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, Paromita (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, Ishq (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
J.P. Dutta, Umrao Jaan
Rituparno Ghosh, Anatarmahal
Deepa Mehta, Water
Satyajit Ray, Mahanagar
Aparna Sen, Paromita 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)

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
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)

Week 4: PARALLEL CINEMA AND WOMEN FILM MAKERS: DOMESTICITY AND DESIRE RECONSIDERED
Mon. Feb 14th: Screening of Parama

Week 5: UNIT 2: THE VEIL: THE MUSLIM “COURTESAN” FILM
Mon. Feb. 21st: Screening of Umrao Jaan

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)

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=sd9kTPI_L_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
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
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]

Mon. March 28th: Screening of Ishqiya

Wed. March 30th: Discussion of Ishqiya
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
M. Dillon, “Patriotism and valor are in your blood’: necropolitical subjectivities in The Terrorist (1999)” Studies in South Asian Film & Media (2009). (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)

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

Week 14: STUDENT CONFERENCE
Wed. April 27\(^{th}\) : STUDENTS PRESENT CONFERENCE PAPERS

Week 15: MAKING FILMS ABOUT THE DIASPORA
Mon. May 2\(^{nd}\) : Screening of *Bend it like Beckham*

Wed. May 4\(^{th}\) : 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)


Week 16 :
Wed. May 11\(^{th}\): PAPER 3 DUE