

A bout de souffle (Breathless) (Jean-Luc Godard, 1959; 89 min.)

Producer: Georges de Beauregard	Cameras: Claude Beausoleil, Jacques Maumont
Story: François Truffaut	Production Designer: Claude Chabrol
Dialog: Jean-Luc Godard	Assistant Director: Pierre Rissient
Original music: Martial Solal	Sound: Claude Beausoleil, Jacques Maumont
Cinematographer: Raoul Coutard	Technical advisor: Claude Chabrol
Editors: Cécile Decugis, Lila Herman	

Cast:

Michel Poiccard (Jean-Paul Belmondo)	Antonio Berrutti (Henri-Jacques Huet)
Patricia Franchini (Jean Seberg)	The Journalist (Van Doude)
Police Inspector (Daniel Boulanger)	Claudius Mansard (Claude Mansard)
Parvulesco (Jean-Pierre Melville)	The Informer (Jean-Luc Godard)

Abstract (adapted from IMDB.com):

Michel is a young thug who romantically models himself on Humphrey Bogart. While driving a stolen car, Michel shoots a policeman. Penniless and on the run from the police, he turns to his American girlfriend Patricia, a student in Paris and aspiring journalist. Patricia agrees to hide him and the two spend their time evading the police, making love, and stealing cars to raise money for a trip to Italy. As the police net tightens, Michel and Patricia's bravado and desperation grow...

Questions for Discussion:

1. What parallelisms and contrasts do you find suggested among the different main characters and their situations? What judgments are we encouraged to make of their values and their conduct?
2. How does the narrative style of *Breathless* differ from other narrative films we've seen for this class? How is it similar?
3. How do the cinematographic and editing styles of *Breathless* differ from other films we've seen for this class? For example, when & why does Godard use long takes? When & why does he use jump cuts? When & why does he use more Hollywood-style camerawork & editing?
4. What do you interpret as the film's explicit, implicit, and symptomatic meanings? Try to answer this by keeping track of the major segments of the film and considering:
 - 1) What values does each major character represent? Are they consistent throughout the film?
 - 2) What motifs, parallels, & contrasts do you find among the different segments?
 - 3) What is the significance of the ending?

Italian Neorealism, the French New Wave, and Art Cinema Terminology

"Telefono bianco" films	Intertextuality	Subjectivity
"Tradition of Quality" films	<i>Cahiers du Cinéma</i>	Objective Realism
Ambiguity	Auteur Theory/Authorship	Subjective Realism
Self-reflexivity	Delayed Exposition	Filmmaker's Expressivity
Cinéphilia	Episodic	