In this course, we will interrogate key themes in the societies of various nations in Asia through analyzing works of popular culture historically. We will examine different genres of popular culture, from Hindi films to Japanese popular music and ask how to understand such works in relation to larger social phenomena and trajectories, such as nationalism, the cold war and the cultures of fordist and post-fordist capitalism. The course will involve learning to “read” works of popular culture to reveal social issues and ideological tensions often not visible on first view. Whether works related to popular culture are created as propaganda as in Communist China or for entertainment in most of Asia, they have a life that goes beyond the intentions of their creators and express dreams, desires and frustrations related to recurrent problems of global modernity. Moreover, this course is transnational in scope, and so, we will examine how many of works of popular culture have after-lives beyond national boundaries as is evidenced in the wide reception of Japanese anime and popular music in East Asia or the popularity of Hindi films outside of India. This poses a theoretical question, namely whether the circulation of popular culture is made possible by certain global or regional social processes that condition cultural production and reception. From this perspective, we can enter debates, such as those about post-modernism and the cultural logic of late capitalism, from the standpoint of transnational Asia.

Goals of the course:
To acquire basic knowledge about various genres of popular culture in Asia, including, Hindi movies, J-pop and Korean drama. Many students may already be familiar with some of these genres of popular culture in Asia, but the major focus of the course will be to understand these genres and works within a larger transnational context. In this way, students will learn how to engage critically sources of history and will also learn to think critically about what a source is. Popular culture is not traditionally considered a source, but becomes a source when read in a certain way. Moreover, because much of the materials we will be reading are connected to the contemporary world, the course poses the problem of thinking of our own present as history.

The assignments in the course are geared to help students learn to pose historical questions and explain their academic and public implications. The course has one major writing assignment, which students will revise over the course of the semester. As a result, students will learn to write clear well-organized narratives, in which explain their argument about selected works of popular culture.
Required Texts


Grading

Participation/Attendance: 20%
Weekly Reading Responses: 30%
Mid-term short-paper (5 pages): 20%
Final Paper (10 pages): 30%

As you see from the above breakdown, your grade will be made up of three components. You are expected to come to class having read the material for that day and having done any other assignments required. Readings will be from the required texts, placed on Learn@UW or available for download through the libraries various search engines. Students should write a 250-500 word reading response every week. Most films will be available on Youtube and in some cases, a DVD of the film will be placed on reserve. These assignments will be due every Friday. You will not be given a letter grade, but will receive check or a check +, the latter meaning that the instructor acknowledges that the student has put extra effort into the assignment.

A mid-term paper, on a subject related to the topics discussed in class will be due October 19th. Your topic can be your own analysis of a film or you can develop a more general topic, such as an analysis of trends in Bollywood. You should also choose the topic of your final paper, which is due Dec. 14th. As in the case of the mid-term, your final paper can be analysis of a specific work of popular culture in Asia or a discussion of a more general theme, such as representations of gender in Japanese Anime. I would also encourage students to attempt transnational or comparative projects. If you are unsure of your topic for either of your papers please see the instructor.

Weekly Assignments and Readings (May be Subject to Revision during the Course)

Week 1: Asian Popular Culture in the World/the World in Asian Popular Culture

September 5
Introduction
September 7 The Culture Industry and Fordism


**Week 2: Representations of Land and Time in India**

September 10

September 12

September 14
Discussion of Hindi Movie *Do bigha Zameen* (Two Acres of Land, 1953)
Ernst Bloch, “Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectic,” *New German Critique*, 1977

**Week 3: Bollywood: Representations of the City, Countryside and Justice**

Paper Topics Due

September 17

September 19 Discussion of Hindi Movie: Deewar (Wall, 1975)

September 21

You may also want to consult the following website
http://www.culanth.org/?q=node/298

**Week 4: Global Capitalism and Global Cultures**

September 24
September 26  Discussion of Hindi Movie: *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* (2001)

September 28

**Week 5: Gender and Hindi Cinema**

October 1  Discussion of Hindi Movie, “Sholay”

October 3  

October 5  
Discussion of Hindi Movie *The Dirty Picture* (2011)

**Week 6: Chinese Cinema from Revolutionary to Post-revolutionary Period**

October 8  Discussion of Chinese Film *Baimao Nü* (White Haired Girl, 1951)

October 10  


October 12  

**Week 6: The Kung-Fu Film and Hongkong Culture**
October 15


October 17

October 19 *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004)
Raechel Dumas, “Kung Fu Production for Global Production,” *Style* 43.1, 2009.

Paper Proposals Due

Week 7: Theorizing Anime I

October 22

October 24
Lamarre, 55-86

October 26
Lamarre, 86-110

Week 8: Theorizing Anime II

October 29
Lamarre, 103-155

October 31
Lamarre, 155-184

November 2
Lamarre, 184-221.

Week 9: Anime and Sex


November 5
Week 10: Popular Culture and Asianism
November 12

Rough Drafts of Paper Due


November 14
November 16

Week 11: Japanese Pop

November 19
Bourdagh, Chapter 1

November 21
Bourdagh, Chapter 2

November 23
Bourdagh, Chapter 3

Week 12 J-Pop Continued

November 25
Bourdagh, chapter 4

November 27
Bourdagh, chapter 5

November 29
Bourdagh, chapter 6

Week 13: Chinese Rock Music

December 3
Campbell, 1-67

December 5
Campbell, 67-89

December 7
Week 14: Korean Pop Culture and East Asian Identity

December 10,

December 12,

December 14
Final Paper Due