Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites six experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Professor Phil Powrie (University of Surrey)

Soundscapes of Loss: Songs in Contemporary French Cinema

In 2003 I hypothesized that contemporary French films are increasingly using Anglophone songs in their compilations. A recent survey of a large sample of films that I have recently undertaken suggests that something like 20% of the 2250 or so films produced since 2000 are likely to be dominated by English-language songs.

This paper explores the use of English-language songs in a small sample of these films using a range of strategies: the film that has a large number of almost exclusively English-language songs; the film that has very few, but where the songs are all the more striking; the film where songs are sung in English by French singers; and finally the film which demonstrates how English-language and French-language songs work in counterpoint. This last comparative element of the paper allows me to claim that the use of English-language and French-language films in contemporary French cinema functions in very different ways. The former's function is to define a contemporary space and culture, while the latter's function is to retrieve a communitarian past in nostalgic mode.
Phil Powrie is Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences and Professor of Cinema Studies at the University of Surrey. He has published a number of books mainly on French cinema, amongst them French Cinema in the 1980s: Nostalgia and the Crisis of Masculinity (1997), Jean-Jacques Beineix (2001) and Pierre Batcheff and Stardom in 1920s French Cinema (2009). He leads the Association for Studies in French Cinema and is the chief general editor of its journal, Studies in French Cinema. He is Chair of the British Association of Film Television and Screen Studies. He is currently preparing a book on the French film musical.