



J-ET-0144 – Bombay to Bollywood: Hindi Cinema’s Past and Present Cross Listed Elective – Fall 2026

Course Information

Course Duration: 14-15 Weeks

Credit Hours: 3 hours per week

Meetings: TBD

Location: TBD

Prerequisites: No formal prerequisites for opting for this departmental elective. This is a film studies course with written assessment components. It will be useful for students who are interested in popular Indian cinema and wish to pursue careers in film reportage, film criticism, content creation as well as writing and research.

Equivalent Courses: NA

Exclusive Courses: NA

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Abhija Ghosh

Biography: Abhija Ghosh has a PhD in Cinema Studies from the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her areas of interests include film history, media industries, sound and music technologies, early cinema and Indian popular cinemas. Her essays are published in *‘Bad’ Women of Bombay Films: Studies in Desire and Anxiety* (2020) and *Music, Modernity and Publicness in India* (2020), *Introduction to Film Studies* (2022), and *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies*. She was a Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Fellow (2017-2018) at the Center for Media, Culture and History, Department of Anthropology, New York University, New York.

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Phone: +91 8930110182; Office Hours: 11am – 5pm; Meetings by Appointment

Office: 6A South 3rd Floor, New Faculty Office Block (FOB)

1. Course Description

This elective offers an introduction to the history, debates and persistent themes of Hindi cinema. The melodramatic narrative address, and song and dance structure of Indian popular cinemas have always occupied a complex place in film writing, often caught in opinions about good and bad cinema or mass and art film. Instead of such binaries of high and low culture, this course critically engages with how such a popular cinematic form has responded to historical and political developments concerning the nation. The core theme running throughout the course will be the centrality of Bombay as a city in the imagination and production of Hindi cinema post-independence, and what changes post-globalization. This course aims to provide a broad perspective on how to understand this popular Indian cinematic form with focused sessions on the cultural dominance of Hindi cinema and its shifting relationship to other languages and industries, stardom, musical structure, genres, styles and narrative themes. Mapping the past and present industrial landscape of Hindi cinema from the 1940s to early 2000s, the students will have to deal with two critical questions, what is ‘Bombay cinema’ and is it different from ‘Bollywood’?

2. Course Intended Learning Objectives (Aim)

| Course Intended Learning Outcomes | Teaching and Learning Activities | Assessments/ Activities |
|--|---|---|
| Identify consistent visual and narrative themes of Bombay cinema | To be able to locate on screen representation in a historical context | Identify issues and concerns surrounding representation of characters |
| Historical perspective on the making of the Bombay industry | To be able to grasp the complexity of how a film/ creative industry comes about, its cultural position, production processes | Recognize the lack of institutional archives and how film scholars and filmmakers have used print archives. |
| Understanding Hindi cinema and its audiences through print cultures, especially looking at posters, film magazines, press material | To map the shifts in how Hindi cinema has addressed, appealed and responded to its audiences in different decades Case Study: Bombay Film Poster | Learn about how film narratives have responded to shifting exhibition practices. |
| Industry, Film Form and Stardom | Study the relationship of popular cinema and stardom – with critical focus on female stardom. | Understand how the film song and stardom works within narratives as well as gains an extra cinematic cultural power to respond to social and political issues |

3. Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

Evaluation breakup

Total: 100 marks

Internal breakup: 70 marks (2 assignments; Will be announced at the beginning of the course)

External breakup: 30 marks (End Term Exam)

Grade Definition

COURSE LETTER GRADES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

| Letter Grade | Percentage of Marks | Grade Points | Interpretation |
|--------------|---------------------|--------------|--|
| O | 80 and above | | Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability. |
| A+ | 75-79 | | Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules, and principles, and critical |
| A | 70 - 74 | | Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules, and principles, critically analyze existing material, and originality in thinking and presentation. |
| A- | 65-69 | | Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills |
| B+ | 60-64 | | Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems, and reasonable critical and analytical skills. |
| B | 55 - 59 | | Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills. |
| B- | 50-54 | | Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills |
| P1 | 45-49 | | Pass 1: Pass with basic understanding of the subject matter. |
| P2 | 40-44 | | Pass 2: Pass with a rudimentary understanding of the subject matter. |

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|--|------------|--|--|
| | Below40 | | Fail Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course. |
| | Pass | | ·p· represents the option of choosing between the Pass/Fail grading system over the CGPA grading system in the COVID 19semester/s. The option is provided when students attain a minimum of 40 percentage marks under the current grading structure in a given subject. |
| | Incomplete | | Extenuating circumstances preventing the student from completing coursework assessment, taking the examination; or where the Assessment Panel at its discretion assigns this grade. If an "I" grade is assigned, the Assessment Panel will suggest a schedule for the completion of work at a later date |

4. Academic Integrity

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism in assignments in any form or extent will be penalized as per school and university level policies. Cheating or copying of others works will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Use of phone and laptop in the classrooms during the lectures will be limited until so allowed by the course instructor.

Participation/Attendance Policy: Students will be given response sheets with keywords or issues after the film screening sessions to note their observations. The idea is to be able to use one's first impressions of a film to compare and contrast with the readings, learn new perspectives or even unlearn certain notions towards the mainstream cinema. Students are expected to answer and participate in classroom activities such as responses, discussions and quizzes. **Minimum 75% attendance is the requirement for answering the final end term exam.**

5. Keyword Syllabus

Hindi Cinema; Bombay Cinema; Bollywood; Popular Culture; City and Cinema; Film Music; Stardom; Culture Industry; Media Industry

6. Course Material

Main Text Books: (Selected Sections/Chapters)

- i. *Indian Cinema: A Very Short Introduction*: Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Oxford University Press, 2016.
- ii. *Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History*, Jyotika Viridi, Rutgers University, 2003
- iii. *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City*, University of Minnesota, 2007
- iv. *Producing Bollywood*, Tejaswini Ganti, Durhan Duke University Press, 2012

- v. *Bombay Before Bollywood: Film City Fantasies*, Rosie Thomas, SUNY Press, 2013
- vi. *From Bombay to Bollywood: The Making of a Global Media Industry*, Aswin Punathambekar, NYU Press, 2013.
- vii. *Film Studies: An Introduction*, Eds. Vebhuti Duggal, Bindu Menon and Spandan Bhattacharya, Worldview Publications, Delhi, 2022.

7. Session Plan

WEEK 1- Bombay Cinema/Hindi Cinema: An Overview

Rosie Thomas, Excerpts from Introduction, *Bombay Before Bollywood: Film City Fantasies*, Suny Press, New York, 2013, p. 3-20.

Ranjani Mazumdar, Excerpts from Introduction: Urban Allegories, *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of a City*, University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Tejaswini Ganti, Excerpts from “From Vice to Virtue: The State and Filmmaking in India”, *Producing Bollywood*, Durhan Duke University Press, 2012

Class Discussion on: Fearless Nadia/ *Diamond Queen* (1940); Raj Kapoor/ *Awaara* (1951); Nargis/*Mother India* (1957)

Lecture with Clips/Class Discussion

WEEK 2 - From the Archives: Female Stardom and Studios

Jyotika Viridi, Heroes and Villains: Narrating the Nation, *The Cinematic Imagination, Indian Popular Films as Social History*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2003

Debashree Mukherjee, “Jubilee Is a Beautifully Mounted Show About the 1930s but the Women Pioneers Have Been Erased”, *The Wire*, 26 April 2023, <https://thewire.in/culture/jubilee-series-review>

Karan Bali, “How Bombay Talkies Studio became Hindi Cinema’s original dream factory” in *Scroll.in*, 09 December 2014, <https://scroll.in/reel/692493/how-the-bombay-talkies-studio-became-hindi-cinema-s-original-dream-factory>

Lecture with clips and archival material

Screening: Episode 1& 2; *Jubilee (2023)*/Vikramditya Motwane

WEEK 3 & 4- : 1950s Social Realism: Post-Independence Concerns

“100 Years of a Star: Special Edition on Raj Kapoor”, *Frontline*, June 30, 2025.

Nasreen Munni Kabir, “Pyasa” in her *Guru Dutt: A Life in Cinema*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, 75-88

Screening: *Shree 420* (1955) /Raj Kapoor

WEEK 5 -: Bombay Cinema: Histories and Genres

Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, Excerpts from Introduction: Islamicate Genres and Idioms, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema*, Tulika Books, Delhi, p. 3-23

Lecture with Clips from Pukar (1939)/Sohrab Modi; **Jodha Akbar (2008)**/Ashutosh Gowariker – Discussion on the return of the historical genre

WEEK 6-: MID TERM

In-class Written Exam

WEEK 7 -: The Song and Dance Film Form

Neepa Majumdar, Excerpts from The Embodied Voice: Song Sequences and Stardom in Bombay Cinema, *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only! Female Stardom and Cinema in India 1930s-1950s*.

Tejaswini Ganti, “No Longer a Singing and Dancing Nation of Movie-Makers: The Hindi Film Industry and its Quest for Global Distinction” , *Visual Anthropology*, 2012, p. 340-365.

Lecture with Clips

WEEK 8 & 9 -: 1970s – Anger on Screen I

Ranjani Mazumdar, Excerpts from “Rage on Screen”, *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of a City*, University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Ranjani Mazumdar, “The Bombay Film Poster”, *Seminar 525: Unsettling Cinema*, May 2003, 33-41.

Poster Archive: <http://www.tasveergharindia.net/essay/amitabh-bachchan-posters.html>

Screening: *Deewar* (1975)/ Yash Chopra

WEEK 10 –The Indian New Wave I

Ananya Parikh, “The Other Side of Indian Cinema: Art House Cinemas” in India in *Film Studies: An Introduction*, Worldview Publications, 2022.

Reference: Uttaran Das Gupta, “The cry of the wounded in movies reflects real life in India” in *Business Standard*, 07 Jul 2023; https://www.business-standard.com/opinion/specials/the-cry-of-the-wounded-in-movies-reflects-real-life-in-india-123070700293_1.html

Lecture with Clips/ Focus on Shyam Benegal and Govind Nihalini’s films

WEEK 11 – The Indian New Wave - II

Reference: Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, “Salim Langde pe Mat Ro (1989)” in, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema*, Tulika Books, Delhi, p. 293-304.

Screening – Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro (1989)/ Saeed Akhtar Mirza

**Mid Term II – Reviewing Masculinity on Screen:
Angry Young Man Films and the New Wave**

WEEK 12 –1990s Bombay Cinema and Globalization

Tejaswini Ganti, Excerpts from *Producing Bollywood*, Tejaswini Ganti, Durhan Duke University Press, 2012

Aswin Punathambekar, Excerpts from Introduction, *From Bombay to Bollywood: The Making of a Global Media Industry*, NYU Press, 2013.

Lecture with Clips from *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), *Taal* (1999), *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001)

WEEK 13 -: Bollywood- The Media Industry I

Ashish Rajadhyaksha, “The Bollywoodization of Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena”, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume 4, Number 1, Routledge: Taylor and Francis, 2003, p. 25-39.

Usha Iyer, “Teaching Indian Cinema in Trinidad: Rethinking Globalization Paradigms”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiXzCU-oo3c&list=PLmsK9JBJBwII7KmlP6lPAH3-MgD-B5Ih0>, Stanford Global Studies, Film and Media Studies, Stanford University.

Screening: Luck By Chance (2009)/Zoya Akhtar

WEEK 14 - Revision

