



CIEE Global Institute – Paris

Course name:	Contemporary French Cinema
Course number:	CINE 3001 PCFS
Programs offering course:	Paris Open Campus (Communications, Journalism and New Media Track)
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3
Contact hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2018

Course Description

This course focuses on contemporary French cinema, with an emphasis on film culture in Paris and its area. It also provides an introduction to the practice of film analysis as well as to the main figures and movements in the period considered. In addition, we will examine the importance of cinema in documenting and affecting the social, cultural, and political changes taking place in contemporary France.

Learning Objectives

By the end this course, students will be able to:

- master the terms that are essential for the analysis and interpretation of film, and as a spectator, sharpen their attention to the forms and meanings of images and sounds;
- become more attuned to the social and cultural forces that shape filmmaking, and which filmmaking informs in return, through a historical perspective on French cinema (artists, movements, state and private institutions, as well the practice of cinema-going);
- report on a personal, first-hand experience of film culture in Paris.

Course Prerequisites

None.

Methods of Instruction

Lectures will be based on assigned texts and audiovisual documents. They are to provide, a) further context for a deepened discussion on individual films, and 2) an overview of the history of contemporary French cinema. In-class learning experiences will be enhanced by the attendance of current events around cinema in Paris: excursions will take us to screenings,



exhibits, debates with filmmakers, festivals, or meetings with professionals in various segments of film culture in France, depending on availability.

Assessment and Final Grade

Reports on readings	20%
Course participation	20%
Midterm examination	20%
Final examination: in-class essay in film analysis	20%
Presentation of field research on a film event	20%

Course Requirements

Reports on readings

In small groups, students choose a text best suited to their personal interests from a list proposed by the lecturer. After a careful individual reading, they prepare a summary together and introduce the text to the class. The lecturer is available to meet with the group, upon request, for a preliminary discussion to help with the report. In that case, the discussion accounts for 5% of the final grade, or a quarter of the 20% the assignment is worth. Such discussion should be scheduled a few days before the report takes place and by appointment. The reports are designed to help prepare students for their presentation of field research at the end of the course. They are also an opportunity for students to think about various angles or approaches to film, an important aspect as they start working on their final essay in film analysis.

Course participation

As part of their work in this course, students should demonstrate learning beyond the submission of written assignments or presentations. As such, all students receive grades based upon participation.

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilising the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students receive grades based upon their contributions both in the classroom and in the Canvas course.

Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed by the Instructor, in advance of each class session. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials where directed.



This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Students are expected to read the texts and watch the films assigned before attending a session. Active and effective participation involves an informed discussion of the material, but also asking questions, requesting clarifications whenever necessary and taking notes with as much precision as possible. This will prove particularly important for a successful midterm. Students should also bear in mind that leaving the room during a film screening is no more appropriate than skipping pages in a novel in a literature class. They should use the short breaks given by the instructor for anything that is not a health issue.

Midterm examination

The midterm examination covers the historical pointers covered in the course up to that point (from the origins of cinema to the pre-New Wave period of the 1950s) and the definitions of terms needed to describe and analyze visual aspects of film.

Historical pointers are tested through essay questions while definitions of terms are evaluated through short answers and identification in a film clip presented at the start of the examination.

Final examination: in-class essay in film analysis

Drawing on the various terms and notions for description and analysis learned throughout the course (but also, possibly, on the text read, then discussed and presented as a group to the rest of the class), each student writes about a short excerpt from a French film chosen by the instructor.

Presentation of field research on a film-related event

The presentation is an oral account of a group research on/experience of an event involving film in any way (attending an exhibition on film, going to a screening in a movie theater or in a different venue, attending a concert of film scores, a film or video festival, attending a shoot, etc.).

If you are interested in interviewing or just meeting people to add primary material, feel free to—but it is by no means an obligation. The primary focus is on the following elements:

- defining the institution, organization or theater you visited, especially through its location, the events it is in charge of, a brief history of its activity, its space(s) and architecture, its



visual identity; it should be specific to Paris or another place you are visiting in France during your stay, *and something you could not find in the United States*;

- describing the specific moment or event you took part in (time of the day, day of the week, type of film) and the social/cultural background of other participants, as far as you could tell;
- telling about your own experience of it, and (if applicable) comparing what you noted to what a similar event would have been in the US, sharing it with other students in the group who did not get the chance to attend (and may still want to do so, in some cases).

Class Attendance and Punctuality

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and *all unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course*.

Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, *unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course sessions will also result in a lower final grade*.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. *Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement*. Students who miss class for personal travel will be marked as absent and unexcused. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

An absence in a CIEE course will only be considered excused if:

- a doctor's note is provided
- a CIEE staff member verifies that the student was too ill to attend class
- satisfactory evidence is provided of a family emergency

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.



Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

<i>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</i>	<i>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</i>	<i>Minimum Penalty</i>
Up to 10%	1	No academic penalty
10 – 20%	2	Reduction of final grade
More than 20%	3 content classes, or 4 language classes	Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion

Weekly Schedule

NOTE: this schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to take advantage of current experiential learning opportunities.

1. RECORDING LIFE

Week 1

Session 1

- Presentation of the course, the schedule and the breakdown of assignments
- How do we define what is contemporary or not?
- Perceptions of French and European cinemas
- Historical pointers: French cinema from 1890 to 1918
- Film analysis: framing: angles and shot scales

For next class

- Read T. Jefferson Kline, *Unraveling French Cinema*, introduction, p. 1-12.
- Watch Maurice Pialat's *À nos amours* (1983).

Week 2

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Session 2

- Discussion of early cinema in relation to contemporary technologies
- Discussion of Maurice Pialat's *À nos amours* (1983)
- Historical pointers: French cinema from 1918 to 1939
- Film analysis: mobile framing, dialogue and improvisation

For next class

- Prepare reading report #1 on film form and style (for assigned group).
- Watch Agnès Varda's *Sans toit ni loi/Vagabond* (1985).

Session 3

- **Reading report #1 on film form and style by assigned group.**
- Discussion of Agnès Varda's *Sans toit ni loi/Vagabond* (1985).
- Historical pointers: French cinema during the Occupation and after World War II.
- Film analysis: mise-en-scène, narrative constructions.

For class after next

- Prepare reading report #2 on cultural studies and sociology (for assigned group).
- Watch Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* (2001).

2. FANTASY WORLDS

Session 4

- **Reading report #2 on cultural studies and sociology by assigned group.**
- Discussion of Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* (2001).
- Historical pointers: critical and filmic harbingers to the New Wave in the 1950s.
- Film analysis: editing, set and colours.

For next class

- Prepare for midterm.

Week 3



Session 5

- Midterm examination.

- Screening and discussion: short films by Georges Méliès and clips from Leos Carax's *Holy Motors* (2012).
- Film analysis: sound.

For next class

- Prepare reading report #3 on auteurism and creative process (for assigned group).
- Watch film by heir of the New Wave: Philippe Garrel, *In the Shadow of Women* (2014).

3. NEW WAVES

Session 6

- Discussion of Philippe Garrel, *In the Shadow of Women* (2014).
- **Presentation of reading report #3 on auteurism and creative process (for assigned group).**
- What is the New Wave? (1) What relates the film discussed today to aspects of it covered in the lecture?

For next class

- Prepare reading report #4 on gender and film (for assigned group).
- Watch second film by heir to the New Wave: Olivier Assayas, *Irma Vep* (1996).

Week 4

Session 7

Co-curricular #1. To be announced.

Session 8

- **Presentation of reading report #4 on gender and film (for assigned group).**
- Discussion of second film by heir to the New Wave.
- What is the New Wave? (2) How does the film discussed today relate to the aspects covered in the lecture?



For next class

- Read selections from Robert Bresson, *Notes sur le cinématographe* (group work).

4. GENRES AND AFFILIATIONS

Session 9

- The world of Robert Bresson: his conception of the cinematograph (piecing it together: reading in groups of his *Notes* and reporting to the entire class), clips from his most famous films illustrating his views, directly or indirectly.
- Film screening and discussion: *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé* (*A Man Escaped*, 1956).

For next class

- Prepare for the final examination.

Week 5

Session 10

Co-curricular #2.

- Visit to the Cinémathèque française: the Musée du cinéma and the temporary exhibition. (to be confirmed)
- Introduction to issues in film preservation and to the institution.

Session 11

- Genres and French cinema: problems in the volume of production; popular national genres as 'non-exportable'.
- The case of comedy: laughter as a conservative tool (community reinforcement).
- May 68 and its aftermath: cinema, society, and power.

- Final examination: analysis of a short clip chosen and shown by the instructor.

For next class

- Prepare reading report #5 on genres and national identity (for assigned group).
- Watch Josiane Balasko's *Gazon Maudit* (*French Twist*, 1995).



5. CONCLUSIONS (TEMPORARY ONES)

Week 6

Session 12

- **Presentation of reading report #5 on genres and national/sexual identity (for assigned group).**

- Discussion of *Gazon Maudit*: comedy, gender and sexuality
- Cinema and the rise of television in France.

For next time

Prepare for the presentation of your field research on a film-related event.

Session 13

- **Final group presentations of field research on event attended or site visited.**

- Wrap-up: the state of French cinema today and its relationship to U.S. and global cinema.
- Course evaluations.

Course Materials

Bibliography

Emmanuelle Toulet, *The Birth of the Motion Picture* (1988; London, New York: Abrams, 1995).

Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo," in *The New Wave : Critical Landmarks*, eds. Peter Graham and Ginette Vincendeau (London: BFI, 2009).

Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, "From the Blum-Byrnes Agreement to the GATT Affair," in *Hollywood and Europe. Economics, Culture, National Identity 1945-1995*, eds. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Steven Ricci (London: BFI, 1998).



Robert Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (1975; New York: Urizen Books, 1977).

Michel Marie, *The French New Wave: An Artistic School*, trans. Richard Neupert (1997; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003).

The Oxford History of World Cinema, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1999) is an excellent general reference and strongly recommended reading (chapters on French and European cinemas).