

The Department of French & Italian presents  
a PhD Dissertation Defense

Evie Munier

## **Banlieusard·e·s: Female Identities, Intersectionality, and Performativity in Contemporary French Banlieue Cinema**

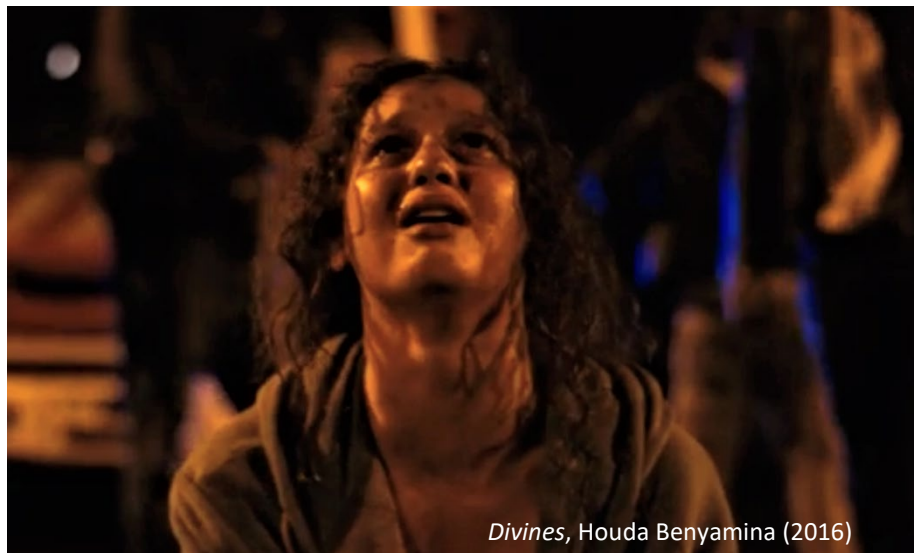
**Geological Sciences Building, Room 1032, and on Zoom - ID Rm. 899 9769 1204.**

**10:00 am, Tuesday, June 27, 2023. In English.**

**If you would like to attend, please inform Prof. Bowles at [bowlesb@indiana.edu](mailto:bowlesb@indiana.edu).**

At the crossroads between gender studies, media studies and post-colonial studies, this dissertation investigates the performative qualities of female characters at the intersection of race, class, gender, and even religion and sexuality, in recent banlieue cinema (2000-2020), that is, a genre named after its object representing the underprivileged outskirts of France's urban centers. A comparative

approach shows that, just as male performativity dominated in the 1980s and 1990s at the inception of the genre, this phenomenon also applies to women. Indeed, young women from the banlieue resort to performances of both race (most often ethnic or racial minorities mimicking whiteness) and gender (mimicking male behaviors) in order to restore a sense of agency over their own identities, and to resist the narratives dictated by the



*Divines*, Houda Benyamina (2016)

status quo, their social environment (family and male counterparts), and mainstream imagination. Overlapping or isolated performances of masculinity and femininity not only become a way of accessing visibility—or, in some cases, return to invisibility—but also emerge as strategies of subversion, emancipation, denunciation, and self-expression.

Understanding the extent to which gender performances are essential to these young women's identities, and experiences, as well as looking into how gender is instrumentalized and to what purposes, allows us to comprehend the unique yet various experiences of female bodies. This research informs the gendered dynamics of the banlieue, and provides evidence for the still ongoing feminization of the banlieue initiated at the turn of the century.

### **Committee:**

Brett Bowles, Ph.D. (French and Italian)

Vincent Bouchard, Ph.D. (French and Italian)

Margaret Gray, Ph.D. (French and Italian)

Colin Johnson, Ph.D. (Gender Studies)