FRANCOFONIA
6:30 pm, Fri, March 23, PA 101
(Introduced by Viviana Pizzullo, FAU Comparative Studies)

Francofonia is the great Russian filmmaker Alexander Sokurov's histrionically ambitious meditation on European culture and history as seen through the lens of the Louvre museum in Paris, with a particular focus on its fortunes during World War II. Neither a straightforward documentary nor a standard work of fiction, the film achieves an esoteric density by moving between several narrative strands: there is Sokurov himself, talking on camera with a cargo ship captain carrying part of the Louvre's holdings through a deadly storm, France's national symbol Marianne mourning the museum's collections with Napoleon Bonaparte, and the true story of the friendship between the Louvre's wartime French curator and the Nazi's head of artistic preservation (or, perhaps more accurately, appropriation). In what may be the film's most affecting sequence, Sokurov turns closer to home and compares the Louvre's relatively benign wartime fate with that of the Hermitage Museum in besieged Leningrad. Sokurov's voice-over directly addresses the characters in archival images and present-day footage shot in his distinctive palette of gold and beige, his ruminations aiming for nothing less than a history of the relationship between art and power in twentieth-century Europe. The exploration of savagery and civility as seen through the treatment of artistic treasures proves once more that Sokurov is not only one of the most idiosyncratic artists of our age but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living idiosyncratic artist, but one of its most passionate, a living

NI LE CIEL NI LA TERRE
6:30 pm, Wed, April 11, PA 101
(Introduced by Dr. Rodrick Cooker, FAU (LLCL))

When French soldiers stationed at a remote outpost in Afghanistan begin vanishing without a trace, their commander Captain Antares Bonseguin (Jérémie Renier) assumes that enemy troops are responsible. Then he learns that the Talibans are also disappearing and realizes he may be facing the most invisible of enemies. Described by its brilliant young director Clément Gogoin as “John Ford meets M. Night Shyamalan,” Neither Heaven nor Earth is the rare film to make the leap from the headlines to the Twilight Zone, playing out the eternal struggle between the spiritual and the physical on a desert battlefield where literally anything could happen. Deftly combining a nearly documentary attention to the details of military life with an archetypal touch that reveals his background in the visual arts, Gogoin reimagines the viewer in an environment unfamiliar to most but imagined by many – the contested tribal areas of Afghanistan – only to take us far beyond the imaginable, thus turning his directorial debut feature into a deeply metaphysical film that works both as a thriller and a horror movie, but is not limited by either genre. This speculative contribution to the growing body of films about the endless wars of the 21st century is entirely its own beast, and signals the arrival of a major new talent.