

French 326
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Fall 2012

INTOUCHABLES? MISFITS AND OUTSIDERS IN FRENCH CINEMA



Still from Louis Feuillade's *Les Vampires*, episode 2, 1916.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will focus on the representations of outcasts and dissident social groups in French cinema from the 1910s to today. We will watch and discuss both classic French films (Renoir, Carné, Cocteau, Godard) and popular national blockbusters (Besson, popular comedies) in order to examine the role that cinema has given to misfits and outsiders.

Marginal characters can be the villains of the story, but they can also be the ill-fated heroes of classic genres (Poetic Realism in particular) and gangster movies (as incarnated by actor Alain Delon in the 1960s). For some, isolation proceeds from a dubious humanity (*La Belle et la bête*), while for others it is simply their goofiness and incapacity to adapt to social life that separate them from society. Segregation can also be gender-related (*Nikita*) or socially/racially caused (*La Haine*, *Intouchables*).

Isolation has many shapes, causes, and outcomes; consequently, we will discuss the cinematographic representations of exclusion, isolation, and marginality through a variety of critical perspectives and approaches – including psychoanalysis, historical/sociological studies and structuralist theories.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This class has three main objectives:

- To train you to recognize and analyze film techniques and forms (the composition of shots, editing, movements of camera, etc...).
- To introduce and familiarize you with French cinema via its representation of outcasts. The range of films selected cover a period of almost a hundred years, which will give you a broad approach to both French cinema and the evolving representation of outsiders and social margins in French films.
- To expose you to the ways in which the question of the "other" has been theorized and discussed in relation to cinema in France. You will be encouraged to think critically about the representations of outcasts in films and about the theoretical texts that we will read on the subject.

REQUIREMENTS

Required textbook: Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau. *French Film, Texts and Contexts*, 2nd edition. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Viewing: films are on reserve at the Library. It is highly recommended that you see each film at least twice. Projections will be organized ASAP, time and place TBA.

Attendance at every meeting and completion in due time of the assigned readings are mandatory. Work in this class will consist of active class participation, one 10- to 15-minutes presentation, two short response papers (1-2 pages), a midterm paper (5-7 pages) and a final paper (10-12 pages) due on December 15th.

The grade will be calculated as follows:

Class participation: 10%

Presentation: 15%

Short response papers: 20%

Midterm paper: 20%

Final paper: 35%

Grading scale

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	93-96.5	B	83-86.5	C	73-76.5	D	63-66.5
A-	90-92.5	B-	80-82.5	C-	70-72.5	D-	60-62.5
						F	< 60

CLASS PARTICIPATION: participation is essential to our class. You are expected to come prepared to discuss the films and the assigned readings. Be engaged and active in the general discussion. You should take notes while (re-)viewing the films, so that you can contribute to our discussion with precise points/questions.

PRESENTATION: you will prepare a 10 to 15 minutes presentation on either one of the films that we will watch together. You can organize your presentation as you wish, but it should be articulated around one specific idea. For instance you could pick a theme (ex: love, death), a motif (ex: disguises and characters' transformations), a technique (traveling shots, jump cuts), a narrative aspect (repetition), an aspect of the mise-en-scène (costumes, decors) or of the soundtrack (music, sound perspective). You could also pick a sequence and present a shot-by-shot analysis to the class.

2 SHORT RESPONSE PAPERS: you will write two short response papers (1-2 pages) during the semester. These papers will each discuss a film from the "Recommended" sections in the calendar. You should hand them in to me either at the end of the class for which they were listed, or the following week. Trailers for these films will be posted on Moodle.

MIDTERM PAPER: short research paper (5-7 pages) on the subject and film(s) of your choice. You should document your argument by including critical sources and a short bibliography.

FINAL PAPER: 10 to 12 pages research paper on the subject and film(s) of your choice. You will be graded according to the coherence and originality of your paper, the quality of your research (you document your argument with critical sources), and the precision of your text (you give examples, you analyze specific aspects of the film(s)' cinematography).

ABSENCE POLICY:

Attendance in class is mandatory and students missing more than a week of class will see their grade reduced as a result. If you miss more than one class, your final grade will be lowered (an A would become

an A-, an A- a B+, a B+ a B, etc...). French majors are also expected to attend the supplementary discussion group, and the same absence policy applies to that discussion group. Please keep in touch via email if you have to miss a class; homework should be turned in in due time even if you are absent.

HONOR CODE:

For questions related to the honor code, feel free to consult the College website at:

<http://www.brynmawr.edu/honorcode/>

You are encouraged to do research and to document your arguments with external sources; but remember to quote them properly. When you cite somebody else's work, you should acknowledge your source and cite them accordingly (see MLA manual of style).

In addition to this, students will be expected to write their papers without any exterior help. Getting help from another party will be considered as an infringement of the Bryn Mawr Honor Code, and will entail the corresponding consequences.

CALENDAR

All the readings will be available on our Moodle site, except for the chapters from *French Films, Texts and Contexts* (marked as *FFTC* below), which is available at the Bryn Mawr Bookstore. This calendar is subject to change, in which case you would be notified either in class or via email at least a week in advance.

WEEK 1 (SEPT 4TH): INTRODUCTION

- General introduction of the course and its objectives.
- Introduction to early French cinema
- Sequence analysis: Louis Feuillade, *Fantômas* (1913).

WEEK 2 (SEPT 11TH): CRIME SERIALS AND CINEMATIC PARANOÏA

Louis Feuillade, *Fantômas*, episode 1 (1913); Louis Feuillade, *Les Vampires*, episodes 1-3 (1916).

READINGS:

- David Bordwell. "Feuillade, or What Was Mise-en-scène." *The Velvet Light Trap*, number 37, Spring 1996.
- Christian Metz, "La grande syntagmatique de la bande image." *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, p 121-134/"The Large Syntagmatic Category of the Image Track." *Films Language: a Semiotics of the Cinema*, 119-133.

RECOMMENDED:

- Louis Feuillade, *Les Vampires* (10 episodes)/*Fantômas* (5 episodes).
- French discussion group: sequence analysis.

WEEK 3 (SEPT 18TH): ISOLATED SPACES

Jean Vigo, *L'Atalante* (1934)

READINGS:

- *Republic of Images*, 213-220 (pdf on Moodle)
- Michael Temple, "Poetry Applied to Prose", *Jean Vigo*, 109-123.

RECOMMENDED:

- Leos Carax, *Les Amants du Pont Neuf*/*The Lovers on the Bridge* (1991).

- French discussion group: Gilles Deleuze. *L'Image-mouvement*, chapitre 5 (1 and 2), p 104-116.

WEEK 4 (SEPT 25TH): THE SAVAGE AND THE CIVILIZED

Jean Renoir, *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (1932)

READINGS:

- Bazin, "L'évolution du langage cinématographique." *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* 63-80 / André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema", in *What is Cinema?*
- Richard Abel. "Collapsing Columns: Mise-en-scene in *Boudu*." *Jump Cut*, no. 5, 1975, pp. 20-22.

RECOMMENDED:

- François Truffaut, *Victor l'enfant sauvage / The Wild Child* (1970).
- French discussion group: Deleuze, *L'image-mouvement*. "Chapitre 2: Cadre et plan, cadrage et découpage," 2 et 3, pp 32-45.

WEEK 5 (OCTOBER 2ND): THE CRIMINAL AND THE POLITICAL

Jean Renoir, *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1935)

READINGS:

- *Republic of images*, 220-242.
- Christopher Faulkner, "Paris, Arizona; or the Redemption of Difference: Jean Renoir's *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*." *FCTC*, pp. 27-41.

RECOMMENDED:

- Jean Renoir, *La Règle du jeu* (1939).
- French discussion group: sequence analysis/Bazin on Jean Renoir.

WEEK 6 (OCTOBER 9TH): DOOMED HEROES (POETIC REALISM)

Marcel Carné, *Le Quai des Brumes* (1938)

READINGS:

- Edward Turk, "Poetic Realism" (excerpt). *Child of Paradise*, 109-128

RECOMMENDED:

- Carné, *Le jour se lève / Daybreak*, 1939.
- Julien Duvivier, *Pépé le Moko*, 1937.
- French discussion group: Deleuze on close shots/sequence analysis.

MIDTERM PAPER DUE IN CLASS ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9 TH .
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FALL BREAK

WEEK 7 (OCT 23RD): BEASTS AND ATAVISM

Jean Cocteau, *La Belle et la bête* (1946)

READINGS:

- Madame Leprince de Beaumont, *La Belle et la bête* (fairy tale).
- Susan Hayward: "Gender politics: Cocteau's belle is not that bête." *FFTC*.

RECOMMENDED:

- Renoir, *La Bête humaine*/*The Human Beast* (1938)
- French discussion group: extended comparison between the fairy tale and the film.

WEEK 8 (OCT 30TH): MISFITS AND SOCIAL PEACE: MURDERERS AND BLACK-MAILERS

Henri-Georges Clouzot, *Les Diaboliques* (1955)

READINGS:

- *Republic of images*, 245-271.
- Susan Hayward, "Texts and Intertexts: What kind of Film is this: Noir, Queer, Political?" *Les Diaboliques*, pp. 41-62.

RECOMMENDED:

- Henri-Georges Clouzot, *Le Corbeau*/*The Raven* (1943).
- French discussion group: sequence analysis

WEEK 9 (NOV 6TH): THE RUNAWAYS (NEW WAVE)

François Truffaut, *Les 400 coups* (1959)

READINGS:

- Anne Gillain. "The Script of Delinquency: Truffaut's *Les 400 coups*." *FFTC*, pp. 142-157.
- François Truffaut, "a Certain Tendency of the French Cinema." Bill Nichols, ed. *Movies and Methods*.

RECOMMENDED:

- François Truffaut, *L'argent de poche*/*Small Change* (1976).
 - French discussion group: Jacques Rivette. "*Les Quatre Cent Coups* de François Truffaut." *Cahiers du cinema*, Mai 1959. In *La nouvelle vague*, 32-35.
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WEEK 10 (NOV 13TH): THE RUNAWAYS (2) (NEW WAVE)

Jean-Luc Godard, *A bout de souffle* (1959)

READINGS:

- Michel Marie. “‘It really makes you sick!’: Jean-Luc Godard’s *A bout de souffle*.” *FFTC*. Pp. 158-173.

RECOMMENDED:

- Louis Malle, *Ascenseur pour l'échaffaud/Elevator to the Gallows* (1958).
- French discussion group: “Entretien avec Jean-Luc Godard.” *Cahiers du cinema*, Décembre 1962. In *La Nouvelle Vague*, 193-199.

WEEK 11 (NOV 20TH): LONERS AND STAR SYSTEM: BELMONDO/DELON

Melville, *Le Samourai* (1967)

READINGS:

- Ginette Vincendeau. “Jean-Paul Belmondo and Alain Delon: One Smiles, the Other Doesn’t.” *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema*, 158-195.
- Colin McArthur. “Mise-en-scène Degree Zero: Jean-Pierre Melville’s *Le Samourai*.” *FFTC*, pp. 189-201.

RECOMMENDED:

- Godard, *Pierrot le fou* (1965)

THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 12 (NOV 27TH): CLUMSIES, LOOSERS AND EMMERDEURS (POPULAR COMEDIES)

Francis Veber, *La chèvre* (1981)

READINGS:

- TBA

RECOMMENDED:

- Edouard Molinaro, *L’Emmerdeur/A Pain in the Ass* (1973), Veber’s 2008 remake also called *L’Emmerdeur*.
 - Veber, *Les compères/ComDads* (1983)/Veber, *Les fugitifs* (1986), all starring Depardieu and Richard as the “duo infernal”...
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WEEK 13 (DEC 4TH): FEMALE MARGINALITIES (CINÉMA DU LOOK)

Luc Besson, *Nikita* (1990)

READINGS:

- Susan Hayward. "Recycled Woman and the Postmodern Aesthetic: Luc Besson's *Nikita*." *FFTC*, pp. 297-309.

RECOMMENDED:

- Beineix, *37°2 le matin/Betty blue* (1986).
 - Agnès Varda, *Sans toit ni loi/ Vagabond* (1985).
 - Erick Zonca, *La Vie rêvée des anges/The Dreamlife of Angels* (1998).
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WEEK 14 (DEC 11TH): SUBURBS AND EXCLUSION (CINÉMA DE BANLIEUE)

Mathieu Kassovitz, *La Haine* (1995)

READINGS (OPTIONAL):

- Ginette Vincendeau. "Designs on the *banlieue*: Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine*." *FFTC*, pp. 310-327.

RECOMMENDED:

- Laurent Cantet, *Entre les murs/The Class* (2008), Palme d'or at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival.
- Olivier Nakache, Eric Toledano, *Intouchables/The Intouchables* (2011).
- Jacques Audiard, *Un prophète* (2009)

FINAL PAPER DUE ON DEC. 17TH BY 5 PM (EMAIL IT TO ME IN A WORD .DOC FORMAT, NO DOCX PLEASE)