



LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

French [R]evolutions through Film: Transformations in French Society from 1945 to the Present

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: : MONT 3025

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 45

Instructor: : Paul Rogers, PhD

Course Description

Through the lens of cinema and documentary film, this course explores the changes in French society from the period of the Second World War to the present day. Beginning with the trauma of the Nazi occupation, students will look at how French cinema over the years has served as a mirror on society, reflecting cultural, social, and political evolutions. Students will examine key moments in France's history that have left a mark: the period of Nazi occupation and the conflict between collaborators and resistance fighters (as portrayed in Louis Malle's *Au Revoir les Enfants*, Jacques Audiard's *Un Héros très discret* or Joseph Losey's *Mr. Klein*), France's departure from Indochina (Pierre Schoendorffer's *Diên Biên Phu*), the Algerian war (Gillo Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger*), the cultural revolution of May 1968 (Ducastel and Martineau's *Nés en 68*), evolving family models and changing visions of socialism in the 1980s (Pinoteau's *La Boum*), social upheaval and exclusion in the 1990s (Kassovitz's *La Haine*, Lisa Azuelos's *LOL*, Mounia Meddour's *Papicha*). Recent film and text will engage with an exploration of contemporary France (the 2000s and 2010s) around issues such as francophone multiculturalism, societal unrest (the yellow-jacket movement) and the terror attacks (Audiard's *Un Prophète*, Ladj Ly's *Les Misérables*, Houada Benyamina's *Divines*, Emmanuel Leconte's *Humour à mort*— the Charlie Hebdo attacks), but also France's continuing mission to promote the arts and humanities and make them accessible to every socioeconomic corner of the population (e.g., through nationwide events such as the annual *Fête du Cinéma*, the

Journées du Patrimoine, and once-a-month free access to museums). The course aims to provide students with tools for understanding a culture through an exploration of its creative artifacts.

Course Objectives

- Provide students with tools for analyzing the cinematographic art form as a cultural product of France from a variety of perspectives (cultural and visual studies, sociological, historical, etc.).
- Develop a critical and nuanced analytical approach that takes into account the multiplicity of contexts in which these works of art emerged.
- Examine a film director's artistic choices (content, background, media, and method).
- Acquire an understanding of the culture of the country and the specific community in which they are immersed.

Methodology

- Students will be expected to engage with readings before each class and prepare regular presentations and written assignments. Deploying critical thinking skills and structured reasoning will be of paramount importance in these assignments.
- Students will also be asked to view films outside of class in preparation for in-class discussion and analysis. Learning to examine the artistic choices of a director and write structured argumentative essays will be a key component of the methodology.
- During each class session, interactive lectures will provide students with essential historical, sociological, and cultural context for studying these works.

Writing Intensive

This course is intended to be writing intensive. It is paramount that students acquire strong writing skills to effectively analyze cultural artifacts/documents within the framework of the liberal arts curriculum.

- Writing is at the core of the academic experience and is the responsibility of every member of the academic community. By participating in the production and interrogation of the discourse in the field of French studies, students progress in their understanding of the discipline. Over the course of the semester, students will complete a variety of writing assignments, including, 8-9 essays (each essay will be between 1-4 pages long), and one 8–10 page final research/analysis paper/dossier. The instructor will provide the students with regular feedback, focusing on essay structure, grammar, and stylistics. Students must correct at least three of their assignments, taking into account the instructor's feedback on their first version, and hand in corrected versions to thereby improve their grade. The student's initial version will include commentary and suggestions for structural/analytical changes as well as indicate grammatical and stylistic errors.

Required Reading / Materials

- Cole, French Politics and Society. London, UK: Routledge, 2017.
- Kepel, Gilles and Antoine Jardin. Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West (Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- Kidd, William and Sian Reynolds. Contemporary French Cultural Studies. London, UK: Routledge, 2000
- Hénaut, Stéphane and Jeni Mitchell. Histoire de France à pleines dents. New York, NY : Flammarion, 2018.
- Lewis, Jon. Essential Cinema: An Introduction to Film Analysis. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2013.
- Rousso, Henry and Nicolas Beaupré. Les Grandes Guerres (1914-1945). Paris: Editions Belin, 2012.
- Zancarini-Fournel, Michelle and Christian Delacroix. 1945-2005: La France du Temps Présent. Paris: Editions Belin, 2014.

Supplemental Materials (films)

- Journal: French Politics, Culture, and Society
- Louis Malle, Au Revoir les Enfants
- Jacques Audiard, Un Héros très discret
- Joseph Losey, Mr. Klein
- Pierre Schoendorffer's Diên Biên Phu
- Gillo Pontecorvo, La Bataille d'Alger
- Dany Boon, Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis
- Cédric Klapisch, L'Auberge espagnole
- Jean-Luc Godard, A bout de souffle
- Ducastel and Martineau, Nés en 68
- Andrieu and Kebabian's Les Révoltés
- Pinoteau's La Boum
- Kassovitz's La Haine
- Lisa Azulos, LOL
- Mounia Meddour, Papicha
- Jacques Audiard, Un Prophète
- Ladj Ly, Les Misérables
- Houda Benyamina, Divines
- Emmanuel Leconte, Humour à mort
- Euronews Special documentary on France's 'gilets jaunes' movement
- News sites (in English): en.rfi.fr/france, france24.com/en, thelocal.fr, jacobinmag.fr

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation in class	10%
Essays	45%
Exposés	15%
Final research paper	15%
Final oral presentation	15%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment Details

Participation

Attendance and active participation in class is very important to your success in this course. Students should be present at all classes and come prepared to discuss the readings as outlined in the syllabus.

Essays

Students will complete between 8 and 9 essays / written assignments. Each written assignment will be between 1-4 pages in length, and based on one of the topics of the course provided by the instructor. The topics of these assignments will be directly related to the readings or the films at the heart of the current unit being studied. An example of one topic might be a comparative study of how a film or film sequence contradicts / confirms / complements sociological findings elaborated in one or more of the articles assigned as course readings or in the course lectures. Written assignments should aim to include an average of 3 citations per page. Students will be asked to include references (the nature and number of these references will vary depending on the type of assignment, 3-4 sources is a rough estimate). Students must correct at least three of their essays, taking into account the instructor's feedback on their first version, and hand in corrected versions to thereby improve their grade. The student's initial version will include commentary and suggestions for structural/analytical changes as well as indicate grammatical and stylistic errors.

Exposés

Students will complete between 1 and 2 oral presentations over the course of the semester. Presentations should last between 5 and 7 minutes and provide a springboard for class discussion. Students will be asked to present their analytical work to the rest of the class; an example might be a critical analysis of a cinematic sequence from the film *A bout de souffle*. Students will be asked to include references (the nature and number of these references will vary depending on the type of assignment, 3-4 sources is a rough estimate).

Final written paper

Each student will write an 8-10 page research paper, to be handed in during the last class meeting. The student should choose a topic related to the course material that they wish to explore in greater detail and share with the rest of the class. Sample topics include: a critical study of the body of work of one of the directors introduced in the course or a French director chosen by the student (to be approved by the instructor), or a critical, historical, and analytical exploration of some of the contemporaneous events, noteworthy individuals, or societal paradigms that form part of the backdrop for the creation of the cinematographic works studied during the semester. By the halfway point of the semester, students should begin to have an idea of the approach they would like to take and consult with the instructor to narrow down their topic. Students should include roughly an average of 3-4 citations per page and use between 6 and 9 outside sources (this is an estimate and will depend upon the topic chosen).

Final presentation

During the last class meeting, students will present the research they undertook for their final written paper to the class. The goal of the presentation is to introduce the class to the research in as interesting a manner as possible. To that end, students are encouraged to use slideshows, handouts, and when applicable, show brief film sequences; students should avoid simply reading their paper. At the end of their presentation, the student should have questions prepared to involve the listeners and be prepared to organize and moderate a group discussion. (15-20 min.)

Course Content

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Ut rutrum id elit in consectetur. Proin a aliquet nisi, a euismod est. Nullam aliquam vel turpis in dignissim. Suspendisse placerat turpis et porta mollis.

Unit 1

Course Introduction: French society, permanent revolutions, & change

- Introductory lecture—course objectives; presentation of the syllabus
- In-class, diagnostic writing assignment
- Reading: Reynolds, Siân. “How the French present is shaped by the past: the last hundred years in historical perspective.” *Contemporary French Cultural Studies*, Chapter 3.

Unit 2

France During & After WWII: Days of reckoning

- The Nazi occupation of France profoundly altered French society, leaving deep wounds that can still be felt to the present day. The conflict between those who collaborated and those who resisted the occupation remains a source of conflict and tension. French cinema depicts this tension, and the horror of the deportation, in poignant forms.
- Lecture
- Films: *Au revoir les enfants*, *Un héros très discret*, *Uranus*
- Analytical essay
- Reading: Welch, Edward. “Objects of Dispute: Planning, Discourse, and State Power in Post-War France.” *French Politics, Culture, and Society*. Vol. 36, No. 2, Summer 2018: 103-125.
- Reading: Andrieu, Claire. “Women in the French Resistance: Revisiting the Historical Record.” *French Politics, Culture, and Society*. Vol. 18, No. 1, Spring 2000.

Unit 3

The End of the Colonies: Indochina, Algeria

- How did the wars in Indochina and in Algeria transform French society? What were the socio-cultural effects of the conflict on mainland France? Long considered a taboo

subject, the arts have persistently led the way in seeking to come to terms with the deep wounds left over by these wars. Through the 'objective' lens of the documentary, *La Bataille d'Alger* shows the conflict in Algeria all of its horror.

- Lecture
- Film: *La Bataille d'Alger*
- Reading: Miller, Jeannette E. "A Camp for Foreigners and 'Aliens': The Harkis' Exile at the Rivesaltes Camp (1962-1964). *French Politics, Culture, and Society*. Vol. 31, No. 3, Winter 2013.

Unit 4

Modernizing France: The 1950s-1960s

- *Le poujadisme* and its contemporary echoes, a new consumer society, representing the family, forms of Americanization and resistance. Studying Jean-Luc Godard's, *A bout de souffle*, one of the most emblematic films of the Nouvelle Vague, will allow students to understand how French cinema sought to free itself of traditional constraints in the 1950s and 60s, revolutionized the art form, and became a source of artistic inspiration for contemporary filmmakers.
- Lecture
- Film: *A bout de souffle*
- Analytical essay
- Reading: Kuisel, Richard. "The Rivalry between the French and American Cinema in the 1950s." *Yale French Studies*. No. 98 (The French Fifties). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Analytical essay

Unit 5

What Happened in May 1968?

- Political crisis, De Gaulle, and youth revolutions—from the Quartier latin to the countryside, the advent of strikes, occupations, and assemblées générales. Two films explore the origins of this societal revolution, one from a fictional perspective, another through the documentary lens.
- Lecture
- Film: *Nés en 68, Les Révoltés*

- Reading: Christofferson, Ball, David. "The Tracts of May." *French Politics, Culture, and Society*. Vol. 28, No. 1, Spring 2010.

Unit 6

France in the 1970–1980s

- Economic Crisis, France's suburbs, La Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme. The emerging question of religion in French society. Change and revolution in the home: New social constructs. Pinoteau's *La Boum* explores this evolving family dynamic and portrays the freedoms and aspirations of French society in the eighties.
- Lecture
- Film: *La Boum, La Vie est un long fleuve tranquille*
- Reading: Kidd, William. "Frenchness: constructed and reconstructed." Chapter 12, *Contemporary French Cultural Studies*.
- Analytical essay

Unit 7

France in the 1990s

- *Blocages* in the high schools, le Pacts (le Pacte civil de solidarité), the end of the Cold War. Lisa Azulos's *LOL*, reprises and transforms the themes explored a decade earlier by *La Boum*, and depicts the nonchalance of a certain segment of French society in the 1990s.
- Lecture
- Film: *LOL*
- Reading: Beale, Helen. "French public culture: places and spaces." Chapter 11, *Contemporary French Cultural Studies*

Unit 8

France in the 1990s

- Forgotten France : disenfranchised youth, multiculturalism, pluriculturalism, and the French social model. Kassovitz's timeless *La Haine* starkly depicts, in black and white, the bleakness of life in the suburbs for three young men.
- Lecture

- Film : *La Haine*
- Reading : Elsayed, Hanan. « La Haine : Falling in Slow Motion ». Balibar and the Citizen Subject. Ed. Warren Montag, Hanan Elsayed. Edinburgh, UK
- Analytical essay

Unit 9

France in the 2000s

- An exploration of light-hearted French cinema of the early and mid-2000s will serve as a springboard for exploring French regional identity and aspects of the culture including minority languages and cuisine (UNESCO has recognized *la gastronomie* as a world intangible heritage)
- Lecture
- Films: *Bienvenue chez les ch'tis*, *L'auberge espagnole*
- Reading: Lamont, Michèle and Nicolas Duvoux. "How Neo-Liberalism has transformed France's Symbolic Boundaries?" *French Politics, Culture, and Society*. Vol. 32, No. 2, Summer 2014.

Unit 10

France in the 2000s: Social unrest & the rise of the far right/the crisis

- Understanding France's *banlieues* : segregation, ethnicity, identity. Persistent rifts in French society. Jacques Audiard's film *Un Prophète* depicts the intersection of multiple identities and shows a side of France where language can both bind and divide.
- Lecture
- Film: *Un Prophète*
- Reading: Ross, George. "Myths and Realities in the 2006 'Events.'" *French Politics, Culture, and Society*. Vol. 24, No. 3, Winter 2006.

Unit 11

France in the 2010s: Terror & « Etats d'urgence »

- Understanding the lead-up to the terror attacks; the cultural phenomenon of Charlie Hebdo. Exploring the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in 1990s Francophone Algeria, Mounia Meddour's film *Papicha*, provides a unique perspective on the origins of a movement that subsequently took hold in parts of mainland France.

- Lecture
- Film: *Papicha*
- Reading: Thompson, Christopher S. "From *Black-Blanc-Beur* to *Black-Black-Black*? "L'Affaire des Quotas" and the Shattered Image of 1998" in 21st-Century France. *French Politics, Culture, and Society*. Vol. 33, No. 1, Spring 2015.
- Reading: Neffati, Imen. "Charlie Hebdo and the Gilets Jaunes." *Jacobinmag*. July, 2019.

Unit 12

France in the 2010s: Economic strife & insurrection

- As France struggles to recover from 2008's Great Recession, public outcries against social inequality are growing in strength. Persistent, haunting visions of police brutality on news sites have been burned into the French collective consciousness. Ladj Ly's recent film (2019) *Les Misérables* seeks to depict the tensions between police and inhabitants of the banlieues. Yasmina Adi's 2012 documentary *Ici on a noié les Algériens* looks back to October 1961 when peaceful Algerian demonstrations were brutally repressed in Paris. Parallels and divergences with the current social strife and the "yellow jackets" movement will be explored.
- Reading: Bruneau, Ivan, Julian Mischi and Nicolas Renahy. "Rural France in Revolt." *Jacobinmag*. March 2019.
- Reading: Harris, Sue. "Cinema in a nation of filmgoers." Chapter 16, *Contemporary French Cultural Studies*.
- Euronews documentary on the Gilets Jaunes from December 17, 2018. • Film: *Ici on a noié les Algériens*

Unit 13

France in the 2010s: Hope & future prospects

- Where does France stand on the threshold of the 2020s? What can the arts teach us about the current social climate?
- Lecture
- Oral presentations and discussion
- Course conclusion

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).