

Paris on the Screen

Course Code: SMLM 018
Spring 2012

Course organiser: Dr Sue Harris
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Class time and venue: Thursday 10-12, Arts 1 G.34

Course description:

The city of Paris has a complex relationship to filmmaking. It is the hub of the French industry in terms of production and exhibition, and features with such regularity in domestic films that it arguably functions metonymically for France itself. It is also the primary centre of film production in Europe, boasting more financial and industrial weight than any other European neighbour, and has been a favoured destination for foreign filmmakers since the earliest days of cinema. For French filmmakers Paris has always been a complex and contested site: an object of scrutiny as both setting and subject, a rhetorical topos that is variously cherished, celebrated, despised or banalised, and which exists in proximity or distance to discourses of the national and the hegemonic. For international filmmakers on the other hand, and American filmmakers particularly, the city of Paris is an iconic geographical site, one that speaks of the cultural appeal of 'old Europe', its art and fashions; it encapsulates the thrill of the exotic other, while providing an easy shorthand for national and international identity narratives. The American industry's seemingly superficial appropriation of Paris as coded narrative space on a par with New York and Los Angeles, appears to testify to a profoundly uncritical perspective on the city; a perspective which is all the more significant for its extensive global reach, which far surpasses that of French domestic production.

This course offers comparative perspective on French and US cinema at an identifiable and potentially inflammatory point of aesthetic intersection. Focussing on the significance of Paris as a setting, the course brings together a corpus of French and US films from a range of periods of cinema history, all set in Paris. It uses a case study model to explore continuities and differences between films from different genres, styles, historical periods, critical positions and production contexts, and to consider the aesthetic, thematic and political dialogue that operates – internally and externally – across the two cinema industries. The course uses Paris as an example of a city that has been accessed in a multiplicity of ways by international cinema, and interrogates the significance and critical weight of setting and location in cinematic representation. It works towards an understanding of 'Screen Paris' as a distinct and demonstrable cultural concept, rather than a simple celluloid mirror of the familiar city.

Teaching pattern:

The course is composed of a lecture-led introductory block, followed by four student led 'case study' blocks. The final week will be given over to an essay workshop.

The case study blocks will each draw on a different selection of films and readings, conceptualised as follows:

- i. Locations: On the streets of Paris
- ii. Sets: Paris by design
- iii. Themes: Dystopian Paris
- iv. Aesthetics: Reimagining Paris

Students are expected to watch the films and complete the set reading in advance of the session. All students will make at least one formal presentation (depending on numbers of participants) in the course of the semester.

Assignment

One essay of 4,000 words on a topic to be decided in consultation with the course tutor, and presented for informal group discussion and peer feedback in the essay workshop.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Books:

Alsayyad, Nezar: Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real (Routledge, New York, 2006)

Andrew, Dudley: Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film (Princeton University Press: Princeton 1995)

Augé, M: Non-Places Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity (Verso, London & New York, 1995)

Beaumont, Matthew & Dart, Gregory (eds.): Restless Cities (Verso, London & New York, 2010)

Benjamin, Walter: Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism (Verso, London & New York, 1992)

Bergfelder, T, Harris, S & Street, S: Film Architecture and the Transnational Imagination: Set design in 1930s European Cinema (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2007)

Bruno, Guiliiana: Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film (Verso, New York, 2002)

Brunsdon, Charlotte: London in Cinema: The Cinematic City Since 1945 (BFI, London, 2007)

Charney, L & Schwartz, Vanessa R. [Eds.] Cinema and the Invention of Modernity (University of California Press, L.A. & London, 1995)

Ezra, Elizabeth (ed.): European Cinema (OUP, Oxford, 2004)

Ezra, E & Rowden, T (eds.): Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader (Routledge, London and New York, 2006)

Flitterman-Lewis, Sandy: To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema (Columbia University Press, 1996)

Forbes, Jill: Les Enfants du Paradis (British Film Institute, 1997)

Hayward, Susan & Vincendeau, G (Eds.) French Film: Texts and Context (Routledge, London, 2000)

Hussey, Andrew: Paris: The Secret History (Viking, London, 2006)

Jones, Colin: Paris, Biography of a City (Penguin, London, 2006)

Konstantarakos, Myrto (Ed.): Spaces in European Cinema (Intellect, Exeter, UK, 2000)

Marshall, Bill & Stilwell, Robyn (eds.): Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond Intellect, Exeter, 2000)

Mazdon, Lucy: Encore Hollywood: Remaking French Cinema (BFI, London, 2000)

Powrie, Phil (ed.), French Cinema in the 1990s: Continuity and Difference (OUP, Oxford, 1999)

Prendergast, Christopher: Paris and the Nineteenth Century (Blackwell, Cambridge Mass. & Oxford UK, 1992)

Ross, Kristin, Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, 1995)

Sanders, James: Celluloid Skyline: New York and the Movies (Bloomsbury, London, 2002)

Schwartz, Vanessa: It's so French! Hollywood, paris and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2007)

Sheringham, Michael [Ed.]: Parisian Fields (Reaktion Books, London, 1996)

Sorlin, Pierre: European Cities, European Societies 1939-1990 (Routledge, London, 1991)

Verevis, Constantine: Film Remakes (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2005)

Warner, Marina: L'Atalante (British Film Institute, London, 1993)

Watson, Sophie & Gibson, Katherine (eds.) Postmodern Cities & Spaces (Blackwell, Oxford, 1995)

White, Edmund: The Flâneur: A stroll through the paradoxes of Paris (Bloomsbury, Lonon, 2001)

Wollen, Peter: Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film (Verso, London & New York, 2002)

Journal articles and book chapters:

Austin, James.F: 'Digitizing Frenchness in 2001: On a 'historic' moment in the French Cinema, *French Cultural Studies*, Vol.15: 3, October 2004 pp. 328-300

Durham, Carolyn A.: 'Sighting/Siting/Citing the City: The construction of Paris in twenty-first century cinema' in *Post Script* Vol.27, no.1

- Ezra, Elizabeth: 'The latest attraction: Léos Carax and the French cinematic patrioimoiné' in *French Cultural Studies* Vol.13: 2, June 2002 pp. 225-234
- Ezra, Elizabeth: 'The Death of an Icon: *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*', *French Cultural Studies*, Vol.1 15: 3, October 2004 pp. 301-310
- Forbes, Jill: 'Gender and Space in Cléo de 5 à 7', *Studies in French cinema* Vol.2:2, 2002, 83-89
- Green, Naomi: 'Parisian Images and National Transformations' in Temple, Michael & Witt, Michael (Eds.): The French Cinema Book (Eds.) (British Film Institute, London, 2004), pp.247-255
- Handyside, Fiona: ' "Paris isn't for changing planes, it's for changing your outlook": Audrey Hepburn as European Star in 1950s France', *French Cultural Studies* 14:3 (October 2003), 99-108.
- Handyside, Fiona: 'Beyond Hollywood, Into Europe: The Tourist Gaze in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Hawks, 1953) and *Funny Face* (Donen, 1957)', *Studies in European Cinema* 2:1 (October 2004), 77-88.
- Harris, Sue: 'Conspiracy, surveillance and the spatial turn in the Bourne Trilogy' (*The Bourne Identity*, Liman, 2002; *The Bourne Supremacy*, Greengrass, 2004; *The Bourne Ultimatum*, Greengrass, 2007), in Christophe Lindner (ed.) Globalization, Violence and the Visual Culture of Cities, (Routledge, London & New York, 2009)
- Higbee, Will: 'The Return of the Political, or designer visions of exclusion? The case for Mathieu Kassovitz's *fracture sociale* trilogy' in *Studies in French Cinema* Vol 5: 2, 2005, pp.123-135
- McCann, Ben: " 'A discreet character?' Action spaces and architectural specificity in French poetic realist cinema" in *Screen* 45, 2004 pp.375-382
- Nettlebeck, Colin: 'Layering Culture: Leos Carax and *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* in *Australian Journal of French Studies* 32:1 (1995) pp. 109-24
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- Rollet, Brigitte: '*Paris nous appartient: Flânerie* in Paris and Film' in *Film Quarterly*, Vol.61, no.3, pp.46-51
- Saxton, Libby: 'Secrets and revelations: Off-screen space in Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005)', *Studies in French Cinema* Vol. 7:1 (2007), 5-17
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