Course Description

Come envision India on the big screen. See the religious and social life of the Indian subcontinent acted out, danced, and sung. Imagine India’s history through images of its past. Learn to understand how filmic representations form an integral part of lived experience in India.

This course will explore issues of religious, social, and national identity in India through the lens of the country’s cinema. We will interpret a series of Bollywood films, as well as Tamil films and Indian arthouse films, to understand the way narratives and images of India’s past, and its social and religious ideals, serve as formative cultural forces. We will look at the tension between religious and secular ideologies in India, and how such ideologies are represented in filmic narratives.

Materials used in this course will include films and secondary readings. There will be weekly film screenings, up to three hours long, outside of the main class times. The films will also be on reserve in the library so that they can be viewed at other times.
Required Readings and Filmography

*Course Reader* (various book excerpts and articles, available for download as PDF files)
- *Mother India* (1957)
- *Devi* (1960)
- *Guide* (1965)
- *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977)
- *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* (2001)
- *Dharm* (2007)
- *Naan Kadavul* (2009)
- *The Dirty Picture* (2011)
- *OMG Oh My God!* (2012)

Learning Objectives

- Ability to discuss the relationship between religion and popular culture in modern India
- Ability to identify how gender roles, caste expectations, and ritual practice govern Indian life
- Ability to analyze how representations in film reflect specific historical ideologies in India
- Ability to demonstrate a basic familiarity with the narrative conventions of Indian cinema

Course Requirements, Grading Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class Group Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
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Class Schedule (Preliminary Topic Outline)

Introductory Class (August 22)
*In the Thrall of “Bollywood”: Indian Cinema, the Lay of the Land*

Week 1 (August 27th and 29th)
Film Screening: *Mother India* (1957)
*Envisioning the Nation*
Week 2 (September 3rd and 5th)
Film Screening: Devi (1960)
Gods Incarnate

Week 3 (September 10th and 12th)
Film Screening: Guide (1965)
Perfidy, Sainthood, and Community Practice

Week 4 (September 17th and 19th)
Film Screening: Amar Akbar Anthony (1977)
Narrating the Secular Nation (and the Roots of Hindutva)

Week 5 (September 24th and 26th)
Film Screening: Umrao Jaan (1981)
History, Performance, and Women’s Agency

Week 6 (October 1st and 3rd)
Film Screening: Lagaan (2000)
Remembering the Age of Empire

Week 7 (October 8th and 10th)
Film Screening: Earth (1998)
Love, Loss, and Violence: Revisioning the Nation
MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8 (October 15th)
Film Screening: Rang De Basanti (2006)
The Past in the Present

Week 9 (October 22nd and 24th)
Film Screening: Bombay (1995)
Communalism and the City

Week 10 (October 29th and 31st)
Film Screening: Dharm (2007)
Purity, Scripture, and the Way of the World

Week 11 (November 5th and 7th)
Film Screening: Mission Kashmir (2000)
Terror, Identity, and the Muslim “Other”

Week 12 (November 12th and 14th)
Film Screening: Naan Kadavul (2009)
Ascetics in the World
Week 13 (November 19\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st})
Film Screening: *The Dirty Picture* (2011)
*The Male Public and the Female Gaze*

Week 14 (November 26\textsuperscript{th} and December 3\textsuperscript{rd})
Film Screening: *OMG Oh My God!* (2012)
*Sending up Religion (and the Endurance of Faith)*

Review Session (December 5\textsuperscript{th})

*FINAL EXAM*