

BOLLYWOOD FILM

ENGL 471A & AA

Lecture/Discussion: Tu & Thurs 3:30-4:50pm (WY 101)

Film Screening: Tues 6:30-9:30pm (MC003 or Rausch Auditorium)

Spring 2009

Professor: Priti Joshi

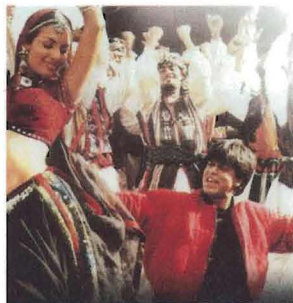
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[Hindi] films share noticeable features, such as the use of melodrama and heightened emotion, especially around the family, an engaging narrative, stars, a certain *mise en scène*, usually one of glamour, grandiloquent dialogues and the all-important songs."

Rachel Dwyer, *100 Bollywood Films* (BFI Publishing, 2005)

Introduction

What is "Bollywood"? On one level, the answer is fairly straightforward, but, as with all academic matters, with a little probing gets more complex. At its simplest, "Bollywood" stands for the films made in the city of Bombay (renamed "Mumbai" in 1995) in India. (There are other large film centers, notably Chennai. In all, India produces about 800-900 films a year.) However, the term has come to mean not just films from the Bombay film industry, but a particular *type* of film produced by the Indian film industry, a song-and-dance (literally!) extravaganza. Salman Rushdie, the novelist, has dubbed these films "Epico-Mythico-Tragico-Comico-Super-sexy-High-Masala-Art." Bollywood films are sheer entertainment, and this course aims to introduce you to a form that is a genuine global brand – in Malaysia, Egypt, Dubai, Taiwan, South Africa, Russia, Oakland, and Southall, people – sometimes of South Asian descent, just as often not – voraciously consume Bollywood films, humming their songs and repeating dialogue films, often in a language alien to them.

As with all popular culture, key cultural themes and concerns are elaborately articulated from within a framework that might at first appear "un-sophisticated." We will get beyond such surface readings to focus on the way these films pose and probe questions of national identity, gender, masculinity, women's roles, caste, class, and wealth, as well as unpack the fantasy, fears, hopes, and anxieties that these films articulate and elaborate. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Indian popular film is one of the best places to study India's entry into modernity and self-fashioning in the post-independence period. In assessing these popular films, we will locate them within the larger Indian film industry. This course, then, will be focused on Bollywood films, but in order to develop a wider understanding, we will examine them in relation to the broader category of "Indian Cinema."

Note on the Format of This Class

We meet twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30-4:50pm. In addition to our class time, we will also have a "Film Screening" (listed on Cascade as Engl 471AA) that is on **Tuesdays from 6:30-9:30 pm** in Rausch for a perfect theater experience (all films may not last the full 3 hours, but please block that time). In addition to attending class on Tues and Thurs, you **MUST attend the screenings** on Tues evenings. Think of the screening as akin to a lab that

you take concurrently when you sign up for a Bio or Chem class; or, think of it as time you would spend reading for class, only in this case the “reading” will be a communal viewing. Because you will be dedicating time to the screenings, the amount of reading assigned will be commensurate. The assigned readings will be primarily scheduled for discussion on Tues; Thursday discussions will focus on the film we have watched on Tues night.

Use of Blackboard

We will be using Bb in this class; please sign up for it *right away*. The course code is “engl471a” (no quotation marks, no spaces, all lowercase). Many of the readings are on Bb and you will submit your Response Papers and Scene Analysis on Bb. I will also use Bb to communicate regular with you; *please check the email address that is connected to your Bb account regularly*.

Course Requirements

- **Response Papers:** Each student will write **three (3)** response papers. Each paper should be approximately 900-1,200 words (3-4 standard pages) and should discuss one or more of the films and readings we are discussing. At the start of the semester, the class will be divided into four groups – Group A, B, C, & D – and each group will have a separate due date for each of the response papers (please see the schedule). ***If you miss your due date, you cannot make it up and hand your paper in on another group’s due date.***
- **Scene Analysis:** Each student will write **one (1)** scene analysis. As the title indicates, this is a close-reading of a scene in a film. You are free to select any scene you wish; your paper should be 900-1,200 words and should discuss the “language” of film – framing, set up, camera angles, etc – as it relates to the narrative. Once again, each group has a different due date and you cannot “switch” your group or due date.
- **Quizzes:** In the course of the semester, we will have (at least) **five** in-class quizzes. If you have attended class and the screening and done the reading, you should have no difficulty with the quizzes.
- **Final Project:** For your final project, you have immense latitude. You can choose to work solo or in a team; you can do a creative project or a traditional research paper; you can perform a song-and-dance sequence or develop a poster for a film or write the publicity or film an alternative ending. Go where your inclination and imagination takes you! More specific details will follow, but for now you need to know two things: each individual or group must hand in a project proposal no later than **Tues, April 7**; and, if your final project is “creative,” you should also hand in a brief discussion of your choices, your process, your difficulties, and an assessment of your final product.
- **Participation:** You and your input are central to the success – or failure – of this class. I will act as a discussion facilitator, guide, and occasional lecturer; your responsibility is to prepare for and participate fully in class discussion. What is valued is **not merely the quantity, but the QUALITY of your contribution**. Your willingness to *rethink* and revise initial reactions, along with your ability to listen to peers, proffer your own readings, and pose questions that forward our understanding are the most important skills you bring to our joint project of learning.

Grade Breakdown

• Active participation in all class discussions	15%
• Three 3-4 page Response Papers	30%
• One scene analysis	15%
• Five in-class quizzes	15%
• Final Project Proposal	5%
• Final Project	20%

Required Texts

- *Bollywood: A Guide to Popular Hindi Cinema*, Tejaswini Ganti (“Ganti” on syllabus)
- *Bollywood: The Indian Cinema Story*, Nasreen Munni Kabir (“Kabir” on syllabus) [**This book has just gone out of print; assigned chapters from it will be on Bb**]

- In addition to these texts, we will read essays that are located on Blackboard (listed as “Bb” on the syllabus). Please make sure you not only read but bring a copy of the article to class on the day we are discussing it.

Course Policies

- **Attendance:** You are required to attend every class (I take roll at the start of class; if you are late, it is your responsibility to make sure I have marked you). If you are absent, particularly for more than one consecutive class, **I appreciate the courtesy of an email**. This is not a distance-learning university: *you cannot pass this class with more than 4 absences – excused or unexcused*. If you have an emergency that requires you to miss a week or more of classes, please contact Academic and Career Advising at 879-3250.
- **Punctuality:** Please come to class on time; it is disturbing and discourteous to me and your peers to arrive late. Excessive lateness will count as an absence.
- **Absences:** It is your responsibility to get the notes for a class you have missed from a peer. Please make sure you get the telephone number and e-mail of at least three of your peers.
- **Preparedness:** Please come to each class having completed the reading assignment, thought about it in relation to previous readings, and prepared to discuss it.
- **Papers:** Papers must be typed and handed in on time. Late papers will be marked down one grade (i.e. A to B+) *for each class period* they are late. No paper will be accepted more than a week after it is due (unless there is a special circumstance and you have spoken with me beforehand). You must complete all written assignments. Papers will be graded for their argument, supporting evidence, analysis, and style (consult “Grading Criteria” and “Academic Papers” on Bb).
- **Grades:** Letter grades on papers and assignments will be converted to the following numerical equivalents:

A+ = 99	B+ = 89	C+ = 79	D+ = 69
A = 95	B = 85	C = 75	D = 65
A- = 92	B- = 82	C- = 72	F = 0

Your final numerical score will be converted to a letter equivalent thus:

A = 94 - 100	B- = 80 - 83.9	D+ = 67 - 69.9
A- = 90 - 93.9	C+ = 77 - 79.9	D = 64 - 66.9
B+ = 87 - 89.9	C = 74 - 76.9	D- = 60 - 63.9
B = 84 - 86.9	C- = 70 - 73.9	F = below 60

- **The Meaning of Grades:** Please consult the “Grading Criteria” on Bb for an explanation of each grade. Briefly, an “A” means superlative work; “A” papers demonstrate critical and analytic thinking and the ability to extend ideas and concepts discussed in class in new directions. In my classes, a “C” indicates “average.” It is *not* a failing grade; I do not treat it as such and nor should you. Finally, please know: I do *NOT* grade on “effort,” but on the outcome. While I appreciate effort, please recognize that it is only fair to all that I only assess the product you hand in.
- **Academic Honesty:** The full promise of the academic community and learning in it only emerges when all participants act with academic honesty. There are many forms of academic dishonesty (please consult *The Logger* at <http://www.ups.edu/x4718.xml> for a complete list); here I will highlight only three:
 - * Plagiarism
 - * Submitting the same work for credit in more than one course without prior consultation with the professor

- * Asking or contracting someone else to write a paper or do other course work for you

To plagiarize means to pass along someone else's words **or ideas** as if they were your own. In the educational community, this is considered a theft – of intellectual property – and is unacceptable. Please be aware that both the university and I take plagiarism seriously and will not tolerate it. There are many forms of plagiarism, but even the most “innocent” carries penalties (which range from failing the paper or class to suspension for a semester or expulsion). If you keep the following in mind, you will steer clear of trouble:

- * Always put quotation marks around any statement written by somebody else and provide a full citation that includes the full source and page number.
- * Cite the author **even if you paraphrase or summarize** her/his ideas. The general rule is that any ideas or arguments that are not common knowledge must be given their due and acknowledged.
- * The Internet **IS** a “source” and ideas or materials gathered from it should be properly cited (see <http://library.ups.edu/research/guides/citeurls.htm> for instructions on how to cite internet sources)

If the stick of failure or suspension is not enough, here is the carrot: properly citing your work is not only intellectually honest and keeps you free of the university's judicial system, but also allows you to develop more robust arguments of your own that may build upon others' ideas but that allow you to develop your own voice and independence as a thinker.

- **And Finally ...:** Please turn *off* any noise-making devices you may be carrying; hearing even the most sublime of musical arrangements converted into a tinny ringtone can set one's teeth on edge and a persistent buzzing from the floor makes everyone jumpy. Needless to say, you should not be texting during class either. All of these distractions detract from the high-brow pursuit of learning.

Schedule of Discussion, Films, Readings, and Due Dates

(this is your class; depending on your needs, the syllabus may change)

For each film we watch, please read the accompanying blurb on the film, director, and major stars in Chapters 3 and 4 of Ganti.

Course Introduction			
Date	Topics Discussed	Readings Due	Writing Due
Tues, Jan 20	• Introduction		
1/20 Screening	★ <i>Pather Panchali</i> (1955), dir. Satyajit Ray		

“Indian Cinema,” “Hindi Film,” “Bollywood,” “Indian Popular Film”: What’s in a Name?			
Date	Topics Discussed	Readings Due	Writing Due
Thurs, Jan 22	• Art films vs popular films • Basics of film language		
Tues, Jan 27	• Introduction to the Indian film Industry • Regional film centers (Bengali and Tamil film)	⌘ Kabir, Ch 1: “Bollywood Basics” pp 1-23 [Bb] ⌘ Ganti, pp 23-43	
1/27 Screening	★ <i>Bunty aur Babli</i> (2005), dir. Aditya Chopra		
Thurs, Jan 29			Group A Response Paper #1

Conceiving India: National Narratives			
Date	Topics Discussed	Readings Due	Writing Due
Tues, Feb 3	• The “mother fetish” • Tradition/modernity; materiality/spirituality	⌘ Kabir, Ch 3: “The Heroine” pp 53-80 [Bb] ⌘ Excerpts from Vijay Mishra’s , “The Texts of ‘Mother India’ from <i>Bollywood Cinema</i> , pp 65-81 [Bb]	

Conceiving India: National Narratives			
2/3 Screening	★ <i>Mother India</i> (1957), dir. Mehboob Khan		
Thurs, Feb 5			Group B Response Paper #1
Tues, Feb 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “Indian Woman,” Take 2 • The studio system & distribution 	✕ Kabir, Ch 5: “Working Wonders,” pp 103-121 [Bb] ✕ Ganti, pp 53-78	
2/10 Screening	★ <i>Bhumika</i> (1977), dir. Shyam Benegal		
Thurs, Feb 12			Group C Response Paper #1
Tues, Feb 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban/Rural • What does it mean to be Indian? 	✕ Kabir, Ch 2: “The Hero,” pp 25-52 [Bb]	
2/17 Screening (5-8pm)	★ <i>Shree 420</i> (1955), dir. Raj Kapoor		
Thurs, Feb 19			Group D Response Paper #1
Tues, Feb 24	• Songs & playback singers	✕ Kabir, Ch 7: “Singing Through the Ages,” pp 153-182 [Bb] ✕ Ganti, pp 78-88 and 176-180 ✕ Nasreen Munni Kabir, “Pyasa,” in <i>Guru Dutt: A Life in Cinema</i> , pp 75-88 [Bb]	
2/24 Screening	★ <i>Pyasa</i> (1957), dir. Guru Dutt		

A Star is Born: Amitabh Bacchan and the Angry Young Man			
Date	Topics Discussed	Readings Due	Writing Due
Thurs, Feb 26			Group A Response Paper #2
Tues, March 3	• Overcoming communalism; or, Hindu, Muslim, Christian	✕ Kabir, Ch 4: “The Villains and the Vamps,” pp 81-102 [Bb]	Group D Scene Analysis due

A Star is Born: Amitabh Bacchan and the Angry Young Man			
3/3 Screening	★ <i>Amar, Akbar, Anthony</i> (1977), dir. Manmohan Desai		
Thurs, March 5			Group B Response Paper #2
Tues, March 10	• “The angry young man” phenomenon	ꣳ Kabir, Ch 6: “Calling the Shots,” pp 123-151 [Bb]	
3/10 Screening	★ <i>Deewar</i> (1975), dir. Yash Chopra		
Thurs, March 12			Group C Response Paper #2
March 17 & 19	Spring Break		
Tues, March 24	• The “Masala Western”	ꣳ Vijay Mishra, “The Actor as Parallel Text,” from <i>Bollywood Cinema</i> , pp 125-156 [Bb]	Group B Scene Analysis due
3/24 Screening	★ <i>Sholay</i> (1975), dir. Ramesh Sippy		
Thurs, March 26			Group D Response Paper #2

The NRI Phenomenon; or, Films for the Diaspora			
Date	Topics Discussed	Readings Due	Writing Due
Tues, March 31	• South Asian Diasporas • Bollywood becomes a global brand name	ꣳ Vijay Mishra, “Bombay Cinema and Diasporic Desire,” from <i>Bollywood Cinema</i> , pp 235-269 [Bb]	Group C Scene Analysis due
3/31 Screening	★ <i>Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge</i> (1995), dir. Aditya Chopra		
Thurs, April 2			Group A Response Paper #3
Tues, April 7	• How to be “Indian” in the US/UK/Australia • Mixing it up - disco, hip-hop, rap, pop become “Indianized”	ꣳ Patricia Uberoi, “The Diaspora Comes Home: Disciplining Desire in DDLJ,” <i>Contributions to Indian Sociology</i> 32:2 (1998): 305-336	Final Project Proposal (either individual or group proposals)
4/7 Screening	★ <i>Kal Ho Naa Ho</i> (2003), dir. Nikhil Advani		

India's Past and Present			
Date	Topics Discussed	Readings Due	Writing Due
Thurs, April 9			Group B Response Paper #3
Tues, April 14	• Assessing India's colonial past: Bollywood revises history	ꣳ Sumita S. Chakravarty, from "The Recuperation of History and Memory," in <i>National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema 1947-1987</i> , pp 157-173.	Group A Scene Analysis due
4/14 Screening	★ <i>Mughal-e-Azam</i> (1960), dir. K. Asif		
Thurs, April 16			Group C Response Paper #3
Tues, April 21	• Can popular films question national narratives?		
4/21 Screening	★ <i>Dil Se</i> (1998), dir. Mani Ratnam		
Thurs, April 23			Group D Response Paper #3

Wrap Up and Presentations			
Date	Topics Discussed	Readings Due	Writing Due
Tues, April 28	• Final Project Presentations		
4/28 Screening	• Final Project Presentations		
Thurs, April 30	• Final Project Presentations		
Tues, May 5	• Final Project Presentations		
5/5 Screening (in Wy 101)	• Final Project Presentations		

Tues, May 12 – Final Project Papers Due (no later than 6pm)

Supplemental Readings

The number of scholarly books and articles on Bollywood film is very large. Below is just a small sample of scholarly books on relevant topics:

- Moinak Biswas, ed, *Apu and After: Re-visiting Ray's Cinema* (Seagull Books, 2006)
- Mihir Bose, *Bollywood: A History* (Tempus, 2006)
- Santi Das, ed, *Satyajit Ray: An Intimate Master* (Allied, 1998)
- Rachel Dwyer, *100 Bollywood Films* (BFI, 2005)
- Rachel Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema* (Routledge, 2006)
- Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (Routledge, 2004)
- K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, *Indian Popular Cinema: a Narrative of Cultural Change* (Trentham, 2004)
- Subhash K. Jha, *The Essential Guide to Bollywood* (Roli Books, 2005)
- Lalit Mohan Joshi, ed, *Bollywood: Popular Indian Cinema* (Dakini Books, 2002)
- Ashish Rajadhyaksha & Paul Willemen, eds, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (BFI, 2002)
- Preben Kaarsholm, ed, *City Flicks: Indian Cinema and the Urban Experience* (Seagull Books, 2007)
- Nasreen Munni Kabir, *Bollywood: The Indian Cinema Story* (Channel 4 Books, 2001)
- Raminder Kaur & Ajay J. Sinha, eds, *Bollyworld: Popular Indian Cinema Through a Transnational Lens* (Sage, 2005)
- Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (Routledge, 2002)
- M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi film: A Historical Construction* (OUP, 2000)
- Yves Thoraval, *The cinemas of India* (Macmillian, 2000)
- Ravi S. Vasudevan, *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema* (OUP, 2000)
- Jyotika Virdi, *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (Rutgers UP, 2003)