French New Wave

1959-ca.1970
Origins

- Critics from *Cahiers du Cinema*
- Reaction to films of literary adaptation
- “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema” essay by Francois Truffaut
Themes

- Youthful rebellion
- Social criticism
- Human relationships
- Homage to Hollywood (cinematic references)
Directors

- Alain Resnais
- Jean-Luc Godard
- Francois Truffaut
- Claude Chabrol
- Agnes Varda
- Robert Bresson
Jean-Luc Godard

Most political
First film *Breathless* 1959
Barometer of the age
Self-reflexive
Some of innovations
  Jump cut
  Chapter breaks and titles
  Direct address
  Emphasis on ambient background sound
  Voiceover
Breathless

► Best known of his films
► Summary: A street punk shoots a cop and wants to flee with an American girlfriend to Italy. She vacillates, then consents, but again changes her mind and turns him in.
► Low budget
► Not instant success
► Eventually influences film and narrative style
► Introduces Jean(ne) Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo
Alain Resnais

- Paves way for New Wave (nouvelle vague)
- Already established as filmmaker
- *Nuit et brouillard* 1955
  - Auschwitz
  - Reflects past
- *Hiroshima mon amour*
  - Exploration of memory
  - Exploration of guilt
  - Love affair
Francois Truffaut

- Most immediately accessible of directors
- *400 Blows*
  - Influence of Jean Renoir and Orson Welles
    - Moving camera
    - Long takes
    - Open, fluid mise-en-scene
  - Revisits the character in four later films
Post New Wave

- Not really a movement
- Shows influence of New Wave
- More commercial
- More diverse
- Less experimental
- Less political
Selected names and titles

- Jean-Jacques Beineix
  - *Betty Blue* 1986
  - *Diva* 1981
- Luc Besson
  - *La femme Nikita* 1990
  - *The Messanger* 1999
  - *The Fifth Element* 1997
- Jean-Jacques Annaud
  - Quest for Fire 1981
  - *The Bear* 1988
  - *Enemy at the Gates* 2001
  - *Two Brothers* 2004
Names and titles continued

- Jean-Pierre Jeunet
  - *City of Lost Children* 1995
  - *Alien: Resurrection* 1997
  - *Amelie* 2001
  - *A Very Long Engagement* 2004
- Catherine Breillat
  - *Romance* 1999
  - *Fat Girl* 2001
- Gaspar Noe
  - *Irreversible* 2002