



The Most Political Movie of the Year...Is the Story of 24 French Teenagers

→ It's troubling that in a hotly contested election year, it takes a tiny French film to make us confront our American ideological rifts. But here we are. The movie is *The Class*, winner of the Palme d'Or at this year's Cannes Film Festival, and it's an improvised set piece about a year in the life of twenty-four pan-ethnic Parisian middle schoolers and their beleaguered white teacher. Point-blank, this is the most unflinchingly honest film about adolescents since *Kids*. But its implications are far wider. A study in conflict, *The Class* is a jarring piece of vérité in which students and their instructor perpetuate a classroom culture so fractured by base reactions to intrinsic differences (race, class, age, sex) that it's impossible to watch without confronting our own national reflection, no matter whom we elect president. What resonates is an understanding of when to go on the offensive and when to, at any age, shut up and learn.—HOWIE KAHN