

South Asian Feminist Cinema

WAGS 69/ASLC 52/FAMS 58

Spring 2011

Wednesday 2:00-4:30pm

Converse 308

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Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 11:30am-12:30pm

How do we define the word “feminism”? Can the term be used to define cinematic texts outside the Euro-American world? In this course we will study a range of issues that have been integral to feminist theory--- the body, domesticity, same sex desire, gendered constructions of the nation, feminist utopias and dystopias ---through a range of South Asian cinematic texts. Through our viewings and readings we will consider whether the term “feminist” can be applied to these texts and we will experiment with new theoretical lenses for exploring these films. Films will range from Satyajit Ray’s classic masterpiece *Charulata* to Gurinder Chadha’s trendy diasporic film, *Bend it like Beckham*.

Required Films: All films will be screened in Fayerweather 113

Satyajit Ray, *Charulata* (Mon. Feb 7th 5pm)

Aparna Sen, *Paroma* (Mon. Feb 14th 5pm)

Muzaffar Ali, *Umrao Jaan* (Mon. Feb 21st 5pm)

Kamal Amrohi, *Pakeezah* (Mon. Feb. 28th 5pm)

Madhur Bhandarkar, *Fashion* (Mon. March 7th 5pm)

Sanjay Leela Bhansali, *Devdas* (Mon. March 21st 5pm)

Vishal Bhardwaj, *Ishqiya* (Mon. March 28th 5pm)

Santosh Sivan, *The Terrorist* (Mon. April 4th 5pm)

Manish Jha, *Matrubhoomi* (Mon April 11th 5pm)

Deepa Mehta, *Fire* (Mon. April 18th 5pm)

Gurinder Chadha, *Bend it like Beckham* (Mon. May 2nd 5pm)

Recommended Films: (available via streaming on E-reserve)

Amit Shimin, *Chak De! India*

Madhu Bhandarkar, *Corporate*

J.P. Dutta, *Umrao Jaan*

Rituparno Ghosh, *Anatarmahal*

Deepa Mehta, *Water*

Satyajit Ray, *Mahanagar*

Aparna Sen, *Paromitar ek din*

Mira Nair, *Mississippi Masala*

Tanuja Chandra, *Dushman*

Required Texts: (available at Amherst Books, 8 Main St., Amherst)

M.H. Ruswa, *Umrao Jan Ada* (1899)

Rabindranath Tagore, *The Broken Nest* (1901)

Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (1992)

Shashi Tharoor, *Show Business* (1992) (available at the WAGS office, 14 Grosvenor)

Conceptual Design of the Course:

- This course has been designed to engage topics in feminist theory in tandem with topics that are relevant to feminism and the film industry. The course is divided into five units each of which speaks directly to topics in feminist theory: Domesticity; The Veil; The Body; Women and Violence; Cinema on the Margins.
- Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive, and as we read and view cinematic texts we will think through the ways in which we can interweave these two approaches to create a holistic understanding of a particular unit. We hope thereby to arrive at a complex understanding of feminism and South Asian cinema.

Grade Break Up:

- Paper 1: (15%) This paper will ask you to think through some of the themes discussed in early weeks of the class through a close reading of a film. The paper will test your ability to integrate theoretical material with attentive visual close reading of the film. →Length: 4-5 pages
- Paper 2: (15%) This paper is similar to Paper 1 but covers later materials. This paper should reflect your ability to synthesize theoretical and visual material and also engage with the larger contexts and historical currents in which the film is situated. → Length: 4-5 pages.
- Class Participation: (15%) On top of the base grade, your participation in class discussion will result in one of three adjustments, a null grade, a quarter grade increase, or a half a grade increase. You will not be graded down for anything you say (or don't say) in class. However, if you say nothing or almost nothing you will not receive any grade benefit.
- Conference Abstract: (5%) This is as an abstract for the conference paper you will be presenting at the end of the semester. In this paper you will outline your theoretical argument in the context of one of the films on the suggested readings list. →Length: 1 page
- Conference Paper Presentation: (20%) You will be evaluated on how you present your paper at the conference. This will include delivery, use of visual aids, engagement with the Q and A session at the end of the conference and so on.
- Final Paper: (30%) This will be a more comprehensive version of your conference paper. It will be a longer research paper with sources cited and an extensive works cited list. → Length: 8-10 pages.
- Due dates for Papers: Paper 1: Friday March 4
- Paper 2: Friday April 1
- Abstract: Friday April 15
- Paper 3: Wednesday May 11

Week 1: INTRODUCTION

Wed. Jan. 26th : South Asian cinema and feminist theory

Week 2: EXPLORING TEXTS AND CONTEXTS: SOUTH ASIAN CINEMA AND FEMINIST THEORY

Wed. Feb 2nd : Lalitha **Gopalan**, “Introduction: ‘Hum Aapke Hain koun?’- Cinephilia and Indian Films” *Cinema of Interruptions* (2002): 1-33. (E)

Ella **Shohat**, “Post-Third-Worldist Culture: Gender, Nation and the Cinema,” *Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures* (ed.) M. Jacqui Alexander, Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1997): 183-212. (E)

Shashi **Tharoor**, *Show Business* (1992) (B)

Week 3: **UNIT I: DOMESTICITY: DESIRE IN THE HOME**

Mon. Feb 7th : Screening of *Charulata*

Wed. Feb. 9th : Discussion of *Charulata*

Rabindranath **Tagore**, *The Broken Nest* (E)

Partha **Chatterjee**, “The Nation and its women” *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Chapter 6, 116-134. (E)

Bert **Cardullo**, “Introduction” *Interviews with Satyajit Ray* (2007): vii-xvi. (E)

Folke **Isaksson**, “Conversation with Satyajit Ray” *Interviews with Satyajit Ray* (2007): 34-52. (E)

Week 4: PARALLEL CINEMA AND WOMEN FILM MAKERS: DOMESTICITY AND DESIRE RECONSIDERED

Mon. Feb 14th: Screening of *Parama*

Wed. Feb. 16th : Discussion of *Parama*

Brinda **Bose**, “Sex, lies and the Genderscape: The cinema of Aparna Sen” *Women: A Cultural Review*, Volume 8, Issue 3 Winter 1997, pages 319 – 326. (E)

Geetha **Ramanathan**, *Feminist Auteurs: Reading Women’s Films*, Chapter 1, 10-44. (E)

Kathleen **McHugh**, “The World and the Soup”: *Camera Obscura* (2009) (E)

Chitra **Parayath**. “LoKvani Meets Aparna Sen and Konkona Sensharma.” (2003). (E)

Week 5: **UNIT 2: THE VEIL: THE MUSLIM “COURTESAN” FILM**

Mon. Feb. 21st: Screening of *Umrao Jaan*

Wed. Feb. 23rd : Discussion of *Umrao Jaan*

Faisal **Devji**, “Gender and the Politics of Space”, *South Asia* vol.14, no. 1: June 1991. (E)

M.H. **Ruswa**, *Umrao Jan Ada* (1899) (B)

Chandra **Mohanty**, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” *Feminist Review* 30 (1988) 61-88. (E)

Week 6: THE “VEILED” VOICE OF THE NATION: GHAZAL, THUMRI AND PLAYBACK SINGING

Mon. Feb 28th : Screening of *Pakeezah*

Wed. March 2nd : Discussion of *Pakeezah* (1972)

Vidya **Rao**, "Thumri as Feminine Voice" in Nivedita Menon (ed). *Gender and Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. (E)

Sanjay **Srivastava**, "Voice, Gender and Space in Time of Five-Year Plans" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39.20 May 15 - May 21 (2004). (E)

Biswarup **Sen**, "The Sounds of Modernity: The Evolution of Bollywood Film Song" *Global Bollywood*: 85-104. (E)

Sound Clips of Thumri singers:

Begum **Akhtar**: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYgG6SiX7ZE>

Girija **Devi**: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eu9eEKMOa9s>

Rekha **Bhardwaj**: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sd9kTpL_3wg

Friday March 4th: PAPER 1 DUE

Week 7: **UNIT 3: THE BODY: VISUAL PLEASURE AND THE BODY**

Mon. March 7th : Screening of *Fashion*

Wed. March 9th : Discussion of *Fashion*

Laura **Mulvey** "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" *Feminist film Theory* (ed.) Susan Thornham, pp. 58-69. (E)

Vanita **Reddy**, "The Nationalization of the Global Indian Woman: Geographies of Beauty in Femina" *South Asian Popular Culture* Volume 4, Issue 1 April 2006, pp. 61-85. (E)

Naomi **Wolf**, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* Part I (B)

Week 8: SPRING BREAK

Week 9: **CULT OF THE BODY: WOMEN AND STARDOM**

Mon. March 21st : Screening of *Devdas*

Wed. March 23rd : Discussion of *Devdas*

Goldie **Osuri** (2008) "Ash-coloured whiteness: The transfiguration of Aishwarya Rai," *South Asian Popular Culture*, 6: 2, 109-123. (E)

Amita **Nijhawan** 'Excusing the female dancer: Tradition and transgression in Bollywood dancing', *South Asian Popular Culture*, 7: 2 (2009):99-112. (E)

Sangita **Shresthova**, "Dancing to an Indian Beat: 'Dola' goes my diasporic heart" *Global Bollywood*, 243-263. (E)

Naomi **Wolf**, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* Part II (B)

[Find news items on Ash and Abhishek wedding; Ash's entry into film]

Week 10: **SEX AND THE BODY: THE VAMP AND THE HEROINE**

Mon. March 28th : Screening of *Ishqiya*

Wed. March 30th: Discussion of *Ishqiya*

Mary Ann **Doane** “Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator” in *Feminist Film Theory: a reader* (ed.) S. Thornham (1999): 131-145. (E)

Janet **Staiger**, “Les Belles Dames sans Merci, Femmes Fatales, Vampires, Vamps and Gold Diggers: The transformation and narrative value of Aggressive Fallen Women” *Feminism and Film History* (ed.) Vicki Callahan (2010): 32-57. (E)

Patha **Chatterjee**, "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness", in *Subaltern Studies VI*, pp. 169-209. (E)

Friday April 1st: PAPER 2 DUE

Week 11: **UNIT 4: WOMEN AND VIOLENCE: REPRESENTING VIOLENCE**

Mon. April 4th : Screening of *The Terrorist*

Wed. April 6th : Discussion of *The Terrorist*

Stephen **Morton**, “The Unhappy Marriage of Third World Women’s Movements and Orientalism” *After Orientalism* (ed.) Boer, Inge E. 165-181. (E)

M. **Dillon**, “Patriotism and valor are in your blood’: necropolitical subjectivities in *The Terrorist* (1999)” *Studies in South Asian Film & Media* (2009). (E)

Neloufer **de Mel**, “Agent or Victim? The Sri Lankan Woman Militant in the Interregnum” *Women & the nation's narrative: gender and nationalism in twentieth century Sri Lanka*. (E)

Week 12: **REPRODUCTION AND ECOFEMINISM: A FEMINIST DYSTOPIA?**

Mon. April 11th : Screening of *Matrubhoomi*

Wed. April 13th : Discussion of *Matrubhoomi*;

Julia **Kristeva**, “From filth to Defilement” *Powers of horror: An essay in Abjection*, pp. 56-89. (E)

Barbara **Creed**, “Horror and the Monstrous Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection” *Feminist Theory* (ed.) Susan Thornham, pp. 251-266. (E)

Alison Wood **Manhoff**. “Banned and Enforced: The Immediate Answer to a Problem without an Immediate Solution—How India Can Prevent Another Generation of “Missing Girls,” *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 38 (2005): 889-920.(E)

Friday April 15th: CONFERENCE ABSTRACT DUE

Week 13: **UNIT 5: CINEMA ON THE MARGINS: SAME SEX DESIRE**

Mon. April 18th : Screening of *Fire*

Wed. April 20th : Discussion of *Fire*

Jigna **Desai**, “Homo on the Range: Mobile and Global Sexualities” *Social Text*, Vol. 20 no. 4, (2002): 65-89. (E)

Ratna **Kapur**, “Imperial Parody” *Feminist Theory* Vol. 2 (2001): 79-88. (E)

Martha **Nussbaum**, “The Professor of Parody” *The New Republic*, 02-22-1999. (E)

Week 14: STUDENT CONFERENCE

Wed. April 27th : STUDENTS PRESENT CONFERENCE PAPERS

Week 15: MAKING FILMS ABOUT THE DIASPORA

Mon. May 2nd : Screening of *Bend it like Beckham*

Wed. May 4th : Discussion of *Bend it like Beckham*

“*Bend it Like Beckham: Identity, Socialization and Assimilation*” by Alberto **Bisin** and Eleonora Patacchini, Thierry Verdier & Yves Zenou, 2006. (E)

Arjun **Appadurai**, “Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology” *Recapturing Anthropology: working in the present*. R.G. Fox (ed.) Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, (1991) 191-210. (E)

Jigna **Desai**, “Between Hollywood and Bollywood” *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of Diasporic Film* (2004), pp. 35-69. (E)

Week 16 :

Wed. May 11th: PAPER 3 DUE