Expressive Culture: French cinema (in English)

**Class code**
CORE-UA9750 (9510)

**Instructor Details**
Sam Azulys
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**Class Details**
Expressive Culture: Film (in English)
Tuesday 3 – 4:30 Thursday 3 – 4:30

**Prerequisites**
This course is destined to students who don’t necessarily have a thorough knowledge in cinema.

**Class Description**
This course will allow students to become familiar with the methods and formal aspects of cinema. Students will discover French culture through the prism of cinema by underlining the specific dynamics by which cinema becomes the privileged witness of the profound transformations of mentalities and the upheavals that deeply changed the French society.

By putting the films into their social, historical and philosophical context, the students will get to study, across a diverse range of examples, the relation existing between French films and French culture. It deals for example with the formal and thematic relationships among the Avant-garde artistic movements (futurism, cubism, expressionism, surrealism, etc.) and the cinematographic Avant-garde (Buñuel, L’Herbier, Cocteau), those between the cinema of Renoir and classical French theatre (Marivaux, Beaumarchais, Musset), the troubled period of the occupation and the filmmakers who deliberately chose to stay in France to work there (Clouzot, Carné) and the influence of Saint Germain des Prés’s existentialism (Sartre, Camus) on the Nouvelle Vague, etc. The students will thus discover that cinema is a cultural agent that reflects a period all the while produces a critical point view on said period.

Also examined are the formal structure of French cinema, its stylistic choices and ways of expression shared with other artistic practices, in order to understand to what extent the « French cultural exception » contributed to its worldwide influence. Throughout the course, students will develop their understanding of the basic methods and concepts of cinema studies.

**Desired Outcomes**
By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Recognize how the components of film-narrative, directing, cinematography, editing, production design and sound work together to produce a coherent and meaningful cinematographic language.

- Emphasizes critical thinking and writing about film.

- Learn the basic vocabulary of film form and be able to use it to analyze the structure of a film.

- Analyze how cinema reflects a historical period in its political, cultural and philosophical context and how it gives a critical point view on said period.

- Have a better knowledge of the different aspects of French culture such as the political, social, artistic and philosophical ones.
Assessment Components

- **Class Participation**: (20%) Assessed throughout the semester.
- **2 Critical Papers**: 3-4 pages (20%).
- **Mid-Term Paper**: 4-5 pages (20%).
- **Final Paper**: class exam (40%).

**Class Participation**

Students are expected to engage in active discussions and debates. The previous courses must be reviewed and the next one must be prepared.

**Critical Paper**

Students will have to submit three papers on French cinema over the semester. These essays will deal with films related to the studied period but which have not yet been analyzed in course. Students are required to analyze an important sequence of the work and establish a thematic link between the film and the historical, political, social and cultural context of the concerned period.

The critical paper should be written in an appropriate academic style with consistent scholarly referencing and bibliography.

**Mid-Term Paper**

Students will submit a 4-5 pages essay.

A list of films is proposed to the students. Students are required to analyze an important sequence of the work and establish a thematic link between the film and the historical, political, social and cultural context of the concerned period.

The Mid-Term paper should be written in an appropriate academic style with consistent scholarly referencing and bibliography.

**Final Paper (Exam Week)**

Students will write a sequence analysis essay in class. Students are required to apply their analysis to demonstrate their critical thinking, analysis and evaluation skills.

Late submission of work is allowed only in case of sudden and incapacitating illness, or other grave emergency and that prevent a student from completing the final assignment or examination for a course. A proper justification must be delivered. Students must make arrangements with the professor to finish the incomplete work. If not completed, the work will be graded F.

**Required Text(s)**

*Cf.* list of texts in the Reader. All readings are required, unless otherwise stated.

**Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)**


**Session 1**

The invention of motion pictures & introduction to cinema studies (Part I)

Films:

- Short-movies directed by the Lumière’s Brothers
- Short-movies directed by Georges Méliès

Supplementary Film:

- *Fantômas (À l’ombre de la guillotine)* – Louis Feuillade (1913)

Readings:


**Session 2**

The French Avant-garde & introduction to cinema studies (Part II)

Film:

- *L’inhumaine* – Marcel L’Herbier (1924)

Supplementary Film:

- *Napoléon* – Abel Gance (1927)

Readings:

Session 3

The French Avant-garde: Bunuel

Film:

• L’Age d’Or – Luis Buñuel (1930)

Supplementary Film:

• Un Chien andalou – Luis Buñuel (1929)

Readings:

• Rudolf Kuenzli, « Dada and surrealist film » in European Cinema, pp. 78-96.


Session 4

The Golden Age of French Cinema (Part I): Poetic Realism

Film:

• Quai des Brumes – Marcel Carné (1938)

Supplementary Film:

• Sous les toits de Paris – René Clair (1930)

Readings:


Session 5

The Golden Age of French Cinema (Part II): Poetic Realism

Film:

• Hôtel du Nord – Marcel Carné (1938)

Supplementary Film:

• L’Atalante – Jean Vigo (1934)

Readings:


Session 6

The Golden Age of French Cinema (Part III): Poetic Realism

Film:

• Le jour se lève – Marcel Carné (1939)
Supplementary Film:

•  *Pépé le Moko* – Jean Duvivier (1937)

Readings:


**Session 7**

**The Golden Age of French Cinema (Part IV): Renoir**

Film:

•  *La Règle du jeu* – Jean Renoir (1939)

Supplementary Films:

•  *La Grande Illusion* – Jean Renoir (1937)

Readings:


**Session 8**

**French Cinema of the Occupation (part I)**

Film:

•  *La Traversée de Paris* – Claude Autant-Lara (1956)

Supplementary Film:

•  *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* – Marcel Ophüls (1971)

Readings:


**Session 9**

**French Cinema of the Occupation (part II)**

Film:

•  *Le Corbeau* – Henri-Georges Clouzot (1943)

Supplementary Films:

•  *Les Diaboliques* – Henri-Georges Clouzot (1955)

•  *Les Visiteurs du soir* – Marcel Carné (1942)

**Session 10**

**French Cinema of the Occupation (part III)**

Film:

•  *Le Dernier Métro* – François Truffaut (1980)
Supplementary Films:


Readings:


**Session 11**

*The New Wave (part I)*

Film:

- *A bout de Souffle* – Jean-Luc Godard (1960)

Supplementary Films:

- *Le Signe du Lion* – Eric Rohmer (1959)
- *Les 400 coups* – François Truffaut (1959)

Readings:


**Session 12**

*The New Wave (part II)*

Film:

- *Cléo de 5 à 7* – Agnès Varda (1962)

Supplementary Film:

- *Hiroshima, mon amour* – Alain Resnais (1959)

Readings:

Session 13

The New Wave (part III)

Film:

- *Bande à Part* – Jean-Luc Godard (1964)

Supplementary Films:

- *Pierrot le fou* – Jean-Luc Godard (1965)

Readings:


Session 14

The New Wave (part IV)

Film:

- *Le Mépris* – Jean-Luc Godard (1963)

Supplementary Films:

- *La Chinoise* – Jean-Luc Godard (1967)

Readings:


Final Exam

Students will write a sequence analysis essay in class. The critical paper should be written in an appropriate academic style and should reflect the knowledge acquired about the major cinematographic period of the selected movie.

Classroom Etiquette

- No eating in class.
- No cell phones in class.
- No laptop computers in class unless permission is expressly given by your professors.
- Leaving class to go to the bathroom or yawning in class is considered rude in France.

Required Co-curricular Activities

Students are invited to go to a Parisian art-house cinema and submit reviews of the French movies they saw.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

- *Forum des Images*: the city film library and cinema, housed in the Forum des Halles. Besides screenings, it is possible to access individual viewing posts and to consult the large collection of films related to Paris. There are regular thematic cycles, lectures and conferences with prestigious and famous academics and cinema professionals.
- **Cinémathèque Française**: one of the world’s largest film collections. Classics and little-known films are regularly screened.

- **Museum of Cinema of the Cinémathèque Française**

- **La Cité du Cinéma**: real crossroads of the European cinematographic industry, the ambitious “Cité du Cinéma” created by Luc Besson, brings together talents, studios, students and cinema professionals.

- **Centre Pompidou**: 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 with related exhibitions.

- **Cinemas d’Art et d’Essai**: independent movie theaters (several are in the Latin Quarter close to NYU Paris, 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.

- **Bibliothèque François Mitterrand**: large collections of books and magazines about cinema.

- **Bibliothèque André Malraux**: large collections of books and magazines about cinema.

- **Allocine.com**: cinema listings, searchable by film title, movie theaters, zip code, etc.

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**Your Instructor**

Sam Azulys has a Ph.D. in Philosophy (Paris I - Sorbonne) and is a Professor in philosophy and in cinema / American TV shows. He is also a film director, screenwriter, writer and painter. He is the author of an aesthetic essay on filmmaker Stanley Kubrick and of a philosophical essay about *Game of Thrones*. *(Stanley Kubrick: a Philosophical Odyssey, Paris, Ed. de la Transparence, 2011)*

He regularly writes articles in movie magazines and he gives lectures and conferences in different institutes such as the “Forum des images”.