

SPECIAL TOPICS IN FRENCH CIVILIZATION
TODAY'S FRENCH CINEMA: A MIRROR OF CONTEMPORARY FRANCE

- Course proposed for the 2018 Pitt in Nantes Program -

Rationale for this course: Today's students are very much attuned to all aspects of popular culture, including cinema. A course devoted to the representation of societal issues of concern to the French in current French films should prove exciting to students participating in the Pitt in Nantes program.

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The "big screen," as the French like to refer to cinema, can be viewed as a mirror of society, as it constantly contributes to reflecting and even shaping French identity, both collective and individual. In this course, we will focus on French films released since the year 2000 to examine how 21st century French cinema has dealt with important national concerns – such as race, immigration, the working world, political life, as well as feminist and LGBTQ issues. Students will be introduced to the basic concepts and vocabulary necessary to analyze films. We will examine how French films differ from Hollywood productions in their treatment of current social issues. We will also take a look at films that have drawn the largest French audiences in the past 17 years, and what this tells us about French movie goers and the current state of cinema (think: French vs. Hollywood) in France.

We will devote 3 days per theme focusing on a film, which will be viewed and discussed in class.

Assignments for this course:

- Students will read reviews of, and write a response paper (500 words) – for which I will give a prompt – on each film featured in this course.
- Students will also go see a French film playing in Nantes and write a 500-word reaction paper on this movie.
- For each film, a group of students will work as a team of "discussion leaders" – i.e. they will prepare questions for the class, and select scenes from the movie discussed that the class will examine closely.
- Students will work in pairs to create a proposal – in the form of a multimedia presentation - for a film (fiction or documentary) for which they are seeking funding, focusing on an aspect of contemporary French society.

Tentative list of films to be viewed and discussed (only one film will be picked per theme – this list is one of films chosen not primarily for their artistic value, but because they focus on one of the themes featured in this course):

	Theme	Possible Movie (only one film will be chosen per theme)
Week 1 – Days 1, 2 & 3	Race	Bienvenue à Marly Gaumont (The African Doctor - 2016) Qu'est-ce qu'on a fait au bon Dieu? (Serial (bad) Weddings – 2014) Monsieur Chocolat (Chocolat – 2016) Les Intouchables (The Intouchables – 2011)

<p>Week 1 – Day 4 Week 2 – Days 1 & 2</p>	<p>Immigration</p>	<p>Welcome (2009)</p> <p>Le Havre (2011)</p> <p>La Cour de Babel (2013)</p> <p>Samba (2014)</p>
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<p>Week 2 – Days 3 & 4 Week 3 – Day 1</p>	<p>The family</p>	<p>Un Conte de Noël (A Christmas Tale – 2008)</p> <p>L’Heure d’été (Summer Hours – 2008)</p> <p>La Famille Bélier The Bélier Family (2014)</p> <p>Belles Familles (Families – 2015)</p>
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<p>Week 3 – Days 2, 3 & 4</p>	<p>Life in “les cités”</p>	<p>Bande de Filles (Girlhood – 2014)</p> <p>Dheepan (2015)</p> <p>Neully sa mère (Neuille Yo Mama – 2009)</p> <p>L’Esquive (Games of Love and Chance – 2003)</p> <p>Entre les Murs (The Class – 2008)</p> <p>La Journée de la jupe (2008)</p>
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<p>Week 4 – Days 1, 2 & 3</p>	<p>LGBTQ Issues</p>	<p>Tomboy (2011)</p> <p>Quand on a 17 ans (Being 17 – 2016)</p> <p>La Vie d’Adèle (Blue Is the Warmest Color – 2013)</p> <p>Les Invisibles (2013)</p>
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<p>Week 4 – Day 4 Week 5 – Days 1 & 2</p>	<p>Life in an economy in crisis</p>	<p>La Loi du marché (The Measure of a Man – 2015)</p> <p>Deux jours, une nuit (Two Days, One Night – 2014)</p> <p>L’Emploi du temps (Time Out – 2001)</p> <p>Le Grand Partage (The Roommates Party – 2015)</p>
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<p>Week 5 – Days 3 & 4 (students will watch the film outside of class)</p>	<p>Feminist issues</p>	<p>L’Emprise (2015)</p> <p>Pieds nus sur les limaces (Lily Sometimes – 2011)</p> <p>Tout ce qui brille (All That Glitters – 2010)</p> <p>Coco avant Chanel (Coco Before Chanel – 2009)</p> <p>Les Femmes de l’Ombre (Female Agents – 2008)</p> <p>La Fille de Brest (150 milligrams – 2016)</p> <p>Elle (2016)</p>
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<p>Week 6 – Day 1</p>	<p>What films actually draw French audiences?</p>	<p>Bienvenue Chez les Ch’tis (Biggest box-office hit of all times in France– after Titanic)</p>
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<p>Week 6 – Days 3 & 4</p>	<p>FINAL PRESENTATIONS</p>	
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