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**Curriculum Development Grant (April 2000) Report**  
“The Art of Looking: Women and French Cinema”

1. During June of 2001, I developed a new course entitled, “The Art of Looking: Women and French Cinema.” I spent the month reviewing the critical literature on feminist film theory as well as previewing some 20 French films. I eventually chose three books and selected 8 films to show during class.
2. Yes, I was able successfully to complete the project.
3. During the spring of 2001, I taught the course which was cross-listed with Women’s Studies (F391/W302). I will teach it again Spring 2004. The student evaluations were quite positive. Additionally, I invited Linda Chen, then acting Director of Women’s Studies, to observe the class. Her report was also positive. I have attached the course syllabus to my report.

I would be happy to provide further information if the committee needs it.

## **The Art of Looking: Women and French Cinema F391: W302**

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e-mail: Lwalker@iusb.edu  
Office hours: MW 11:30-12:30; 2:00-3:00; T 4:00-5:00 or by appointment

**Tuesdays at 5:30-8:15 in GR 106.** *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* and Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* are available at the IUSB bookstore. There are also a series of articles on reserve at Schurz library as well as the Language Resource Center in Wiekamp 1104.

### **Objectives:**

In 1985 Laura Mulvey made a provocative claim. She stated that the gaze was gendered, that looking was primarily a man's domain. Through a psychoanalytic analysis of the cinematic apparatus, she demonstrated that man was the "subject" of the gaze and woman was the "object." Mulvey's theory radically altered the terms of feminist debates because she insisted on the psychically, overdetermined nature of gender construction. If an act as seemingly innocuous as viewing, going to the movies, was at the root of gender construction, how could a committed feminist ever hope to escape her inevitable objectification? Mulvey's theory caused controversy and was widely criticized. However, her fundamental questioning of the role that the cinematic (or visual) apparatus plays in the construction of identity remains as urgent and important today—in our "post-literate" culture—as it was 25 years ago. In the specific context of postwar French cinema, we shall study these questions as they relate to identity construction and feminist debates.

Within the framework of these general theoretical questions, we will concentrate on postwar French cinema produced mostly, but not exclusively, by women writers/directors. Key figures are Agnès Varda, Marguerite Duras, Chantal Akerman, Claire Denis, Diane Kurys and Coline Serreau. Additionally, we will view four films by Roger Vadim, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Jacques Annaud as points of comparison and contrast. The time span covered will be roughly 1955-1998. We will see France emerge from the devastation and deprivation of the war years to a booming economy of the 50s, 60s and 70s. France will lose its colonial empire; May of 1968 will usher in a new government and worldview; Women will discover new roles for themselves. The 80s and 90s will complicate the polarities of a "simpler" time when identity, whether national or sexual, seemed relatively stable. We will trace this history with an eye toward how cinema represented it.

The course objective is thus three-pronged: to give students a sense of the issues which have concerned many feminist thinkers of the last quarter century; to give them an understanding of the specificity of French cinema and its relationship to these questions; and, finally, in a more general sense, to help the students acquire the skills to navigate between general abstract claims and the specificity of any given text or film.

### **Assignments:**

2 papers (4-5 pages)	400 pts
mid-term exam	100 pts
participation	100 pts
final exam	200 pts

1) We will see eleven full-length movies in class and you will be asked to write two thematic essays. (Your papers may be in English or French). For each essay, you will have the choice of at least two essay questions assigned by me. The point of these papers is to write a relatively brief and concise analysis of a certain aspect of the film. For instance, I might ask you to define a specific term and then show how it is relevant to the film in question.

2) The mid-term and final exam will consist of key words and dates to identify as well as comparative essay questions. Here, you will be asked to synthesize broader themes of the course.

3) **Attendance is extremely important.** Since we only meet once a week missing even one class is greatly discouraged.

If you miss the mid-term due to illness or for another reason, you must make up that test **within one week** of your return to the classroom. Note also that I cannot return the tests until all have taken it! Tardy papers will receive a lower grade.

If you have any special needs or requests, feel free to discuss them with me and we'll be sure to make any necessary arrangements.

*Please note that I reserve the right to modify the syllabus in the event of any and all unforeseeable circumstances that, at a later date, may manifest themselves, unexpectedly!*

### Grading Scale

100-93%	A	79-77%	C+	62-60%	D-
92-90%	A-	76-73%	C	59%	F
89-87%	B+	72-70%	C-		
86-83%	B	69-67%	D+		
82-80%	B-	66-63%	D		

### Week 1 (1/9)

Introduction to the course

*Et Dieu créa... la femme*, Roger Vadim, 1956

1. "Writing about the Movies" and "Preparing to Watch and Preparing to Write" from *Film on reserve* at Schurz. (pp. 1-33)
2. *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, "La Belle Amérique" (pp. 1-70)

### Week 2 (1/16)

Post-war France

*Cléo de 5 à 7*, Agnès Varda, 1961

1. *Feminist Film Theory*, chapters 2-5, paying particularly close attention to 5 (pp. 9-69).
2. "Women Film Makers in France" from *The Cinema in France after the New Wave*, pp. 76-102 on reserve at Schurz.

### **Week 3 (1/23)**

The Question of the Gaze: Woman as Object

1. *Fast Cars*, "Hygiene and Modernization" and "Couples" (pp. 71-156).
2. *Feminist Film Theory*, "Caught and Rebecca: the Inscription of Feminity as Absence," Mary Ann Doane, pp. 70-82.

### **Week 4 (1/30)**

Fast cars and beautiful girls

*Jules et Jim*, François Truffaut, 1962

1. *Fast Cars*, "New Men," "New Men and the Death of Man," "Cadres" "Immobile Time. pp. 157-232.
2. "Style and Structure in Writing," pp. 106-124 on reserve at Schurz.

### **Week 5 (2/6)**

Do you prefer Bardot or Moreau?

*Bonheur*, Agnès Varda, 1965

- 1. Paper due 2/13. Guidelines and topic to be announced.**

### **Week 6 (2/13)**

Social Upheaval and May 68 in France

1. *Feminist Film Theory*, "Oedipus Interruptus," by Teresa de Lauretis and "Lost Objects and Mistaken Subjects," by Kaja Silverman pp. 83-105.
2. *May 68*, by Margaret Atack, "L'avant mai: la France s'ennuie," "Nanterre-la-folie," pp. 9-44 on reserve at Schurz.

### **Week 7 (2/20)**

*Saute ma vie*, by Chantal Akerman, 1968

*Weekend*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1967

- 1. Midterm exam for first 90 minutes of class 3/6.**

**Week 8 (3/6)**

Mid-term examination (90 minutes)

*La Chinoise*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1967

**Week 9 (3/13)**

What Does Woman Want?

*Nathalie Granger* (1972) or *Le Camion* (1977) by Marguerite Duras

1. *The Accoustic Mirror*, Kaja Silverman, on reserve at Schurz.
2. *Feminist Film Theory*, “The Female Spectator,” pp.111-158.

**Week 10 (3/20)**

*Rendez-vous d’Anna* by Chantal Akerman, 1978

1. *Feminist Film Theory*, “Rethinking Difference,” pp. 287-335.

**Week 11 (3/27)**

The Post-colonial Gaze

*Chocolat*, Claire Denis, 1988

1. *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, Rey Chow, “Seeing Modern China: Toward a Theory of Ethnic Spectatorship,” pp. 3-33 on reserve at Schurz.

**Week 12 (4/3)**

*L’Amant*, adopted from the Duras’ novel of the same title, Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1991

1. *Feminist Film Theory*, “Gender is Burning, Questions of Appropriation and Subversion, Judith Butler, pp. 136-349.
2. *French Cinema in the 1980s*, “The Nostaglia Film” and “Coup de foudre: Nostaglia and Lesbianism, by Phil Powrie, pp. 14-27;62-74 on reserve at Schurz.

**Week 13 (4/10)**

*Coup de foudre*, Diane Kurys, 1983

1. *French Cinema in the 1980s*, “Trois hommes et un couffin; Hysterical Homoeroticism,” by Phil Powrie, pp. 147-158 on reserve at Schurz.

**Week 14 (4/17)**

*Trois hommes et un couffin*, Coline Serreau, 1985

1. **Second paper due 4/24 topic to be announced.**

**Week 15 (4/24)**

New directions in French Cinema

*Nenette et Boni*, Claire Denis, 1997  
Conclusion and second paper due.

**Final Examination is on Tuesday, May 1 at 5:30.**