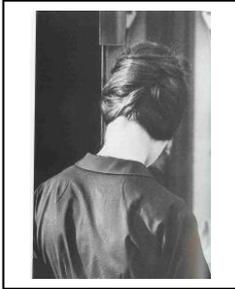


UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO
DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA FILM AND COMMUNICATION
STUDIES

French Cinema: French Cinema and the New Wave
MFCO 314



Please note: the following is a shortened example of a course outline as it has been taught in past years. As such it is **indicative only**: the assessment and schedule may change. If you require any further information please contact the department: mfco@otago.ac.nz

Note that in 2019 we will be introducing a new assessment task: an audio-visual essay.

Co-ordinator: Catherine Fowler

Aims of this paper

Through a focus upon French cinema from 1955-64 this paper will:

1. Provide an introduction to the critical and conceptual issues involved in the study of a specific national cinema
2. Explore the notions of change, innovation and ‘the new’ in relation to the study of national cinemas.

French cinema of the period of 1955-64 has been critically constructed as the moment of ‘la nouvelle vague’, or in English ‘the new wave’. As film moments go, the French New Wave is one of the most significant in the history of cinema. In this period a new generation of ‘cinéphiles’ (lovers of cinema) would transform film criticism, film practice and film-going world-wide. The films they made were low budget and raw; sometimes artistic and experimental at others homages to American genres and unashamedly popular. Those who debuted in this period have proven to be some of the most influential European directors ever: Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda and Jean Rouch. Some were also critics for Cahiers du Cinéma (founded in 1950) and their writings were the foundation for theories of authorship and film style that scholars use today. In short any student studying film HAS to engage with the French New Wave.

This course will take the new wave as a moment of **innovation** and **change**, and will examine the variety of ways in which these two concepts are manifest. In the first three weeks of the course we will look at French precedents and precursors: the ‘tradition of quality’ against which many film makers have been said to have reacted, and more independent works (e.g.: the work of Jean-Pierre Melville) that fed into the new wave moment. These first weeks will also be used to examine the work of the journal Cahiers du cinéma, in the pages of which film criticism and crucial aspects of film theory as we know it today (such as authorship, genre and realism) were born.

The films in weeks 4, 5 and 6 will be used as different examples of what could be called the ‘new wave aesthetic’: a film making practice that is low-budget, works largely without scripts, and uses non-professional actors and actresses; directors whose films represent a personal vision, and films that focus upon contemporary life in Paris. These first six weeks will build towards a discussion of

how the new wave could be said to constitute a national film style, the opportunity for which is created through the fragmentation of the Hollywood studio system.

Following the first assessment, weeks 8-13 will shift the focus from France to Europe and from contexts to texts, as we examine a series of issues pertinent to film studies: stars, realism and documentary, modernism, gender and dominant versus counter-cinema.

Objectives:

By the end of the course you can expect to:

- Demonstrate understanding of the significant contextual elements that bring about change in the French new wave period
- Be able to analyze the ‘myth’ of the French New Wave as it has been created through film literature
- Use close textual analysis to compare and contrast ‘innovation’ in selected films of the French new wave period
- Discuss and apply in a wider context key concepts in European cinema such as ‘authorship’ ‘realism’ ‘modernism’ and ‘counter-cinema’

180 hours

Course assessment

Note that this will change for 2019 to include audio-visual essays!!

Assignment 1	GROUP PRESENTATION	30%	due: Week 7, Monday 22nd August in class
Assignment 2	ESSAY	50%	due: week 12, Friday 7th October
Assignment 3	Exam (2 hours)	20%	due: in exam period

Lecture and Tutorial Programme

PART ONE: EXAMINING THE MYTH OF THE ‘FRENCH NEW WAVE’

Week One - Monday 11 July

Introduction to the course: no screening this week

Week Two –Monday 18 July

France in the 1950s and French cinema - Precursors - The Tradition of Quality



Les Grandes Manoeuvres/Summer Manoeuvres (1955, René Clair 107min)

Week Three -Monday 25nd July

Precedents – Melville and the US/France Axis of Influence



Bob le flambeur/Bob the gambler (1957, Jean-Pierre Melville)

Week Four - Monday 1 August

The Myth of the French New Wave I

Note: decide on your group for week seven



Les Quatre cents coups (1959, François Truffaut 90min)

Week Five - Monday 8th August

The Myth of the French New Wave II

Groups and topics to be assigned by now for week six



À bout de souffle (Jean-Luc Godard, 1959)

Week Six - Monday 15th August

Broadening the Definition



Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959, Alain Resnais 91min)

Week Seven – Monday 22nd August

Presentations in Monday session (lecture and screening times)

SEMESTER BREAK

Week Eight - Monday 5th September

The New Wave, Gender and Stars



Jules et Jim (1961, Francois Truffaut 110min)

Week Nine – Monday 12th September

Realism



Chronique d'un été/Chronicle of a Summer (1961, Jean Rouch 90min)

Week Ten - Monday 19th September

Modernism



L'Année Dernière à Marienbad/Last Year at Marienbad (1961, Alain Resnais 94min)

Week Eleven - Monday 26th September

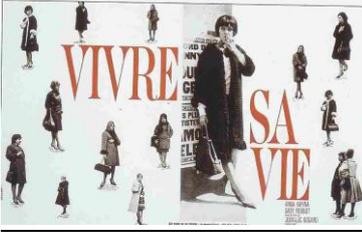
The Woman in the City I



Cléo de 5 à 7 (1962, Agnès Varda 90min)

Week Twelve - Monday 3rd October

The Woman in the City II



Vivre sa vie (1962, Jean-Luc Godard 82 min)

Week Thirteen – Monday 10th October

The end of the New wave

Screening to be decided