

Department: Modern & Classical Languages (French & Francophone Studies)

Course No: 1171 [171]

Credits: 3

Title: French Cinema

Contact: Roger Travis (Lucy McNeece /Roger Celestin)

Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

Diversity: CA4 International

Catalog Copy: Weekly screenings of French films from the first comedies and surrealism to the New Wave the. Introduction to film history, analysis and the interpretation of films. Either semester. Three credits. One 3-hour class period. Readings, viewings and lectures in English. May not be used to meet French foreign language requirement.

Course Information: The course introduces students to the fundamentals of French film analysis and film history through the study of films made throughout the French-speaking world. Students read selected critical texts on film and are given contextual material on the periods and the cultural regions (France, Africa, Quebec, Vietnam, etc.) in which the films are produced.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed:

- a. Students are encouraged to move from impressions to reasoned arguments about film and to form their own judgments in relation to critical readings.
- b. Students enlarge their understanding of the filmic medium by learning to analyze its formal and technical components and also to appreciate the material conditions of its production.
- c. Students are encouraged to examine the ways in which cultural discourses encode themselves in both the form and content of cinematic production.
- d. Students are asked to understand the specific historical and cultural conditions of film production in French speaking communities within and outside of France, and to interrogate the critical discourses that evaluate films for different publics.
- e. Students should emerge from the course with a heightened sensitivity to the diverse uses of the cinematic medium, both as a tool of cultural persuasion and as a vehicle for cultural analysis and criticism. Students learn to appreciate the industrial and economic determinants of film production in various areas of the world, and to understand the different conceptions of narrative and visual representation issuing from different traditions.
- f. Students become more conscious of their own assumptions and habits of seeing and interpreting visual representation.

CA1 Criteria: 1. Investigations/critical analyses of human experience: Students in this course are asked to develop a critical perspective on a cultural medium that normally attempts to inhibit such awareness. They also read accounts of specialists from various periods and communities that involve philosophical, political and artistic reflection, as well as accounts of the way the film industry operates.

3. Investigations into symbolic modes of representation: Students are taught to understand the ways in which film functions to articulate a wide range of cultural phenomena, and draws upon a number of cultural “codes.” Analyzing film in this way can assist students in their understanding of other cultural forms.

4. Comprehension of written and/or graphic performance/art forms: They learn to “read” the language of film and to understand its complex modes of signification. They also learn to write about a medium that “goes without saying,” so that they learn to translate one form of expression into another.

CA4 Criteria: 1. The course involves the “diversification” of the French film industry, i.e., it analyzes both its material and ideological evolution and its impact on the construction of cultural stereotypes and categories of difference, both with respect to groups within France (Beur cinema) and throughout the French speaking world (the Americas, the Caribbean, Africa, the Maghreb, the Near East, The Indian ocean, and Asia).

2. The course analyzes the way different cultures sharing a common language have used the technology of film as well as the conventions of cinema inherited from France. It demonstrates the arbitrary and constructed character of such conventions and reveals their connection to political and economic structures.

3. The course also teaches students to understand the function of critical discourses on film, and to what extent they affect film reception. Film theory is presented in historical and cultural contexts that allow students to grasp its contingency, and its relation to ideological projects. The entire question of “theory” with respect to traditional cultural environments is raised as one of the epistemological “blindsights” of France’s treatment of cultural productions emanating from her former colonies.

4. Students are encouraged to perceive analogies among very different types of cinematic production coming from sites with different histories, and to perceive patterns in the uses and abuses of power with respect to filmic representation.

5. Students are asked to imagine the actual making of a film, and to prepare a first stage working script with still photos.

6. This course addresses multiculturalism and diversity within an international context.