Course Description

This course explores the history, music, and narrative conventions of popular Hindi cinema in India, commonly referred to as “Bollywood.” Bollywood movies, readily identified by their song-and-dance sequences and “masala”-style mixing of filmic genres, are among the most avidly watched films in the world. Focusing on films that engage major historical and cultural moments in sixty years of modern Indian nationhood, we will explore why Bollywood-style storytelling is so effective as well as examine how these filmic narratives both reflect and shape the culture and society in which they are created.

There are several objectives for this course. In one sense, it is an introduction to modern Bollywood cinema and we will watch several of the most significant (for both critics and popular audiences) films of the post-independence era. In another sense, we will also use these films as windows into postcolonial Indian culture and society, and through a chronological viewing, get a Bollywood-eye view of modern Indian history. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, we will “read” and interpret these films as cultural and aesthetic texts and think about the ways in which they make meaning through storytelling, music, and spectacle.

Films (in the order to be shown)

Shree 420 (1955)         Deewar (1975)
Devdas (1955)            Sholay (1977)
Mother India (1957)      Roja (1992)
Dil Se (1998)
Hum Aapke Hai Koun…! (1994)
Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995)
Lagaan (2001)

Rang De Basanti (2006)
Om Shanti Om (2007)

Required Texts

The Bollywood Reader (2008)
ed. by Rajinder Dudrah and Jigna Desai

by Vijay Mishra

Schedule of Classes

Week One: Main Hoon Na/I’m Here Now (Farah Khan, 2004)
Jan. 13 Welcome and film discussion:
Why Should we Study Bollywood Cinema? (aside from the fact that it’s awesome)
Jan. 15 “Bollywood” in local and global contexts
* Mishra ch. 1: Inventing Bombay Cinema (p. 1-?)

**Week Two** (No film screening Monday, MLK Day):

**Jan. 20 watch film in-class: “Larger than Life: India’s Bollywood Film Culture” (2005)**

**Jan. 22 Historical antecedents and the birth of Hindi cinema**
* Tejaswini Ganti, ch. 1 “Introduction” (p. 1-52)
* Rosie Thomas, “Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity” in The Bollywood Reader (p. 21-31)

**Week Three: Shree 420/Mr. 420 (Raj Kapoor, 1955)**

**Jan. 27 film discussion**
* Rashmi Varma, “Provincializing the Global City” in *Social Text* 22/4, Winter 2004 (p. 65-89)

**Jan. 29 Foundational myths: the Ramayana and the Mahabharata**
* Vijay Mishra, “Towards a theoretical critique of Bombay cinema” (ch. 3 in *The Bollywood Reader*) p. 32-44
* Gregory Booth, “Traditional Content and Narrative Structure in the Commercial Hindi Cinema” in *Asian Folklore Studies* 54/2 (p. 169-190)

**Week Four: Devdas (Bimal Roy, 1955)**

**Feb. 3 film discussion**
* Ravi Vasudevan, “The politics of cultural address in a ‘transitional’ cinema: a case study of Indian popular cinema” in *Reinventing Film Studies* ed. Gledhill and Williams (p. 130-164)
* Poonam Arora, “Devdas: India’s Emasculated Hero, Sado-Masochism, and Colonialism” in *Jouvert* 1/1

**Feb. 5 De-coding Bollywood melodrama**
* Mishra ch. 2 “Melodramatic Staging” (p. ?.59)
* Rosie Thomas, “Melodrama and the Negotiation of Morality in Mainstream Hindi Film,” from *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World* (157-182)

**Week Five: Mother India (Mehboob Khan, 1957)**

**Feb. 10 film discussion**
* Mishra, ch. 3 “The Texts of Mother India” (p. 61-87)
* Parama Roy, “Figuring Mother India: The Case of Nargis,” ch. 9 in The Bollywood Reader (p.109-121)

**Feb. 12 Viewing religion in Hindi cinema**
* Rachel Dwyer, “The religious and the secular in Hindi film” ch. 4 in *Filming the Gods* (p.132-161)

**Week Six: Guide (Vijay Anand, 1965)**
Feb. 17 film discussion
* Sumita Chakravarty, “The national-heroic image: masculinity and masquerade” in The Bollywood Reader (p. 84-96)

Feb. 19 Amitabh Bachchan and the “Angry Young Man” of the 1970s
* Mishra, ch. 5 “The Actor as Parallel Text: Amitabh Bachchan” (p. 125-156)

Week Seven: Deewar/Wall (Yash Chopra, 1975)
Feb. 24 film discussion
* Ashis Nandy, “Introduction: Indian popular cinema as a slum’s eye view of politics,” in The Bollywood Reader (p. 73-83)

Feb. 26 Filmi geet I: playback singing
* Sangita Gopal and Biswarup Sen, “Inside and Out: Song and Dance in Bollywood Cinema” in The Bollywood Reader (p. 146-157)
* Rajinder Dudrah, “Singing for India: Songs in the Bollywood Film” ch. 2 in Bollywood Goes to the Movies (p.47-64)

March 3 film discussion

March 5 Cracks in the nation: domestic terrorism in the films of Mani Ratnam
PAPER DUE

Week Nine: Roja (Mani Ratnam, 1992) and Dil Se (“From the Heart” Mani Ratnam, 1998)
March 10 film discussion - Roja
* Nicholas Dirks, “The Home and the Nation: Consuming Culture and Politics in Roja” in The Bollywood Reader (p. 134-145)
* Tejaswini Niranjana, “Integrating Whose Nation? Tourists and Terrorists in Roja” in Economic and Political Weekly (p. 79-82)

March 12 film discussion – Dil Se
* Ananya Jahanara Kabir, “Allegories of Alienation and Politics of Bargaining: Minority Subjectivities in Mani Ratnam’s Dil Se” in South Asian Popular Culture 1/2 (p. 141-159)
Week Ten: *Hum Aapke Hai Koun…!* (Who Am I to You!, 1994)
March 17 film discussion
* Patricia Uberoi, “Imagining the Family: an ethnography of viewing *Hum Aapke Hain Koun*” in *The Bollywood Reader* (p. 172-189)

March 19 **Filmi geet II: staging social transgression**
* Monika Mehta, “What is Behind Film Censorship? The *Khalnayak* Debates” in *The Bollywood Reader* (p. 122-133)

**Spring Break!**

Week Eleven: *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* /The Lover will Take the Bride (Aditya Chopra, 1995)
March 31 film discussion
* Mishra, ch. 8 “Bombay Cinema and Diasporic Desire” (p. 235-269)

April 2 **Nationalism and sport: the case of cricket**
* Ashis Nandy, “Tradition, Transgression, and Norms” ch. 1 in *The Tao of Cricket* (p. 1-51)

Week Twelve: *Lagaan*/Tax (Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001)
April 7 film discussion
* S. Anand (ed.), *Brahmans and Cricket: Lagaan’s millennial purana and other myths* (entire, to be handed out in class)

April 9 **India and Pakistan: reality and representation**
PAPER DUE
Week Thirteen: *Veer-Zaara* (Yash Chopra, 2004)  
April 14  film discussion  
* Srijana Mitra Das, “Partition and Punjabiyat in Bombay cinema: the cinematic perspectives of Yash Chopra and others” in *Contemporary South Asia* 15/4 (p. 453-471)  

April 16  **Youth culture in the 21st century Hindi movie**  

Week Fourteen: *Rang De Basanti/Paint It Saffron* (Rakesh Omprakash Mehra, 2006)  
April 21  film discussion  

April 23 **The Future of Bollywood?**  
* Ashis Nandy, “Notes Towards an Agenda for the Next Generation of Film Theorists in India” in *South Asian Popular Culture* 1/1 (p. 79-84)  
* Ashok Raj, “The curse of globalised culture: the fall of Indian cinema foretold” in *Futures* no. 36 (p. 797- 809)

Week Fifteen: *Om Shanti Om* (Farah Khan, 2007)  
April 28 film discussion

April 30 wrap-up!
Online resources for Bollywood films:

Fabulous site for scholarly reviews of many Bollywood films:
http://www.uiowa.edu/~incinema/

Sites for buying Bollywood films, music:
http://store.nehaflix.com/index.html
http://www.indiaweekly.com/Main/

For Bollywood gossip, news etc:
http://www.bollywoodvillage.com/
http://magnamags.com/magna_stardust/
http://www.bollywood-stars.net/
http://www.indiafm.com/

Bollywood news/gossip/music podcasts:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/asiannetwork/lovebollywood/
www.podmasti.com