

History, Fiction, Memory in French Cinema

Course Code: SMLM 008

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Module description

This module will investigate the contribution of cinema to current debates about the interplay of history, fiction and memory. It will begin by examining the aesthetics of films that represent processes of remembrance and forgetting. This initial interrogation of how memory is mediated by the filmmaker will allow us to establish a critical and theoretical framework in which to conceptualise and explore the screen representation of memory.

We shall then focus on questions of memory in relation to specific moments of national trauma, concentrating on fiction films and documentaries relating to episodes in recent French history (the Holocaust, the Occupation, the Franco-Algerian war). These will be considered in the context of recent historiographical material; our analysis of these films will focus on understanding what the French filmmaker's contribution has been to acts of commemoration and repression of national memory, as well as to the formation of ideas about the relationship between public events and personal memories.

All core films will be available in subtitled versions, and much of the reading material will be in English. To follow the course, it is therefore not necessary to have a knowledge of the French language.

Provisional filmography

L'Année dernière à Marienbad (*Last Year at Marienbad*; Alain Resnais, 1961)

Caché (*Hidden*; Michael Haneke, 2005)

Le Chagrin et la pitié (*The Sorrow and the Pity*; Marcel Ophuls, 1971)

Un héros très discret (*A Self-Made Hero*; Jacques Audiard, 1996)

Hiroshima mon amour (Alain Resnais, 1959)

Jacquot de Nantes (Agnès Varda, 1991)

La Jetée (*The Pier*; Chris Marker, 1962)

Lacombe, Lucien (Louis Malle, 1974)

Nuit et brouillard (*Night and Fog*; Alain Resnais, 1955)

La Question humaine (*Heart-Beat Detector*; Nicolas Klotz and Elisabeth Perceval, 2007)

Sans toit ni loi (*Vagabond*; Agnès Varda, 1985)

Shoah (Claude Lanzmann, 1985)

Supplementary filmography

Au revoir les enfants (*Goodbye, Children*; Louis Malle, 1987)

La Bataille d'Algers (*The Battle of Algiers*; Gillo Pontecorvo, 1965)

La Guerre sans nom (*The Undeclared War*; Bertrand Tavernier, 1992)

Histoire(s) du cinéma (Jean-Luc Godard, 1988–1998)

India Song (Marguerite Duras, 1975)

Laissez-passer (*Safe Conduct*; Bertrand Tavernier, 2001)

Muriel, ou le temps d'un retour (*Muriel, or the Time of Return*; Alain Resnais, 1963)

L'Oeil de Vichy (*The Eye of Vichy*; Claude Chabrol, 1993)

Sans Soleil (*Sunless*; Chris Marker, 1982)

Train de vie (*Train of Life*; Radu Mihaileanu, 1998)

General bibliography

Guy Austin, 'Holocaust Documentary, the War Film, and National Identity', in *Contemporary French Cinema* (Manchester U. P., 1996), pp. 18–45

Ilan Avisar, *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable* (Indiana U. P., 1988)

Antoine de Baecque and Christian Delage, (eds.), *De l'histoire au cinéma* (Complexe, 1998)

Victoria Best and Kathryn Robson, (eds.), *French Studies*, vol. lix, no. 1 (January 2005) (special issue: 'Memory and Innovation in Post-Holocaust France')

Caruth, Cathy, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Johns Hopkins U. P., 1996)

—— (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Johns Hopkins U. P., 1995)

André Pierre Colombat, *The Holocaust in French Film* (Scarecrow, 1993)

Thomas Elsaesser, 'Subject Positions, Speaking Positions: From *Holocaust*, *Our Hitler*, and *Heimat* to *Shoah* and *Schindler's List*', in Vivian Sobchack, (ed.), *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event* (Routledge, 1996), pp. 145–183

Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (Routledge, 1992) (especially 'The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*', pp. 204–283)

Marc Ferro, *Cinéma et histoire* (Paris, 1993) (trans. by Naomi Greene as *Cinema and History* (Wayne State U. P., 1988)

Jill Forbes, *The Cinema in France: After the New Wave* (Macmillan, 1992) (especially 'The New Documentary', pp. 33–38)

Saul Friedländer, (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'* (Harvard U. P., 1992) (not exclusively on film, but a landmark volume that provides valuable background with respect to the key critical issues)

Jean-Michel Frodon, (ed.), *Le Cinéma et la Shoah: un art à l'épreuve de la tragédie du 20^e siècle* (Cahiers du cinéma, 2007)

Richard J. Golsan, *Vichy's Afterlife: History and Counterhistory in Postwar France* (University of Nebraska Press, 2000)

Naomi Greene, *Landscapes of Loss: The National Past in Postwar French Cinema* (Princeton U. P., 1999)

Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, (eds.), *Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television since 1933* (Wallflower Press, 2005)

Lynne Higgins, *New Novel, New Wave, New Politics: Fiction and the Representation of History in Postwar France* (University of Nebraska Press, 1996)

Joshua Hirsch, *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust* (Temple U. P., 2004)

Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (University of California Press, 1998)

Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (C.U.P., 1989)

Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years – 1940–1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Rod Kedward and Nancy Wood, (eds.), *The Liberation Of France: Image and Event* (Berg, 1995)

Lawrence D. Kritzman, (ed.), *Auschwitz and After: Race, Culture, and 'the Jewish Question' in France* (Routledge, 1994) (especially Nelly Furman, 'The Languages of Pain in *Shoah*', pp. 299–312, and Naomi Greene, 'La Vie en rose: Images of the Occupation in French Cinema', pp. 283–98)

Sylvie Lindeperg, *Les Ecrans de l'ombre: La Seconde Guerre Mondiale dans le cinéma français (1944–1969)* (CNRS, 1997)

Yosefa Loshitzky, (ed.), *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List* (Indiana U. P., 1997) (especially the comparative analyses of Lanzmann and Spielberg in chapters 3–5)

Vincent Lowy, *L'Histoire infilmable: les camps d'extermination nazis à l'écran* (L'Harmattan, 2001)

Alan Morris, *Collaboration and Resistance Reviewed: Writers and the Mode Rétro in Post-Gaullist France* (Berg, 1992)

Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols. (Gallimard, 1984–92) (trans. by Arthur Goldhammer as *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (Columbia U. P., 1996))

Rebecca M. Pauly, 'From Shoah to Holocaust: Image and Reality in Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* and *Hiroshima mon amour*', *French Cultural Studies*, 3: 9 (October 1992), 253–61

Susannah Radstone, Thomas Elsaesser, E. Ann Kaplan and Maureen Turim, 'Trauma and Screen Studies: Opening the Debate', *Screen*, 42 (Summer 2001), 188–216

Jacques Rivette, 'De l'abjection', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 120 (June 1961), 54–55 (reprinted in *Cahiers du cinéma*, special edition entitled 'Le siècle du cinéma' (November 2000), 67)

Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History* (Harvard U. P., 1995)

—— (ed.), *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Princeton U. P., 1995)

Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford U. P., 2009)

Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Harvard U. P., 1991)

Daniel L. Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (Perseus, 1996)

Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (Routledge, 1989), (especially introduction and pp. 231–35)

Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford University Press, 2004)

Nancy Wood, *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe* (Berg, 1999)

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