CMA 3892 Cinema & Islam
Professors Jennifer Fay and Anand Taneja
MW 2:10- 3:25, Buttrick 015
Screening: Monday 7:00 p.m. Buttrick 103

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Course Description
How and when did cinema function to define Islam? Why was cinema considered the art form best suited to this purpose? How may we understand Islam through the narrative and aesthetic properties of cinema, on one hand, and how does cinema become Islamic through strategies of production, censorship, and aesthetic design? Or, put differently: how does cinema change our understanding of Islam, and how does Islam change cinema?
This course proposes to answer these questions through extended case studies in which film created an image of and, in some instances, made a case for Islam. These will include Post-Partition India, Post-Revolutionary Iran, and the Post-9/11 global cinema. Team-taught by Jennifer Fay (Cinema & Media Arts| English) and Anand Taneja (Religious Studies| Anthropology), the class invites students from a range of disciplinary and social backgrounds to discuss the connection between a medium and a religious practice.

Course Requirements:

Participation: This course presupposes an active and participating student body. Our aim is to create an intellectual community. In order to achieve this, you are expected to come to class on time, having done the reading, and ready to jump into class discussion with comments, questions, and connections you have made between this reading, the film, and other texts we have discussed in class. We may have periodic in-class writing exercises and/or reading quizzes just to keep you on your toes. We expect everyone to participate in our conversations and be considerate. Attendance does not count towards your participation grade.

Laptop computers, cell phones, tablets, are banned during class meetings and screenings. Please take notes the old fashioned way. Why? Such electronic distractions are disruptive to me and other students. Furthermore, as this study demonstrates, we pay a “mental price” for multi-tasking:


Attendance: You are expected to attend all class sessions and the one weekly screening. A student who misses more than two classes may expect a penalty of .1 for every subsequent absence on the final grade. A student who misses six or more classes will fail based on attendance alone.

Assignments: The principle assignments are three papers, a final project, and the blog posts on Blackboard. For the papers, we will give out four paper assignments and take the best three grades. Thus you may decide to write only three of the four papers, or decide to write all four with the idea of dropping your lowest score. Whatever you decide, you are required to submit the first paper so that you may receive feedback from us before the mid-term period. Failure to write at least three papers and the final project will result in a failing grade regardless of the grades earned on other assignments.

Blackboard Postings: In addition to these formal papers and the final exam, we ask that you regularly post responses to readings (and films in relation to the readings) over the course of the semester. These posting, which should be at least two substantial paragraphs, should be submitted to the OAK discussion board no later than 9 a.m. on the day of our class meetings. Anything posted after 9 am will not count towards this requirement. Your posts will serve as prompts for our class discussions and they will help you to formulate your ideas before we meet. If you find yourself too shy to participate in class discussion, additional postings (posted by the deadline) may boost your participation grade.

Students with Disabilities: We are committed to accommodating students who have special instructional needs. If you need course accommodations due to a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the
building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me and/or the EAD (2-4705) as soon as possible.

**Religious Holidays**: Students who expect to miss classes, examinations, or any other assignment as a consequence of their religious observance should provide us with notice (via email) of the dates of religious holidays in the first two weeks of the semester.

**Grade distribution:**
- Blackboard Posts: 10%
- Participation: 20%
- Three highest paper grades: 60% (20% each)
- Final Project: 10%

**Due Dates:**
- Paper #1: Friday Feb. 3, 5:00 p.m.
- Paper #2: Friday March 3, 5:00 p.m.
- Paper #3: Friday March 31, 5:00 p.m.
- Paper #4: Friday, April 14, 5:00 p.m.
- Final Project: May 1, 5:00 p.m.

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**Course Schedule**

**Week 1 (Jan 9, 11): The Image of Islam**

- **M.** Intro to Class
- **Screen:** *Valentino’s Ghost* (Singh, 2012)

- **W.** *Following Muhammad* Ch. 1. “Islam in the Eyes of the West”

**Week 2 (Jan 16, 18): A History of “The Orient”**

- **M.** No class in honor of MLK Day.

- **W.** Said, “Impossible Histories.”
  Timothy Mitchell, “The World as Exhibition.”

**Unit I: Hindus, Muslims, and the Character of Post-Partition India**

**Week 3 (Jan 23, 25): The Muslim Courtesan in Bombay Cinema**

- Saleem Kidwai, “The Singing Ladies Find a Voice.”
- Veena Oldenburg, “Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow”.
  [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/umraojan/txt_veena_oldenburg.htm](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/umraojan/txt_veena_oldenburg.htm)
Screen: *Pakeezah [The Pure One]* (Kamal Amrohi, 1971, 150 min.)

W. Bhaskar and Allen, “Pakeezah: Dreamscape of Desire.”

**Week 4 (Jan 30, Feb. 1): Indian Secularism and the Place of the Muslims**

M. Introduction, *Amar Akbar Anthony*


W. “Akbar: Parda and Parody”

**Paper #1 Due Friday, Feb. 3, 5:00 p.m.**

**Week 5 (Feb. 6, 8): Partition and Everyday Life.**


Screen: *Bajrangi Bhiajaan [Brother Bajrangi]* (Kabir Khan, 2015, 159 min.)

W. Taneja, “Chapter 4,” “Conclusion.”

**Week 6 (Feb. 13, 15): The Allure of the Muslim “Other”**


Screen: *Dil Se [From the Heart]* (Mani Ratnam, 1998, 155 mins.)


**Unit II: Islamizing Cinema: Iran after the Revolution**

**Week 7 (Feb. 20, 22): An Ethical Education**

M. Nacify: “Transition from ‘Cinema of Idolatry’ to an ‘Islamicate Cinema’”


Screen: *Khane-ye-doust kodjast? [Where is the Friend’s House?] (Abbas Kiarostami, 1987, 83 min)*


Robin Wood: “Heroism of Disobedience and Deceit: Where is the Friend’s Home?” *Film International* [http://filmint.nu/?p=1574](http://filmint.nu/?p=1574)

**Week 8 (Feb. 27, March 1): Under the Veil**

M. Nacify, “Islamizing Film Culture in Iran: A Post-Khatami Update”

Nacify, “Under Cover, On Screen” from *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Vol. 4*

Screen: *Zir-e-poost-e shahr [Under the Skin of the City]* (Rakhshan Banietemad, 2005, 92 min)
W. Atwood, “Screening Reform” from *Reform Cinema in Iran*

**Paper #2 Due Friday March 3, 5:00 p.m.**

### Spring Break: March 6-12

### Week 9 (March 13, 15): Gender Apartheid?

M. *Following Muhammad* pp. 139-151
   *Quran Surah 24 (selection)*
   *Excerpts from Fatima Mernissi, The Veil and the Male Elite*

Screen: *Offside* (Jafar Panahi, 2006, 93 min.)

W. Massound Mehrabi, “Reporting to History” an interview with Panahi
   J. Hoberman, “Goals!” Interview with Panahi.

### Week 10 (March 20, 22) Encountering Radicalism

M. Rashid, “The Taliban: Exporting Terrorism”
   *Hirsckind and Mahmood, “Feminism, The Taliban, and the Politics of Counterinsurgency”*

Screen: *Kandahar* (Mosen Makhmalbaf, 2001, 85 min)

W. Lisa Béar interview with Makhmalbaf.
   Dabashi, reading TBA.
   Cynthia Weber, “Not Without My Sister(s): Imagining A Moral America in *Kandahar*”

** **Screening of *A Separation* (Farhadi, 2011)**

International Lens, 7:30 p.m. Sarratt Cinema.

### Unit III: The Image of Islam after 9/11

### Week 11 (March 27, 29): Islam and American Terror

   *Excerpts from the 9/11 Commission Report*
   *Osama Bin Laden, “Letter to America”*

Screen: *United 93* (Paul Greengrass, 2006, 111 min.)

W. Gavin Smith, “Mission Statement”
   **Paper #3 Due Friday March 31, 5:00 p.m.**

### Week 12 (April 3, 5): Islam for Dummies?

M. Mehdi Hasan, “What the Jihadists who bought ‘Islam for Dummies’ on Amazon tell us about Radicalization.”
Michael Muhammad Knight, “I understand why Westerners are joining Jihadi movements. I was almost one of them.”
Alireza Doostdar, “How Not to Understand ISIS”
M. Crone, “Governing Muslim Militancy through Aesthetic Assemblages.”
Screen: *Four Lions* (Chris Morris, 2010, 97 min.)

Week 13 (April 10, 12): The Islamic State (… of Mind)?
M. Abu Ala Mawdudi, “Political Theory of Islam”
Irfan Ahmen, “Geneologies of the Islamic State.”
Screen: *Timbuktu* (Abderrahamane Sissako, 2014, 96 min.)
W. Selections from *Ritual and its Consequences*,

Short interviews with Sissako:
http://www.filmcomment.com/blog/interview-abderrahmane-sissako/

Paper #4 Due Friday, April 14, 5:00 p.m.

Week 14 (April 17, 19): What is and what was Islam?
Screen: *Bab’Aziz: The Prince that Contemplated His Soul.* (Nancer Khemir, 2005, 98 min.)
W. No reading.

Week 15 (April 24) A Little Liberation
M. Interviews with al-Mansour
http://www.npr.org/2013/09/22/224437165/wadjda-director-haifaa-al-mansour-it-is-time-to-open-up
Screen: *Wadjda* (Haifà al-Mansour, 2012, 98 min.)

Final Project Due May 1, 5:00 p.m.