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 √+, √, √- 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 a 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 7th, 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


*Source Book. (=SB)*

OPTIONAL READING


• 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:

FOR THE EXTRA EAGER:

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


SUGGESTED FILM READING:
WEEK 2 (2/2, 2/4)

SUGGESTED FILM READING FOR THIS WEEK AND THE NEXT:
  “The Saint Poets of Prabhat,” 197–202 (SB)
  “Revelation and Doubt: Sant Tukaram and Devi,” 233–264, particularly 235–251 (SB)

ii. VISUALITY AND THE FUNCTION OF OBJECTS IN INDIA
  entire book
  “Living Images,” 14–50 (SB)
  “Museums are Good to Think: Heritage on View in India,” 35–55 (SB)

WEEK 3 (2/9, 2/11)

ii. DARŚAN: THOUGHTS ON SEEING AND BEING SEEN
  “Seeing the Sacred,” 3–31 (SB)
  “Seeing and Knowing: Semiology, Semiotics and the Art of India,” 193–207 (SB)

OPTIONAL:
  “A Taste of India: On the Role of Gustation in the Hindu Sensorium,” 221–230 (SB)
WEEK 4 (2/16, 2/18)

SUGGESTED FILM READING FOR THIS WEEK AND THE NEXT:
  “Ritwik Ghatak,” 107–117 (SB)
  “Interviews,” 80–96 (SB)
  Section III from “The Freedom of the Archetype,” 50–79 (SB)
  “Meghe Dhaka Tara,” 42–51 (SB)

ii. THE POWER AND POLITICS OF PHOTOGRAPHY
  selections, 8–107

THE COLONIAL GAZE—
SELECTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS FROM:
• http://Harappa.com/photo3/index.html

AT THE OTHER COLLEGES:
  (MH DS413.D43 folio)
  (AC x DS414.M6)
  (HC & MH DS479.1.K57 D38)
WEEK 5 (2/23, 2/25)

ii. THE POWER AND POLITICS OF PHOTOGRAPHY, REDUX
  selections, 108–213
SUGGESTED READING:
  “Introduction,” 1–30 (SB)

THE POSTCOLONIAL GAZE—
SELECTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS CONTINUED
  (SC/Art NC998.6.I6 D38)
• Gupta, Sunil. “Autographs.”
  http://www.autograph-abp.co.uk/gallery/gup.html
  —see Chapter 5: “Painted Photographs,” 103–132
• 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:
SOME VIEWER COMMENTS TO CONSIDER:
http://www.apunkachoice.com/movies/mov114/

ii. ART AND NATIONALISM
  “Visualising India’s Geo-body: Globes, Maps, Bodyscapes,” 151–190 (SB)
  “‘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)
• 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
  Chapters 1–4, pp. 1–128
OR:
  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:
  “Bombay and its Public,” 186–211 (SB)
ii. **HINDU NATIONALISM IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: RAMA ON THE RISE I**

  
  Excerpts from “Mediating Modernities: The Ramayan and the Creation of Community and Nation,” 166–170, 199–204, 210–217 (SB)

  
  “Hindutva Intervisuality: Videos and Politics of Representation,” 265–296 (SB)

  

  
  “The Iconography of Rama’s Chariot,” 27–54 (SB)

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**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**

  
  “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

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**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:**

  
  “Looking at Film Hoardings,” 59–76 (SB)

  

ii. **INDIAN ADVERTISING AND THE COMMODITY IMAGE**

  
  “Cindy at the Taj: Cultural Enclosure and Corporate Potentateship in an Era of Globalization,” 387–399 (SB)

  
  “Elaborations: The Commodity Image,” 37–58 (SB)
  “More than Meets the Eye: The Circulation of Images and the Embodiment of Value,” 33–70 (SB)
  “The Politics and Personhood of Tibetan Buddhist Icons,” 181–200 (SB)
OR:
  “Elaborations: The Commodity Image,” 37–58 (SB)
  “Citizens Have Sex, Consumers Make Love: Kama Sutra I,” 59–98

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

i. **SCREENING**: *Dil Chahta 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**