

# South Asian Visual Culture (REL 370)

## SYLLABUS

### REQUIREMENTS

1. You are expected to attend class regularly, finish the assigned readings on time, and participate in class discussions actively (and, one hopes, enthusiastically).
2. The format of the class is as follows: On Mondays we will watch films and discuss them, making reference, whenever possible, to the various secondary readings. On Wednesdays we will discuss the week's primary readings. These will be presented by pairs of students who will be responsible for introducing the material and leading a discussion.
3. To facilitate class discussion, 7 weekly reaction papers will be due during the semester. These reaction papers should be roughly 2 pages in length, and should demonstrate a thoughtful and rigorous engagement with the material. Creativity is encouraged, rambling is not. Although you are welcome to focus on a particular article, passage, image, or scene within a week's assignment, you should try and contextualize that material within the rest of the week's readings. These reaction papers are due on the Thursday of each week, and will be graded on a  $\sqrt{+}$ ,  $\sqrt{\phantom{+}}$ ,  $\sqrt{-}$  system, corresponding roughly to an A/A-, B+/B, and B-/etc.
4. Intelligent and articulate class participation will constitute a substantial portion of your grade. Hence, read the material, write your reaction papers, and come to class prepared to engage in an high level discussion of the material. Keep in mind Wittgenstein's aphorism, "Even to have expressed a false thought boldly and clearly is already to have gained a great deal." As part of this requirement, you will be expected, at least once in the semester, to disagree with an argument that is being propounded in class, and offer a counter argument with evidence to substantiate your claims.
5. You will also be required to write a 10–15 page research paper. First: Topics must be emailed to me for approval. Second: On April 7<sup>th</sup>, you will submit to me an annotated bibliography for your research. Third: During the last three weeks of the semester, you will present your research as a work in progress. Each of you will be expected to submit a draft of your work to your peers and to introduce your work for ten minutes.
6. These presentations will then be followed by the comments of two respondents. Each respondent will be expected to offer comments and criticisms for five minutes. This will then be followed by an open discussion of the material for ten minutes. This is intended to provide helpful comments and criticism so that each of you will be able to write better final drafts.

### *How to get a good grade in this class*

Do the readings, then come to class and participate in classroom discussions. If you're presenting material, do so in a concise, articulate, and engaging manner. Hand in your reaction papers on time. Write a good research paper, and present it with verve. And when you're responding to someone else's ideas, make sure that you do so thoughtfully.

**REQUIRED READING**

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*. University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*. London: Hurst & Company, 1996.

*Source Book*. (=SB)

**OPTIONAL READING**

Bari Kumar, Kajri Jain, and Samantha Harrison, *India Bazaar: Vintage*. Taschen America, 2003.

Sirish Rao, V. Geetha, and Gita Wolf, *An Ideal Boy: Charts from India*.  
*An Ideal Boy*. Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2001.

William Mazzarella, *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.

•texts are available at Grécourt Bookshop, 100 Green Street, 585–4140

•the source book is available at Paradise Copies, 30 Crafts Avenue, 585–0414

**WEEK 1** (1/26, 1/28)

## i. INTRODUCTION: THE EARLIEST INDIAN CINEMA

SCREENING: Clips from the films of D. G. Phalke

- Raja Harischandra (“King Harischandra”). D. G. Phalke, Phalke Films, 1917 remake of 1913 film [incomplete]
- Lanka Dahan (“Burning of Lanka”). D. G. Phalke, Phalke Films, 1917 [incomplete]
- Shri Krishna Janma (“Birth of Shri Krishna”). D. G. Phalke, Hindustan Cinema Films, 1918 [incomplete]
- Kaliya Mardan (“Slaying of Kaliya”). D. G. Phalke, Hindustan Cinema Films, 1919 [incomplete; most complete Phalke film extant]

SUGGESTED FILM READING:

- Shoosmith, Brian. “Swadeshi Cinema: Cinema, Politics and Culture: The Writings of D. G. Phalke.” *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture* 2.1 (1987): 44–50. (SB)
- Phalke, D. G. “Swadeshi Moving Pictures.” Translated by Narmada S. Shahane. *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture* 2.1 (1987): 51–73. (SB)

FOR THE EXTRA EAGER:

- Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. In *Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India*. Edited by Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir, and Vivek Dhareshwar. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1993.  
“The Phalke Era: Conflict of Traditional Form and Modern Technology,” 47–82 (SB)

## ii. FIRST REFLECTIONS: FILM, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND OTHER VISUAL PRACTICES

SCREENING: *Photo Wallahs*. 60 minutes. Directed by David MacDougall and Judith MacDougall. Berkeley, CA: University of California Extension Center for Media and Independent Learning, 1991.

SUGGESTED FILM READING:

- MacDougall, David. “‘Photo Wallahs’: An Encounter With Photography.” *Visual Anthropology Review* 8.2 (1992): 96–98. (SB)
- Pinney, Christopher. “To Know A Man From His Face: Photo Wallahs and the Uses of Visual Anthropology.” *Visual Anthropology Review* 9.2 (1993): 118–125. (SB)
- MacDougall, David. “Photo Hierarchicus: Signs and Mirrors in Indian Photography.” *Visual Anthropology* 5.2 (1992): 103–129. (SB)
- Ramaswamy, Sumathi. In *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*. Edited by Sumathi Ramaswamy. Contributions to Indian Sociology, Occasional Studies 10. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003.  
“Introduction,” xiii–xxix (SB)

**WEEK 2 (2/2, 2/4)**

i. SCREENING: *Sant Tukārām* (“Saint Tukaram”); 131 minutes, in Marathi. Directed by Vishnu Govind Damle and Sheikh Yasin Fattelal. Prabhat, 1936 (first half).

SUGGESTED FILM READING FOR THIS WEEK AND THE NEXT:

- Shahani, Kumar. In *70 years of Indian Cinema, 1913–1983*. Edited by T. M. Ramachandran. Bombay: CINEMA India-International, 1985.  
“The Saint Poets of Prabhat,” 197–202 (SB)
- Kapur, Geeta. In *When was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*. New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000.  
“Revelation and Doubt: Sant Tukaram and Devi,” 233–264, particularly 235–251 (SB)

## ii. VISUALITY AND THE FUNCTION OF OBJECTS IN INDIA

- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.  
entire book
- Davis, Richard H. 1997. *Lives of Indian Images*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.  
“Living Images,” 14–50 (SB)
- Appadurai, Arjun and Carol Breckenridge. In *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Edited by Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.  
“Museums are Good to Think: Heritage on View in India,” 35–55 (SB)

**WEEK 3 (2/9, 2/11)**

i. SCREENING: *Sant Tukārām* (“Saint Tukaram”); 131 minutes, in Marathi. Directed by Vishnu Govind Damle and Sheikh Yasin Fattelal. Prabhat, 1936 (second half).

## ii. DARŚAN: THOUGHTS ON SEEING AND BEING SEEN

- Eck, Diana. *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. Columbia University Press, 1998.  
“Seeing the Sacred,” 3–31 (SB)
- Meister, Michael W. In *Los Discursos sobre el Arte*. Edición a cargo de Juana Gutiérrez Haces. XV Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas), 1995.  
“Seeing and Knowing: Semiology, Semiotics and the Art of India,” 193–207 (SB)
- Babb, Lawrence A. “Glancing: Visual Interaction in Hinduism.” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 37 (1981): 387–401. (SB)
- Rotman, Andy. “The Erotics of Practice: Objects and Agency in Buddhist Avadana Literature.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71 (3): 555–578. (SB)
- Pinney, Christopher. In *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Edited by Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.  
“The Indian Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction:  
Or, What Happens when Peasants ‘Get Hold’ of Images,” 355–369 (SB)

## OPTIONAL:

- Pinard, Sylvain. In *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses*. Edited by David Howes. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.  
“A Taste of India: On the Role of Gustation in the Hindu Sensorium,” 221–230 (SB)

**WEEK 4 (2/16, 2/18)**

i. SCREENING: *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (“The Cloud-Capped Star”); 122 minutes in Bengali. Written and directed by Ritwik Ghatak, 1960 (first half).

## SUGGESTED FILM READING FOR THIS WEEK AND THE NEXT:

•Banerjee, Shampa. *Profiles, Five Film-makers from India: V. Shantaram, Raj Kapoor, Mrinal Sen, Guru Dutt, Ritwik Ghatak*. New Delhi, India: Directorate of Film Festivals, National Film Development Corporation, 1985.

“Ritwik Ghatak,” 107–117 (SB)

•Ghatak, Ritwikumar. *Rows and Rows of Fences: Ritwik Ghatak on Cinema*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2000.

“Interviews,” 80–96 (SB)

•Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. *Ritwik Ghatak: A Return to the Epic*. Bombay: Screen Unit, 1982.

Section III from “The Freedom of the Archetype,” 50–79 (SB)

•Banerjee, Shampa. *Ritwik Ghatak: An Attempt to Explore his Cinematic Perception with Excerpts from Essays by Ghatak and on Ghatak*. New Delhi: Directorate of Film Festivals, National Film Development Corporation, 1982.

“Meghe Dhaka Tara,” 42–51 (SB)

## ii. THE POWER AND POLITICS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

•Pinney, Christopher. *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*. University of Chicago Press, 1997.

selections, 8–107

## THE COLONIAL GAZE—

## SELECTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS FROM:

•Dehejia, Vidya, et al. *India through the Lens: Photography 1840–1911*. Washington, DC.: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution in association with Mapin Publishing, Ahmedabad, 2000. (SC/Art TR103.I53)

•Furieux, J. *Glimpses of India: A Grand Photographic History of the Land of Antiquity*. Philadelphia: Historical Publishing Company, [1895?]. (SC/Neilson 954 F98)

•Gutman, Judith Mara. *Through Indian Eyes*. New York: Oxford University Press: International Center of Photography, 1982. (SC/Art TR103.G87)

•Pelizzari, Maria Antonella, editor. *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850–1900*. Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. (SC/Art TR103.T72 2003)

•Ryan, James. *Picturing Empire: Photography and Visualization of the British Empire*. Reaktion, 1997. (SC/Neilson DA16.R93)

•Worswick, Clark and Ainslie Embree. *The Last Empire: Photography in British India, 1855–1911*. Millerton, NY: Aperture, 1976. (SC/Neilson & Art DS479.L28)

•<http://Harappa.com/photo3/index.html>

## AT THE OTHER COLLEGES:

•Desmond, Ray. *Victorian India in Focus: A Selection of Early Photographs from the Collection in the India Office Library and Records*. London: H.M.S.O., 1982.

(MH DS413.D43 folio)

•Moore, Derry. *Evening Ragas: A Photographer in India*. London: J. Murray, 1997.

(AC x DS414.M6)

•Singh, Raghubir. *River of Colour: The India of Raghubir Singh*. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1998. (AC xx DS414.2.S563)

•Worswick, Clark. *Princely India: Photographs by Raja Deen Dayal*. New York: Knopf, 1980. (HC & MH DS479.1.K57 D38)

**WEEK 5 (2/23, 2/25)**

i. SCREENING: *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (“The Cloud-Capped Star”); 122 minutes in Bengali. Written and directed by Ritwik Ghatak, 1960 (second half).

## ii. THE POWER AND POLITICS OF PHOTOGRAPHY, REDUX

•Pinney, Christopher. *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*. University of Chicago Press, 1997.

selections, 108–213

## SUGGESTED READING:

•Srivatsan, R. In *Conditions of Visibility: Writings on Photography in Contemporary India*. Calcutta: Stree Publishers; Mumbai: Distributed by Popular Prakashan, 2000.

“Introduction,” 1–30 (SB)

## THE POSTCOLONIAL GAZE—

## SELECTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS CONTINUED

•Dawson, Barry. *Street Graphics India*. London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999. (SC/Art NC998.6.I6 D38)

•Gavin, Aldred and Peter Nagy. *Cock: Indian Firework Art*. London: Trafalgar Square, 2001. (on order)

•Gupta, Sunil. “Autographs.”

<http://www.autograph-abp.co.uk/gallery/gup.html>

•Gutman, Judith Mara. *Through Indian Eyes*. New York: Oxford University Press: International Center of Photography, 1982. (SC/Art TR103.G87)

-see Chapter 5: “Painted Photographs,” 103–132

•Kumar, Bari, Kajri Jain, and Samantha Harrison. *India Bazaar: Vintage*. Taschen America, 2003.

•Rao, Sirish, V. Geetha, and Gita Wolf. *An Ideal Boy: Charts from India*. *An Ideal Boy*. Dewi Lewis Publishing.

•<http://www.sarai.net/>

-select COMPOSITIONS and then IMAGES

**WEEK 6 (3/1, 3/3)**

i. SCREENING: *Rangeela*; 130 minutes; in Hindi. Directed by Ram Gopal Varma, written by Sanjay Chel, 1995 (first half).

## SUGGESTED FILM READING FOR THIS WEEK AND THE NEXT:

•Thomas, Rosie. “Indian Cinema: Pleasure and Popularity: An Introduction,” *Screen* 26.3–4 (May–August 1985): 133–146. (SB)

•Nandy, Ashish. “The Popular Hindi Film: Ideology and First Principles.” *India International Centre Quarterly: Special Issue, Indian Popular Cinema: Myth, Meaning and Metaphor* Edited by Pradip Krishen) 8.1 (March 1980): 89–96. (SB)

•Chandravarkar, Bhaskar. “The Power of the Popular Film Song.” *Cinema in India* 4.2 (April–June 1990): 20–24. (SB)

## SOME VIEWER COMMENTS TO CONSIDER:

<http://www.apunkachoice.com/movies/mov114/>

## ii. ART AND NATIONALISM

•Guha-Thakurta, Tapati. “Visualizing the Nation: The Iconography of a ‘National Art’ in Modern India.” *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 27–28 (1995): 7–40. (SB)

•Pinney, Christopher. “The Nation (Un)Pictured? Chromolithography and ‘Popular’ Politics in India, 1878–1995.” *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Summer 1997): 834–867. (SB)

- Ramaswamy, Sumathi. In *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*. Edited by Sumathi Ramaswamy. Contributions to Indian Sociology, Occasional Studies 10. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003.  
“Visualising India’s Geo-body: Globes, Maps, Bodyscapes,” 151–190 (SB)
- Uberoi, Patricia. In *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*. Edited by Sumathi Ramaswamy. Contributions to Indian Sociology, Occasional Studies 10. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003.  
“‘Unity in Diversity?’ Dilemmas of Nationhood in Indian Calendar Art,” 191–232 (SB)

NOTE:

- Watch video of Patricia Uberoi discussing her work, “Tracking Secularism in Popular Print Media: Dilemmas of Nationhood in Indian Calendar Art” (<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/casi/lectures.html>).  
In addition, look at the images from the exhibit ([http://www.indocenter.org/exhibit\\_item.asp?id=16&artid=77](http://www.indocenter.org/exhibit_item.asp?id=16&artid=77))
- For images of some of Ravi Varma’s paintings, see <http://www.cyberkerala.com/rajaravivarma/>

### WEEK 7 (3/8, 3/10)

i. SCREENING: *Rangeela*; 130 minutes; in Hindi. Directed by Ram Gopal Varma, written by Sanjay Chel, 1995 (second half).

ii. VISUAL PRESENTATION: DRESSING THE PART

•Tarlo, Emma. *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*. London: Hurst & Company, 1996.

Chapters 1–4, pp. 1–128

OR:

•Bayly, C. A. In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Edited by Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.  
“The Origins of Swadeshi (home industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700–1930,” 285–321 (SB)

•Tarlo, Emma. *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*. London: Hurst & Company, 1996.

Chapters 3–4, pp. 62–128

### WEEK 8 (3/15, 3/17)

RELAX . . . SPRING BREAK

### WEEK 9 (3/22, 3/24)

i. SCREENING: *Bombay*; 130 minutes; in Hindi. Written and directed by Mani Ratnam, 1995 (first half).

SUGGESTED FILM READING FOR THIS WEEK AND THE NEXT:

•Vasudevan, Ravi S. In *Pleasure and the Nation: The History, Politics, and Consumption of Public Culture in India*. Edited by Rachel Dwyer and Christopher Pinney. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001.

“Bombay and its Public,” 186–211 (SB)

•Taylor, Woodman. In *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*. Edited by Sumathi Ramaswamy. Contributions to Indian Sociology, Occasional Studies 10. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003.

“Penetrating Gazes: The Poetics of Sight and Visual Display in Popular Indian Cinema,” 297–322 (SB)

ii. HINDU NATIONALISM IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: RAMA ON THE RISE I

- Mankekar, Purnima. *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.  
Excerpts from “Mediating Modernities: The *Ramayan* and the Creation of Community and Nation,” 166–170, 199–204, 210–217 (SB)
- Brosius, Christiane. In *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*. Edited by Sumathi Ramaswamy. Contributions to Indian Sociology, Occasional Studies 10. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003.  
“Hindutva Intervisuality: Videos and Politics of Representation,” 265–296 (SB)
- Kapur, Anuradha. In *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today*. Edited by Gyanendra Pandey. Delhi: Viking Publishers, 1993.  
“Deity to Crusader: The Changing Iconography of Ram,” 74–109 (SB)
- Davis, Richard. In *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*. Edited by David Ludden. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996  
“The Iconography of Rama’s Chariot,” 27–54 (SB)

**WEEK 10** (3/29, 3/31)

i. SCREENING: *Bombay*; 130 minutes; in Hindi. Written and directed by Mani Ratnam, 1995 (second half).

ii. HINDU NATIONALISM IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: RAMA ON THE RISE II

- Rajagopal, Arvind. *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.  
“Introduction,” 1–29  
“Prime Time Religion,” 72–120  
“The Communicating Thing and Its Public,” 121–150  
“Conclusion,” 271–283  
“Appendix: Background to the Babri Masjid Dispute,” 284–291

**WEEK 11** (4/5, 4/7)

i. SCREENING: *Dil Cahta Hai* (“The Heart’s Desire”); 183 minutes, in Hindi. Written and directed by Farhan Akhtar, 2001 (first half).

SUGGESTED FILM READING FOR THIS WEEK AND THE NEXT:

- Srivatsan, R. In *Conditions of Visibility: Writings on Photography in Contemporary India*. Calcutta: Stree Publishers; Mumbai: Distributed by Popular Prakashan, 2000.  
“Looking at Film Hoardings,” 59–76 (SB)
- Matthew, Anna Palakunnathu. “Bollywood Satirized.”  
<http://annumatthew.com/Portfolios/Bollywood%20Satirized/Bollywood.html>

ii. INDIAN ADVERTISING AND THE COMMODITY IMAGE

- Mazzarella, William. In *Everyday Life in South Asia*, edited by Diane P. Mines and Sarah Lamb. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.  
“Cindy at the Taj: Cultural Enclosure and Corporate Potentateship in an Era of Globalization,” 387–399 (SB)
- Mazzarella, William. *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.  
“Elaborations: The Commodity Image,” 37–58 (SB)



•Jain, Kajri. In *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*. Edited by Sumathi Ramaswamy. Contributions to Indian Sociology, Occasional Studies 10. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003.

“More than Meets the Eye: The Circulation of Images and the Embodiment of Value,” 33–70 (SB)

•Harris, Clare. In *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment*, edited by Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas. Oxford and New York: Berg.

“The Politics and Personhood of Tibetan Buddhist Icons,” 181–200 (SB)

OR:

•Mazzarella, William. *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.

“Elaborations: The Commodity Image,” 37–58 (SB)

“Citizens Have Sex, Consumers Make Love: KamaSutra I,” 59–98

“The Aesthetic Politics of Aspiration: KamaSutra II,” 99–148

## **WEEK 12** (4/12, 4/14)

i. SCREENING: *Dil Cahta Hai* (“The Heart’s Desire”); 183 minutes, in Hindi. Written and directed by Farhan Akhtar, 2001 (second half).

### II. PRESENTATIONS

## **WEEK 13** (4/19, 4/21)

### I. PRESENTATIONS

### II. PRESENTATIONS

## **WEEK 14** (4/26, 4/28)

### I. PRESENTATIONS

### II. PRESENTATIONS