Film viewing tonight:  

- **Our final exam**  
  - There will be twelve identification questions, and you’ll be expected to answer ten of them  
  - There will also be an essay question (you get to choose between two different prompts, and you have to discuss at least four films in your response)  
  - There will also be short essays written in response to three short film clips (~3 minutes each)

- **The New Wave (Nouvelle Vague)**  
  - Sort of a French version of Neo-realist, but probably less intense, less political  
  - Modern film grows out of these two movements  
  - We could create a line of film realism that begins with Chaplin, then jumps to French film and Renoir, then to Italian Neo-realist, then to the French New Wave, and then finally to a wide variety of contemporary films  
  - *Cahiers du Cinema*, Bazin, 1951  
    - This theory of film was very like the practices of Jean Renoir  
    - Mise en scene  
    - The importance of the camera as an instrument of meaning  
    - Hostile to literary adaptation  
  - Alexandre Astruc – older film critic, formulated some of the theories on which the Nouvelle Vague was based  
    - Auteur Theory  
    - Camera style: the camera should be the director’s most important tool, equivalent to the pen in the hands of the writer or the brush in the hands of the artist  
    - They valued American directors like John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, and Orson Wells for their independence from more literary styles, and their ability to put their own signature their personal distinctive visual style on their films, despite the limitations of the Hollywood system  
  - The New Wave introduced a new vitality and a new realistic seriousness

- **Key Figures in the Nouvell Vague**  
  - Alan Renais: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959)  
    - Very politically and socially ambitious
French architect has an affair with a Japanese woman on a trip to Japan
- It was very shockingly explicit for the time
- This intimate and erotic encounter was juxtaposed against scenes of the destruction of the Hiroshima bombing
- The film moves quickly between the confining bedroom and the post-Hiroshima horrors
  - J. L. Godard: *Breathless* (1959)
    - A female character goes without a bra during the whole movie, which was shocking at the time
    - She gets to know and romanticizes a gangster
    - Clips: The character looks at some posters of Humphrey Bogart, and then we see a chase scene, and the character kills a man
      - Jump cut: an edit in the middle of an action. It’s very astonishing, and it creates a very kinetic effect
      - Note the pictures of Humphrey Bogart – a kind of homage to American movies
      - Watch the quick editing
    - The distance from World War II allows Nouvelle Vague directors to be less overtly political than the Italian Neo-realists were
      - With Neo-realism, it sometimes seems like there’s a set, programmed message about how bad post-war Italy is, which all films must show you
    - The politics of *Breathless* and other New Wave films are much more unpredictable and personal
  - Truffaut: *The 400 Blows* (1959)

Truffaut’s career (1932-1984)
- “Doinel” films
    - Two men in love with the same woman
    - Many people would say this is his best film
  - *Shoot the Piano Player* (1960)
    - Film noir, more personal kind of film
    - Becomes a kind of chase film, with a man trying to avoid being murdered
    - Has a lot of the excitement of an American genre film, but it’s more personal
  - *The Last Metro* (1980)
    - A man hides underground from the Nazis
    - His wife, above ground, conducts an affair, but he forgives her
    - Says a lot about the nature and importance of theatre
- The Wild Boy (1970)
  - Involves questions of what it means to be civilized, and whether it is helpful or not
Les Quatre Cent Coups (Four Hundred Blows)

- The title comes from a French idiom for “Sow your wild oats”: it’s a period of unconventional and vaguely rebellious activity that you engage in as a young person.
- This is probably his best film.
- One of its deepest interests is Paris itself:
  - It’s a kind of travelogue.
  - It loves Paris.
  - Paris is evoked very musically.
  - When the boy leaves Paris for reform school, it seems like he might miss the city more than his parents.
- The film is very character-oriented, and the plot is subservient to the characters. The story serves a larger vision of life:
  - There are no evil characters, though there are characters who do bad things.
  - The mother is unhappy with her life:
    - She resents her son for trapping her in a marriage with a man she considers boring.
    - She’s sometimes a bad mother, but the film requires that we see this with a sympathetic eye.
  - We feel an equally complex mixture of sympathy and judgment for the father:
    - He’s a nice man, but very dull, narrow, and conventional.
    - You feel his desperate love for her.
  - Character is very rich and complex.
  - Watch the boy’s attitude and resentment for his parents:
    - Watch the poignancy of the moment that finally gets him sent to reform school.
    - You can see why the boy would say that his mother died, because psychologically it feels true to him.
    - When he’s accused of plagiarism, it wasn’t intentional on his part, it was only a mark of how much he loved and inhabited the world of that other poet.
    - He’s only caught stealing the typewriter after he tries to return it.
- The realistic ambiguity of the end of the film carries a lot of the ambiguity of real life:
  - The use of the soundtrack in this ending is one of the most beautiful moments in film.