Women in South Asian Art

Professor Jinah Kim
Office: Old Gym #210
Office hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:00pm or by appointment
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All the handouts for the course will be available on the blackboard. Please enroll yourself on the blackboard for this course, if you have not already done so. Go to https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oak, and find this course by the course title and number.

Course Description
This course explores manifold issues related to female representations in South Asia from the Mohenjodaro (2600-1900 B.C.E.) to the present. One of the main goals of the course is to understand the cultural and social significance of the prominence of goddesses and their cult in South Asia, especially in India. In this regard, we will examine mythologies and iconographies of different goddesses and the historical development of their cult, while exploring the relationship between the prominence of goddesses and women’s social status in pre-modern India. We will also scrutinize visual representations of female body in South Asia and critically reassess the Orientalizing perspective that emphasizes femininity of South Asian art. Sensuous sculptures of goddesses and courtesans from ancient South Asia are so visually provocative that they sometimes serve as a representative of South Asian art in the West. What is the significance of the sensuous representations of female body in relation to women’s status in ancient India? Are they public and private displays of male fantasy, rendering the female body as an object of desire? Or is it an acknowledgement of the female power unique to South Asian cultural traditions? How are we to understand seemingly contradicting views of the femininity in South Asian art? We will examine a few key examples of “erotica Indica,” including the prevalent use of erotic imagery from medieval temples for illustrating the Kama sutra in the West. The last two classes of the course will be devoted to analyzing the political use of female imagery, especially of powerful goddesses in colonial and post-independence India, based on our understanding of goddesses and female representations in pre-modern India. The readings for this course are interdisciplinary, and we will cover a wide range of materials from ancient clay toys, to
medieval sculptures of goddesses, to miniature paintings, to an interpretive animated cartoon of the famous Hindu epic, Rāmāyana, and to award-winning contemporary films.

Required Texts

Recommended:
Also see, [http://www.asia.si.edu/devi/index.htm](http://www.asia.si.edu/devi/index.htm)

Attendance and Participation: 20%
Attendance: You are required to come to every class well prepared and ready to discuss the assigned readings. Your grade will be lowered significantly for repeated absences. Every two classes you miss without any notification, your grade will drop by one letter grade. If you miss a class due to illness or other unavoidable emergencies, please contact me as soon as possible. A note from Dean Bergquist will be required for unexpected absences to be excused.

Participation: Your preparation for every class will be a key to a good participation grade. This includes completing the assigned readings before class and being prepared to present your critique on the readings in class. We will take turns in leading discussion for readings throughout the semester. When you are the discussion leader, it is your responsibility to circulate your question/topic before class. Occasionally, you will be asked to prepare a written response to the reading and share it with the class.

Written Assignments: 65%
All written assignments should be double spaced with one and a half inch margins in size-12 font. Multiple pages should be stapled. Detailed instructions will be given about each assignment throughout the semester.

- Response papers to films, 1-2 pages each (10%)
- Visual analysis (5%)
- Prospectus for Research Paper, 1-2 pages (5%)
- Annotated Bibliography for Research Paper (10%)
- Outline/Draft of Research Paper (5%)
- Research Paper, 10-15 pages including bibliography and notes (30%)

Quiz: 15%
Late Assignments
All written work must be completed and submitted in class on the day they are due. Late assignments will be penalized one third of a grade for each day past the original due date. If an A paper is turned in two days late, the grade will drop to a B+. No assignment will be accepted after passing three days from the due date. You will not get any credit for the missed assignment.
If you have any illness or personal emergency due to which that you find it difficult to meet a deadline, please speak with me in advance. I will accommodate all legitimate and reasonable requests for extension for such cases.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism
Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. Please visit http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/Honor_System.htm for further information on the plagiarism and other issues related to Vanderbilt’s Honor System.

**- Required
*- Recommended
No mark- Reference material

Jan 7(W) Introduction: Of Yakṣīs, Goddesses, and Women in South Asia
**Vidya Dehejia, Indian Art, 4-48.
*Vidya Dehejia, “Issues of Spectatorship and Representation,” in Representing the Body ( Kali for women,1997), 1-21.

Jan 14 (W) Temptresses, Nuns, and the Goddesses for enlightenment: Representations of Women in South Asian Buddhist traditions
☼Visual Analysis assignment☼
**Vidya Dehejia, Indian Art, 51-100, esp.64-76, 92-100.
Jan 20 (T) **Films Screening**: Deepa Mehta’s film, “Water” – Women’s social status in South Asia (5:30-7:30pm, location: Old Gym 106 or TBA)


Jan 21 (W) **Goddesses on the Periphery**

**Dehejia, *Indian Art*, 4-8, 124-134, 185-192.


Jan 28 (W) **From Periphery to Center**: Emergence of Temples to the Goddess and the Goddess cult

**Dehejia, *Indian Art*, 137-152, 234-246.

Feb 4 (W) **Visions of the Great Goddess**: the *Devi Mahātmyā*

**Dehejia, *Indian Art*, 196-200.

Feb 11 (W) **Consorts to the Divine 1**: Kālī, Pārvatī, and Laks̄mī (*Śrī*)


Feb 17 (T)☼ Mandatory Office Hour to discuss paper topics ☼

Feb 18 (W) **Consorts to the Divine 2: Rādhā and Sitā


** Dehejia, Indian Art, 337-362, esp. 346-360.

Feb 25 (W) **Rādhā and Sitā in action: Screening of the film, Fire by Deepa Mehta

☼ Research Prospectus due ☼


Feb 28 1-Mar 8 Spring break

Mar 11 (W) **Longing for the hero or a Woman's Fate: representations of subversive women in various epic tales and contemporary films, Fire and Water (*Screening of the Sitāyāna by Nina Paley)

☼ Annotated Bibliography Due ☼


** Dehejia, Indian Art, 337-362.

* Purnima Mannekar, “‘Women-Oriented’ Narratives and the New Indian Woman,” Screening Culture, Viewing Politics, 104-164.


Mar 18 (W) **Erotica Indica?: the Kāma sūtra and Sexual imagery on the temples of Konarak and Khajuraho
**Dehejia, Indian Art, 155-170, 177-182.


**Annapura Garimella, “Engendering Indian Art,” in Dehejia ed. Representing the Body: Gender issues in Indian Art (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1997) 22-41.


Mar 25 (W) Contentions on female nudity and sexuality: Varied representations of female nudes and the “Rape” of the Goddess


Apr 1 (W) Images of Women and the struggle for Independence


**Dehejia, Indian Art, 379-406.

Apr 8 (W) Mother India (Bhārat Mātā): Politics of Popular images and the Hindu Nationalism

© Research paper draft due ©


Apr 15 (W) Student Presentations on Women in South Asian Art

© Final paper due on April 23 by noon ©