Film Reviews, Presentations, and Final Research Paper. **The use of computer technology, including but not limited to translation software to prepare assignments, is not permitted.** Students should be very wary of the use of computer software and even the use of spell check, which can in fact miss errors or lead to statements that are not coherent in a particular context. Use of the Internet is permitted for research, but all sources must be properly documented in order to avoid plagiarism. **A violation of the honor code will be treated as a very serious offense.**

WL 4365 Acknowledgment of Course Information May Term 2017

I, _____, have read the course information and agree to
(print name)

follow the course policies.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

X. COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	IN CLASS WORK	HOMEWORK & ASSIGNMENTS
05/18 <i>Zéro de conduite</i> (1933) Jean Vigo	INTRODUCTION *FILM QUIZ* The French Republic	*SCREENING REPORT DUE ON CANVAS* <u>Read:</u> Sorlin, "How to look at an 'historical film'" <u>Watch:</u> <i>Zéro de conduite</i> https://archive.org/details/zero_de_conduite <u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>New Forces: Socialism and Syndicalism</i> (30-43) <u>Read:</u> Strebel, "French Social Cinema and the Popular Front."
05/19 <i>The Grand Illusion</i> (1937) Jean Renoir	*FILM QUIZ* INTRODUCTION: THE MISE EN SCÈNE Preparing for war? (1939-1945)	*SCREENING REPORT DUE ON CANVAS* <u>Watch:</u> <i>The Grand Illusion</i> <u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>Confrontations, 1934-1936</i> (167-183) & <i>Not Another War? Shattered Illusions, 1930s-1940</i> (219-244) <u>Read:</u> Jackson, "Politics: <i>La Grande illusion</i> between the Popular Front and Vichy."
05/22 <i>The Crime of Mr. Lange</i> (1936) Jean Renoir	*FILM QUIZ* The Popular Front (1936)	*SCREENING REPORT DUE ON CANVAS* <u>Watch:</u> <i>The Crime of Mr. Lange</i> <u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>Manipulating Crisis, 1920s-1934</i> (151-166) <u>Read:</u> Fofi, "The Cinema of the Popular Front Cinema in France (1934-1938)."

05/23 <i>Daybreak</i> (1938) Marcel Carné	*FILM QUIZ* Disillusionment and World War II	*SCREENING REPORT DUE ON CANVAS* <u>Watch:</u> <i>Daybreak</i> <u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>Popular Front, 1936-1938</i> (184-218) <u>Read:</u> Dudley, "The Literary and Artistic Sources of Poetic Realism."
05/24 <i>A Man Escaped</i> (1956) Robert Bresson	In-class exam (1h30) *FILM QUIZ* The French Resistance	Review for exam *SCREENING REPORT DUE ON CANVAS* <u>Watch:</u> <i>A Man Escaped</i> via Kanopy Streaming @ http://smu.kanopystreaming.com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/video/man-escaped <u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>Occupied France (2). Resistance and Liberation, 1940-1944</i> (272-309) <u>Read:</u> Royer, "Shaping and Reshaping WWII: French Cinema and the National Past."
05/25 <i>Mr. Hulot's Holiday</i> (1958) Jacques Tati	*FILM QUIZ* Economic Booming Years (France in the 50s)	*1st MOVIE REVIEW DUE ON CANVAS* *SCREENING REPORT DUE ON CANVAS* <u>Watch:</u> <i>Mr. Hulot's Holiday</i> via Kanopy Streaming @ http://smu.kanopystreaming.com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/video/m-hulots-holiday <u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>The Chequered Imperative of Change, 1940s-1958</i> (349-376) <u>Read:</u> Cardullo, "An Interview

		with Jacques Tati by André Bazin with the Participation of François Truffaut.”
05/26 <i>The Little Soldier</i> (1960) Jean-Luc Godard	*FILM QUIZ* The Algerian War	*SCREENING REPORT DUE ON CANVAS* <u>Watch:</u> <i>The Little Soldier</i> <u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>Ending War...Not in Indo-China or Algeria, 1944-1962</i> (310-348) <u>Read:</u> Hill, “ <i>Filming Ghosts: French Cinema and the Algerian War</i> ”
05/30 <i>Tout va bien</i> (1972) Jean-Luc Godard	IN-CLASS EXAM (1h30) *FILM QUIZ* May 68	Review for exam *SCREENING REPORT DUE ON CANVAS* <u>Watch:</u> <i>Tout va bien</i> <u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>May-June '68</i> (416-427) & <i>Whose New society?, 1960s-1979</i> (435-475) <u>Read:</u> Smith, “May in the Cinema.”
05/31 <i>Vagabond</i> (1985) Agnès Varda	*FILM QUIZ* The Mitterrand Years	*SCREENING REPORT DUE ON CANVAS* <u>Watch:</u> <i>Vagabond</i> <u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>Ideological Rupture and Retreat, 1970s-1984</i> (476-508) & <i>Pressures for Consensus “Focus of Exclusion”</i> (520-524) <u>Read:</u> Blum-Reid, “Vagabondages.”
06/1st <i>La Haine</i> (1995) Matthieu Kassowitz	*FILM QUIZ* France, 1995	*2nd MOVIE REVIEW DUE ON CANVAS* *SCREENING REPORT DUE ON

		<p>CANVAS*</p> <p><u>Watch:</u> <i>La Haine</i> via Kanopy Streaming @ http://smu.kanopystreaming.com.proxy.libraries.smu.edu/video/la-haine</p> <p><u>Read:</u> Kedward <i>The Challenge of Plurality, 1990s-2000s</i> (551-569) & <i>Memory and Identity, 1990s-2000s</i> (3) "France multilayered and multiform..." (638-648)</p> <p><u>Read:</u> Tarr, "<i>Beur and banlieue</i> cinema in 1995."</p> <p><u>Read:</u> "An Iconography of Exclusion: Film in France, 1995."</p>
06/2 nd	<p>CLASS PRESENTATIONS : THE <i>MISE-EN-SCÈNE</i></p> <p>DISCUSSION: THE HISTORICAL AND THE MOVING IMAGE</p>	Final Research Paper due