

The Comic in French Cinema. ENG 4135/FRT 3520 / Fall 2020

Dr. Sylvie E. Blum-Reid (she/her/hers)

sylblum@ufl.edu

Office Hours : MW : 10 :30-11 :30 am, F. 3-4pm

24386 section #8017

26115 section # FRT8

MWF 7th period (1:55-2:45pm) online

Screenings: W. 9-11 (4:05pm-7:05pm) Due to online classes for fall semester each screening will be done individually via online streaming. The library is working hard regarding copyrights for all screenings. Knowing that there will be a discussion and analysis of each film *Fridays*, the syllabus indicates the preferred choice for the film screening on *Thursdays*. You can of course view the film earlier than suggested time (but not later) and take notes for discussion.

Please keep in mind that this class is online and synchronous.

Perspective

The Comic in French Cinema: Moving away from film noir in French cinema, I have decided to tackle comedy and humor in French cinema since its inception until today. Comedy is the favorite French genre. The class will examine different facets of what constitutes the comic tradition and if it translates well into American culture. What makes the French laugh? Ethnicity, nationalism, politics, business, food, war-time and interracial recent comedies will be subject to analysis and discussion. The comic body in French cinema will also be an overall concept as well. The course is taught in English and can be used for the major or minor in FFL and LLC (Film and Visual Culture concentration). It is cross-listed with English.

Course Goal

Over the course of 15 weeks, you will become knowledgeable in film history and film analysis. The core of the class is specific to French comedy, and its impact on the nation, as well as its variations over time. We will also come to understand the influence of other national directors on French cinema when it comes to a genre that is France's favorite. Discussion will entail all the above (in perspective) and more.

Required textbook:

Remi Lanzoni: *French Comedy on Screen*- London: Palgrave MacMillan 2014

A copy of this book is placed at our library (west) reserve for class.

<https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/ares.dll?Action=10&Form=60&Value=20894>

All other texts will be available on e-reserve at Library West or sent as pdf files are located in the course modules.(canvas)

Film screenings: there will be a weekly film screening to do individually-- all films will be available online, streaming. On a week without a 'screening day' due to Holidays, there still will be a scheduled screening.

NB: * Regarding all films: *This content may be protected under U.S. Copyright Law and should not be disseminated outside this course.*

Grading:

Weekly-class participation	10%
Weekly homework (questions/and/or quizzes)	20%
One mid-term examination	30 %
<i>Choice between the following two options:</i>	
1) a final research paper	30%
1 compulsory oral presentation/on research project	10%
Or 2)	
A journal + oral presentation on your journal	30% + 10%

*The Journal or Research paper option:

Will be discussed in more depth after Drop/Add in separate handouts and on Canvas pages.

Grade	Scale Point Range (%)	GPA equivalent	
	≥ 90.00	A	4.0
	86.7 – 89.9	A-	3.67
	83.3 – 86.6	B+	3.33
	80.0 – 83.2	B	3.0
	76.7 – 79.9	B-	2.67
	73.3 – 76.6	C+	2.33
	70.0 – 73.2	C	2.0
	66.7 – 69.9	C-	1.67
	63.3 – 66.6	D+	1.33
	60.0 – 63.2	D	1.0
	56.7 – 59.9	D-	0.67
	< 56.7	E	0

Note: A grade of C– is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/Pages/home.aspx>

* Academic Honesty, please refer to the following guidelines
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/academicguide.php>

University's Policy:

Statements related to COVID-19 – I do not plan to record our classes but in case of it, I would alert you and remind you of such a rule.

Our class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your

camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate verbally are agreeing to have their voices recorded.

If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared.

As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

Netiquette policy: (see separate Canvas page for the LLC policy on Zoom instruction)

Minimal CANVAS use requirement:

All Fall 2020 courses delivered through any means (face-to-face, online, etc) will be required to use the Canvas learning management system for at least the following purposes: Distributing and storing the course syllabus along with any syllabus updates, maintaining student grades, and regular communication with students. The only exceptions are courses set up as individual academic experiences such as directed independent study, supervised research, supervised teaching, and thesis or dissertation credits.

Instructors and/or course directors are also strongly encouraged to use Canvas for posting announcements, providing access to course materials, and scheduling Zoom meetings. These practices will help ensure that students who may be geographically dispersed and taking courses asynchronously have access to course content and provides an extra layer of security for Zoom sessions. Doing so will also allow for uniformity of the student course experience and will facilitate the process of making up of course work missed because of illness, periods of self-isolation, and other excused absences.

Policy related to class attendance + absences:

Class attendance is compulsory. Excuses will be made for medical absences provided that a doctor's note is submitted to the instructor. Class participation is evaluated on a daily basis and has to be consistent over the duration of the term. It may include group work on specific questions, and discussion of assigned readings and films. Not excused are the following: a vacation cruise, leaving early for your week end, etc. (three absences are permitted throughout the term, however make sure you are up to date with the in-class discussions, analysis, presentations and reading). After 3 absences, there will be a -1 pt. policy per class.

Screenings: I have opted for specific films so that most of them might be available for streaming. Do keep in mind that each film is discussed in great length and details on Fridays. (discussion time), you should plan for watching the film prior to coming to class. You should allow for about 2 hours a week to screen films. Some of them are longer.

Library reserve for class:

<https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/ares.dll?Action=10&Form=60&Value=20894>

- Please note that not all films are on the usual platforms. When login for a film on Kanopy (through UF-Lib, make sure that you have installed (Cisco) VPN for remote access.

Classroom behavior: Arrive in class with the reading material (books/chapters/essays) that is to be covered that day along with your notes, and with your screening notes, once a week.

Honor code: On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” For further ref. please consult: <http://www.sg.ufl.edu/branches/judicial/HonorCode.aspx>

Students with disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students’ office. <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc>

Exam: The midterm exam will be a comprehensive exam that involves essay questions (short and medium length size. as well as identification of films/filmmakers and analysis of sequences demonstrating knowledge of proper filmic terminology.

Options final exam or research project:

The final research project (8 pp-paginated, including bibliography) involves researching your favorite film and topic and should not just ‘rely’ on films presented during the semester. It should focus on a specific aspect of French cinema and comedy. Please familiarize yourselves with the class reserve and reading material. You’re welcome to visit me during zoom office hours for advice on the project. Your final research project will be presented to class in a formal oral presentation, scheduled during the last final (2) weeks. The project has to be started after the midterm. For those writing a weekly journal, there will be a formal presentation of your journal in class.

****Please note that the syllabus is subject to changes over the course of the semester, based on class dynamics and instructor’s philosophy.***

- For students minoring or majoring in French, you are welcome to write and do research in French. I will help you with this.

August-Sept.

Week #1

31 Introduction to class and the genre

2 sept. the early films. Reading: Lanzoni: Introduction + Richard Abel (pdf sent by instructor) American influences: Buster Keaton/Chaplin; ‘the comic body’

SC: Chaplin. *A Woman* (1915)/*The Immigrant* (1917), Keaton: *The Boat* (1921)

4 reading: Lanzoni : 17-34- discussion of film(s)

Week #2

7 Labor day: No class

9 Sacha Guitry and auteur theory. Lanzoni: chapt. 1=68

Comedies in early sound films. The role of dialogue, different types
SC. [Carné: *Drôle de drame/Bizarre, Bizarre*] Sacha Guitry : *The Story of a Cheat*
11 Early sound cinema- Why does one laugh? Reading: Bergson (e-text chap. 1)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4352/4352-h/4352-h.htm>

Week #3

14 Laughter and the body
16 The Comedies of Postwar France. Reading: Lanzoni: Chap.2 up to 99
SC: *La Traversée de Paris / Four Bags Full* (Claude Autant-Lara, 1956; 1h20mn.)
18 Comedies and WWII. Film discussion

Week #4

21 Bourvil & Louis de Funès- reading Wylie: “Beaux Gestes” (pdf sent)
23 And The top-selling comedic film isReading: Larry Portis: “Calling into Question
Abuses of Power and Subordination Hierarchy and Authority in the Films of Louis de
Funès” (pdf. on Canvas Modules)
SC: *La Grande Vadrouille* (Gérard Oury, 1966 ; 2h12mn)
25 film discussion and analysis

Sept. October

Week #5

28 Parodies of films noirs -- examples. scripwriters: Audiard...Reading: Lanzoni: 100-110
30 Jacques Tati's **Hulot**- Lanzoni 110-119- The democracy of comedy.
SC: *Les Vacances de M. Hulot/Mr. Hulot's Holidays* (Tati, 1953; 1h23mn.)
2 Oct. Discussion of Tati and Lanzoni's reading.

Week #6

5 Discussion of Tati's film - Comedy in the Modern Era. Post 1968. Lanzoni : 3 early
race-based satires-discussion of *Les Vacances*.
7 ‘Why do the French love Jerry Lewis so much?’
SC: *Rabbi Jacob/The Mad Adventures of Rabbi Jacob* (Gérard Oury, 1973, 1h35)
9 Film discussion- Reading: Michael Mulvey: “What was so funny about Les Aventures de
Rabbi Jacob” (pdf sent by instructor)

Week #7

12. MIDTERM- Journals (part I) to be collected
14. Race in comedies. Africans in Comedies-Reading: Leadston: “Happily never after:
the visual politics of contemporary French interracial romantic comedy” (pdf sent by
instructor)
SC: *Black MicMac* (Gilou, 1986; 1h33mn.) or alternate film.
16 Film discussion. Lanzoni: 129-138

Week #8

19 Non conformity & Homosexuality in comedies

21 From theater to screen - Reading Lanzoni: III. 139-147.

SC: *La Cage aux Folles/Birdcage* (Edouard Molinaro, 1978, 1h33mn.)

23 Film discussion

Week #9

26 Newcomers. *Le Splendide*. Lanzoni: 156-173

28 Introduction to Leconte. Reading : JF Staszak: "Interview with Patrice Leconte" (pdf sent to class)

SC : *Les Bronzés/French fried Vacation* (Patrice Leconte, 1978, 1h45mn.) if available or alternate film

30 Film discussion- Tourists in film

November

Week #10

2 November French comedy Today. Lanzoni. Chap. 4

4 Stand-up comedies. Ethnic humour. Gad Elmaleh : *American Dream* (Netflix)

SC : *Two days in Paris* (Julie Delpy, 2007, 1.41mn.) [Amazon Prime].

6 Film(s) discussion

Week #11

9 New Sexual encounters. Lanzoni 207-212

11 Veterans Day: *No class*

13 Women's Laughter. Coline Serreau. Reading: Brigitte Rollet (4, pdf)

SC. *Gazon Maudit/French twist* (Balasko, 1994, 1h.44mn.)

Week #12

16 Discussion of Balasko's film- Reading: Lynn A. Higgins, "The Liberating Power of Laughter..." (pdf sent by instructor)

18 Theatre & film : Bacri-Jaoui....and Klapisch- first oral presentations until last week of semester

SC. *Un air de famille/Family Resemblances* (Bacri-Jaoui/Klapisch, 1996 ; 1h50mn.)

20 Film discussion

Week #13

23 Introduction to « Bienvenue chez les ch'tis » and regional comedies- oral presentations.

Reading : Raphaëlle Moine. « Contemporary French Comedy as Social Laboratory” (pdf sent by instructor) and Lanzoni, pp. 221-228.

SC : *Bienvenue chez les ch'tis/Welcome to the Sticks* (Dany Boon, 2008; 1.46mn.)

25 Thanksgiving *no class*

27 Thanksgiving -----

December

Week #14

30 Film discussion - oral presentations

Dec. 2nd Introduction to racial comedies.

SC. *He even has your eyes/Il a déjà tes yeux* (Lucien Jean-Baptiste, 2017; 1h35mn.)

4 discussion

Week #15

7 Final discussion of comedies today- oral presentations

9 Conclusion-last oral presentations + final projects due that day.