

Imagining Bombay

Freshman Seminar on a South Asian City
Fulfills Writing Requirement
(SASt 009)

Professor Christian Lee Novetzke
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Fall Semester 2005
Tuesday, 2-5pm
Location: Williams Hall 826

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Course Synopsis: In this course we'll explore postcolonial Bombay (Mumbai) – the economic, cosmopolitan, and pop cultural capital of India – as it has inspired filmmakers, novelists, poets, essayists, photographers, and scholars over more than fifty years since independence. Bombay's diverse worlds present extreme wealth and abject poverty, underworld crime alongside cultural apotheosis, glamour and glitz amid urban squalor. We'll investigate how creative artists have rendered Bombay's myriad guises through their imagination. This course encourages the development of strong writing skills and fulfills the college's writing requirement.

Requirements and Grading:

- Attend all classes, do all the reading, participate in class projects, and engage the materials in class discussion (15%).
- Write a two-page reaction paper based on the readings and lectures, due each week on Sunday night by ten pm via email (15%).
- Complete an imaginative travel writing piece, based on research about Bombay, in the first third of the term, 3-5 pages (15%).
- Complete a critical film review in the second third of the term on a film pertaining to Bombay, 5-7 pages (15%).

- Complete a final critical essay on a book about Bombay, 7-9 pages (20%).
- Present and lead discussion at least once in the semester (20%).

Materials: The books listed below are available at House of Our Own for purchase. A bulkpack will be available at the University Copy Center (Houston Hall). You are required to bring copies of all readings to class, whether or not you purchase the materials.

Books Required:

Maimon, Elaine. 2003. *A Writers Resource: A Handbook for Writing and Research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. [Required for all writing seminars]

Mehta, Suketu. 2004. *Maximum City*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Mistry, Rohinton. 1991. *Such a Long Journey*. London: Penguin Books.

Rushdie, Salman. 1995. *The Moor's Last Sigh*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Books Recommended:

Chandra, Vikram. 1997. *Love and Longing in Bombay*. Delhi: Penguin Books.

Suri, Manil. 2001. *The Death of Vishnu*. W. W. Norton: New York.

Films:

Bombay: Our City (1985, Anand Patwardhan, dir.; 57 mins.)

Salaam Bombay (1988, Mira Nair, dir.; 116 mins.)

Bombay (1995, Mani Ratnam, dir.; 130 mins.)

Satya (1998, Bharat Shah, dir.; 175 mins.)

Bollywood Bound (2001, Nisha Pahuja, dir.; 86 mins.)

Syllabus

WEEK 1 [9/13] INTRODUCTION

Reading: None.

WEEK 2 [9/20] PERSONAL BOMBAY

Reading: "Personal Geography," "Mumbai," and "Vadapav Eaters' City," from *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* (2004), pages 3-38, 111-130, and 253-263; "Bombay: Diversity and Exchange," by Alice Thorner in *Bombay: Mosaic for Modern Culture*.

WEEK 3 [9/27] RESEARCH WORKSHOP WITH DR. DAVID NELSON, SOUTH ASIAN LIBRARIAN

Reading: *The Moor's Last Sigh*, First Half

FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DRAFT DUE 9/26

GRADE-NORMING SESSION IN CLASS

WEEK 4 [10/4] RUSHDIE'S BOMBAY

Reading: *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Finish

WEEK 5 [10/11] UNDER THE OVER

Screening: *Salaam Bombay* (1988, Mira Nair, dir.; 116 mins.)

Reading: "Indian Popular Cinema as a Slum's Eye View of Politics," by Ashis Nandy, pages 1-19.

FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE 10/10

WEEK 6 [10/25] WRITING WORKSHOP

Reading: *Such a Long Journey*, Mistry, first half.

WEEK 7 [11/1] WAR, EMERGENCY, AND GOOD TIMES

Reading: *Such a Long Journey*, finish.

SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DRAFT DUE 10/31

COLLECTIVE CRITIQUE SESSION IN CLASS

WEEK 8 [11/8] LOVE AND RIOTS

Screening: *Bombay* (1995, Mani Ratnam, dir.; 130 mins.)

Reading: "Powertoni," Mehta, pages 39-110.

WEEK 9 [11/15] SOMEWHERE TO LIVE

Screening: *Bombay: Our City* (1985, Anand Patwardhan, dir.; 57 mins.)

Reading: "Sone ki Chidiya," Mehta, 450-496.

SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE 11/15

WEEK 10 [11/22] UNDERWORLD

Screening: *Satya* (1998, Bharat Shah, dir.; 175 mins.)

Reading: "Number Two After Scotland Yard" and "Black-Collar Workers," Mehta, 131-252.

WEEK 11 [11/29] BOLLYWORLD

Screening: *Bollywood Bound* (2001, Nisha Pahuja, dir.; 86 mins.)

Reading: "Distillers of Pleasure," Mehta, pages 346-414.

COMPLETED DRAFT OF FINAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE 11/29

WEEK 12 [12/6] WRITING WORKSHOP [No Reaction Paper Due]

Reading: One another's work.

FINAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE 12/15