

March 12, 2015

Dear Friends,

I hope this finds you all well. This coming summer, from July 6 through July 23, I will be offering a 3-week summer course in Paris, "[Discovering French Cinema in Paris](#)," an exploration of the art and industry of filmmaking in the city so synonymous with many of its greatest achievements.

Although a number of people had been able to create moving images earlier, film historians give pride of place to December 28, 1895 as the birthdate of cinema—the date marking the unveiling of the Lumiere brother's *cinematographe* at the Salon Indien of the Grand Café in Paris. From that moment on, Paris—and the French cinema—have truly been at the heart of the history and development on the seventh art. This course will present a series of cinematic milestones that together will offer a history of both the artistic ambitions and the commercial realities of the French cinema, moving from the earliest days of silent cinema (Méliès, Feuillade) to the most recent releases (Assayas, Breillat). Wartime film production, as well as the rise of recent genres such as the *beur film* (works set in the suburban housing projects that ring Paris, focusing on young immigrants) will be covered; a special concentration will be on the French New Wave (1958-1967), the movement which perhaps more than any other truly took the city of Paris as its muse. A special feature of the class will be guest appearances by filmmakers, critics, historians and officials in the French film industry who will offer their own unique perspectives on the past, present and future of French cinema, as well trips to the Cinematheque Française and other sites related to the French cinema. Topics to be discussed will include the emergence of new film genres, French cinema under German occupation, the changing nature of film finance, the impact of digital technology and the considerable increase in production that came with it, and the role of France within contemporary European media initiatives.

This class will meet 4 times a week for 3 weeks, Mondays through Thursdays, from July 6 to July 23, 2015. Each class will be approximately 3.5 hours, beginning each day at 10am. Generally the structure will be lectures and screenings Mondays through Thursdays. The initial lecture would be 45 minutes to an hour, depending on the topic and length of the film. After the film screening, there would be a discussion/analysis section, in which brief parts of

the film might be re-screened. On most days, we would also plan meetings with notable figures from France, to expose students to a wide variety of figures within the industry or the critical establishment to complement the information given in the lectures. On Fridays, the class might also go on some optional “field trips,” for example to the Cinematheque Française or to a special preview of a new film. Ideally, students will have taken at least an introduction to film studies course prior to enrollment. No knowledge of French language will be presumed.

Here are some comments from students who took the course last summer:

Every aspect of the experience was valuable, including Professor Peña’s exciting and evenhanded lectures, the unusual and stimulating selection of films, his recommendations, the diverse group of guest speakers, the different perspectives provided by other students, and the time we were allowed to explore Paris on our own.

DAVID B.

I gained an incredible amount of knowledge in three weeks thanks to Professor Peña. His insight into the history of French Cinema was incredibly valuable, and I especially enjoyed watching feature films in class every day... overall a truly amazing experience.

SHIRIN D.

The course was extremely informative and I would highly recommend it. The final assignment was particularly helpful in really digesting the readings and thinking critically about the different eras of French cinema.

Lauren L.

Please visit our website, <http://arts.columbia.edu/summer-programs>, for a full description of the course and details on how to register. If you have any questions about the course, please contact our Office of Summer Programs at the email address below.

Best wishes,

Richard Peña

Director Emeritus, New York Film Festival

Professor of Film Studies, Columbia University