Media and Religion in India
[SARS 208 RELS-268 RELS-568 SARS-508]
Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-3pm, Spring 2004
Williams Hall Room 205

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Course Synopsis: In this course we’ll explore how cultural life and ideals are expressed through various media. Our aim is to acquire a familiarity with a variety of media forms—including traditional architecture, devotional poetry-music, visual-sensorial worship, modern film, recorded music, clothing, and live performance. We will situate these media within important cultural fields such as religion, primarily, but also politics, popular culture, and global culture, exploring past and present expressions. Though much of our study will immerse us in India’s past, our endeavor is to understand contemporary India and its culture through selected media.

Requirements: You’re required to attend all classes and screenings, read all outside materials carefully and thoughtfully, and engage with the subject matter in class and in your writing. This means that during class you’re expected to participate enthusiastically and outside of class to complete your readings conscientiously. Each week you’ll be asked to compose a short reaction paper (2 pages max.) that can be send via email attachment. In addition, for one class in the semester, you’ll give an informal presentation on the reading and lead discussion for the remainder of the class. At the end of the term, you’ll write a twelve to fifteen (12-15) page critical review paper on a subject of your choice, which should be printed and submitted; no electronic submissions of final paper.

Screenings: During the latter half of the semester, in lieu of reading, we’ll screen a film together. In addition, the videos are available at Rosengarten reserve. During weeks when we watch a film, our class will meet only once, rather than twice. If you can’t attend the class screening, it is your responsibility to see the film before the next class.

Grading: Twenty percent (20%) of your grade will depend on your attendance and the quality of your classroom participation; thirty percent (30%) will be based on the quality of your weekly reaction papers; twenty (20%) percent will depend on your day of presentation and leading discussion; and thirty percent (30%) will hinge on your final critical review paper.
Materials:

These **books** will be available for purchase at House of Our Own Bookstore:

*Amar Chitra Katha: The Ramayan Series* (Also available online at: [http://www.askasia.org/students/virtual_gallery/exhibitions/](http://www.askasia.org/students/virtual_gallery/exhibitions/))


Copies of each book will be on reserve at the library.

**Articles** will be available in a printed bulk pack at the Wharton business school’s copy shop. The number of pages to be read is given in brackets alongside the weekly course themes.

Please bring reading materials to class on the day we discuss them.

Note that readings from the course pack are marked by a “**P**” and those from the books above by a “**B**”.
Syllabus

THE REIGN OF THE RAMAYANA

Week 1: The Postmodern Ramayana.

   No Reading

II. [1/15] In Class screening of episodes from the TV Ramayan.
   Reading: B “Introduction” by Lawrence Babb in Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia [1-20]

Week 2: Was the Revolution Televised?: The TV Ramayan.

   Reading: B “All in the (Raghu) Family,” by Phil Lutgendorf in Media and the Transformation [217-249].

II. [1/22] Discussion.
   Reading: B Amar Chitra Katha: Ramayana series (also available online at: http://www.askasia.org/students/virtual_gallery/exhibitions/).

Week 3: Comic History: The Amar Chitra Katha.

   Reading: B “The World of Amar Chitra Katha,” by Fran Pritchett in Media and the Transformation...[76-106].


VISUAL CULTURE IN RELIGION, POLITICS, AND HISTORY
**Week 4:** Temples and Mosques: Icons and Iconoclasm

I. [2/3] Lecture: Place as Media


Reading: B Sunil Kumar, *The Present in Delhi’s Pasts*, Chapter One [1-61].

**Week 5:** The Past as Politics


Reading: Sunil Kumar, Chapters Two-Four [62-131].


**Week 6:** The Culture of Clothing


**Crazy Love: Sufis, Bhaktas, and Modern Gurus**

**Week 7:** Songs and Sass: Basavanna, Kabir, and Mira

I. [2/24] The Medium of Devotional Song

Reading: B “Introduction,” Chapter Two and Chapter Five by J. S. Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer in *Songs of the Saints of India*, [3-8; 35-62; 119-142].

    Reading: P “Chapter Four: Muslim Life and Customs—Saints and Their Tombs—Mystical Folk Poetry,” by Annemarie Schimmel in Islam in the Indian Subcontinent [106-149]

Week 8: Pir Pleasure: Sufism and Ecstatic Islam


    Reading: B “Recorded Sound and Religious Music: The Case of Qawwali,” by Rgula Burckhardt Qureshi in Media and Transformation…[139-166]


SPRING BREAK 3/5-3/14

Week 9: The Multimedia Guru: Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh/Osho

I. [3/16] In class screening: Rajneesh meditation/lecture videos.


    Reading: B Mother India by Gayatri Chatterjee. [Entire.]

HINDU MODERNITY IN FILM

Week 10: The Feminine Nation: Mother India

I. [3/23] No Class

    Screen: Mother India (1957: 2h55m)


    Screen: Amar Akbar Anthony (1977: 2h56m).

Week 11: Comedy and Community: Amar Akbar Anthony
I. [3/30] No Class

Reading: P “Introduction,” by Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel, in Cinema India: The Visual Culture of Hindi Film. [7-41]

II. [4/1] Discussion.

Screening: Bombay (1995: 2h15m)

Week 12: Prem and Politics: Bombay

I. [4/6] No Class

Reading: P “Bombay and Its Public” by Ravi Vasudevan.


Screening: Gandhi (1982: 2h22m)

Week 13: Karma Chameleon: Gandhi

I. [4/13] No Class

Reading: B Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma by Susanne and Lloyd Rudolph [1-50].


Screening: Guide (1965: 2h47m)

Week 14: Old Religions in a New Country

I. [4/20] No Class


Final Papers Due May 7, 4pm, In My Mailbox in the Department of South Asia Studies.