This course offers a critical overview of one of the world’s largest and most beloved film industries—the popular cinema produced in Bombay (Mumbai) and consumed around the world under the label “Bollywood.” Focusing on the post-Independence (1947) era to the present, it introduces key films, directors, stars, genres, formal techniques, and themes, as well as critical analyses of these and other topics. Special attention will be given to the pervasive role of music, song, and dance. Other topics to be addressed include: the cultural sources of Hindi cinema, cinema and nationalism, the star system, and global audiences. This course assumes no previous knowledge of Indian culture or cinema, and all films have English subtitles. For more information, contact the Dept. of East Asian Languages and Civilizations: 303-492-6639.

**Film Screenings:** Mondays, 6:30-9:30 P.M., HUMN 180  
Screenings are free and open to the public. All films are in DVD format, with English subtitles.

**Schedule:**

Monday, August 27, 6:30 PM  

This complex and unsettling saga of the political awakening of jaded urban upper-class youth became one of the most talked-about films of 2006. It includes a popular score by A. R. Rahman and strong performances by a cast headed by Aamir Khan, and prominently featuring a Hindi-
speaking British actress (Alice Patten), as the filmmaker-granddaughter of a colonial officer involved in the execution of legendary Freedom Fighter Bhagat Singh in 1931.

Monday, September 10, 6:30 PM

**Shree 420** (“The Gentleman Swindler”), Raj Kapoor, 1955, 177 min.

One of the most beloved films of the 1950s “Golden Age,” Shree 420 features director and star Kapoor’s Chaplinesque Indian “Everyman,” Raju, here as an orphan who comes to the big, bad city to find his fortune. In this Nehruvian allegory, Raju is drawn into a real estate scam and must choose between the competing visions of success proffered by beautiful women named “Wisdom” and “Illusion.” The celebrated score includes the much-quoted song “Mera Joota Hai Japani” (“My shoes are Japanese…but my heart is Indian!”).

Monday, September 17, 6:30 PM

**Mother India**, Mehboob Khan, 1957, 168 min.

One of the most influential and cited of Indian films and the first to be nominated for an American Academy Award (1958), this epic drama of the life of a poor rural woman and her two sons made actress Nargis a national icon. Sometimes compared to “Gone With the Wind,” it celebrates fortitude, chastity, and devotion to the Mother(land) through a two-generational plot rendered in lavish Technicolor and accompanied by a near-operatic medley of twelve famous songs.
Monday, September 24, 6:30 PM  
**Pyaasa** (“The Thirsty One”), Guru Dutt, 1957, 139 min.

The quintessential film of one of the most acclaimed auteurs of 1950s Bombay cinema, *Pyaasa* is a dark fable of an artist pitted against a materialist culture. Introducing the radiant Waheeda Rehman as the good-hearted prostitute Gulab and featuring comic Johnny Walker as a carefree masseur, it uses Marxist-influenced lyrics by Sahir Ludhianvi to pointedly question the nation’s progress under Congress Raj. The film assembled the creative team that would collaborate on such Guru Dutt masterworks as *Kaagaz ke phool* (“paper flowers,” 1959) and *Sahib, Bibi, aur Ghulam* (“master, wife, and servant,” 1961).

Monday, October 1, 6:30 PM  

K. Asif’s monumental retelling of the popular legend of Prince Salim’s forbidden love for the court dancer Anarkali itself quickly became legendary—said to have taken twelve years to complete and to have been the most expensive Indian film up to its time. Screen legends Dilip Kumar and Madhubala star as the lovers who defy crusty patriarch Akbar the Great, played by Prithviraj Kapoor as a stern Father India. Shot mainly in black and white with two short Technicolor sequences, the film was re-released in 2004 in a colorized and restored version to renewed acclaim.
Monday, October 8, 6:30 PM

**Lagaan** (“The Tax”), Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001, 225 min.

Gowariker’s “historical” film revisits the colonial era to craft an epic national allegory of a group of drought-stricken villagers who take on their local British rulers in a cricket match, the prize being exemption from the dreaded annual tax. Aamir Khan stars as a peasant who assembles a ragtag team to challenge the colonial masters at their own game. Memorable characterizations, a brilliant A. R. Rahman score, and deft pacing during the climactic match highlight this uniquely Indian take on the proverbial “underdog” sports saga.

Monday, October 15, 6:30 PM

**Sholay** (“Flames”), Ramesh Sippy, 1975, 199 min.

This stylish “multi-starrer” about a village saved from rapacious bandits by the unlikely alliance of a retired police officer and two petty crooks became the definitive megahit of the 1970s and helped launch Amitabh Bachchan to superstardom. Released soon after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s ruthless assumption of Emergency powers, it adapts conventions of the American Western to a surprisingly dark parable of social renewal through violence and revenge.
Monday, October 22, 6:30 PM

*Deewaar* ("The Wall"), Yash Chopra, 1975, 174 min.

Another of the seminal Bachchan texts of the 1970s, Chopra's film retells the *Mother India* saga of a woman forced to destroy her favorite son, this time against a darker, urban backdrop of an India threatened by organized crime, smuggling, unemployment, and labor unrest. Bachchan's iconic portrayal of a laborer-turned-mobster, who is tragically opposed by his policeman brother, is enhanced by taut and justly famous dialog by the Salim Khan-Javed Akhtar team.

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Monday, October 29, 6:30 PM

*Jai Santoshi Maa* ("Hail Mother Santoshi"), Vijay Sharma, 1975, 138 min.

In a mid-'70s Hindi cinema dominated by "angry young men" and revenge dramas, this exuberant "mythological" film became an unexpected hit, especially among female audiences, and it came to enjoy (literal) "cult" status—since the deity it celebrates has become widely popular. Its parallel, often broadly-comic narratives of the heavenly career of an upstart goddess and the earthly trials of her greatest female devotee are accompanied by catchy pop *bhajans* (devotional hymns) and sets and costumes that mirror the conventions of popular poster art.
Monday, November 5, 6:30 PM


In the late 1970s and early 1980s, populist director Desai redefined the masala action film with a series of hugely successful “multi-starrers” characterized by baroque plots, manic energy, and the “three p’s” (piety, patriotism, and parody). Many consider this robustly entertaining allegory of three separated brothers who are raised by Hindu, Muslim, and Christian parents — and featuring Amitabh Bachchan as a Goan saloon-keeper named Anthony Gonsalvez — to be the quintessential Desai blockbuster.

Monday, November 12, 6:30 PM

**Hey Ram** (“Oh, God!”), Kamal Haasan, 2000, 186 min.

This dark meditation on inter-religious hatred and violence excavates a dying archaeologist’s tortured memories of the bloody birth of a nation, and indirectly addresses the Hindu nationalist politics of the 1990s. Brilliant, disturbing, and controversial, the film uses the conventions of mainstream Bombay cinema (and stars like Shahrukh Khan, Rani Mukherjee, and Hema Malini) to craft a sur-real retelling of the events leading to Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination, that author-director-star Haasan tellingly and punningly terms “an experiment with truth.”
Monday, November 26, 6:30 PM
*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* ("The True Lover Will Take the Bride") Aditya Chopra, 1995, 190 min.

One of the most successful Hindi films ever made—and enduringly popular among South Asian diasporic communities—Aditya Chopra’s directorial debut re-orient the West as a place where transplanted Indians happily live, love, and loosen up, while their hearts remain reassuringly *Hindustani*. The palpable chemistry between Shahrukh Khan and Kajol is enhanced by the strong supporting performances of Farida Jalal and Amrish Puri (whose glowering NRI Father became a new transnational Parent-Icon) and an irresistible Jatin-Lalit/Anand Bakshi score.

Monday, December 3, 6:30 PM

Director Verma darkened the “Bombay noir” with this gripping and gritty portrayal of the gangster *bhai* (literally “brothers”) of the city’s underworld. The brief career of an enigmatic outsider ironically named “Truth” exposes mobster links to both the film industry and the Hindu nationalist *Shiv Sena* party. A superb cast includes then-newcomer Manoj Bajpai, whose portrayal of lumpen crimeboss Bhiku Mhatre won a well-deserved *Filmfare* award.
Monday, December 10, 6:30 PM

*Dil Chahta Hai* (“the heart desires”), Farhan Akhtar, 2001, 185m

The directorial debut of Akhtar (son of famed dialog-writer and lyricist Javed Akhtar) scored a huge hit with Indian 20-somethings and garnered seven Filmfare awards. Its cast includes male stars Aamir Khan, Akshaye Khanna, and Saif Ali Khan as three ex-college pals and conspicuous consumers in search of love, and ’70s heroine Dimple Kapadia as a melancholic divorcée. The film’s understated acting, hip-Hinglish dialog, and cool cinematography are complemented by a superb medley of songs by (the *Amar Akbar Anthony*-like team of) Shankar Mahadevan, Ehsaan Noorani, and Loy Mendonca, with lyrics by proud papa (and co-producer) Javed.