

Semester – VII
Discipline Specific Elective- 7.3 (DSE-7.3)
Cinema and History: India on the Silver Screen
Course Code: --
Offered by the Department of History, College of Vocational Studies

CREDIT DISTRIBUTION, ELIGIBILITY, AND PRE-REQUISITES OF THE COURSE

Course title & Code	Credits	Credit distribution of the course			Eligibility criteria	Pre-requisite of the course (if any)
Cinema and History: India on the Silver Screen	4	3	1	0	Pass in class XII	NIL

Course Objectives:

This paper is intended for students who take an interest in the rhetorical shifts of caste politics, gender-based discrimination, and the pitfalls of nationalism during the 20th century as they pervade the mediums of popular history. The course is situated at the intersection of history, digital humanities, and film studies, which looks at how films have been a site for oppression and resistance, memory, and forgetting. It will equip the students with skills to reflect and analyse films as extensions of historical discursivity.

This course aims to:

1. Develop in students the ability to understand film as a historical process through which discourses of caste, gender, and nationalism are percolated to the masses.
2. Encourage discussions about how cinemas interpret and recontextualize historical events and the politics entailed therein.
3. Extend the boundaries of historiographical writing by considering the digital medium as constructing identity, memory and social reality.

Course Content

Unit 1: Visual Syntax: The Grammar of Films (11 Hours)

This unit addresses films as a distinct medium that has its own structural semiotics. It introduces students to the foundational elements of a film: cinematography, narrative structure, mise-en-scène, performance and sound design. This unit also examines films as a mediator of an ideology and historical context.

Unit 2: Representation of Caste through Films (11 Hours)

With a steady focus on two films and relevant theoretical frameworks from caste studies, this unit attempts to analyse how caste has been a prevalent theme in Indian cinema and how it functions to reiterate or erase caste-based segregation in Indian society.

Unit 3: Gendering Films (12 Hours)

This unit explores how Indian films have historically constructed gender roles and especially the role of women in dominant narratives. It extends to look at films as an intersectional space that attempts to break the binary constructions of gender to examine the queer gaze, ecocritical responses.

Unit 4: Nationalism and Cinema (11 Hours)

From the idealistic visions of Nehruvian modernity to the complex portrayals of Partition, communalism, and border politics, Indian films have long been central to how the nation is imagined and remembered. This unit examines the role of cinema in constructing, reinforcing, and critiquing the ideas of nation and national identity.

Suggestive Reading:

Unit 1:

Metz, Christian. *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Translated by Michael Taylor, University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Thomas, Rosie. "Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity." *Screen*, vol. 26, no. 3-4, 1985, pp. 116–131.

Rosenstone, Robert A. *History on Film / Film on History*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2012.

M. Madhava Prasad – *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (1998)

Unit 2:

Chakravarty, Sumita S. *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema, 1947–1987*. University of Texas Press, 1993.

Guru, Gopal. "Dalits from Margin to Margin." *India Seminar*, no. 521, 2003, www.india-seminar.com.

Rao, Anupama. *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*. University of California Press, 2009.

Geetha, V. "Caste and Cinema: A View from Below." *Seminar*, no. 616, April 2010.

Ajay, N. "Reading Caste in Contemporary Malayalam Cinema: A Study of Kammatipaadam." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 53, no. 21, 2018, pp. 56–62.

Unit 3:

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1975, pp. 6–18.

Gokulsing, K. Moti, and Wimal Dissanayake. *Indian Popular Cinema: A Narrative of Cultural Change*. Trentham Books, 2004.

Virdi, Jyotika. *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History*. Rutgers University Press, 2003.

Menon, Nivedita. "Recovering Subversion: Feminist Politics Beyond the Law." *Permanent Black*, 2004.

Mehta, Rajesh.

"Queering Bollywood: Alternative Sexualities in Popular Indian Cinema." *Journal of South Asian Popular Culture*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2006, pp. 141–155.

Unit 4:

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed., Verso, 2006.

Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. "Indian Cinema: Origins to Independence." *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*, edited by Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, rev. ed., Oxford University Press, 1999

Sarkar, Bhaskar. *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition*. Duke University Press, 2009.

Vasudevan, Ravi. "Addressing the Spectator of a 'Third World' National Cinema: The Bombay 'Social' Film of the 1940s and 1950s." *Screen*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1995.

Thomas, Rosie. "Melodrama and the Negotiation of Morality in Mainstream Hindi Cinema." *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World*, edited by Carol A. Breckenridge, University of Minnesota Press, 1995.

Kumar, Priya. "Testimonies of Loss and Memory: Partition and the Haunting of a Nation in *Garam Hava*." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2005, pp. 157–169.

Filmography

Sairat (2016, Nagraj Manjule)

Achhut Kanya (1936, dir. Franz Osten)

Mather India

Pather Panchali

Do Bigha Jameen

Article 15 (2019, Anubhav Sinha)

Fire (1996, Deepa Mehta)

Rang De Basanti (2006, dir. Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra)

Pinjar (2003, Chandraprakash Dwivedi)

Tamas (1988, Bhasham Sahni)

Upkar

Saheed

Suggested readings list

- Rachel Dwyer, *Bollywood's India: Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Modern India*, **Reaktion Books**, 2014
- M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*, **OUP India**, 1998

- Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*, 2nd ed., **Routledge**, 2013
- Sumita S. Chakravarty, *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema, 1947-1987*, *Univ of Texas Press*, 1994
- Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*. **Routledge**, 1999
- Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen (eds.), *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema*, **Tulika Books**, 2009
- Rosie Thomas, "Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity" in *Screen*, Volume 26, Issue 3-4, May-August 1985, Pages 116–131, Oxford University Press
- Shohini Ghosh, *Fire: A Queer Film Classic* (2010) — focuses on *Fire* and cultural politics
- Anupama Chopra, *Sholay: The Making of a Classic*, **Penguin India**, 2000
- Lalitha Gopalan, *Cinema of Interruptions: Action Genres in Contemporary Indian Cinema*, **BFI Publishing**, 2002
- Bhaskar Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition*, Duke University Press, 2009
- Priya Jaikumar, *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India*, *Duke University Press*, 2006
- Arvind Rajagopal, "The Violence of Commodity Aesthetics: Hawkers, Demolition Raids, and a New Regime of Consumption", *Duke University Press*, 68 (Volume 19, Number 3), pp. 91-113, 2001
- Nasreen Munni Kabir, *Talking Films: Conversations on Hindi Cinema with Javed Akhtar*, **OUP India**, 1999