AMESALL 01:013:365, 01:175:365:01
Bollywood, Fall 2020

Prof: Dr. Meheli Sen
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Office Hours: By appointment, on Zoom

Class: TTH: 4:30-5:50
Classroom: On Zoom (synchronous)

Course Description

India is the second most populous country in the world and has a cultural tradition that has evolved over 5,000 years. It is also the world's largest film-producing nation, releasing over 900 films every year. Of these, approximately 200 films are made in Hindi in India's film capital—Bombay. Driven by the growth and spread of the Indian diaspora in recent decades, the popular Bollywood has become a ubiquitous presence in theaters and film festivals across the globe. While remaining India's most beloved art form, this cinema today is also India's most visible and fascinating export. Bollywood remains an exceptional industry that has successfully resisted the onslaught of Hollywood films in the country of its birth. These and other factors have contributed in making academic exploration of Bombay cinema a relatively new, but extremely exciting field of study. What makes Hindi cinema different? How are such a staggering number of films made in India? How do these 'song and dance' movies challenge our perceptions of narrative forms? How do Bombay films negotiate the polarities of tradition and modernity? How do they bear the burden of postcoloniality? Despite the plethora of languages and cultures that comprise India, how does Hindi cinema maintain its hegemonic position both within the subcontinent and without? What is the status of Bollywood as a national cinema? These are some of the larger questions with which we will engage in this canopic overview.

Course Goals

This class has three basic goals: 1) to increase sensitivity to a cultural form that may be at odds with our own perceptions of cinematic story-telling, 2) to interrogate the varied ways by which Hindi popular films create and disseminate meaning and 3) to learn that the popular film is not a monolithic form, by exploring the ways in which it has evolved over the last 60 years.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to write a **short paper** (5-6 pages). For this paper students will write on one film, genre, or filmmaker. The paper must combine close textual analysis with theoretical insights from lectures and course readings.

Students are expected to write **one longer term-paper** (8-10 pages) over the course of the semester. This paper must engage with different film-texts than those analyzed in the short paper. Interesting and innovative combinations of films and/or scholarly articles are welcome. I will furnish assignment details in a timely manner.

Each student must write a **two-paragraph response** to every film screened over the course of the term in the appropriate **Sakai folder.** These paragraphs must go beyond summary to demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the films. ***This response must be posted by 10 PM on Wednesdays.*** Questions will be posted ahead of time.

Informed **participation** in our Zoom classroom discussions is highly encouraged. Informed participation requires having watched and thought about the films, having read all assigned material and being present in class to talk about them.

Class Presentation

Each student will prepare and lead the online class discussion once during the semester. This requires reading the assigned material ahead of time to prepare a short response and questions for group discussion.

Grading

Short Paper:	20%
Final Paper:	30%
Presentation:	20%
Sakai Responses:	20%
Participation:	10%