

HISTORY 228
Historicizing Popular Culture in Asia

LEC 001

Room: 1101

Instructor: Viren Murthy

When: 2:25 PM-3:15 PM MWF

Office Hours Friday, 3:30-4:30pm

In this course, we will interrogate key themes in the societies of various nations in Asia through analyzing works of popular culture historically. We will examine different genres of popular culture, from Hindi films to Japanese popular music and ask how to understand such works in relation to larger social phenomena and trajectories, such as nationalism, the cold war and the cultures of fordist and post-fordist capitalism. The course will involve learning to “read” works of popular culture to reveal social issues and ideological tensions often not visible on first view. Whether works related to popular culture are created as propaganda as in Communist China or for entertainment in most of Asia, they have a life that goes beyond the intentions of their creators and express dreams, desires and frustrations related to recurrent problems of global modernity. Moreover, this course is transnational in scope, and so, we will examine how many of works of popular culture have after-lives beyond national boundaries as is evidenced in the wide reception of Japanese anime and popular music in East Asia or the popularity of Hindi films outside of India. This poses a theoretical question, namely whether the circulation of popular culture is made possible by certain global or regional social processes that condition cultural production and reception. From this perspective, we can enter debates, such as those about post-modernism and the cultural logic of late capitalism, from the standpoint of transnational Asia.

Goals of the course:

To acquire basic knowledge about various genres of popular culture in Asia, including, Hindi movies, J-pop and Korean drama. Many students may already be familiar with some of these genres of popular culture in Asia, but the major focus of the course will be to understand these genres and works within a larger transnational context. In this way, students will learn how to engage critically sources of history and will also learn to think critically about what a source is. Popular culture is not traditionally considered a source, but becomes a source when read in a certain way. Moreover, because much of the materials we will be reading are connected to the contemporary world, the course poses the problem of thinking of our own present as history.

The assignments in the course are geared to help students learn to pose historical questions and explain their academic and public implications. The course has one major writing assignment, which students will revise over the course of the semester. As a result, students will learn to write clear well-organized narratives, in which explain their argument about selected works of popular culture.

Required Texts

Michael Bourdagh, *Sayonara America, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Pre-history of J-Pop*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Jonathan Campbell, *Red Rock: The Long March of Chinese Rock & Roll*., Hong Kong: Earnshaw books, 2011.

Grading

Participation/Attendance: 20 %

Weekly Reading Responses (250 word): 30%

Paper-Proposal (5 pages): 20 %

Final Paper (10-15 pages) 30%

As you see from the above breakdown, your grade will be made up of three components. You are expected to come to class having read the material for that day and having done any other assignments required. Readings will be either from the required texts, placed on Learn@UW or available for download through the libraries various search engines. Students should write a 250 word reading response every week, reflecting on the readings or other materials. These assignments will be due every Friday. You will not be given a letter grade, but will receive check or a check +, the latter meaning that the instructor acknowledges that the student has put extra effort into the assignment. Most films will be available on youtube and in some cases, a DVD of the film will be placed on reserve.

A paper proposal, on a subject related to the topics discussed in class will be due October 19th. Your topic can be your own analysis of a film or you can develop a more general topic, such as an analysis of trends in Bollywood. I will give students comments on their proposals, which should help in preparing the final paper, which is due Dec. 14th. I would also encourage students to attempt transnational or comparative projects. If you are unsure of your topic for either of your papers please see me.

Weekly Assignments and Readings (May be Subject to Revision during the Course)

Week 1: Asian Popular Culture in the World/the World in Asian Popular Culture

September 5

Introduction

September 7 The Culture Industry and Fordism

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,

Week 2: Representations of Land and Time in India

September 10

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, Harry Zohn trans., Schocken, 1969.

September 12

Readings: Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "The "Bollywoodization" of the Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena," in Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar eds., *Global Bollywood*,

September 14

Discussion of Hindi Movie *Do bigha Zameen* (Two Acres of Land, 1953)
Ernst Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectic," *New German Critique*, 1977

Week 3: Bollywood: Representations of the City, Countryside and Justice

Paper Topics Due

September 17

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-liberalism*, Oxford University Press, 2005.
Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" *New Left Review*, 1984.

September 19 Discussion of Hindi Movie: *Deewar* (Wall, 1975)

Jyotika Viridi, "Deewar/Wall (1975)-Fact, Fiction, and the Making of a Superstar," in *Global Bollywood*.

September 21

David Novak, "Cosmopolitanism, Remediation, and the Ghost World of Bollywood." *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 25.1, 40-72.

You may also want to consult the following website

<http://www.culanth.org/?q=node/298>

Week 4: Global Capitalism and Global Cultures

September 24

Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture*, 1990.

September 26 Discussion of Hindi Movie: *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* (2001)

Arjun Appadurai, "Playing with Modernity: The Decolonization of Indian Cricket," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, chapter 5.

September 28

"Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities" *Africa* 67(3):406–440, 1997.

Week 5: Gender and Hindi Cinema

October 1 Discussion of Hindi Movie, "Sholay"

Ulka Ajaria, "Relationships which have no name': Family and Sexuality in 1970s popular film." *South Asian Popular Culture*, Vol. 10.1(2012)

October 3

"Constructing-Contesting Masculinities: Trends in South Asian Cinema" *Signs*, Vol. 31.4, 2006.

October 5

Discussion of Hindi Movie *The Dirty Picture* (2011)

Amitah Nijahwan, "Excusing the Female Dancer: Tradition and Transgression in Bollywood Dancing," *South Asian Popular Culture*, Vol. 7.9 2009.

Week 6: Chinese Cinema from Revolutionary to Post-revolutionary Period

October 8 Discussion of Chinese Film *Baimao Nü* (White Haired Girl, 1951)

Meng Yue, "Female Images and National Myth," *Gender and Politics in Modern China*, Duke University Press, 1994.

October 10

Jason MacGrath, "Cultural Revolution: Model Opera Films and the Realist Tradition in Modern Chinese Cinema," *The Opera Quarterly*, 2010.

Alfreda Murck, "Golden Mangoes - The Life Cycle of a Cultural Revolution Symbol", *Archives of Asian Art*, vol. 57 (2007), pp. 1-21

October 12

"Lydia Liu, Beijing Sojourners in New York: Postsocialism and the Question of Ideology in Global Media Culture," *Positions*, 1999.

Week 6: The Kung-Fu Film and Hong Kong Culture

October 15

David Desser, "The Kung Fu Craze: Hong Kong Cinema's First American Reception," in

Poshek Fu and David Desser eds., *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*. Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Vijay Prasad, "Bruce Lee and the Anti-Imperialism of Kung Fu," *Positions*, March 1, 2003.

October 17

Akbar Abbas, "Wang Gar-wai: Hong Kong Filmmaker" in *Hong Kong and the Politics of Disappearance*, University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

October 19 *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004)

Raechel Dumas, "Kung Fu Production for Global Production," *Style* 43.1, 2009.

Paper Proposals Due

Week 7: Theorizing Anime I

October 22

Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*, 3-55

October 24

Lamarre, 55-86

October 26

Lamarre, 86-110

Week 8: Theorizing Anime II

October 29

Lamarre, 103-155

October 31

Lamarre, 155-184

November 2

Lamarre, 184-221.

Week 9: Anime and Sex

Lamarre, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*

November 5

Lamarre, 209-252

November 7

Lamarre, 252-277

November 9

Lamarre, 277-300

Week 10: Popular Culture and Asianism

November 12

Rough Drafts of Paper Due

Leo Ching, "Globalizing the Regional and Regionalizing the Global: Mass Culture and Asianism in the Age of Late Capitalism," *Public Culture*, Winter, 2000.

November 14

Koichi Iwabuchi, "Nostalgia for a Different Asian Modernity," *Positions*, Winter, 2002.

November 16

C.J.W.L Lee, "Imagining the Fractured East Asian Modern," *Criticism*, Spring 2012.

Week 11: Japanese Pop

November 19

Bourdagh, Chapter 1

November 21

Bourdagh, Chapter 2

November 23

Bourdagh, Chapter 3

Week 12 J-Pop Continued

November 25

Bourdagh, chapter 4

November 27

Bourdagh, chapter 5

November 29

Bourdagh, chapter 6

Week 13: Chinese Rock Music

December 3

Campbell, 1-67

December 5

Campbell, 67-89

December 7

Campbell, 89-139

Week 14: Korean Pop Culture and East Asian Identity

December 10,

Pil Ho-kim and Hyun Joon Shin, "The Birth of 'Rok': Cultural Imperialism, Nationalism and the Glocalization of Rock in South Korea, 1964-1975," *Positions*, 18.1, 2010.

December 12,

Younghan Cho, "Desperately Seeking East Asia Amidst the Popularity of South Korean Pop Culture in Asia," *Cultural Critique*, 2011.

December 14

Final Paper Due

Jeongsuk Joo, "Transnationalization of Korean Pop Culture," *Journal of Popular Culture*, June, 2011.