

VIVEKANANDA COLLEGE  
THAKURPUKUR  
KOLKATA-700063

NAAC ACCREDITED 'A' GRADE



Topic: Jean-Luc Godard\_Breathless

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Name of the Teacher: Bandana Basu Bhowmick

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## Jean-Luc Godard

- Jean-Luc Godard was born in Paris on December 3, 1930, the second child of his four other siblings. His father was a doctor who owned a private clinic, and his mother came from a preeminent family of Swiss bankers
- He saw the possibility of making a documentary film about the dam Grande Dixence Dam Thanks to Swiss friends who lent him a 35mm movie camera, he was able to shoot on 35mm film. He rewrote the commentary that Laubscher had written and gave his film a rhyming title *Opération béton* (Operation concrete), he had created many other films e.g. *Breathless* (1960), through to *Week End* (1967).

## Breathless

The 1960's Film *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*) is about Michel Poiccard, a young outlaw seeking refuge after stealing a car and killing a police officer. He plans to escape to Italy along Patricia Franchini, an American girl studying journalism abroad who throughout most of the movie is unaware of his recent criminal activity. Once she becomes aware that he is a fugitive of the law she must then choose between her new-found romance with him or become an accomplice to his illegal, murderous, and immoral ways. Influenced by Italian Neorealism came about the French New Wave in film. Godard *Breathless* is perhaps one of the most well-known films that displays this type of filmmaking. What characterizes this class of film are jump cuts, use of handheld cameras, elliptical editing, unusual camera angles, filming in real locations, natural lighting, improved scripts, and spontaneous shooting. For example, there is one scene in *Breathless* where Michel and Patricia are walking through the streets, she is selling copies of the *New York Herald Tribune*, the entire sequence is filmed using a hidden camera, with ordinary citizens interacting with the actors as they stroll up and down the block.

*Breathless* is the auteur theory. A simple definition of this theory is that a film director "writes" his or her film with the use of a camera as an author would write their novel with pen or pencil. The filmmaking techniques Godard used in this particular film; jump cuts, handheld cameras, and location filming all make up just how unique he was showing his own expression of personality. At the time this movie was made, no other films had really possessed such characteristics. Jesus Smith says in an article on

ezonearticles.com “Breathless offers many moments, which have no real connection between cause and effect disrupting the unity of the story. This is not to say that these moments are completely random. Everything is put in a film for a reason, even if the reason is to disrupt unity.” Then he goes on to give an example from the film when Michel and Patricia are in taxi talking to one another and she mentions French girls skirts. Michel mentions that he sometimes gets the urge to lift them up and Patricia replies “don’t let me stop you”. He then proceeds to get out of the cab when it comes to a stop, lifts up a random girls skirt, and get back into the car. This is an illustration of the auteur theory carried out by Godard. The way he intentionally deviates from the typical Hollywood film from that time. In an article from the L.A. Time about Breathless they quoted Godard from 1962 “What I wanted to do”, which goes along with why I related the auteur theory to this film. They also say that "Breathless" actual story is minimal at best. This is what the previous article from exinarticles.com was discussing how there are randomly, yet strategically placed parts within a scene that Godard put in because he wanted them there. I can really appreciate this film now knowing how ground-breaking it was to the film industry. Upon reading about Breathless, I was only going based upon the film itself uninformed about the creative detail put into each shot in each scene. I re-watched the film and took notice to the shakiness of the camera, the jump cuts, and the on location with real people scenes. The plot is a bit dry and some scenes seem to just drag on entirely too long, however the randomness at certain parts holds my attention. I would not recommend the movies to anyone who wasn't seriously about films.