

**Economic policing 2**  
**Laurent Cantet, *L'Emploi du temps***  
**(2001)**

FR325

Week 18

# Today

1. Discuss the film's portrayal of the human cost of debt and economic hardship.\*
2. Analyse the film in terms of the concept, derived from Lazzarato, of 'economic policing'.
3. Analyse the relationship between money and masculinity in the film.

# Introduction

- Co-written Cantet and Robin Campillo
- A 'socialist-realist melodrama' (Higbee, 2008)
- Cantet's second film after *Resources humaines* (2000)
- part of 'New Realism' movement: return to socio-economic realities
- 'affaire Romand' (1993, Claude Romand)
- Vincent 'not a victim of unemployment: unemployment is something he desires' (Cantet in Porton & Ellickson, 2002: 24)
- Serge Livrozet as Jean-Michel (Comité d'action des prisonniers, CAP)
- sinister social ambiance (e.g. trucker tells story of robbery)
- financial transactions in background (share prices on car radio)

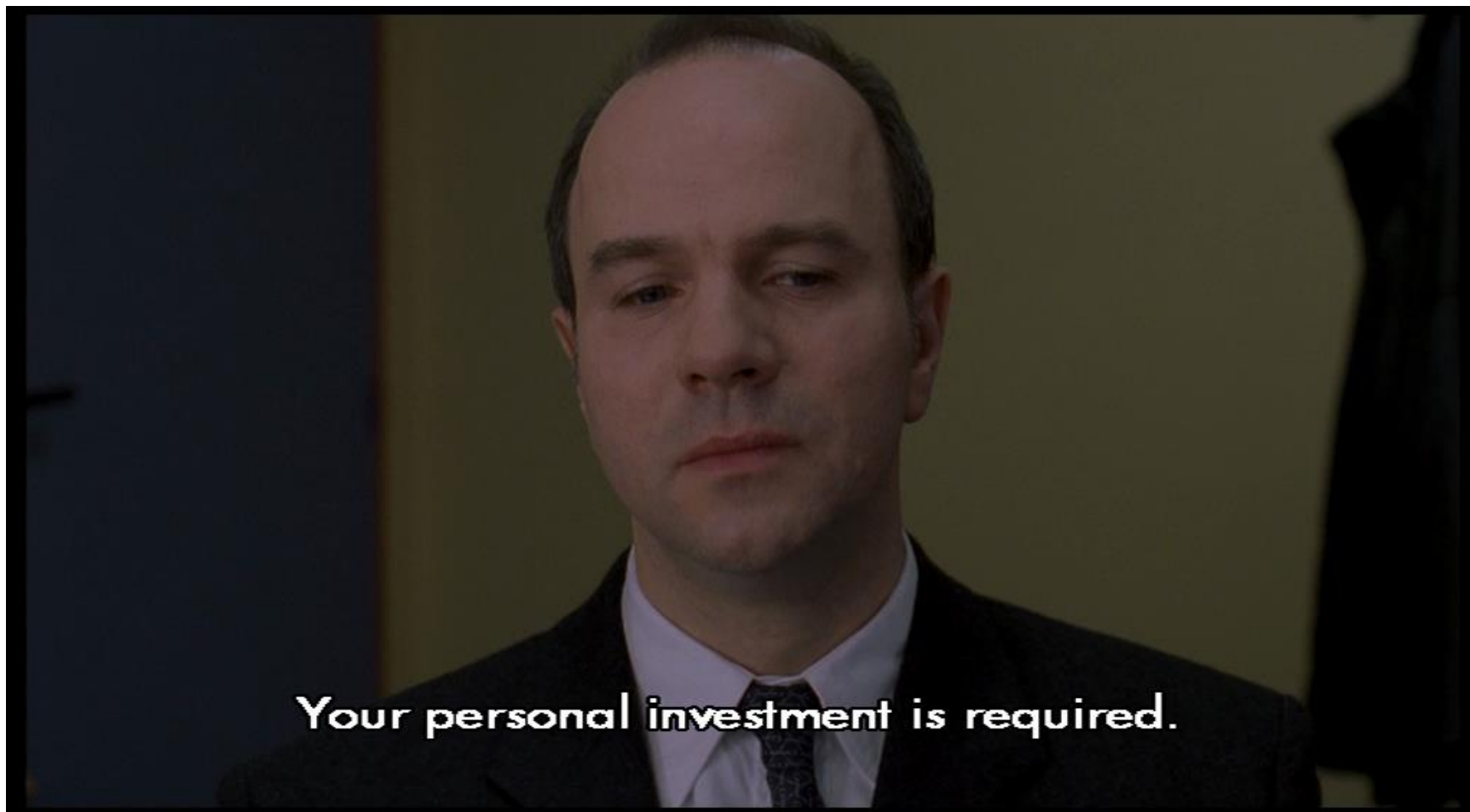
# Student presentation

Discuss the film's portrayal of the human cost of debt and economic hardship.

# The human cost of debt and economic hardship

- effects on white male middle-class professionals (dominant group)
- Vincent as pathological expression of prevailing tendencies of neoliberal economics and suggesting in turn something pathological about them:
  - ‘Inasmuch as it suggests that survival under capitalism is often a product of advanced psychopathology, *Time Out* proves remarkably unsettling’ (Porton & Ellickson, 2002: 24)
- theme of tiredness and exhaustion: “Je suis fatiguée, Vincent” and loss/disruption of sleep
  - see also Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (Verso, 2013)
  - father will disrupt sleep





dormancy in Vincent's eyes even as he gets the new job

- prevalence of anonymous non-lieux (Marc Augé): wastelands abandoned by capital, intermediate social spaces such as motorway service areas
- *road* also 'non-lieu' (Archer)
- and privileged office spaces Vincent seeks to inhabit are similarly anonymous, their component parts interchangeable; their workers interchangeable
- 'proletarianisation' of middle class workforce and its working environment (work becomes 'une activité vide': L109)





a nondescript foyer between two sets of doors, also in its way a 'non-lieu':  
note camera angle and visual arrangement of standard-issue office furniture



neoliberalism in the nursery: Felix admonished for underselling his toys



even international aid as opportunity to demonstrate neoliberal economic principles  
(and the currency of their learnable language)

# Small-group work

Analyse the film in terms of the concept, derived from Lazzarato, of 'economic policing'.

# 'economic policing' in the film

- estimation/evaluation: Vincent exposed to (too) many forms of scrutiny (even physically, at home: "Tu as les seins qui tombent un peu"(1:29:00))
- motif of glass expresses scrutiny:
  - The buildings in the film, with the notable exception of Vincent's mountain hideaway, are transparent. The result of this is not just that one can observe everyone at work or at play, but that, by inference, the observer is also the object of scrutiny. (Archer: 142)
- technique of 'trapping' characters visually 'to suggest isolation or separation' (Higbee, 245)
  - isolation in individual responsibility (fault) for debt
- the credit extended to Vincent from his father opens him to further scrutiny:
  - apparent confidence accompanied by sense of 'entitlement' (to visit, to information, etc.)
  - relatively benign middle-class correlate of interventionist 'pedagogical paternalism' diagnosed by Lazzarato in treatment of the unemployed poor? But still vehemently resented by Vincent.
  - figure of father dominates (prosperity of preceding generations; figure of guilt and blame => guilty interiority of indebted humanity)



visual recollection of death-bed scenes of final moral reckoning

# Small-group work

Analyse the relationship between money and masculinity in the film.

# money and masculinity

- gendered division of spaces
- Vincent as 'unmanned' by loss of job and income (Archer, 143)
- figure of Nono?
- bravado and competitiveness:
  - racing the train (but...)
  - judo (but...)
- 'the road' as gendered (Archer, 138)
- 'melodramatic' focus on father-son relationships (Higbee, 237)



- the paternal:
  - ‘By the end of the film it is the pressure of *bourgeois expectation* to maintain the trappings of professional success and affluence – articulated most intensely not through his wife but through the father – that pushes Vincent to breaking point.’ (Higbee, 242)
- from failure to maintain pretence follows loss of patriarchal authority (Julien’s disobedience)
- and final plot resolution?