

Department of English & Writing Studies
Film Studies Program

Film 2191G (001)
Bollywood Cinema: Re-Viewing India in the 21st century

Winter 2026

Instructor: Anmol Dutta



Course Description

Bollywood, the mainstream Hindi-language film industry in India, is regarded as one of the world's largest and most prolific film industries. In this course, we aim to look at narratives in 21st century Bollywood films which dismantle and interrogate mainstream representations of India. In analyzing representations of gender, religion, caste, class, the diaspora, and the nation, we will understand the role that mainstream Hindi cinema plays in nation-building and identity-formation. In doing so, we will also examine the contestations that surround the term, "Bollywood," and how 'Bollywood' is desired by re-making India in the Western and diasporic imaginations.

This course is a continued commitment to Western University's investment in EDID. All films in the course are in Hindi language and will be available with English subtitles. **No prior knowledge of Hindi or Bollywood is required.**

Objectives

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Have an overall understanding of the socio-cultural and political impacts that cinema can make.
- Have a better understanding of India in representations of Western and diasporic imaginations.
- The group presentation encourages students to develop public speaking and collaborative skills.

- The research essay provides skills in locating and integrating peer-reviewed scholarship in Film Studies.
- The scene analysis assignment familiarizes students with key aspects of Film Studies like the mise-en-scene, and placing the scene within a larger socio-cultural context.
- Students will learn how engaging divergent perspectives in cinema is a way of remembering the past, and of creating new ways of re-imagining the future.

Course Materials

Texts:

All required course readings will be provided via the course website on OWL Brightspace in the "Content" tab. There are NO required texts that students need to purchase for the course.

Films:

Viewings are asynchronous i.e. assigned movies and videos are to be watched by students in their own time before class. Since 6/8 film titles are available on Netflix with English subtitles, students are strongly encouraged to have a Netflix subscription. The most basic subscription starts at \$6.99/ month and goes up to \$20.99/ month for a premium subscription.

1. *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001)
Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/60036750>
Rent on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeK4qlwdpQ>
2. *Main Hoon Na* (2004)
Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/70000196>
Rent on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uu9294bol9U>
3. *Rang de Basanti* (2004)
Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/70047320>
Also available on McIntyre Media (link will be made available soon).
4. *The Lunchbox* (2013).
Available on Criterion:
https://media3.criterionpic.com/htbin/wwform/006?T=MON1960&ALIAS=MON1960_EST_KF&M=0_45c5z48q&DSTYLE=0#multimedia_resources_MON1960
5. *Queen* (2014).
Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/80032081>
Also available on McIntyre Media (link will be made available soon).
6. *Haider* (2014). Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/70303432>
7. *Article 15* (2019). Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/81154455>
8. *Gully Boy* (2019)
Available on McIntyre media (link will be made available soon).
Rent on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D98tfnBO8TA>

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Assignment	Weightage	Deadline
Classroom Discussion	15%	N/A
Scene Analysis	20%	DUE before Reading Week
Class Reflections	10%	Weekly, starting from Week 2
Final Essay	25%	DUE on Dec 8, 11.59 pm
Final Exam	30%	TBD

Classroom Discussion– 15%

Students are expected to meaningfully participate in classroom discussions—it is about the quality, and not the quantity of the participation that counts.

"Classroom notes to prof. Dutta": When students do not feel comfortable/ready to participate verbally, they can hand me their participation-comments in a note at the end of the class.

Along with the written participation comment, students will provide their name and student number information. These notes are not to be returned to the student with the grade; rather, they will be graded in similar vein to verbal class participation.

The classroom discussion is further divided into two components:

- a) **Student Engagement**: Student engagement reflects students' thinking in real time about course materials and responding to what is being discussed in the lecture. This is usually the first part of the class which is lecture-based yet has room for discussion/responses.
- b) **Discussion Circle**: Starting Week 4, the second part of the class will be seminar-based where students will respond to specific prompts; this part of the class will be a guided discussion where students will actively think about the prompts and respond to their classmates. It is encouraged that this discussion is in real time and hence verbal.

Scene Analysis - 20%

600 words. DUE before Reading Week on Brightspace

Students will write a 600-word scene analysis before the Reading Week. This assignment will be a close reading analysis of the scene: discussing the mise-en-scene, and its significance in relation to that week's readings and/ or classroom discussion. Students will be given the option of **three** scenes from the syllabus, out of which they will analyze one.

This assignment is meant to give the students a chance to be creative with the material, respond to, and analyze the scene by taking a stand on what speaks most to them.

Class Reflection – 10%

—More info will be available on OWL Brightspace under “Class Reflection”

Starting Week 2, students will start engaging with the class and course materials in more active, nuanced ways. Class Reflection is your opportunity to reckon with your thoughts and reflect on the topic of discussion for a selected week. The point of this assignment is to set aside some time at the end of class each week and capture your thoughts about the lecture, movie, and the course materials.

Students will complete **1 reflection** from **Week 2-6**; and **1 reflection** from **Week 8-12**; both, on any week of their choice. The reflection can also be dialogic and engage two weeks of discussion together instead of just choosing a single week's topic.

The Class Reflection will be between 400-600 words. The following prompts will be useful starting points:

- What moments in class this week felt especially helpful to me – productive, expansive, and generative?
- What are some themes/topics that we discussed in class that stayed with me?
- How did the readings contribute to/divest from my response to the class?
- Is there anything from the classroom participation that I want to further build on?
- What did I / we encounter in class this week that contributes valuably to my learning in my own field of study?
- What did I / we encounter in class this week that expanded my horizons beyond my own field of study?

Final essay – 25%

2000 words. **DUE on OWL: April 10 at 11.59 pm.**

The research essay is to give you the opportunity to synthesize in further detail one or more aspects of the concerns, observations, questions, or critiques of Bollywood cinema in the 21st century as established in the course. The essay topics will be distributed later in the term.

A research essay differs from other kinds of assignment, such as the passage analysis, in that you are expected to develop your thesis with reference to the secondary criticism that is relevant to your topic and/or text. You will be expected to use at least two secondary sources to help support an argument you would like to make, or to highlight what is distinctive or different about your argument. Remember that the essay must be your own; it should not be simply a summary of the articles and books you consult.

The questions to consider are: are these sources reputable? Were they authored by acknowledged experts in their field? Were they published in respected academic journals or by a university press? Furthermore, are these sources truly germane to the topic or text to be studied, that is to say, do they address the very same issues that are at the centre of your argument? In order to identify which two sources are most relevant to your topic, you may, of course, have to consult many more books and articles than you end up using.

Books from reputable academic presses can be best found using the “Search Catalogue” facility available at the “Welcome” page of the Western Libraries Website: <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/>. You also have available a list of databases here: <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/databases/>.

NO REPEATS: You will **NOT** repeat a movie in any of your analyses: **Class Reflection, Research Essay or Scene Analysis**. Repeating a film will lead to **-10%** on your assignment.

Final Exam – 30%

The final exam will be scheduled during the regular exam period. The exam format will include short reflective responses about your learnings, and takeaways from the course. The final exam will test you on your understanding of the **assigned readings and lectures**. More details regarding the final exam will be made available during the term.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at

<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

Additional Information

Email Response Time

Please note that emails/OWL messages to me and your TA will be responded to within 48 hours during regular working hours on Mon – Fri from 9 am-5pm. Please ensure to respect these working hours. When contacting me via email, students *must* include the course code (Film 2191) in the subject line and use their official UWO email account to send the email.

Emails without the course code and/or not sent from a UWO email are subject to be overlooked and not be responded to in time.

Essay Policy

The Scene Analysis and Final essay must follow current MLA format (MLA 9) and must include a list of Works Cited at the end. There is a helpful online version of the guide here:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html

Please ensure that all your written work is **submitted as a Word attachment on OWL**. The essays that are submitted in other formats will receive a grade, without any feedback.

Late Policy

Please note that all overdue essays will receive a penalty of **3% per day late**, including weekends and holidays. Students should not contact the instructor with requests for extensions or any kind of academic accommodation for assignments worth more than 10% of the final grade. They should be directed to their academic counselor. Once the instructor has received a recommendation for accommodation or consideration, then you can discuss the new due date, but not before. Accommodations for medical reasons cannot be given by the instructor, students must go through the proper channels to receive the medical accommodations (see below).

Statements

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the Final Exam and the Final Essay **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 8 unexcused hours for a half course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date. In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend classes will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's (Professor Dutta's) intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner, Anmol Dutta, may be an infringement of copyright.

You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (both online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Support Services

Registrarial Services: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services: <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Week 1. Jan 8. Introduction

- Course Introduction
- Syllabus Overview
- Assigning Group Presentations

Week 2. Jan 15. Desiring Bollywood

Reading:

- Ulka Anjaria. "Introduction" to *Understanding Bollywood: The Grammar of Hindi Cinema*. 2021.

Week 3. Jan 22. Bollywood Song and Dance

Unit 1: Nation-building through Desire, Imagination, and Excess

Viewings: Selected YouTube videos of Bollywood music videos from 1990-2018:

Dola re Dola; *Yeh Taara woh Taara*; *Chaiyya Chaiyya*; *Didi Tera Devar*

Reading:

- Sangita Gopal and Biswarup Sen. "Inside and Out: Song and Dance in Bollywood Cinema" in *The Bollywood Reader*. 2008

Unit 2: The 'Item Girl': Tradition, Transgression and the Female Body

Viewings: Selected YouTube videos of Bollywood music videos from 1990-2018

Sheila ki Jawani; *Kajra re*

Reading:

- Amita Nijhawan. "Excusing the Female Dancer: Tradition and Transgression in Bollywood Dancing."

Week 4. Jan 29. Reimagining Religion & Bollywood Song and Dance

Viewing: *Gully Boy* (2019)

Readings:

- Kalyani Chadha and Annadan P. Kavoori. "Exoticized, Marginalized, Demonized: The Muslim 'Other' in Indian Cinema" in *Global Bollywood*. 2011.
- Aditya Mohanty. "Gully Boy and its Silent Mutinies" in *Economic Political Weekly*, 2019.

Week 5. Feb 5. The Masala Film

Viewings: *Main Hoon Na* (2004)

Readings:

- Tejaswini Ganti. "Genre in Hindi Cinema" in *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*. 2013.
- Rajinder Dudrah. "Borders and Border Crossings in Main Hoon Na and Veer Zara" in *Filming the Line of Control*. 2012.

Week 6. Feb 12. Food as the National Love Language

Viewings: *The Lunchbox*

Reading:

- Olivier Harenda. "I Wish I had kept on Looking back then": The Issue of Epistolary Communication in the film, *The Lunchbox*" in *Beyond Philology: An International Journal of Linguistics, Literary Studies, and English Language Teaching*. 2019.

**** Scene Analysis DUE this week****

----Week 7. Feb 19. Reading Week---

Week 8. Feb 26. Narrating the Nation: Representation, Youth and Rebellion

Viewings: *Rang de Basanti* (2006)

Reading:

- Neelam Shrivastava. "Bollywood as National(ist) Cinema: Violence, Patriotism and the National-Popular in *Rang De Basanti*. *Third Text*, Vol. 23, Issue 6, 2009.

Week 9. March 5. Understanding Caste & Dalit Citizenship

****Trigger Warning: sexual violence, caste-based violence****

Viewings: *Article 15* (2019)

Reading:

- Debjani Banerjee. "Historiography and Historiophoty in Anubhav Sinha's *Article 15*" in *Routledge Companion to Caste and Cinema in India*.

Week 10. March 12. Bollywood Shakespeare

Viewings: *Haider* (2014)

Reading:

- Ambereen Dadabhoy. "Something's Rotten in Kashmir: Postcolonial Ambivalence and the War on Terror in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider*" in *Shakespeare*, Vol. 17, Issue 1, 2021. pp. 15-28.

Week 11. March 19. Desi Girl Abroad

Viewing: *Queen* (2014)

Reading:

- Anupama Arora. "Nobody puts Rani in a corner: Making of the new Indian woman in *Queen*" in *South Asian Popular Culture*, 2019.

Week 12. March 26. Transnational Travels of Bollywood

Viewings: *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001)

Readings:

- Aswin Punathambekar. "Bollywood in the Indian-American diaspora: Mediating a transitive logic of cultural citizenship." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 8, Issue 2. 2005.

Week 13. April 2. Re-telling India through Bollywood

- Key Takeaways
- Exam prep
- Final Essay prep

****Final Essay due on April 10, 11.59 pm****