FREN 592: French Culture through Film I, Origins to 1950 Prof. Van Kelly

2:30 TR

An intensive, advanced survey of French culture as depicted in silent film from the early 1895 through the 1920s, sound cinema from the 1930s through World War II and its immediate aftermath. Students will view and discuss a selection of films that address crucial aspects of French culture from 1895 to 1950 (with some reference to the early 1950s). The emphasis will be on the invention of the Seventh Art, which created an esthetic of the marvelous and the real that differed fundamentally from all other arts, and which radically changed how the French viewed (and, eventually, heard) the world, the state, the self, and the Other. Among the topics covered will be photography, sound and silence, the image, French technical vocabulary for film, how films were made, drama, gender, war and peace, daily life, art and artists, tradition and revolution, city life versus country life, social classes, moral choice, resistance, collaboration, and individual freedoms. The course will include discussion of major historical events like the Great War, major social movements like the Popular Front, and the cultural and artistic significance of French film movements like Surrealism, Poetic Realism, and Occupation Cinema. Directors whose films we will view include Méliès, Gance, Feuillade, Bunuel, Renoir, Clair, Carné, Duvivier, Malraux, Vigo, Clouzot, Cocteau, Clément, Bresson. In addition to viewing and discussing films, students will read and analyze the writings of a number of intellectuals, writers, poets, artists, film critics and film theorists who have had a major influence on French culture as it appears in films from 1895-1950. Theories of culture and film will figure prominently in our readings and discussions. Taught in French. With the exception of one of the required texts, all course books will be in French. Open to graduate students (and to advanced undergraduate French majors with permission of instructor. Interested undergraduates who have had French 326, French 350, French 375, and at least one 400-level lit course should contact Prof. Kelly at vkelly@ku.edu). Students will be required to view the films outside of class.