

**English 494 (W): Study Abroad—Post WWII French Cinema and Society**

Credit Hours: 3 credits, 45 contact hours

Course Description and Appropriateness of the Course to its setting in Paris and France:

This course will be a study of selected periods of French cinema as an aesthetic and cultural body of work since WWII. Each of these periods represents a politically or culturally charged cinema of response to issues within society or within the dominant cinema and/or cinematic practices of the time: the French Nouvelle Vague of the 1950s and 60s as a reaction to the “cinema of quality” that celebrated conservative styles and values after the war; the cinema of the 1970s that responded to the “political uprising” of May 1968 that challenged the Gaullist authoritarian government and its whitewashing of the collaborations under the Nazi occupation during WWII; the “cinema du look” of the 1980s that appealed both to a youth-oriented and consumerist culture; women’s films of the 1980s and 90s that raised gender issues; the nostalgic heritage films of the 1980s and 90s that celebrated a return to traditional values in historical recreations and the adaptations of classical works of French literature; and the response to heritage and nostalgia by the “beur” films (North African immigrant films), the “cinéma de banlieue” (working class street films), and by films that focus on the conflicts and struggles of a postcolonial multi-cultural French and European society.

The primary goal of the course is to study French cinema as a reflection of French culture and society, and its own central role in that society. Second to no other country, France has developed an obsession about cinema as an art and cultural form. French critics of the 1950s coined the terms “auteur” and “film noir” to describe and debate the relative merits of filmmakers and schools of filmmaking, on the one hand, and the style and genre of both the American and French crime film, on the other. They led the way in the development of the auteur theory and the analysis of film genres. In the 1960s and 70s, French critics were responsible for theorizing and promoting the analysis of film as ideology; and in the 80s and 90s, French feminist critics joined their American counterparts in the discussion of film as a gendered construct. Needless to say, France has produced two of the world’s leading journals in film criticism, *Cahier du Cinéma* and *Positif*.

Paris is a rich embodiment of this obsession with many theaters devoted to art cinema, national cinemas, and avant garde and experimental works. It also boasts two museums with libraries and archives devoted to cinema, the Cinémathèque Française on rue Bercy and the Musée du Cinéma-Henri Langlois in the Palais de Chaillot in the Trocadéro. Its film school FEMIS, along with the Institut Lumière in Lyon, has produced many of the top filmmakers in France. Students will visit these centers on field trips to report on and to use the resources available to them in their own study of French cinema. They will also make field trips to visit Paris locations that the films use and incorporate if those locations prove significant to the experience of the films.

Texts: Austin, Guy. *Contemporary French Cinema* (2000)

Powrie, Phil and K. Reader. *French Cinema: A Student’s Guide* (2002)

And a packet of Xeroxed materials

And these films for viewing: *Les Quatre cents coups* (1959), *Weekend* (1965), *Le Boucher* (1969), *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1971), *Lacombe Lucien* (1974), *Diva* (1981), *Entre Nous* (1983), *Jean de Florette* (1986), *Chocolat* (1988), *Nikita* (1990), *Indochine* (1992), *Hexagon* (1993), *Les Visiteurs* (1993), *La Haine* (1995), *La Ville Est Tranquille* (2000), *Chaos* (2001)

Criteria for Student Evaluation: Two term papers (40%); mid-term examination (20%), final examination (20%); journal of homework and field trips (20%); A=91-100; B=81-90; C=71=80; D=61-70.

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**Fall 2008 in Paris, France**