



Syllabus

THE CINEMA OF FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT - 50936

Last update 13-08-2014

HU Credits: 2

Responsible Department: Communication & Journalism

Academic year: 1

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Aner Preminger

Coordinator Email: anerp@zahav.net.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-14:00 by appointment

Teaching Staff:
Dr. Aner Preminger

Course/Module description:

The course explores the Cinema of François Truffaut, a unique filmmaker and one

of the most important figures in the international modern cinema revolution of the late fifties, called "The French New Wave". The course analyses Truffaut's films and checks the interaction between them and his cultural-spiritual world. It is taken as a case study for analyzing the evolution of the cinematic language and as a revision of cinema history. Truffaut is placed in the Cinema Pantheon as a young film critic who shaped cinema first by writing in *Cahiers du Cinéma* and later as a filmmaker. In his writing and in his films he provoked traditional cinematic axioms and theories, and was one of the dominant thinkers of the Auteur's Theory (*La Politique des Auteurs*).

Course/Module aims:

The course will focus on fifteen of Truffaut's films in addition to excerpts from some of his other films. The film's analyses will provide understanding of his cultural-spiritual world, his unique cinema style and utterance, some of which turned to be part of the universal cinematic utterance. It is taken as a case study for analyzing the evolution of the cinematic language and as a revision of cinema history.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

Understanding Truffaut's contribution to cinema history, especially to modern cinema in the 2nd half of the 20th century. Understanding his perception of the historical order, cinematic utterance and the new canon of directors he has shaped. Interpreting his film with intertextual tools in the context of his own oeuvre as well as in the context of cinema history.

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Watching one of Truffaut's films before each class and prepare a film-report. Interpretation of the film in its historical context, during the class. Discussion of the main issues of the film and its contribution to the Truffaut's oeuvre as well as to the history of cinema and to the cinematic language. Screening excerpts from the film, and sometimes from additional movies related to the relevant chapter in cinema history.

Course/Module Content:

Dominant themes in Truffaut's films:

1. "Are women magic?" The obsessive question of Alphonse in *La Nuit Américaine* (Day for Night, 1973) is a key question in Truffaut's Cinema which examines the interaction between the 'feminine magic' and the manhood existence.

2. The tension between reality and fiction, between life and art (cinema, literature, theatre, music), between language and the world it represents.

3. Revision of cinema history as well as redefining the Cinema Pantheon.

4. The psychological pathology of his characters: Oedipal; the uncontrollable need to 'conquer' one's partner; the strong unsatisfied need to be loved; obsessions; blurring borders between fantasy and reality and between life and cinema.

Cinematic innovations, style and issues

raised by Truffaut's Cinema:

1. Use of 'miss-en-scene' in Renoir's and Welles' tradition. Preference of sequence shots on montage.

2. Shooting from outside, through windows, through walls, trying to grasp the inner world as it is perceived from the outside.

3. "wish" pan.

4. Freeze frame.

5. Unpolished shooting: using hand held camera, minimal use of lighting, deliberate 'errors' in cinematic language.

6. A new approach to the cinematic story, plot and narrative.

7. Redefining the relationship between life and cinema, between Documentary and Fiction.

8. Identification vs. alienation.

9. A unique use of voice-over.

10. Relationship between content and form, between an idea and its representation □ the language.

11. Extensive use of inter-textuality.

12. Mixture of genres □ "Explosion of Genres".

13. Exploring and developing some of the "neo-realists" approaches and ideas to its extremes, e.g.: preferring the "small subjects", going against the spectacle, avoiding stars, low budget on location filmmaking, a humanistic approach that places the characters in the center of the film.

14. La Politique des Auteurs □ The importance of the Auteur's (author) Theory in Truffaut's cinema.

15. Cinema and Literature □ A new approach to an old issue. How to adapt "right"? The influence of Robert Bresson.

16. Truffaut's cinematic corpus as a revolutionary statement on cinema history.

How a close analysis of Truffaut's films creates new insights on the Cinema Pantheon on one hand, and how the perspective of cinema history enables us to have a deeper understanding of his films.

17. Revolution and rebellion vs. tradition □ keeping the tension between two contradicting approaches:

a. Rebel against the previous cinematic consensus and conventions; trying to start from zero.

b. Paying homage to the existing tradition; appreciating the old films and masters and internalizing the idea that one can not really start from zero.

18. Exploration and redefinition of Modernism in Cinema □ Distinction between "Classical Cinema", "Modern Cinema" and "Post-modern Cinema". Understanding

Truffaut's placement in this triangular relationship as well as his contribution to all 3 opposing approaches.

19. Reflexive cinema □ definition of the concept and understanding it as a key concept in Truffaut's Cinema and in his approach as a film critic.

20. Theory and criticism vs. filmmaking □ New definitions and criteria for film criticism and exploration of the relationship between a film critic and a filmmaker.

Required Reading:

de Baecque, A., & Toubiana, S., 1999, *Truffaut - A Biography*, Trans. Catherine Temerson, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Dixon, W. W., 1993, *The Early Film Criticism of François Truffaut*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis.

Insdorf, A., 1997, *François Truffaut*, Cambridge University Press.

Truffaut, F., 1967, *Hitchcock/Truffaut*, Simon & Schuster, New York.

Truffaut, F., 1987, *Truffaut by Truffaut*, Compiled by Dominique Rabourdin, Trans. Robert Erich Wolf, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York.

Truffaut, F., *Letters*, Edited by Jacob, J. & De Givaray, C., Trans. Gilbert Adair, Faber & Faber, London.

Additional Reading Material:

Bibliography

Allen, D., 1985, *Finally Truffaut*, Secker & Warburg, London.

Bazin, A., 1967, *What is cinema?*, essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray, Vol. 1, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.

- 1972, *What is cinema?*, essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray, Vol. 2, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London

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Beylie, C., 1959, *Les Mistons*, Cahiers du Cinéma, January 1959.

Bloom, H., 1973, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, London: Oxford UP.
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Cahoreau, G., 1989, *François Truffaut 1932-84*, Julliard, Paris.

Canby, V., 1975, *Truffaut's Clear-Eyed Quest*, New York Times, September 14, 1975.

Card, J., 1984, *More than meets the eye in Singin' in the Rain and Day for Night*, *Literature/Film Quarterly (LFQ)*, Vol. 12:2, p. 87-95.

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- Dixon, W. W., 1993, *The Early Film Criticism of François Truffaut*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis.
- de Baecque, A., & Toubiana, S., 1999, *Truffaut - A Biography*, Trans. Catherine Temerson, Alfred A., Knopf, New York.
- Douchet, J., 1999, *French New Wave*, Trans. Robert Bonnono, D.A.P. Inc., New York
- Fanne, D., 1972, *L'Univers de François Truffaut*, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris.
- Fischer, L., 1989, *Shot/Counter Shot, Film Tradition and Women's Cinema*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Franchi, R. M., & Lewis, M., 1962, *Conversation with François Truffaut*, *NY Film Bulletin*, No. 3, Vol 3.
- Geloin, G., 1981, *La Pratique du Livre: Intertextualité dans Le Jeune Cinéma. (French Text)*, UMI, University of Illinois, Michigan.
- Gillain, A., 1980, *Topologie de L'Amour en Fuite, L'Avant Scène cinéma*, 254, (octobre).
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- Hirsh, A., 1979, *Truffaut's Subversive Siren: Intertextual Narrative in Mississippi Mermaid*, *Film Criticism*, Fall 1979, Meadville, U.S.A.
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The Kristeva Reader, 1986, Edited by: Moi, T., Oxford: Blackwell.
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- Preminger, A., 2004, *The Human Comedy of Antoine Doinel: From Honoré de Balzac to François Truffaut*, *The European Legacy: Journal of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas: (ISSEI)*, Vol. 9, No. 2, p.173-193.
- Preminger, A., 2007, *François Truffaut Rewrites Alfred Hitchcock: A Pygmalion Trilogy*, *Literature/Film quarterly (LFQ)*, July, Vol. 35:3.
- Radell, M. K., 2007, *How Subtext Shapes Narrative in François Truffaut's The Last Metro and Claude Berri's Uranus*, *Literature/Film quarterly (LFQ)*, July, Vol. 35:3.
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 - 1967, *Hitchcock/Truffaut*, Simon & Schuster, New York.
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 - 1987, *Truffaut by Truffaut*, Compiled by Dominique Rabourdin, Trans. Robert Erich Wolf, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York.
 - 1990, *Letters*, Edited by Jacob, J. & De Givaray, C., Trans. Gilbert Adair,
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Truffaut, F. & Moussy, M., 1969, *The 400 Blows*, *The Filmscript*, Ed. David Danby, Grove Press, Inc., New York.
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Vincendeau, G., 1996, *The Companion to French Cinema*, Cassell & British Film Institute, London.

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %
Presentation 0 %
Participation in Tutorials 10 %
Project work 80 %
Assignments 0 %
Reports 10 %
Research project 0 %
Quizzes 0 %
Other 0 %

Additional information:

Filmography
Une Visite, 1955
Les Mistons, 1957
Une Histoire d'Eau, 1958
Les Quatre Cents Coups (The 400 Blows), 1959
Tirez sur le Pianiste (Shoot the Piano Player), 1960
Jules et Jim (Jules and Jim), 1961
Antoine et Colette, L'Amour Vingt Ans (Love at Twenty), 1962
La Peau Douce (The Soft Skin), 1964
Fahrenheit 451, 1966
La Mariée était en Noir (The Bride Wore Black), 1967
Baisers Volés (Stolen Kisses), 1968
La Sirène du Mississippi (Mississippi Mermaid), 1969
L'Enfant Sauvage (The Wild Child), 1969
Domicile Conjugal (Bed and Board), 1970
Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent (Two English Girls), 1971
Une Belle Fille Comme Moi (Such a Gorgeous Kid like Me), 1972
La Nuit Américaine (Day for Night), 1973
L'Histoire d'Adèle H (The Story of Adèle H.), 1975
L'Argent de Poche (Small Change), 1976
L'Homme Qui Aimait Les Femmes (The Man Who Loved Women), 1977
La Chambre Verte (The Green Room), 1978
L'Amour en Fuite (Love on the Run), 1979

Le Dernier M©tro (The Last Metro), 1980
La Femme d' C't© (The Woman Next Door), 1981
Vivement Dimanche! (Finally Sunday), 1983