

Bollywood

LTWL 184. Film Studies and Literature: Close Analysis of Filmic Text

As the world's largest producer of films, Bollywood's existence as a model combining song and dance sequences with a melodramatic plot structure, a model that could not be destroyed by the onslaught of affordable digital platforms and global content has become something of a legend. This course will tell you the story of how the Hindi film industry of the city of Bombay (now Mumbai) became "Bollywood": a globally recognized and circulating brand of filmmaking from India, which is often posited by the international media as the only serious contender to Hollywood in terms of global popularity and influence. A particular corpus of Bollywood films emerged around the twenty first century, that signified a certain form of bigness, with their star lifestyles, bloated economies of scale, world market share, and opulent mise-en-scène. This kind of fecundity in a postcolonial country's culture industry was unprecedented. The neoliberal restructuring of the Indian state and economy—intensified from 1991, followed by the Hindi cinema receiving official industry status from the state in 1998—resulted in Hindi film industry's metamorphosis into Bollywood—a dramatically altered mediascape, armed with satellite television, dotcom boom, and multiplex theaters. In this course we will study this corpus of big Bollywood films.

The course will be populated with **guest lectures** by Pune based eminent scholars of Indian Cinema like Aarti Wani (professor of English (retd.) and the founding co-editor and currently the lead editor of the international peer-reviewed journal *Studies in South Asian Film and Media*) and Ramna Walia (Professor of Film Studies, Flame University, Pune). Each week we will acquaint ourselves with concepts and methods that will help us study Bollywood as the producer of a distinct aesthetic, a unique language of cinema. Weekly readings are curated as per a specific configuration related to the cultural and social status of cinema—as well as the political economy of filmmaking—and locate them in Bollywood's own efforts to accrue symbolic capital, social respectability, and professional distinction. **Screenings** will happen in the **preview theatre of the National Film Archive of India in 35mm**, and the course will include **curated excursions** to key cinematic sites across Pune and **Mumbai**, including the Film and Television Institute of India, Rahul 70mm, and Mumbai's film production and studio infrastructure (Film City, post-production labs, and industry spaces).

Week One

What is Bollywood?

Film- *Om Shanti Om* (Farah Khan, 2007)

Reading- Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "The 'Bollywoodization' of the Indian cinema: cultural nationalism in a global arena," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 2003, 4(1): 25-39.

Week Two

Foreign and Family

Film- *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (Aditya Chopra, 1995)

Reading- Ravi Vasudevan, "The Contemporary Film Industry—I: The Meanings of 'Bollywood'" in *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 334-361.

Guest Speaker- Aarti Wani

Week Three

Desi as Modern, Wealth as Mature

Film- *Dil Chahta Hai* (Farhan Akhtar, 2001)

Reading- Ranjani Mazumdar, “Panoramic Interior” in *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 110- 148.

Week Four

Family, Redux

Film- *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (Karan Johar, 2001)

Reading- Monika Mehta, “Globalizing Bombay Cinema: Reproducing the Indian State and Family,” *Cultural Dynamics*, 2005, 17(2): 135–154.

Guest Speaker- Ramna Walia

Week Five

Unsettling Globalization

Film- *Bhoot* (Ram Gopal Varma, 2003)

Reading- Sangita Gopal, “Fearful Habitations: Upward Mobility and the Horror Genre” in *Conjugations: Marriage and Form in New Bollywood Cinema* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 91-120.

Assignment Structure for Bollywood (At-a-Glance)

Type	Frequency	Description
Journals	Weekly (5)	Site-based reflections linking city + cinema
Screening Notes	Weekly (5)	Formal film analysis grounded in exhibition context
Discussion Posts	1–2	Thematic synthesis (Weeks 2–4)
Short Assignments	3	Ethnography; industry analysis; urban mapping