

COURSE TITLE

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Credits: 4

Credits Type: Non-law

Cross-registration: No

Pre-requisites: Gender and Society course; ability to understand Hindi language.

COURSE DESCRIPTION (COURSE VISION):

Law students typically study Gender and Society in their early years at the law school. This course is intended to revisit and hone their perspectives on aspects learnt in that course, applied to a popular medium – Hindi cinema. This course aims at equipping students to view Hindi cinema more critically, while also delving into the subversive and liberatory potential of Hindi cinema when viewed through the lens of gender.

Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2004), in his work called ‘The Cinema Effect Outside the Cinema’, refers to the ability of cinema to influence, inform, define and redefine many facets of life. Daryl Bem (1972), in his theory on self perception and attitude formation, argued that the media representation of women can influence people’s attitudes towards women. Since individuals learn through observation (‘social learning’), as theorised by Bandura (1977), representation of women, queer and trans* people in films has the potential to reinforce and perpetuate gender stereotypes, heteronormativity, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, leading to ramifications for the well-being of and opportunities accorded to such people. However, there are ‘subversions’ or ‘notes of dissent’ in films as well, which counter gender stereotypes and other forms of stereotypes. In other words, there are ruptures and erosions in the popular tropes of hegemonic masculinity, leading to transformational agency, resistance and freedom for women and other genders. Indian scholars have critically engaged with the portrayal of women in commercial Hindi cinema (for instance, Bhasin and Agarwal 1984; Bagchi 1996; Dasgupta 1996; Gosavi 2013; Sibal 2018). The need for this course arises from the concern raised by various scholars and film critics in this regard. Additionally, this course arises out of the need to view Hindi cinema beyond the binaries of regressive popular culture and progressive *avant-garde*.

With the advent of television, internet and the OTT, Hindi cinema has made its presence into our living rooms. A flood of information and perspectives, images and sounds have meandered their way into our lives through this process. Gender representations in Hindi cinema are influenced and informed by various factors, such as larger ideological forces, process of globalisation, market forces, history, politics, changing roles of women in society as well as shifts in societal perspectives towards all genders in society. Since the 1970s, feminist film theorists such as Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis and Barbara Creed have

revolutionalised the study of films through the lens of gender. Key concepts that are used as tools for film analysis include the following: the male gaze, the female voice, technologies of gender, queering desire, the monstrous feminine and masculinity in crisis (Chaudhuri 2006). This course will provide an overview of these concepts in the early weeks of the course, in order to provide a foundational understanding that will equip the students to effectively engage with films, curated thematically.

This course proposes to engage with Hindi cinema produced in post-colonial India, paying special attention to the articulations of gender and sexuality, intersecting with caste, class, religion, tradition and modernity. It aims to examine the constructions of gender stereotypes within marriage and family as institutions, portrayal of women at the workplace, women as victims and vamps, as well as the construction of masculinities. Additionally, it aims at engaging with the portrayal of queer and trans* identities and intimacies in Hindi cinema. The course will also delve into the subversive and liberatory potential of Hindi cinema when viewed through the lens of gender.

Some of the questions that this course seeks to address include:

- i. How does Hindi cinema depict women, queer and trans* folx in varied roles?
- ii. Has the depiction and the accompanying narrative changed over the decades? If yes, what factors propelled the changes?
- iii. How does Hindi cinema project masculinity, and what is its probable effect on gender relations?
- iv. Are Hindi films directed by women directors distinctly different from mainstream Hindi cinema in terms of their 'female gaze'?

This course is envisaged to be a non-law course for students of JGLS studying varied programmes at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It is designed for students who understand Hindi and love Hindi cinema and would like to gain insights on examining the same through the lens of gender.

This elective course has been offered in Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 with the Course Code: L-EA-0307

TEACHING METHODOLOGY:

Pedagogic approaches for this course will consist of a discussion of the prescribed readings, coupled with viewing pre-selected clips from Hindi films and having a discussion on the same. Interactive lectures, readings followed by discussion, collective viewing of excerpts from Hindi films in class - followed by a discussion on the same, flipped classroom (where the excerpts / audio-visual clips will need to be viewed *before* class), and guest lectures (where feasible) are some of the teaching methods envisioned for this course.

Resource materials for the course will substantially consist of selected clips from Hindi films, which a student is expected to view, accompanied by essential readings for each module that would provide the perspective and lens through which the films maybe critically viewed and analysed.

Since this course is on Hindi cinema, an extensive use of audio visual resources is envisaged, to help transform the classroom into a dynamic, participatory and interactive learning environment.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, it is intended that students would have

- Gained insights on feminist film theory and major concepts related to gender in Hindi cinema;
- Identified, understood and appreciated subversion, dissent and the liberatory potential of Hindi cinema; and
- Acquired the ability to effectively view and analyse Hindi films through an intersectional feminist lens

READING LIST (upto 10 select readings):

1. Bhawana Somaaya et al (2012). *Mother, Maiden, Mistress: Women in Hindi Cinema, 1950-2010*. HarperCollins.
2. Laura Mulvey (1975). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen*, Volume 16, Issue 3, 1 October 1975, 6–18
3. Megha Anwer & Anupama Arora (eds.) (2021). *Bollywood's New Women: Liberalization, Liberation, and Contested Bodies*. Rutgers University Press
4. Nasreen Munni Kabir (ed.) (2008). *Women in Indian Film*. Zubaan.
5. Pushpinder Kaur (2017). Gender, Sexuality and (Be) longing: The Representation of Queer (LGBT) in Hindi Cinema. *Amity Journal of Media & Communication Studies* (ISSN 2231 – 1033), 2017, Vol. 7, No. 1, 22-30
6. Rajinder Dudrah & Jigna Desai (eds.) (2008). *The Bollywood Reader*. Open University Press.
7. Shohini Ghosh (2010). Bollywood Cinema and Queer Sexualities in Robert Leckey & Kim Brooks (eds.), *Queer Theory: Law, Culture, Empire*. Routledge. 55-68
8. Sikata Banerjee (2017). *Gender, Nation and Popular Film in India: Globalizing Muscular Nationalism*. Routledge.
9. Suneeti Rekhari (2014). Sugar and Spice: The Golden Age of the Hindi Movie Vamps: 1960s - 1970s. In: Kishore, V., Sarwal, A., Patra, P. (eds) *Bollywood and Its Other(s)*. Palgrave Macmillan, London

10. Vikrant Kishore (2014). Bollywood Vamps and Vixens: Representations of the Negative Women Characters in Bollywood Films. In M. Hedenborg-White, & B. Sandhoff (Eds.), *Transgressive Womanhood: Investigating Vamps, Witches, Whores, Serial Killers and Monsters* (pp. 139-149). London: Inter-Disciplinary Press.

WEEKLY READING PLAN (WEEKLY OUTLINE):

A weekly plan is provided below:

MODULES	WEEK(S)
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 1: Introduction to the Course & Feminist Film Theory</p> <p>The first module introduces the course contents, pedagogy and scheme of evaluation. It also focusses on elements of feminist film theory, which would lay the foundational framework for the course. This module will also trace the history of gender in Hindi cinema.</p>	1-2
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 2: Varied Facets of Motherhood</p> <p>This module examines the representation of motherhood in Hindi cinema, particularly its glorification. It further traces the varied and transforming facets of motherhood from the 1950s to 2020s.</p>	3
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 3: Marriage, Family and its Discontents</p> <p>This module explores the varied facets of marriage and family as represented in Hindi cinema, including the joint family and nuclear family systems, arranged and choice marriages, domestic violence and other forms of violence and harassment within the family, as well as gendered roles of women within the family.</p>	4
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 4: Damsels in Distress & Womanhood as Victimhood</p> <p>In Hindi cinema, image of a larger-than-life hero is fed by the staple figure of a damsel in distress – a woman in peril - who is rescued by the hero. This module examines the representation of women as victims and its link to the representation of the hero.</p>	5
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 5: Women as Vamps</p> <p>As a visual representation of “the good woman, bad woman” dichotomy which has been a subject of immense feminist analysis, Hindi cinema has a</p>	6

representation of women as the Madonna and as vamps. This juxtaposition and stark contrast was prevalent particularly till the 1990s. This module examines the portrayal of vamps in Hindi cinema and the changes in their representation over the decades.	
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 6: Caste, Gender and the Female Body</p> <p>This module analyses the relationship between caste and gender in select Hindi films, focussing on the depiction that Dalit women's bodies are controlled by an intersecting apparatus of hegemonic masculinity and caste hierarchy.</p>	7
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 7: Women at the Workplace</p> <p>Women's entry into the public sphere, in the form of labour in the organised and unorganised sectors, was captured in Hindi celluloid through various films. They depict the professional lives of married and single women, rural and urban women, employed in menial and white collared jobs. This module examines the varied depictions of women in the workplace.</p>	8
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 8: Women Within the Legal System</p> <p>In Hindi cinema, women have been represented in varied roles in relation to the legal system – as an aggrieved litigant, an agitated witness, a strict law enforcement officer, public prosecutor, private lawyer, judge and other judicial officers. This module analyses the capture of women in the celluloid in these varied roles within the legal system, through the lens of gender.</p>	9
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 9: Queer and Trans* Intimacies</p> <p>This module looks at how queer and trans people, their lives and intimacies, experiences and emotions have been portrayed in Hindi cinema.</p>	10-11
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 10: Masculinities, Male Bodies and Images</p> <p>This module traces varied facets of masculinities that have been portrayed through Hindi cinema. Additionally, this module will also examine subversions and 'dissent' – where gender stereotypes have been countered, such as through a reversion of gender roles or representation of men in non-traditional areas of work.</p>	12
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 11: New Womanhood, Feminist Consciousness & Reclaiming Agency</p>	13

<p>This module engages with narratives of the new woman represented in Hindi cinema. This includes confident, self-loving, ambitious and assertive women who question and transgress patriarchal social norms and customs.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 12: Politics of the Female Gaze, Conclusions & Future Courses of Deliberation</p> <p>This concluding module discusses the theory of the 'female gaze'. It explores the female gaze by examining selected work of women directors. It further draws the threads of various modules together to weave a birds' eye view on gender in Hindi cinema, and indicates topics for deliberation in future.</p>	14
REVISION WEEK	Week 15