

## French 464: Colloquium in French Civilization

### *Technology, the Cinema, and the City*

Pre-requisite: French 300

Spring 2022

Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:20

Taught in French

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In the *Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin wrote: “Couldn’t an exciting film be made from the map of Paris? . . . From the compression of a centuries-long movement of streets, boulevards, arcades and squares into the space of half an hour?” Benjamin’s language reveals how technology generally, and the technology of film specifically, provided new ways of imagining the representation of time, history, and its perception within the city. In this class, we will undertake a study of the city of Paris by way of a history of technology and by placing an emphasis on film history, film exhibition spaces, and the historical practice of cinema going. While we will begin by assessing how earlier technologies such as the telegraph had already transformed how writers, artists, and philosophers conceived of time, space, and urbanity with a new set of metaphors and imaginative tools, our class will examine the development of the cinema as an urban and social phenomenon. We will ask questions such as: How did the new technology of film and the new social, urban space of cinemas transform the perception of urban space and, importantly, social relations? As the number of cinema venues increased exponentially, from only three to hundreds between 1900 and 1910, how did the classical understanding of the city change? How did film, the cinema, and other new technologies such as microscopy and x-rays, expand verbal and visual language, and contribute to the imaginative landscape of Paris’s visual culture? Did the cinema transform “the capital of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,” as

Benjamin also called Paris, into the “capital of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?”

**Prerequisite : French 330**