**French 373.001/373.601**

**French New Wave Cinema: Sources and Legacies**

Fall 2009

TR 3:30-4:45

Dey Hall 202

Projections: T 6 p.m.

Dey Hall 202

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**The course:**

We all watch movies, and many of us watch them with a critical eye. This course is not only an opportunity to engage in critical examination of movies for an entire semester, but also to look closely at the movement in twentieth-century cinema that took criticism as a part of filmmaking most seriously, the French New Wave of the 1950s and 1960s, which included filmmakers Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut. We will also consider some of the material that initially formed the basis for an aesthetic criticism among the New Wave directors, from classical Hollywood cinema and Italian neorealism, involving the work of such directors as Alfred Hitchcock and Roberto Rossellini.

We will look at the challenge that the directors of the New Wave pre­sented to the dominant, government-sponsored French cinema of the 1950s and 1960s by point­ing to films from Hollywood and other European countries as examples of artistry. We will examine the political themes taken up by the New Wave directors, es­pecially Jean-Luc Godard, and the ambivalent relationship to the United States: on the one hand, high praise for its cinematic achievements and counterculture, and on the other hand, suspicion of its exportation of consumer culture. We will also consider the ways that the New Wave in its turn influenced U.S. and European cinema, and what directors from the 1970s to the 1990s, such as Martin Scorsese, Wim Wenders, and Quentin Tarantino, have borrowed from it in order to challenge the aesthetics and politics of their respective film industries.

Some of you may be taking the course for credit toward the French major or minor. If so, you will be expected to do all readings in French that are available in the language. You will also be expected to write your two major papers in French.

**Viewing sessions:**

In addition to the two class meetings per week, we will have one required viewing session per week, on Tuesday evening. The session will start at 6 p.m. and continue until the end of the movie (runtimes are indicated below — in only two cases are the movies longer than two hours).

All of the films are on reserve in the Media Resources Center in House Undergraduate Library.

**Objectives:**

1. Knowledge of narrative, shots, editing, and the other formal aspects of cinema that we will study in *Film Art: An Introduction* by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson as well as some of the other readings, and the ability to exercise this knowledge in the analysis and understanding of films. An important part of this knowledge is the vocabulary of cinema, which we will study in Bordwell and Thompson. Those of you taking the course for French credit are expected to learn the French terms necessary for effective film analysis.

2. Knowledge and critical consideration of the aesthetics and practices of the cinematic traditions that we will examine.

3. A broadened understanding of U.S.-European cultural relations in the area of cinematic production in the decades following World War II.

4. Development of critical thinking on a visual medium by way of viewing, reading, dis­cussion, and analytical writing.

**Readings:**

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, eighth edition, with CD-ROM

Vincent Pinel, *Dictionnaire technique du cinéma* (if you are taking the course for credit toward the French major or minor)

E-reserve — titles below

**Assignments:**

1. Continual engagement in class discussion. I expect every member of the class to contribute to discussion during each class meeting. Although the quality of your comments certainly matters, it is most important that you show your effort to engage in discussion. Students who remain quiet will be called on.

2. A one-page reaction paper for each film viewed (one per week), turned in each Thursday. I want to know that 1) you have watched the movie critically, and 2) that you have though enough about it to make some brief analytical comments. These papers will be graded on a pass/fail basis (pass if you do it, fail if you don’t).

3. Quizzes: there will be four quizzes on vocabulary and concepts from Bordwell and Thompson. It is important that you learn to work with these effectively.

4. One short critical paper (4-5 pages), a close examination of one or several films, written according to the instructions and model that Bordwell and Thompson provide in chapter 11. If you are taking the course for credit toward the French major or minor, you will write in French.

5. One research paper (7-10 pages), a careful consideration of several films, their cultural context, and the criticism on them, due at the end of the semester. If you are taking the course for credit toward the French major or minor, you will write in French.

6. A midterm and a final examination, each one comprising several essay questions. Students taking the course for credit in French will write their exams in French.

*You must turn in all written assignments as hard copy. Attachments will not be accepted.*

**Research:**

In this course, you will be working with a Graduate Research Consultant, Wilson Kaiser, who will assist you with the research for your second paper. The GRC Program is sponsored by the Office for Undergraduate Research ([www.unc.edu/depts/our)](http://www.unc.edu/depts/our)). I encourage you to visit this Web site to see other ways that you might engage in research, scholarship and creative performance while you are at Carolina.

**Absences:**

You are permitted two unexcused absences over the course of the semester. For each unexcused absence beyond the first two, your maximum participation grade will be reduced by one grade point (that is, from A to B or from B to C). If at any point during the semester your maximum participation grade falls to F, an additional unexcused absence will result in your failing the course. Since unforeseen circumstances may arise, it is best that you obtain a documented excuse, inasmuch as it is possible to do so, for every absence. The excuse must involve a serious matter, such as an illness that requires treatment or a family emergency. Participation in official university functions that require travel will also constitute a valid excuse. If you are at any point aware of circumstances that will obligate you to miss more than two classes, you must speak with me outside of class.

*Please note that viewing sessions are regarded as regular class meetings.*

Arriving late: Coming to class late can be very disruptive. Because of this, all late arrivals will be noted. For every two times you are late — that is, if you come too late to hear your name called during attendance — you will be marked as absent once.

**Grading:**

First paper: 15%

Second paper: 25%

Reaction papers: 10% total

Quizzes: 10% total (2½% each)

Exams: 30% total (15% each)

Participation: 10%

**Honor Code:**

The following statement, with your signature, must be on all work submitted for grading:

“On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.”

**Tentative schedule for the semester:**

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| August 25 | Introduction: what is New Wave Cinema?  ***No film this evening*** |
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|  | **1. Film Noir and Neorealism** |
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| August 27 | Reading: André Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” (“L’ontologie de l’image photographique”) |
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| September 1 | Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 74-96  **Film:** Howard Hawks, *The Big Sleep* (1946 — 1 hr. 56 min.) |
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| September 3 | Reading: Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton, *A Panorama of American Film Noir*, 1-28 (*Panorama du film noir américain*, 1-34) |
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| September 8 | Reading: André Bazin, “The Evolution of the Language of Cinema” (“L’évolution du langage cinématographique”)  **Film:** Roberto Rossellini, *Viaggio in Italia (Journey to Italy)* (1953 — 1 hr. 37 min.) |
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| September 10 | Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 162-178, 182 |
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| September 15 | **Quiz**  Reading:   1. Jean-Luc Godard, “Defense and Illustration of Classical Construction” (“Défense et illustration du découpage classique”) 2. Godard, “Montage My Fine Care” (“Montage, mon beau souci”) 3. André Bazin, “The Virtues and Limitations of Montage” (“Montage interdit”)   **Film:** Alfred Hitchcock, *Rear Window* (1954 — 1 hr. 52 min.) |
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| September 17 | Reading: François Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, 213-223 (*Le Cinéma selon Hitchcock*, 160-168) |
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| **Friday, Sept. 18** | **2-4 p.m., Toy Lounge: French Major Career Fair** |
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| September 22 | Reading: François Truffaut, “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema” (“Une certaine tendance du cinéma français”)  **Film:** Jean-Pierre Melville, *Bob le flambeur* (1955 — 1 hr. 38 min.) |
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| September 24 | Reading: André Bazin, “On the *Politique des auteurs*” (no French version available) |
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|  | **2. The New Wave and the *Politique des auteurs*** |
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| September 29 | Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 182-213  **Film:** François Truffaut, *Les 400 coups (The 400 Blows)* (1959 — 1 hr. 34 min.) |
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| October 1 | *Library orientation: class will meet in Davis Library 247. “Walk up the stairs to the second level, head to the right. It's the largest of two computer labs.”* |
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| October 6 | **Quiz**  Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 218-238  **Film:** Jean-Luc Godard, *A bout de souffle (Breathless)* (1960 — 1 hr. 27 min.) |
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| October 8 | Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 397-401; Jean-Luc Godard, “Interview with Jean-Luc Godard”  Discussion, review |
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| **October 13** | **Midterm Exam**  **Film:** François Truffaut, *Tirez sur le pianiste (Shoot the Piano Player)* (1960 — 1 hr. 32 min.) |
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| October 15 | Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 431-437 |
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| October 20 | Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 238-245  **Film:** François Truffaut, *Jules et Jim* (1962 — 1hr. 45 min.) |
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| **October 22-23** | **Fall break** |
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| **October 27** | **First paper due: 4-5 pages**  Discussion  **Film:** Jean-Luc Godard, *Le mépris (Contempt)* (1963 — 1 hr. 44 min.) |
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| October 29 | **Quiz**  Discussion |
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| November 3 | Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 245-260  **Film:** Jean-Luc Godard, *Weekend* (1968 — 1 hr. 45 min.) |
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| November 5 | Reading: Robin Wood, “*Weekend*,” |
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|  | **3. The returns: Hollywood and elsewhere** |
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| November 10 | Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 304-315  **Film:** Martin Scorsese, *Mean Streets* (1973 — 1 hr. 50 min.) |
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| November 12 | Reading: Bordwell and Thompson, 318-336 |
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| November 17 | **Quiz**  Reading: Wim Wenders, “From Dream to Nightmare”  **Film:** Dennis Hopper, *Easy Rider* (1969 — 1 hr. 35 min.) |
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| November 19 | Reading: Wim Wenders, “*Easy Rider*” |
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| November 24 | Reading: Wim Wenders, “The American Dream”  **Film:** Wim Wenders, *Der amerikanische Freund (The American Friend)* (1977 — 2 hrs. 7 min.) |
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| **November 25-27** | **Thanksgiving break** |
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| December 1 | Reading: Kathe Geist, “*The American Friend*” |
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| December 3 | **Film:** Quentin Tarantino, *Pulp Fiction* (1994 — 2 hrs. 34 min.) |
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| **December 8** | **Second paper due: 7-10 pages** |
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| **Final exam: Saturday, December 12, 4 p.m.** | |