

Englit 1410
Spring 2007
Majumdar, N.

Professor: Neepa Majumdar

Office Hours: Mondays, 9:30–11:30 a.m. or by appointment

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ENGLIT 1410: Bollywood and Indian Cinema - 30060

LECTURE and SCREENING: Mondays, 1:00 – 4:50 pm in Lawrence Hall 209

RECITATION: Wednesdays, 11:00 to 11:50 in CL 352

This course will give you an overview of Indian cinema, which the media has recently discovered as “Bollywood,” a term whose history we will analyze even as we distinguish it from the rest of Indian cinema. We will analyze Indian and Bollywood films in terms of their stylistic techniques, narrative conventions, and viewing contexts, as well as in terms of broader historical and cultural issues. Some of the topics we will discuss include new configurations of “art” vs. commercial cinema; Hollywood’s influence; stardom and fan cultures; sound in Indian cinema, nationalism and transnationalism; the representation of history; questions of gender and religion; and the Indian diaspora in the UK, USA, Africa, and elsewhere.

Course Readings

There is no textbook for this class. All course readings are available for download on Blackboard.

Blackboard

You can access the course website at <http://courseweb.pitt.edu> where you will be able to read class-related announcements and download the syllabus, course readings, screening questions, and information about the exams and paper. Please note that lecture notes will not be available online. You can also use this website to email your classmates.

I will contact you occasionally via email to keep you updated about your attendance and performance in class and to make announcements. The course website will send out emails only to your Pitt email account. Therefore, if you do not use your Pitt email account, please use the following instructions to **have your Pitt email forwarded** to the account you use regularly:

- 1) Go to <http://accounts.pitt.edu/>
- 2) Log in with your username and password and click “connect”
- 3) On the Management menu, click on “Edit forwarding addresses”
- 4) Enter your forwarding address(es) (the email address you use regularly) in the box(es) and click “OK”

If you don’t have your email forwarded, you are responsible for any class-related information that you miss.

Course Requirements

Attendance Policy:

3 Late arrivals = 1 absence

3 partial presences = 1 absence (for example, if you leave before or after the film screening)

3 unexcused absences = course grade lowered by one full letter grade

4 to 6 absences = 1/3 letter grade lowered for every unexcused absence.

7 or more excused or unexcused absences = F

Excused absences: you must turn in a doctor's note or other valid explanation within a week of your absence.

I will keep track of attendance based on your signature in the sign-up sheet that will be circulated at the beginning of class. It is your responsibility to remember to sign in when the sheet is sent around. This will be your only valid proof that you were in class.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Please make sure that you **keep a hard copy** of each written assignment for your own protection.

EXAM POLICY: I do not do any make-up exams. If you are sick or have some other valid reason for missing an exam, I will require **valid written proof** of your excuse in order for you to take a make-up exam. If you are sick, you must bring a doctor's note as proof. If you choose to not go to a doctor, you will have to forego a make-up exam.

To prepare for these exams, you will review your reading notes, class lecture notes, and your film screening and discussion notes. **Each exam will have take-home essays and in-class short answers.**

1) Midterm (25%): on material from weeks 1 through 6 and to be held in week 7

2) Final (25%): on material from weeks 7 through 13 and to be held in exam week.
Your final is scheduled for Friday, April 27th from 12:00 p.m. to 1:50 p.m.

Note: The final exam time is set by the university and I cannot change it or make accommodations for individual students.

3) Class Discussion (10%)

Your careful reading of each week's reading assignment will be the basis for your contribution to class discussion. Likewise, I will expect you to be active viewers of the films we watch in class. This means that you should take screening notes and be able to speak in class with detailed examples from your notes. These notes will also be helpful when you study for your exams. If I don't hear your voice in class, I will call on you to speak up.

4) Scene Analysis paper (20 %)

You will write a 4 to 6 page paper with a detailed analysis of an assigned film sequence considering both its formal elements and its cultural context. The sequence will be from a film we will have watched in class. Assigned in week 5 and due in week 10.

5) Group Presentation (10%) and Paper (10%)

Since the course can present only a very small fraction of the totality of Indian cinema, you will research an area of Bollywood or Indian cinema with three other students. Together you will prepare a 20-minute group presentation on the last day of classes from a list of topics that I will hand out. You will also make a handout for the class and turn in an individual paper based on your presentation.

No Last-Minute Extra Credit Opportunities

Please don't come to me at the end of the semester to tell me that you "need" a particular grade for this class. The responsibility for earning a grade is yours and all the information you need to do well in this class is in this syllabus. Make use of my office hours and talk to me if you are having trouble, but do so early in the semester.

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's policy on academic integrity. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Everything you write in your exams and papers must be your own work, unless you quote someone else's work and provide full citations. This includes material you may have found online. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted below from the Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score or F for the paper or exam will be imposed.

The integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation on the part of faculty and honest academic conduct on the part of students. To this end, students are expected to conduct themselves at a high level of responsibility in the fulfillment of the course of their study. It is the corresponding responsibility of faculty to make clear to students those standards by which students will be evaluated, and the resources permissible for use by students during the course of their study and evaluation. The educational process is perceived as a joint faculty-student enterprise which will perforce involve professional judgment by faculty and may involve – without penalty- reasoned exception by students to the data or views offered by faculty. Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom, February 1974

Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, **216 William Pitt Union, 648-7890 or 383-7355 (TTY)** as early as possible in the term.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to talk to me, e-mail me, or stop by during my office hours.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Complete all readings by the date on which they are assigned.

Week 1 (Jan 8 and 10): Introduction

Screening: *Dil Se / From the Heart* (Mani Ratnam, 1998, 163 mins.)

* Complete online questionnaire in time for the recitation*

Week 2 (Jan. 17 only): The Question of National Cinema

NO CLASS ON MONDAY, JAN. 15: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Readings: Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema" (*Cinema and Nation* 63-74)

No Screening

Week 3 (Jan. 22 and 24): Conventions of Popular Hindi Cinema

Readings: Rosie Thomas, "Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity –An Introduction" (*Screen* 26.3-4 (May-Aug 1985): 116-131).

Jacob Levich, "Stars Over Bombay" (*Film Comment* Sept.-Oct. 1995)

Background Reading: Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel, Chapter 1 (*Cinema India* 13-41)

Screening: *Khuda Gawah / God is my Witness* (Mukul Sharma, 1992, 193 mins.)

Week 4 (Jan. 29 and 31): Prabhat Studios: The Devotional Genre

Readings: Ashis Nandy, "An Intelligent Critic's Guide to Indian Cinema" (*The Savage Freud* 196-207).

Selections from contemporary reviews of *Sant Tukaram*

Screening: *Sant Tukaram* (V. G. Damle and S. Fatelal, 1936, 131 mins.)

Note: This film is not available in the library or in video stores, but a study copy has been placed on reserve in the library.

Week 5 (February 5 and 7): Melodrama and Authorship

[Paper 1 assignment handed out on Monday]

Readings: Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema*: excerpts from Chapter 4, "Auteurship and the Lure of Romance"(98-112)

Ashis Nandy, "The Popular Hindi Film: Ideology and First Principles" (*India International Centre Quarterly* 8.1): 89-96.

Optional Reading: Jacob Levich, "Freedom Songs: Rediscovering Bollywood's Golden Age," *Film Comment* May-June 2002): 48-51

Screening: *Awara /The Vagabond* (Raj Kapoor, 1951, 168 mins.)

Week 6 (February 12 and 14): The Bombay Blockbuster

[Take-home exam 1 handed out on Monday]

Readings: Rosie Thomas, "Melodrama and the Negotiation of Morality in Mainstream Hindi Films" (from *Consuming Modernity*)

Wimal Dissanayake and Malti Sahai, "Sholay and the Geneology of Popular Indian Cinema" (from *Sholay: A Cultural Reading*)

Screening: *Sholay* / *Embers* (Ramesh Sippy, 1975, 204 mins.)

Week 7 (February 19 and 21): Stardom, Masculinity, and Nation in Bombay Cinem

[Monday: Take-home Exam 1 due; in-class exam at the start of class]

Readings: Ashwini Sharma, "Blood Sweat and Tears: Amitabh Bachchan, Urban Demi-God" (from *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men*)

Ranjani Mazumdar, "The Psychotic as Protagonist" (excerpt from *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema*)

Screening: *Deewaar* / *The Wall* (Yash Chopra, 1975, 160 mins.)

Week 8 (February 26 and 28): What is "Bollywood"?

Readings: Ronald Inden, Excerpt from "Transnational Class, Erotic Arcadia and Commercial Utopia in Hindi Films" (*Image Journeys*)

Vijay Mishra, "Bombay Cinema and Diasporic Desire" (*Bollywood Cinema* 235-269)

Screening: *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* / *Something Happens* (Karan Johar, 1998, 177 mins.)

March 5 and 7
SPRING BREAK

Week 9 (March 12 and 14): "Bollywood" Masculinity

Ashish Rajashyaksha, "The 'Bollywoodization' of Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena," (*Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4.1 (2003): 25-39).

Corey K. Creekmur, "Bombay Boys: Dissolving the Male Child in Popular Hindi Cinema," (*Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Boyhood*)

Optional Reading: Madhava Prasad, "This Thing Called Bollywood"

Screening: *Dil Chahta Hai* / *What the Heart Desires* (Farhan Akhtar, 2001, 185mins.)

Week 10 (March 19 and 21): Bollywood Noir

[Mar. 19: Scene analysis paper due in class]

Readings: Travis Crawford, "Bullets Over Bombay: Exposing the Underworld of Hindi Cinema (Both Onscreen and Off)," *Film Comment* (May-June 2002): 53-55.

Neepa Majumdar, "The Embodied Voice: Song Sequences and Stardom in Popular Hindi Cinema" (*Soundtrack Available* 161-181)

Ravi Vasudevan, "Disreputable and Illegal Publics" (*Sarai Reader* 2004, pp. 71-79).

Screening: *Satya/Truth* (Ram Gopal Varma, 1997, 170 mins.)

Week 11 (March 26 and 28): History and Memory: The Partition of India

Readings: Chakravarty, *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema*, chapter 5

Mira Reym Binford, "The Two Cinemas of India" (*Film and Politics in the Third World*)

Screenings: *Garm Hawa / Hot Winds* (M.S. Sathyu, 1973, 146 mins.)

Week 12 (April 2 and 4): Cinematic Past and Present

Readings: Ravi Vasudevan, "Another History Rises to the Surface: Melodrama Theory"

Screening: *Hey Ram / Oh God* (Kamal Haasan, 1999, 201 mins.)

Week 13 (April 9 and 11): History, Memory, and Youth Culture

Readings: Wikipedia entry on Bhagat Singh (link through Blackboard)

Screening: *Rang de Basanti/Color it Saffron* (the color of sacrifice) (Rakesh Omprakash Mehra, 2006, 157 mins.)

Week 14 (April 16 and 18): Student Presentations

[Presentation paper, class handouts due; Take-home final exam handed out]

Monday: Student presentations and handouts

Wednesday: Presentation paper due in class; Final exam information discussed

In-Class FINAL EXAM: Friday, April 27th, 12:00 – 1:50 p.m.

Take-home final exam due.

Please note that, inconvenient though this time may be, it is set by the university and I cannot change it or make accommodations for individual students.