

## Diving Into the Movies, Winter 2024, Letter, Week 1

Dear All,

Let me welcome you to our class. For new students, thank you for giving us a try. I hope the class will feel comfy and engaging. For those of you inexplicably returning, it will be so good to have you back. Thank you.....I've really learned from you each semester.

Our format will be that you'll receive a note like this one each week....and thank god it will be shorter than this one. It will tell you which film we're engaging, how to stream it, and some things to keep in mind when watching it. Then we'll gather every Monday, I'll give a lecture, and then you'll wake yourself up for the good part- our discussion.

For our first film, we're diving into Philippe Falardeau's: Monsieur Lazhar. It's a small French-Canadian film. You should be able to find our films on justwatch.com. Some things to keep in mind when watching it;

- the acting- especially the kids
- the use of music
- the editing
- the camera work
- the depiction of bureaucracy
- the depiction of the school
- what is the film doing with gender
- what is it doing with race
- what is it saying about kids and trauma
- how would you describe the tone of it
- what genre is it
- what are the political values of the film
- the nature of the "outsider" in this world.
- what did you think of the ending....both the ending-in-general- and the last shot of the film.
- what happens to our characters in three years? In fifteen years?

For the sake of our discussion, here's a list of the main characters- so that I can refer to them by name in the lecture.

Bachir Lazhar- teacher  
Alice- the girl  
Simon- the boy  
Claire- another teacher  
Mrs. Vaillancourt- the principal  
Gaston- the gym teacher  
Victor- not the brightest kid in the class  
Boris- has migraines  
Martine- the previous teacher

I'm so curious what you make of it. Many of you will probably have seen it, and I'm interested in how it looks now compared to your memory of it. And...my advice would be to see it as close to class as possible. I'll be referring to specific moments, lines of dialogue, and even camera angles, so it's definitely best if it's fresh in your mind's eye. Thanks so much. And I'm so interested in what you make of it. Best wishes, Harry

P.S. As long as the Academy Award nominees will be announced the day after we meet, I thought I'd start out the class with a couple of minutes on the how the film industry did last year. And maybe we'll

have time to chat after class about what films you loved and hated. I'm eager to see- "Zone of Interest" and "American Fiction" but haven't yet- but otherwise, my five favorites from last year were:

Past Lives

Anatomy of a Fall (France- on Amazon)

Barbie

Poor Things

Four Daughters (Tunisia- on Amazon)