

Dr. Justyna Kurowska
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Cultural Studies Colloquium (CSC) XII:

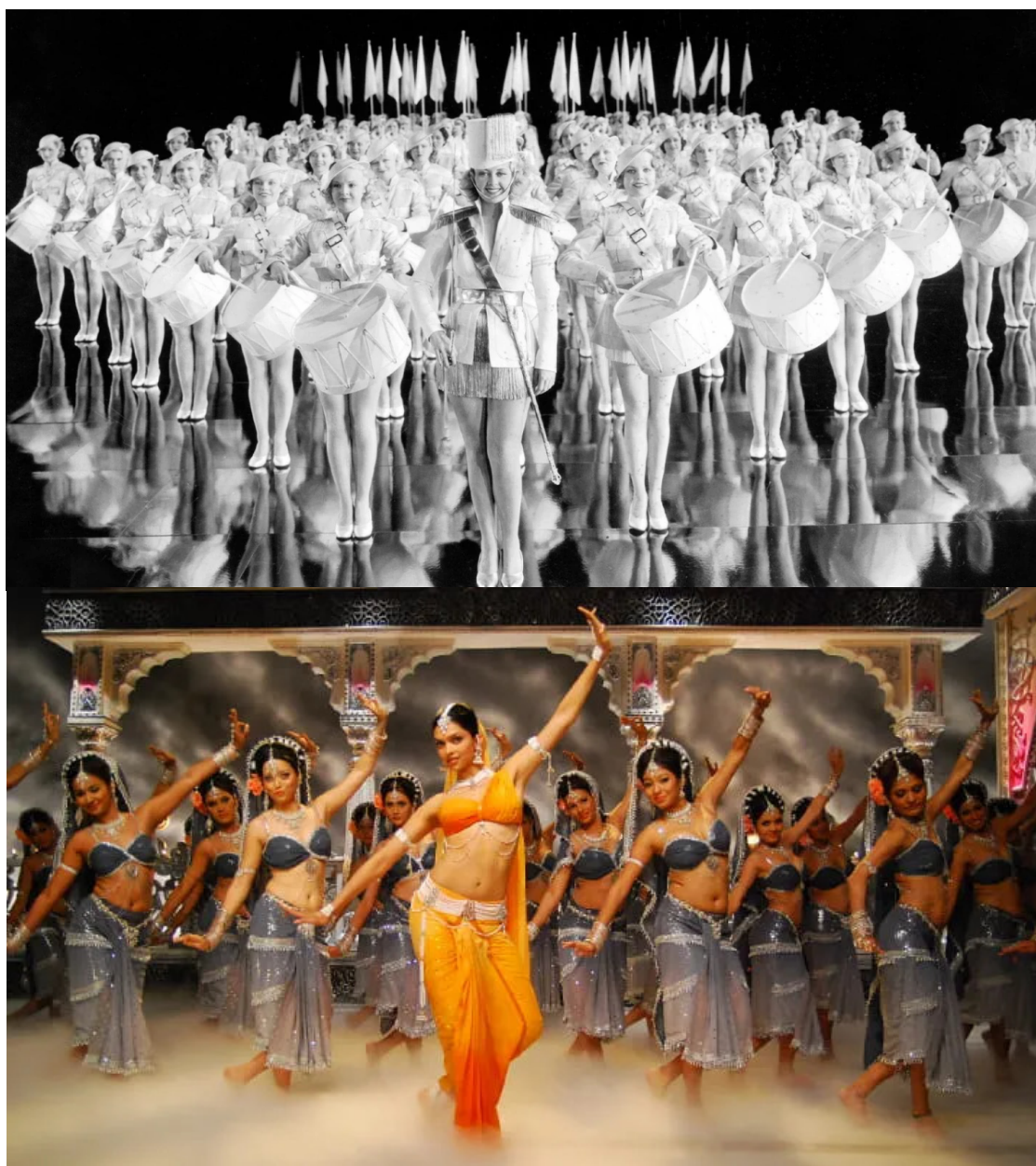
Summer 2025

[Preliminary Syllabus – changes possible]

Bollywood – Hollywood

– Film Musicals on Trans/National Screens –

Wednesday 10 – 12
ÜR 18 / Philosophy Building



From *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933) and *Om Shanti Om* (2007)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Movies matter, so the consensus goes, because they offer us models for how to exist in the modern world as well as how to think about central categories that organize that world such as race, gender, ethnicity, and the national. Film musicals go a step further than conventional narrative films. They teach not only by showing us representative stories on screen. They also draw audiences into participation through songs that they can sing along to and dance choreographies that get their feet tapping.

This interdisciplinary research seminar will be exploring two film musical traditions that developed within national frameworks, but have a powerful transnational reach. Hollywood stands for a US-based filmmaking system whose productions and film-making style long dominated world cinema, while Bollywood represents the now ascendant North Indian, Hindi medium film industry. In terms of output, India has the world's largest film industry and its most distinctive product – the Hindi-language Bollywood musical -- reaches audiences worldwide.

Our film viewing and discussions will begin with the establishment of the Bollywood and Hollywood musical models in the mid-twentieth century. Hindi film is represented by the classic of nation-building, socialist cinema, *Mother India* (1957), the Islamicate courtesan story *Pakeezah* (1972), the masala western with the *angry young man* character - *Sholey* (1977) and the 2007 ode to the industry of desire, *Om Shanti Om*. Hollywood-focused sessions will consider questions of national identity and the musical, models of love and romance, 'queer' potentials of the musical, and the possibility of a current revival of the musical productions such as *Hamilton* (stage 2015, small screen 2020) and *Wicked* (stage 2003, big screen 2024/2025).

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE COURSE

The Cultural Studies Colloquia

This course on film musicals and their cultures is a further installment of our CULTURAL STUDIES COLLOQUIA, but a continuation with an interdisciplinary twist. The summer semester's colloquium brings together time the perspectives of US-American and Indian Cultural Studies for the first time.

As always, the colloquium format is discussion-based. While the course is particularly geared to advanced students and students with theoretical interests, our collaboration profits from a range of insights and experiences. We would love to integrate perspectives from students with backgrounds not only in English-Speaking Cultures and Indian Studies, but also Musicology, Ethnology, History, Political and Social Sciences, for example.

Enrolling

This is a research seminar. To help create a committed and cohesive thinking community, we ask students to compose a brief STATEMENT OF PURPOSE in which they (1) introduce themselves and (2) outline their interest/s in this semester's topic. Please mail your short ca. one-page statement to the CSC Teaching Team at culturalstudies@uni-wuerzburg.de by **4 April**.

After submission of your statement of interest, we will get in touch with you within a week and register you for the course. *Please note that there is no self-registration for this course.*

Contributions / Assessment

Participants are required to write THREE – FOUR RESPONSE PAPERS dealing with texts/topics/film examples from the course as well as a CONCLUDING REFLECTION at the end of the seminar. Ideally, RESPONSE PAPERS

offer perspectives on upcoming sessions by, for example, offering a reading of the next key film example in dialogue with an additional reading resource.

The length of writing contributions can be freely allocated by individual participants as long as the combined length of all texts – with concluding reflection and the initial statement of interest -- constitute a PORTFOLIO of approximately **20 pages** for submission by **1 October**.

INTRODUCTORY READING

Good texts to start out from include the following, which will be made available on WueCampus:

- Raymond Knapp and Mitchell Morris. 2018. “The Filmed Musical” in *Oxford Handbook of the American Musical on Media and Performance in the Musical*. New York: Oxford University Press. 29–53. This contribution might initially seem a bit dry and schematic. However, the authors offer a good historical overview and important insights into key modes of the musical such as ‘sung intimacy’ and what they term ‘Musically Enhanced Reality Mod’ (MERM).
- Philip Lutgendorf. 2006. “Is There an Indian Way of Filmmaking?” in *International journal of Hindu studies* 10 (3). Dordrecht: Springer. 227–256.
- Patrick Colm Hogan. 2008. “So, What’s the Deal with All the Singing?” in *Understanding Indian Movies: Culture, Cognition, and Cinematic Imagination*. Cognitive Approaches to Literature and Culture Series. Austin: University of Texas Press. 160–193.
- Chidananda Das Gupta. 2008. “Why Films Sing?” in *Seeing Is Believing: Selected Writings on Cinema*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India. 33–43.

PROGRAM

Please make sure to have viewed at least the ‘KEY TEXT/S’ and ideally read at least one of the additional resource/s by the time indicated. The ‘ADDITIONAL RESOURCE/S’ constitute recommended, but not required, additional preparation. Unless otherwise specified, all ‘KEY TEXT/S’ and ‘ADDITIONAL RESOURCE/S’ will be made available on or linked from WueCampus.

Getting Started

23/04 **Opening Meeting: Musicals & Us**

Key text/s:

- Participants’ statements of interest

30/04 **Bollywood --- Hollywood**

Key text/s:

- David Bordwell. 1985. “An excessively obvious cinema” in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*. 1–11.
- Rachel Dwyer. 2000. “Chapter 4: Industry of Desire: The Hindi Cinema” in *All You Want Is Money, All You Need Is Love: Sexuality and Romance in Modern India*. London [u.a.]: Cas-sell.

- Madiraju Madhava Prasad. 1998. "Introduction" in *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*. Delhi [u.a.]: Oxford University Press.
- Permendra Mazumder. 2013. "Music in Mainstream Indian Cinema" in *Routledge Handbook of Indian Cinemas*. Routledge Handbooks. London [u.a.]: Routledge. 257–268.

Going to the Movies

From this point on, RESPONSE PAPERS can be uploaded to WueCampus by Sunday night as preparation for the Wednesday morning discussion.

07/05 Busby Berkeley and the 'Mass Ornament' Musical

Key text/s:

- *Gold Diggers of 1933*, dir. Mervyn LeRoy (1933)

Additional resource/s:

- Siegfried Kracauer. 2021 (1927). "Das Ornament der Masse" in *Das Ornament der Masse. Essays*, 14. Auflage. Berlin: Suhrkamp. 50–63.
- Rick Altman. 1987. "The American Film Musical as Dual-Focus Narrative" in *The American Film Musical*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 16–27. This is the most often cited chapter from Altman's still highly influential monograph. He essentially proposes that Hollywood musicals are not structured by a narrative sequence (event A -> B -> C, etc.), but rather by continually setting up dualities (A vs. B, as it were). This thesis can be tested using the Busby Berkeley-choreographed musical *Gold Diggers of 1933*.

14/05 Building of the Nation and the Hindi Melodrama

Key text/s:

- *Mother India*, dir. Mehboob Khan (1957)

Additional resource/s:

- Ravi S. Vasudevan. 2011. *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema*. 1. Aufl. New York [u.a.]: Palgrave Macmillan. Excerpts.

21/05 Musicals & Mid-century 'Americanness'

Key text/s:

- *Westside Story*, dir. Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins (1961)
- Selected scenes from *Oklahoma!*, dir. Fred Zinnemann (1955)

Additional resource/s:

- Raymond Knapp. 2005. "Whose (Who's) America" and "Race and Ethnicity" in *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 103–118 and 181–227.

28/05 **The 'Islamicate' Film and the Musical Culture**

Key text/s:

- *Pakeezah*, dir. Kamal Amaroahi (1972)

Additional resource/s:

- Sangita Gopal. 2008. "Chapter 2: The Sound of Modernity" *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*. Film Studies, Asian Studies. Minneapolis, Minn. [u.a.]: Univ. of Minnesota Press.
- Rachel Dwyer. 2006. "Chapter 3: The Islamicate Film" *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema*. 1. Aufl. London [u.a.]: Routledge.
- Margrit Pernau. 2016. "Introduction: Concepts of Emotions in Indian Languages" *Contributions to the History of Concepts*. 24–37.
- Margrit Pernau. 2021. "Studying emotions in South Asia" *South Asian History and Culture*. 111–128.

4/06 **Camp & the Counter(?)Musical**

Key text/s:

- *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, dir. Lou Adler and Michael White (1975)

Additional resource/s:

- Susan Sontag. 2013 (1964). "Notes on 'Camp'" in *Essays of the 1960s & 70s*. Ed. David Rieff. New York: The Library of America. 259–274
- Sarah Artt. 2008. "Reflections on the Self-Reflexive Musical: The *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and the Classic Hollywood Musical" in *Reading Rocky Horror: The Rocky Horror Picture Show and Popular Culture*. Ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 51–70.

11/06 **The Angry Young Man and Birth of the Formula Movie**

Key text/s:

- *Sholay*, dir. Ramesh Sippy (1975)

Additional resource/s:

- Vijay Mishra, Peter Jeffery, and Brian Shoemsmith. 1989. "The Actor as Parallel Text in Bombay Cinema." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 11 (3): 49–67.
- Ranjani Mazumdar. 2010. "From Subjectification to Schizophrenia: The Angry Man and the Psychotic Hero of Bombay Cinema" in Ravi S. Vasudevan, *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema*. Oxford India Paperbacks. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 238–264.

- Jyotika Virdi. 2003. "Chapter 5: The Sexed Body" and "Chapter 6: Re-reading Romance" in *The Cinematic Imagination: Indian Popular Films as Social History*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Please submit 'STUDY DAY PROPOSALS' by **15 June**. Participants are free to set their own agendas and topics for conference-style presentations. Concrete case studies may perhaps work better than more general approaches, but all approaches are welcome.

18/06 **Return of the Hollywood? Big Screen? Musical**

Key text/s:

- THE NOMINEES ARE ... *Hamilton*, dir. Thomas Kail (2020) and *Wicked*, dir. John M. Chu (2024/2025)

25/06 Gender, Intertextuality, and the Postmodern Commentary

Key text/s

- *Om Shanti Om*, dir. Farah Khan (2007)

Additional resource/s:

- Sudha Shastri. 2011. "The play's the thing, wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king": Intertextuality in *Om Shanti Om*". *Journal of film and video* 63 (1). University of Illinois Press. 32–43.

02/07 & 09/07 **STUDY DAY PREPARATION, NO CLASS SESSIONS**

16/07, 10-16 (location t.b.a.): **STUDY DAY**