

English 395A. Godard and European Film

Steve Dillon

Office Hours: Monday 10-11 Tuesday 12-1 Wednesday 12-1

Course Description:

Jean-Luc Godard is considered by many to be the most important film-maker of the second half the twentieth century. He began his film career as a critic for Cahiers du Cinéma, plunged into film-making with the New Wave masterpiece, Breathless, and over the next forty years went on to create more than 80 films, each of which thought further about what cinema is and what it can do. In this course we shall examine some of the main touchstones in Godard's career, by looking at these films in the context of other European film masterpieces.

Required Texts: Godard on Godard, ed. Tom Milne

Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s. Ed. Jim Hillier

Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, ed. Braudy and Cohen

M Jan 12 Introduction M Jan 19 MLK Day No Class

M Jan 26

Nicholas Ray, Rebel Without A Cause (1955)

Alain Resnais, Hiroshima mon amour (1959)

Hillier: on Resnais, 59-72; "Dossier: Nicholas Ray," 104-24

Film Theory: David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice," 716-24

M Feb 2

Francois Truffaut, The 400 Blows (1959)

Godard, Breathless (1960)

Hillier: on 400 Blows, 51-59; on Cinemascope, Truffaut, 273-274; Rohmer, 280-83

Film Theory: Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," 43-56

Godard on Godard: 75-81, on Bergman, 134-39 on Sirk, 143-46, Renoir and television,
146-47, more on 400 Blows

Film Theory, Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema"

M Feb 9

Godard, Vivre sa vie (1962)

Dreyer, The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928)

Film Theory: Béla Balász, "The Close-up," "The Face of Man," 304-11

Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: the Articulation of Body and Space,"
363-75

Godard on Godard: Interview, 171-96

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Winter Recess

M Feb 23

Godard, Alphaville (1965)

Marker, La Jetée (1962)

Film Theory: Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," 345-55

"The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema," 760-77

M March 1

Godard, Pierrot le fou (1965)

Antonioni, L'avventura (1960)

Godard on Godard: Interview, 213-234

Film Theory: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 833-44

M March 8

Godard, Weekend (1967)

Bergman, Persona (1966)

Film Theory: Brian Henderson, "Towards a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style," 57-67

Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," 701-15

M March 15

Godard, Numéro deux (1975)

Makavejev, WR: Mysteries of the Organism (1971)

Film Theory: Peter Wollen, "Godard and Counter Cinema: Vent d'est," 499-507

John Ellis, "Broadcast TV as Sound and Image," 385-94

M March 22

Godard, Passion (1982)

Fellini, 8½ (1963)

Film Theory: Seymour Chatman, "The Cinematic Narrator," 473-86

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M March 29

Godard, For Ever Mozart (1997)

Jarman, The Last of England (1987)

M April 5

Godard, In Praise of Love (2001)

Tarkovsky, Nostalghia (1983)

Grades: Weekly homeworks (80%), class participation (20%).

Weekly homeworks. Each week you will turn in a 3-4 page paper that brings together elements of both films and the critical reading. I would like the paper to be a real paper, with a title, argument/discussion, and conclusion. You'll need to pick just the right size topic. And you will need to edit ferociously to make it fit in the page limit (please do not go over). I will hand out topic sheets each week. We can certainly use the first couple weeks to practice, to share assumptions and expectations.

The homeworks need to be turned in during class, unless you have a Dean's excuse. Also, I really want to see all of the ten of the homeworks.

In these papers I would like to see responsible use of criticism; that is, succinct and accurate summary of particular points in the reading, plus a critical, thoughtful take on those points.

There's no quantity requirement as to how many paragraphs you need to present on films or critics; the main idea is that you can show me that you have thought about both viewing and reading, and can use the criticism to illuminate certain aspects of the films.

Class Participation. A seminar is your opportunity to discuss interesting things with your colleagues; I would like you to be prepared to join the discussion. You do not need to talk all the time in order to be a successful participant, but I would like to hear from you from time to time. There are sometimes moments when I will stop and just see whether anyone has ideas, observations, or discussion questions.

Viewing the Films

The films will be on reserve at the audio desk in the ground floor of the library. My main advice would be to watch them early in the week rather than later. You can take notes, work on your paper, and if you have to look at them again, you can do that. We are trying to avoid the traffic jam where everyone tries to check out the movies the night before class.

HW1

M Jan 26

Nicholas Ray, Rebel Without A Cause (1955)

Alain Resnais, Hiroshima mon amour (1959)

Hillier: on Resnais, 59-72; "Dossier: Nicholas Ray," 104-24

Film Theory: David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice," 716-24

We will begin by looking an example of Hollywood film, in addition to one of the first masterpieces of the French New Wave. The critics at the Cahiers du Cinéma were famously compelled by not only European art films, but also certain productions of Hollywood. If we take Rebel Without a Cause as typical Hollywood, what does it do that Hiroshima mon amour does not do? In his article, David Bordwell sets down some keys element of European art cinema. Do his definitions apply at all to Rebel Without a Cause? Do his descriptions apply to Resnais? What overlaps do you see in the discussions of Resnais and Ray by the critics at Cahiers du Cinéma?

In order to focus your paper, you might focus on a particular scene or section from each film.

In class we can compare the way each love story is handled; we can think about the relationship of the lovers to the community and world around them.