

SEMESTER-4 (NEP)

HISTORY OF INDIAN CINEMA (FMSCOR404P, MA 4, 5

Credits- Practical)

Course Description

This course is a historical overview of Indian Cinema with focus on the major watershed moments in the chronological development of Hindi language film industry based in Mumbai—a cinema that has historically enjoyed a pan-Indian market and the widest reach to the global markets. It also looks at different cinematic developments parallel to mainstream film industry—films often bracketed as art-house films, festival movies, independent or ‘indie’ films, and so on— that has a transnational nature reaching a niche global audience through festival circuits and other global channels of dissemination. This introductory course on Indian Cinema has limited its scope to feature length live action films from celluloid and digital mediums. The comprehensive history of Indian cinema presented here are marked by a series of canonical films that are representative of each period and themes, divided into five modules. At the end of the course, the students will have a comprehensive overview of Indian film history and its relationship with the wider history of the nation.

Course Objective

- Students will be introduced to the history of Indian cinema
- Students will be introduced to the major events that marked some of the most significant points of departures in over hundred years of Indian film history
- Students will be introduced to an extensive list of iconic films that defines important historical moments in Indian cinema
- Students will be introduced to a list of major filmmakers who represent the ethos of different eras and time periods in Indian cinema

Expected Learning Outcomes

- The students will have a basic understanding of the significant chronological events in Indian cinema for further study of specific research areas in Indian Film History
- The students will undergo an extensive cinephilic experience across different kinds of films getting acquainted with the filmmaking conventions and traditions in Indian cinema
- The student will learn the different directions Indian cinema took since the Silent Cinema Era to understand the contemporary nature of Indian cinema and the larger media landscape in India
- The students will be able to write critical pieces in Indian film history and better contextualise critical analyses of film texts.

Evaluation policy and assignments

Class Presentation: 20%

Film Analysis written following proper academic writing style and bibliography 20%

End-Term Examination: 60%

Module-1: Early Cinema

Silent Films (Major Films and Filmmakers)

- Advent of cinema in India since the first screening of film at the Watson Hotel (Bombay) in 1896
- History of indigenous production of silent films in India
- Mythological films as a Nationalist Project

Case Studies:

Films:

- *Raja Harishchandra (1914)*
- *Shri Krishna Janma (1918)*
- *Kaliya Mardana (1919)*
- *Bilat Ferat (1921)*

Directors:

- Dadasaheb Phalke
- Fatma Begum
- Baburao Painter
- Dhirendranath Ganguly

Early Talkies (Major Films and Filmmakers)

- Advent of Talkies in Indian cinema
- Distinctive features of early Talkies
- The coming of Song and Dance spectacle and Playback Singing

Films:

- *Alam Ara (1931)*
- *Devdas (1935)*
- *Sant Tukaram (1936)*
- *Achhut Kanya (1936)*
- *Vidyapati (1937)*

Directors:

- P.C. Barua
- Debaki Bose
- Franz Osten
- V. Shantaram
- Sohrab Modi

Rise and Fall of Major Studios

- History of the Studio Era in Indian Cinema
- Major studios and their distinctive features
- Reasons for the gradual demise of the Studio Era post-Independence (1947) in India

Case Studies:

Major Studios:

- Bombay Talkies (1934-54)
- Prabhat Film Company (1929-54)
- New Theatres Ltd. (1931-55)
- Gemini Studios (1940-60)
- Ranjit Movietone (1929-1960)

Readings

1. Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. "The Phalke Era: Conflict of Traditional Form and Modern Technology". *Journal of Arts & Ideas*, No 14-15 (1987): 47-78
2. Chapter: The Silent Era (1912-1931). In Barnouw, Erik and S. Krishnaswamy. *Indian Film*. 2nd Edition, New Delhi: OUP, 1980
3. For information regarding individual films, personnel, and studios see Rajadhyaksha, Ashish and Paul Willemen (Eds). *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema*. Revised Edition, New Delhi: BFI/OUP, 1999
4. For an in-depth economic and social history of the time period see Bhaumik, Kaushik. "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936". D. Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 2001.
5. Mukherjee, Madhuja. *New Theatres Ltd.: The Emblem of Art, The Picture of Success*. Pune: National Film Archive of India, 2009.

Module-2: Bombay Cinema

Popular Hindi Cinema/Bombay Cinema (1950-70)

- Madhava Prasad's concept of "Studio Social" as an aesthetic and ideological model to represent the post-colonial Indian nation-state
- Golden age of Hindi film music
- The rise of the Star System in Bombay Cinema

Case Studies:

- *Pyaasa* (1957)
- *Mother India* (1957)
- *Awaara* (1951)
- *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953)
- *Mughal-e Azam* (1960)
- *Bandini* (1963)
- *Guide* (1965)
- *Waqt* (1965)
- *Anand* (1971)
- *Pakeezah* (1972)
- *Garm Hava* (1973)

Bombay Cinema Post-Emergency (1975-77)

- The internal segregation of popular Hindi film industry after 1975 according to Madhava Prasad
- The rise of the “Angry Young Man” phenomenon
- The films championing the developmentalist ideology of the state
- The Middle Cinema

Case Studies

- *Sholay* (1975)
- *Deewar* (1975)
- *Nishant* (1975)
- *Manthan* (1977)
- *Gol Maal* (1979)
- *Rajnigandha* (1974)
- *Angoor* (1982)
- *Ardh Satya* (1983)
- *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* (1983)

Readings

1. Prasad, Madhava. *Ideology of the Hindi film: A Historical Construction*. New Delhi: OUP, 1998
2. Rajadhyasha, Ashish. *Indian cinema in the time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to Emergency*. New Delhi: Tulika, 2009
3. Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. *Indian Cinema: A Very Short Introduction*. New Delhi: OUP, 2016
4. Vasudevan, Ravi. *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship on Indian Cinema*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

Module-3: Bollywood

Early Bollywood (1990-2010)

- The coming of Bollywood with the economic liberalisation of India
- The opening of global market comprising of South Asian Diaspora
- The development of Bollywood Culture Industry
- The Global-Local divide

Case Studies:

- *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (DDLJ, 1995)
- *Hum Apke Hain Kaun* (1994)
- *Lagaan* (2000)
- *Satya* (1998)
- *KabhiKhusi Kabhi Gham* (2001)
- *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001)
- *Chak De India* (2007)
- *3 Idiots* (2009)
- *Dabangg* (2010)

Contemporary Bollywood and rise of OTT platform

- The conglomerate form of contemporary Bollywood
- The blockbuster and the multiplex films
- The shift into streaming platforms
- The loss of Bollywood's pan-Indian character

Case Studies:

- *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012)
- *PK* (2014)
- *Dangal* (2016)
- *Pathan* (2023)
- *Jawan* (2023)
- *Animal* (2024)
- *Queen* (2013)
- *Lunch Box* (2013)
- *Piku* (2015)
- *Ludo* (OTT release, 2020)

Readings

1. Prasad, Madhava. *Ideology of the Hindi film: A Historical Construction*. New Delhi: OUP, 1998
2. Rajadhyasha, Ashish. *Indian cinema in the time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to Emergency*. New Delhi: Tulika, 2009
3. Gehlawat, Ajay. *Twenty-First Century Bollywood (Routledge Contemporary South Asia Series)*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2016

Module-4: Parallel Cinema

Film as Art: Early Auteurs

- The significance of first International Film Festival (1952) in India for propagating the idea of filmmaking as arts practice
- Auteur based study of Indian film history in the context of 'Parallel Cinema/Art-house cinema'
- Directorial Styles of Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, and Mrinal Sen

Case Studies

- Apu Trilogy (Satyajit Ray): *Pather Panchali* (1955); *Aparajito* (1956); *Apur Sansar* (1959)
- Partition Trilogy (Ritwik Ghatak): *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960); *Komolgandhar* (1961); *Subarnarekha* (1962)
- Calcutta Trilogy (Mrinal Sen): *Interview* (1971); *Calcutta 71* (1972); *Padatik* (1973)

Indian New Wave

- History of Indian New Wave and its connection to World Cinema
- The role of State in the propagation and sustenance of the movement
- Reasons for the gradual fading of Indian New Wave as a film movement as well as a filmmaking aesthetics and practice

Case Studies

- Mani Kaul: *Uski Roti* (1969)
- Kumar Sahani: *Maya Darpan* (1972)
- John Abraham: *Amma Ariyan* (1986)
- Adoor Gopalakrishnan: *Elipaathayam/The Rat Trap* (1982)
- Saeed Mirza: *Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho* (1984)

Readings

1. Vasudev, Aruna. *New Indian Cinema*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 1986
2. Raghavendra, M.K. and V.K. Joseph (Eds.). *Critics on Indian Cinema*. FIPRESCI-INDIA, Calcutta: best Books, 2021
3. Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. *Indian cinema in the time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to Emergency*. New Delhi: Tulika, 2009

Module-5: Transnational Developments

Contemporary Indie Films

- How independent is contemporary Indian 'Indie' films?
- Role of the proliferation of film festivals in the dissemination of Indian 'Indie' films
- Role of Transnational film finance in the production of Indian 'Indie' films

Case Studies

- Anurag Kashyap: *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012)
- Rajat Kapoor: *Ankhon Dekhi* (2013)
- Chaitanya Tamhane: *Court* (2014)
- Rahi Anil Barve: *Tumbbad* (2018)
- Payal Kapadia: *All We Imagine as Light* (2024)

Diaspora/Crossover films

- History of 'Diaspora/Crossover' films in Indian cinema
- Role of the Indian diaspora in the narrative and representation of Indian 'crossover' films
- Changing definition and mis-representation of 'cross-over' films as Remakes and as Bollywood's liaison with major South Indian film industries

Case Studies

- Deepa Mehta: *Fire* (1996)
- Mira Nair: *Monsoon Wedding* (2001)
- Mira Nair: *Namesake* (2006)
- Gurinder Chadha: *Bend it like Beckham* (2002)
- Danny Boyle: *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008)

Readings

1. Ganti, Tejaswini. *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2013
2. Desai, Jigna. *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Films*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2003
3. Devasundaran, Asvin Immanuel. *Indian Indies: A Guide to New Independent Cinema*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2022