VL: ‘Bollywood and Beyond’:  
A Social and Cultural History of Indian Cinema in the 20th Century

Film poster of Madhusudhan Rao’s *Samāj ko badal dālo* (“Transform society!”, 1970)

**TIME:** Monday 15:15-16:45  
(Begin: 25 February, 2019)

**LOCATION:** CHN C 14

**INSTRUCTOR:** Prof. Dr. Harald Fischer-Tiné  
[harald.fischertine@gess.ethz.ch](mailto:harald.fischertine@gess.ethz.ch)
COURSE SUMMARY

The Indian film industry has been around for over 100 years and is one of the richest and most variegated of the world. The lecture reconstructs the historical development of Indian cinema from late 19th to early 21st centuries (with a strong focus on the commercial Hindi film (aka ‘Bollywood’) and uses selected landmark movies as a lens through which technical, cultural, social and political change on the Indian sub-continent can be explored.

The objectives of this course are three-fold. For one, the participants shall learn to question aesthetic certainties and received modes of perception of cinematographic art. Secondly, they will be acquainted with the huge potential of films as historical sources that allow the viewer to grasp processes of social and cultural change. Thirdly, the reconstruction of the international career of a specific variety of an art form and entertainment technology will raise important questions of cultural globalisation and consumerism. As a side effect, as it were, the course will also provide students with important insights into the chequered history of the Indian subcontinent over the course of the 20th century.

REQUIREMENTS

- Regular attendance (minimum of 80% recommended)
- Regular reading of the mandatory texts (a course reader with selected texts will be provided via Polybox)
- A 1,500-word summary of a text marked with a flower symbol (ﷺ) of your own choice, to be submitted to the teaching assistant, Carolyn Kerchof, by 1 May 2019, 23:59 CET
- Passing of final exam on 27 May → >50% of the points are required for a passing grade
  - Link to online reader: https://polybox.ethz.ch/index.php/s/fcATIYjbgUeX7PkJ
    - PW: bollywood19
- You can contact the teaching assistant, Carolyn Kerchof, with any questions about the course requirements or logistics: carolyn.kerchof@gess.ethz.ch

OUTLINE OF THE SESSIONS

I.

Session 1 (25.02.2019)  A century of Indian Cinema: Introduction to the course and organisational matters

(recommended reading)


**Session 2 (04.03.2019)**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: India’s turbulent 20th century — political, social and cultural change**

*(recommended reading)*


**Session 3 (11.03.2019)**

**The Shadow of colonialism: India and the ‘Empire cinema’ (c. 1925-1945)**

*(recommended reading)*


**Session 4 (18.03.2019)**

**The origins of Indian Cinema: From Parsi-Theater to end of the silent movie era (1850-1930)**

*(recommended reading)*


**Session 5 (25.03.2019)**

**The ‘golden age’ of Hindi cinema, (c.1931-1975) I: Postcolonial self-assurance in Raj Kapoor’s Awaara (1951)**

*(recommended reading)*

Session 6 (01.04.2019)  
**The ‘golden age’ of Hindi cinema, (c.1947-1977) II: Nation-building on celluloid in Mehboob Khan’s *Mother India* (1957)**  
*(recommended reading)*


Session 7 (15.04.2019)  
**The ‘golden age’ of Hindi cinema, (c.1947-1977) III: formula films, megastars and ‘angry young men’ (Yash Chopra’s *Deewaar*, 1975)**  
*(recommended reading)*

Session 8 (29.04.2019)  
**Bollywood goes global: Popular Hindi cinema and India’s new middle class (Yash Chopra’s *DDLJ, 1995*)**

*(recommended reading)*


Session 9 (06.05.2019)  
**“A wider Bollyworld”: The South Asian Diaspora cinema (Gurinder Chadha’s *Bhaji on the Beach, 1993*)**

*(recommended reading)*


(recommended reading)


(recommended reading)

- [http://bollywoodanthropology.blogspot.ch/2011/03/aakrosh-review-of-review.html](http://bollywoodanthropology.blogspot.ch/2011/03/aakrosh-review-of-review.html)

Session 12 (27.05.2019)  FINAL EXAM
BOLLYWOOD - A Basic Bibliography


BARNOUW, Erik / KRISHNASWAMY, S., Indian Film, New York etc. 21980.

BASKARAN, Sundararaj Theodore, History through the Lens. Perspectives on South Indian Cinema (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2009).


BOOTH, Gregory D., Behind the Curtain: Making Music in Mumbai’s Film Studios (New Delhi: Oxford University Press 2008).


DIMITROVA, Diana, Religion in Literature and Film in South Asia (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).


———, *From Raj to Swaraj: The Non-fiction Film in India* (New Delhi: Viking, 2007).


LAL, Vinay, *Deewaar The Footpath, the City and the Angry Young Man* (New Delhi: Harper Collins India, 2011).


The Bollywood’s dream merchants at work: shooting of *Bhuli Nai* in Bombay (1948)