European Society and Cinema

New York University in France
Spring 2010
Tuesday, 4:00-7:00 PM (weekly screening times to be announced)

Prof. Stephen Monteiro
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Office hours: Tuesday, 7:00-8:00 PM

Course description:

Hailed as the “seventh art” by intellectuals and artists, cinema played a singular role in European politics and culture throughout the 20th century. This course examines film’s contribution to, and critique of, modern society by studying selected avant-garde and popular films from Europe. It explores not only how film narratives can reflect historical and social conditions in Europe during a given period, but how the cinema as industry, mass medium and idea has contributed to issues of nationality and European identity. Films and readings will be supplemented by site visits.

Texts:

All assigned readings are required and available for download from the course page at nyuparis.org. Mark Mazower’s Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century is recommended as a general history of Europe in the twentieth century and is available in the library.

Requirements and Grading:

Participation (15%) – Students are expected to attend all classes and screenings, read all texts and contribute regularly to class discussions.

Presentation (20%) – Each student will prepare a 20-minute presentation on the cinema of a European country not represented in the screening schedule.

Mid-term Exam (30%) – This in-class exam will cover all material from the first half of the semester.

Final Paper (35%) – This ten-page paper will concern a topic in European cinema chosen from a list provided by the professor.
Class Schedule:

1. 2 Feb. **Beginnings**
   Films: short films (1895-1902) by the Lumière brothers and Georges Méliès
   Reading: List of film terms; Ezra, “A Brief History of Cinema in Europe”

2. 9 Feb. **A Revolutionary Art**
   Film: Dziga Vertov, *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

3. 16 Feb. **The Avant-Garde**
   Film: excerpts from *Avant-Garde, Experimental Cinema of the 1920s and 30s*

4. 23 Feb. **World War II and Occupation Cinema**
   Film: Henri-Georges Clouzot, *Le Corbeau* (1943)
   Reading: Siclier, “The Psychology of the Spectator, or the ‘Cinema of Vichy’ Did Not Exist”

5. 2 Mar. **MID-TERM EXAM**

6. 9 Mar. **CLASS POSTPONED**
   Rescheduled for 2 April as Class Visit 2

7. 16 Mar. **Class Visit 1**

8. 23 Mar. **Culture Wars: Europe and the US**
   Film: Federico Fellini, *La Dolce Vita* (1960)
   Reading: Knieger: “La Dolce Vita: Twentieth-Century Man?”; Peri and Fellini, “Federico Fellini: An Interview”

9. 30 Mar. **The Eastern Bloc and Late Communism**
   Film: Milos Forman, *The Firemen’s Ball* (1967)
   Reading: Milos Forman, *Turnaround* (excerpt)

[2 Apr.] **Class Visit 2**

10. 6 Apr. **Dogma and Utopias**
11. 13 Apr. Colonialism
   Film: Claire Denis, Chocolat (1988)
   Reading: Muller, “Notes toward a Theory of Nostalgia”
   FINAL PAPER DUE

[19 Apr. – 3 May] SPRING RECESS

12. 4 May European Identity, National Identity
   Reading: Gillespie, “Identity and the Past in Recent Russian Cinema”; Putain, “Russia is Europe’s Natural Ally”

13. 11 May Class visit 3

Paris film resources

Pariscope and L’Officiel des Spectacles - weekly magazines listing events in Paris, including film schedules. Published on Wednesdays (the day most films are released in France).

Allocine.com - On-line cinema listings, searchable by film title, movie theater, zip code, etc.

Cinémathèque française (www.cinematheque.fr) - one of the world’s largest film history collections. It also maintains a comprehensive screening schedule of classics and little-known films.

Centre Pompidou (www.centrepompidou.fr) - the city’s principal cultural center, it houses an excellent public library, art museums and exhibitions. Its two cinemas offer film retrospectives and festivals, often related to the center’s temporary exhibitions.

Forum des Images (www.forumdesimages.net) - the city’s recently renovated film library and cinema, housed in the Forum des Halles. Besides regular screenings, a day ticket also allows access to individual viewing posts to consult the large collection of films related to Paris. It’s a great place to see the evolution of the city (and its cinema industry) across the twentieth century.

Cinemas d’Art et d’Essai (www.art-et-essai.org/accueil.htm) - Independent movie theaters (several are in the Latin Quarter, but they are found throughout the city) that often program retrospectives of important directors and major genres. They also
screen current films that haven’t found large distributors or that appeal to niche audiences.