

POLS 215/314: The Politics of Cultural Forms: Timescapes & Topographies of the Postcolony

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Office hours: Monday, 8:30-10 am, Wednesday, 11:30-1:30 pm, and by appt.

Course Description:

The course probes the embodiment of politics in cultural forms pivoting, in this version of the course, on cinema and cinematically-inspired artworks. It is an exploration of the cultural lifeworlds of colonial peoples, as it manifests through history, during and after (or so some say) colonization. Achille Mbembe speaks of the postcolony as an entanglement of timescapes.

Cinematic texts, timescapes in their own right, provide unique insights into not only these temporalities, but also the spatial organisations of political and legal power, extending Eyal Weizman's framework of forensic architecture in relation to terror, occupation, and postcolonial violence. The course attempts to bring into relief the interrelation between the spatial, visual, and temporal aspects of ordinary life in the post/colony.

In addition, cinema serves as an accessible and visible component of a "culture industry" whose actions and political economic history under and beyond colonialism can shed light on the dynamics of old and new colonialisms, as manifest in big events and everyday life, at play and at work, in grief and in love, in the public and private spheres, alike. There are many ways of imagining what is produced, distributed, consumed, laboured for, within this industry that not only illuminate colonization of a life-world, but also expose colonization as a lifeworld, producing its own forms of subjection and redemption. The regional focus of this version of the course is the South Asian subcontinent, with its cinemas brought into conversation with British colonial cinema and other postcolonial cinemas in the Middle East and North Africa where possible.

There will be required weekly screenings of films outside of class time. Prerequisite: 300-level: 1 200-level course in politics and 1 200-level course in literature or film. 200-level: 1 100-level course in social studies and 1 100-level course in literature or the arts.

Requirements:

1. Films should be seen before class. Suggested time is Sundays, 2:30-5:30 in the Lecture Centre. Students will take turns arranging the screening.
2. Readings listed for a given week should be done in advance for class that week.
3. Active, engaged, attentive, and empathic class participation.
4. Where additional resources are listed, every 300-level student will pick one to read and present to class.
5. Journal Writing: 2 film journals,, for each section of the course (South Asia, Palestine, Algeria). The film journal (2-3 pages) should be updated by the Thursday of the week in which they are listed. No late submissions will be accepted AT ALL. A google document will be set up for each student to serve as an ongoing film journal. Journals should be more than just responses or reactions. As much as they must detail the experience of the film, a consideration of the guiding questions such as "What is the film asking of me?", "Who and what does it make me accountable to?", "What are its main interventions in the sensible or conceptual realm of the world I inhabit (what about the world as I know it does it normalise or destabilise?)"
6. Papers/Projects:
 - a. Students at the 200-level will write two papers, 3-4 pages each, on any two of the topics given below. They can also work on one project using other modes besides writing (to be approved by the instructor) but which must have a substantial written component, to replace one of the papers.

- b. Students at the 300-level will write two papers, 6-8 pages each on any two of the topics given below. They can also work on one project using other modes besides writing (to be approved by the instructor) but which must have a substantial written component, to replace one of the papers.
- c. The papers can build on the journals written for the class.
- d. Paper 1 should be submitted by **Monday, October 10**. Paper 2 should be submitted by **Monday, December 18**.
- e. Papers should try to engage with these broad pairings: (1) Sight and the colony; (2) the cinema as political form; (3) the postcolony and time; (4) the postcolony and space; (5) Terror, occupation, or partition in contemporary life (in this case you will address a contemporary political issue through a historical manifestation of terror, occupation, or partition as studied in this course).

Learning Outcomes:

1. To gain a broad historical overview of the process of decolonization in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MENASA) region.
2. To use cinema as a cultural form to learn more about the intricacies of colonial and decolonial life and relations.
3. To see in the development of cinema a convergence of capitalist and colonial development, and to gain an understand how colonised populations transformed cinema and its potential in the process of decolonisation. To be able to extend this analysis to other forms and technologies.
4. To gain the tools to assess the different forms of cultural politics in different regions of the world in a comparative context.
5. To make connections between postcolonial politics in these regions as a way to understand the postcolonial politics of the USA in relation to race, gender, and indigeneity.
6. To practice and cultivate watching in relation to the acts of reading and listening, and compare the sensory experience and demands of these ways of engaging with works and texts. To appreciate cinema, its production, and its reception, both as participation outside of an exchange relation.
7. To apply this knowledge to “read” the contemporary landscapes around us to understand power and authority, and also to analyse and challenge claims about the definition of problems connected to postcolonial populations.
8. To understand and distinguish between manifestations of postcoloniality and its politics in the context of slavery, terror, occupation, and partition.

Class Schedule:

Screenings every Sunday, 2:30-5:30 pm, Lecture Centre

Week 1, August 30: Landscapes of the Colony

Black Narcissus (1947) <https://youtu.be/-GjRnbYojG4>

Travel Talks: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL53EE433D99C5546D>

In-class reading/writing

Seminar 525 symposium: <http://www.india-seminar.com/2003/525.htm>

Week 2, September 6: Colonization, Globalisation, Translation

Shakespeare Wallah (1965)

Shakespeare Trilogy: *Maqbool* [*Macbeth*], *Haider* [*Hamlet*], *Omkara* [*Othello*] (pick one per group)

Priya Jaikumar, *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India* (Chapters 1, 2, & 3)

Nasreen Munni Kabir, *Bollywood*: Chapter 1, "Bollywood Basics," pp. 1-23

*Ashis Nandy, "Indian Popular Cinema as a Slum's Eye View of Politics."

Additional Resources (each 300-level student picks one to present):

*Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "The Phalke Era: Conflict of Traditional Form and Modern Technology," in *Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India*, ed. Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir, and Vivek Dhareshwar (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1993): 47-82.

*Simon During, "Popular Culture on a Global Scale: A Challenge for Cultural Studies?" in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 4. (Summer, 1997), pp. 808-833.

*Theodor Adorno, "The Schema of Mass Culture", in *The Culture Industry*

*Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood*, pp. 1-90

Week 3, September 13: Woman and Market

Umrao Jan (1981) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3JwIRye IE>

Bazaar (1981) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBFwzsDaxXA>

*Sumita Chakravarty, "Woman and the burden of Postcoloniality: The Courtesan Film" Genre" in *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1993), 269-305.

*Asha Kasbekar, "Hidden Pleasures: Negotiating the Myth of the Female in Popular Hindi Cinema", in Rachel Dwyer and Christopher Pinney (eds), *Pleasure and the Nation* (New Delhi: OUP, 2001), pp. 286-308.

*Mukul Kesavan, "Urdu, Awadh, and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema," in *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities, and the State* ed. Zoya Hasan (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994): 244-257. [coursepack]

* Veena Talwar Oldenberg, "Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow," in *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia*, ed. Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash (Berkeley: U of California P, 1992): 23-61.

Additional Resources:

*Fareed Kazmi, "Muslim Socials and the Female Protagonist: Seeing a Dominant Discourse at Work," in *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities, and the State*, ed. Zoya Hasan (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994): 226-243.

Week 4, September 20: Memory, Nation, and National Cinema

Pyaasa

Sahib, Bibi, Aur Ghulam

*M.K. Raghavendra, "Structure and Form in Indian Popular Film Narrative", in Vinay Lal and Ashis Nandy (eds), *Fingerprinting Popular Culture: The Mythic and the Iconic Indian Cinema* (New Delhi: OUP, 2006), pp. 24-50.

*Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema*, Chapter 4, "Auteurship and the Lure of Romance": 112-123.

Sumita S. Chakravarty, selection from Chapter 5, "The Recuperation of History and Memory," in *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema 1947-1987* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1993): 173-184.

Additional Resources:

*Ravi S. Vasudevan, "Addressing the Spectator of a `Third World' National Cinema: The Bombay `Social' Film of the 1940s and 1950s," *Screen* 36:4 (Winter 1995): 305-324.

*Darius Cooper, "The Hindi Film Song and Guru Dutt," *East-West Film Journal* 2:2 (1988): 49-65.

*Daisy Rockwell, "Visionary Choreographies: Guru Dutt's Experiments in Film Song Picturisation," *South Asian Popular Culture* 1:2 (October 2003): 109-124.

*Alison Griffiths, "Discourses of Nationalism in Guru Dutt's *Pyasa*," *Deep Focus* VI (1996): 24-31.

Week 5, September 27: "Our Films, Their Films"

Pather Panchali

Charulata

*Selections from Ray anthology

*Article to accompany

Week 6, October 4: Rewriting Landscapes through Partitions and Borders

Hey Raam

1947-Earth or Tamas

Midnight's Children

*Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema*, Chapter 7, "After Ayodha: The Sublime Object of Fundamentalism": 203-233.

(end of Unit 1)

BREAK

(Paper 1 due on or before Monday, October 10)

Week 7, October 18: Landscapes of the Postcolony

*Achille Mbembe, "Introduction: Time on the Move" in *On the Postcolony*

*Mbembe, "Necropolitics"

*(Optional: Mbembe, "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony")

Eyal Weizman, book and articles

<http://www.forensic-architecture.org/case/rafah-black-friday/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/11/magazine/isis-middle-east-arab-spring-fractured-lands.html?smid=fb-share&r=0>

*Amir Nizar Zuabi, Haaretz article <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.608653>

In-class film:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/rebelarchitecture/2014/06/architecture-violence-2014629113556647744.html>

<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/culture/rebel-architect-3-eyal-weizman-and-the-architecture-of-occupation/8669195.article>

Supplementary:

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/sep/01/what-can-forensic-architecture-reveal-about-the-conflict-in-gaza>

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/rebelarchitecture/>

They Do Not Exist/Arna's Children

Week 8a, October 25: Unsettling Colonialism

All will read and watch this:

Chapters 1, 3, and 7 from *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eb3iu8HiSIk>

The Time that Remains (Elia Suleiman) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMRXxjLNs1Q>

Wedding in Galilee (Khleifi) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1d4e7_3GLEQ

*Interview with Michel Khleifi

Suggested:

Laila's Birthday (Masharawi) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqtEk23QjQk>;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDaB6JNArRE>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9KSA8aDkc4>

Arna's Children

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQZiHgbBBcI&list=PLLSoUe4UTH2fE4nHYTmzfAzcDN5BM5FqW&index=4>

[http://wearenotnumbers.org/home/Story/Gaza through a different lens](http://wearenotnumbers.org/home/Story/Gaza%20through%20a%20different%20lens)

In class:

They Do Not Exist

Week 8b, October 30: Boston Palestine Film Festival

Readings from *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*

<http://www.variant.org.uk/pdfs/issue30/PalestineC30.pdf>

Week 9, November 1: Time of the Sovereign

Student Panel I

In class: *Battle of Algiers*

Ranjana Khanna, *Algeria Cuts*, (short selection)

Michael O'Riley, *Cinema in an Age of Terror: North Africa, Victimization, and Colonial History* (selection)

Week 10, November 8: Impossible Loves

Student Panel II

Le Zerda <http://www.alartemag.be/en/en-culture/assia-djebars-forgotten-films/>

Ranjana Khanna, *Algeria Cuts*, (selection)

Interview: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/oBw1ZcT5NGLk8bTFad2dnQjBrMVU>

(end of Unit 2)

Week 11, November 15: Terror in the Postcolony

Student Panel III

Dil Se

Paradise Now

Michael O'Riley, *Cinema in an Age of Terror: North Africa, Victimization, and Colonial History* (we divide up chapters among ourselves)

*Sumita S. Chakravarty, "Fragmenting the Nation: Images of Terrorism in Indian Popular Cinema," in *Cinema & Nation*, eds. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000): 222-237.

*Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Allegories of Alienation and Politics of Bargaining: Minority Subjectivities in Mani Ratnam's *Dil Se*," *South Asian Popular Culture* 1: (2003): 141-159.

<http://montrealgazette.com/entertainment/movies/ridm-documentary-film-festivals-lineup-takes-us-around-the-world>

BREAK

Week 12, November 29: Outside and Under

Satya

Salaam Bombay 1988 <https://docs.google.com/file/d/OB7dkoObDTGbxYmd6NTQzcWphdWc/view>

Omar

Talaash

*Suketu Mehta, *Maximum City*, esp. pp. 185-234, 346-415.

* Ravi Vasudevan, "The Exhilaration of Dread: Genre, Narrative Form and Film Style in Contemporary Urban Action Films," *Sarai Reader 2002: The Cities of Everyday Life* (New Delhi, 2002): 59-67.

Additional Resources:

* Vinay Lal, "The Impossibility of the Outsider in Modern Hindi Film"

* Travis Crawford, "Bullets Over Bombay: Exposing the Underworld of Hindi Cinema (Both Onscreen and Off)," *Film Comment* (May-June 2002): 53-55. [coursepack]

* Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture", in his *Signatures of the Visible* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-46.

Week 13, December 6: Globalization and Desire

Dil Chahta Hai or *Om Shanti Om* or *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani*

Zinda Bhaag

*William Mazzarella, *Shoveling Smoke* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 3-56.

*Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Two Histories of Capital", in his *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 47-71.

* Ashis Rajadhyashka, "The Bollywoodization of Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Era", in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol 4, Number 1, April 2003, pp. 25-39(15).

* Ronald Inden, "Transnational Class, Erotic Arcadia and Commercial Utopia in Hindi Films," in *Image Itineraries: Audio-Visual Media and Cultural Change in India*, ed. Christiane Brosius and Melissa Butcher (New Delhi: Sage, 1999): 41-66.

*Elizabeth Povinelli, Introduction to *Economies of Abandonment*

(end of Unit 3)

Week 14, December 13

NO CLASS (replaced with trip to the Boston Palestine Film Festival 2016 on October 30)

Paper II due on or before December 18