

# HOLLYWOOD/BOLLYWOOD AND INDIAN RELIGIONS

## Term 2 (Winter, 2022/23)

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**Class:** Wed. 7–10pm (PGCLL M12)

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## **Course Description**

This course provides a brief survey of depictions of Indian religious traditions in select films. In one sense, the course is a survey of storytelling traditions. We will not limit ourselves to one type of genre or to one (Indian) language. We will also not limit ourselves to Bollywood proper (and we will not watch or discuss in detail Hollywood films; apologies if the title was misleading).

## **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course students should be:

- familiar with how a number of Indian religions are imagined or re-imagined and thus depicted in Indian films.
- familiar with how Indian society and culture(s), particularly ancient and pre-modern, are imagined or re-imagined and thus depicted in Indian films.
- familiar with how gods, kings, courtesans, priests, and monks and nuns are imagined or re-imagined and thus depicted in Indian films.

## **Required Materials and Texts**

None. Everything needed may be accessed either through the library's e-resources, the University's Fair Dealing Policy, or elsewhere on the internet using older sources in public domain. Prepare ahead of time since some e-books only allow for one simultaneous user.

## **Class Format**

A three-hour slot (7–10 pm; lecture and tutorial slots) is booked to view and discuss the assigned films on Wednesday nights. Students should view the films on their own if they miss class for any reason or are feeling ill. Most of the films are available online through various streaming services (Amazon Prime, Netflix, etc.). There will be no separate tutorial.

## **Course Evaluation – Overview**

1. One 2-page proposal for a film outside of those already assigned: 20%.
2. One 2-page film review of any film viewed in class: 20%.
3. Two essays (2 x 20%): 40%.
4. Four multiple-choice mini-quizzes (4 x 5%): 20%.

## **Course Evaluation – Details**

### **Proposal (20%), due Jan. 25 (week 3)**

No more than 2 pages. 12 point font, double-spaced, approx. 500–600 words. Details will be announced on Avenue and in class two weeks before due date.

**Film review (20%), due Feb. 15 (week 6)**

No more than 2 pages. 12 point font, double-spaced, approx. 500–600 words. Details will be announced on Avenue and in class two weeks before due date.

**Essay 1 (20%), due March 1 (week 8)**

12 point font, double-spaced. Topic will be announced on Avenue and in class at least two weeks before due date.

**Essay 2 (20%), due March 29 (week 12)**

12 point font, double-spaced. Topic will be announced on Avenue and in class at least two weeks before due date.

**Mini-quizzes (4 x 5%; 20%) (weeks 4, 5, 10, 13)**

**Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings** (instructor reserves the right to change films and readings according to availability)

**Week 1 (Jan. 11, 2023)**

**Introduction & Orientation**

**Week 2 (Jan. 18, 2023): Bollywood, satire, and karma**

**Film 1: [Om shanti om \(2007\)](#) (dir. Farah Khan)**

**Reading:**

- Shastri, Sudha. 2011. “‘The Play’s the Thing, Wherein I’ll Catch the Conscience of the King’: Intertextuality in Om Shanti Om.” In *Journal of Film and Video* 63(1): 32–43.
- Wright, Neelam Sidhar. 2014. “*The Soul Gets Typecast: The Reincarnation Film in Popular Hindi Cinema.*” *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 12(1/2): 113–132.

**Week 3 (Jan. 25, 2023): gods 1 (proposal due)**

**Film 2: [PK \(2014\)](#) (dir. Rajkumar Hirani)**

**Reading:**

- Qadri, Monisa, and Sabeha Mufti. 2016. “Films and Religion: An Analysis of Aamir Khan’s PK.” *Journal of Religion & Film* 20(1): Article 9.

**Week 4 (Feb. 1, 2023): gods 2 (mini-quiz 1)**

**Film 3: [OMG: Oh my god! \(2012\)](#) (dir. Umesh Shukla)**

**Reading:**

- Nayar, Sheila J. 2015. "Bollywood Religious Comedy: An Inaugural *Humor-neutics*." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 83(3): 808–825.

**Week 5 (Feb. 8, 2023): courtesans 1 (mini-quiz 2)**

Film 4: [Utsav \(1984\)](#) (dir. Girish Karnad)

**Reading:**

- Akhujkar, Vidyut. 2007 "Mṛcchakaṭikam to Utsav: Re-Creation of a Sanskrit Classic by Girish Karnad." In *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics*, edited by Heidi R.M. Pauwels, 76–95. London: Routledge.

**Week 6 (Feb. 15, 2023): courtesans 2 (film review due)**

Film 5: [Amrapali \(1966\)](#) (dir. Lekh Tandon)

**Reading:**

- Tandon, Deepika. 2019. "The Politics of Sanitization/Sanskritization: The Court Dancers and Classical Pasts (*Rajnartaki*, 1941; *Chitralkha*, 1964; *Amrapali*, 1966)." In *'Bad' Women of Bombay Films: Studies in Desire and Anxiety*, edited by Saswati Sengupta, Shampa Roy, and Sharmila Purkayastha, 93–111. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

**Week 7 (Feb. 22, 2023): Mid-term Recess**

No class

**Week 8 (March 1, 2023): essay 1 due**

Film 6: [Agni Varsha \(2002\)](#) (dir. Arjun Sajani)

**Reading:**

- Desmarais, Michele Marie. 2009. "Karma and Film." In *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, edited by William L. Blizek, 281–289. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

**Week 9 (March 8, 2023): monks 1**

Film 7: [Angulimala \(1960\)](#) (dir. Vijay Bhatt)

**Reading:**

- Thompson, John. 2015. "Ahimsā and Its Ambiguities: Reading the Story of Buddha and aṅgulimāla." *Open Theology* 1(1): 160–174.

**Week 10 (March 15, 2023): monks 2 (mini-quiz 3)**

Film 8: [Trishagni \(1988\)](#) (dir. Nabendu Ghosh)

**Reading:**

- Sharma, Shikha, and Pankaj Jain. 2020. "Encountering Asceticism: A Hindu Nun in Jogan, vis-à-vis a Buddhist Monk in Trishagni." *Visual Anthropology* 33 (5): 466–473.

**Week 11 (March 22, 2023): Reflection Week**  
**Reflect!**

**Week 12 (March 29, 2023): more gods (essay 2 due)**  
**Film 9: [Yamudiki Mogudu \(2012\)](#) (dir. E. Satti Babu)**

**Reading:**

- Renate, Söhnen-Thieme. 2012. "Yama." In *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, edited by Knut A. Jacobsen, et al. Leiden: Brill.

**Week 13 (April 5, 2023): kings (mini-quiz 4)**  
**Film 10: [Aśoka \(2001\)](#) (dir. Santosh Sivan)**

**Reading:**

- Thapar, Romila. 2012. "Early Life, Accession, and Chronology of the Reign of Aśoka." In *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, by Romila Thapar, 25–69. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

**Week 14 (April 12, 2023)**  
**Conclusions**

**Course Policies**

**Submission of Assignments**

Do not submit papers by e-mail (attachments, in-line, etc.); they will not be accepted. Submit only to Avenue to Learn, following specific instructions on the course's website (Announcements in Avenue). Staff in the office of the Department of Religious Studies will not date-stamp or receive papers and other assignments.

All written work will be marked on grammar, clarity of writing, and organization, as well as content and analysis. Proofread and then proofread again. All work must be properly referenced, with footnotes and bibliography (where applicable). Students are encouraged to visit the Student Success Centre to improve their essay skills (Gilmour Hall 110). For information about the Writing Support services, visit the [Centre's website](#).

**Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

### **Late Assignments**

All written work must be submitted on the due date. Late assignments will be penalized 5% a day (including weekends). Late penalties will generally not be waived unless your Faculty/Program Office advises the instructor that you have submitted to that office the appropriate documentation to support your inability to submit the work by the due date. If you are having trouble with a deadline, contact me, *before* the deadline.

### **Avenue to Learn**

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss these with the course instructor.

### **University Policies**

#### **Academic Integrity Statement**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of

academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), located at [the University Secretariat website](#)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Academic Dishonesty: Zero Tolerance (my policy)**

If in doubt, consult with your instructor before submitting any work. Under no circumstances should you submit work if you are unsure whether or not submission of said work constitutes academic dishonesty.

All students are encouraged to complete the following:

- [Indiana University Plagiarism Tutorials and Tests](#)
- [How to Recognize Plagiarism Certification Tests](#)

### **Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection**

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g., A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

**All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/).

### **Courses with an On-line Element**

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn [A2L], LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss these with the course instructor.



## **Online Proctoring**

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

## **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

## **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

## **Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work**

[McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

## **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar’s Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

### **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.