AMES 1
HINDI-URDU AS A CULTURAL SYSTEM

Fall 2012
Thornton 107
MWF 11:15–12:20
Distrib: SOC/CI
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Course Description

From the foothills of the Himalayas to the Deccan plateau, Hindi is spoken across most of northern India. It is singled out in the Indian Constitution as primary among the nation’s official languages. Urdu is spoken throughout the same region and, across the border, is recognized (along with English) as one of the two official languages of Pakistan. Hindi is written in the Devanagari script, the writing system used for Sanskrit, the classical language of the scriptures of Hinduism. Hindi’s technical terminologies, abstract registers, official jargon, and the like are derived from Sanskrit words. Urdu, on the other hand, is written in Nastaliq, a style of Perso-Arabic script, the graphic face of Islamic sacred literature. The more prestigious, official, or technical registers of Urdu vocabulary are taken from Arabic and Persian roots.

Yet Hindi and Urdu are virtually identical in terms of grammar and most basic vocabulary. At the level of colloquial usage, in fact, it’s not a stretch to say that they are the same language.

Is Hindi for Hindus, and Urdu for Muslims? To put things this way is to open up a whole spectrum of questions about language, religion, and historical narrative as ways of organizing collective identities. What does it mean for religious communities to draw linguistic boundaries—for members of different religions to claim different languages? The historical rationalization of a family of diverse regional idioms into two modern languages—Hindi and Urdu—in South Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries parallels the development of other national languages. But it also foreshadows the traumatic twin birth of the subcontinent’s major nation-states along lines of religion—the Partition of 1947.

At a non-official level, Hindi-Urdu functions as a lingua franca not only in India and Pakistan but also on a transnational scale. Perhaps the principal contemporary vector of Hindi-Urdu cultural expression within and beyond South Asia is the Mumbai-based film industry known as Bollywood. Bollywood’s products are conventionally described as Hindi films, but they might in most cases be identified with equal justice as Urdu films. This exuberant and accessible mass-market form is represented on the syllabus alongside examples of historical and modern literary forms and Hindustani classical music.
Course Goals and Learning Objectives

This course will encourage you to develop and express your ideas in more than one way. The class discussion component invites students to communicate ideas dynamically and verbally. Some of our discussions will center on questions of cultural difference—on getting inside perspectives on collective and individual identity that may provoke you to examine your own (culturally constructed?) notions of society and self.

This course also has an introductory language instruction component. You will get started with the building blocks of practical language learning: phonemes, greetings and other conversational formulas, elementary grammar and vocabulary. By the mid-course point you will have mastered the Devanagari syllabary in which Hindi is written. And you may find yourself eager to advance to more systematic formal training in Hindi-Urdu.

Complementing the language learning will be scholarly readings that will guide our understanding of the shared history of Hindi and Urdu as dimensions of collective identity in South Asia. Finally, we will sample primary texts representing some of the expressive forms that have been central to the development of Hindi-Urdu as a cultural system: historical and modern poetry, fiction, examples of Hindustani classical music, and three Indian feature films.

Prerequisites: There are no formal course prerequisites for AMES 1, which is an introductory level class. The only way advance preparation comes into play as a criterion for enrollment is a negative one: If you already know any Hindi or Urdu, you should not be taking this class. The language instruction component is targeted at beginners.

Again, note that among the assigned texts are three Bollywood films. These are examples of popular cinema, produced as crowd-pleasers. Attend the screenings expecting to enjoy yourselves, but also prepared to take notes over a period of up to three hours. You will be required to a short essay on the film of your choice.

I find much of the literary and cultural material we will study together to be not only important, meaningful, and powerful but also beautiful and pleasurable. There is room in this course for the exploration not only of critical ideas but also aesthetic and creative perspectives. The most important assignment is a final project that offers an opportunity to experiment with nontraditional, creative formats to students who are so inclined.

Required Books and Films

Rupert Snell, Teach Yourself Hindi (cited in course schedule as “Snell, TYH”)

Rupert Snell, Teach Yourself Beginner’s Hindi Script (cited as “Snell, Script”)

Stephen Alter, Fantasies of a Bollywood Love Thief

Peter Gottschalk, Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple Identity in Narratives from Village India
Uday Prakash (trans. Jason Grunebaum), *The Girl with the Golden Parasol*

*Textbooks may be purchased at Wheelock Books. Note that the syllabus incorporates numerous reading assignments taken from sources outside of these books. You will be able to access these readings through Blackboard, generally in the form of PDF scans.*

*Dil Se* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1998)

*Omkara* (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2006)


*It is highly recommended that you view the films together with your classmates at the screenings scheduled for Sunday evenings. Films will also be made accessible through the library’s reserves and streaming services.*

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**Course Requirements**

1. **Class Participation:** 15%
2. **Quizzes and Homework Exercises:** 15%
3. **Midterm Exam:** 20%
4. **Film Essay, 5 pp.:** 15%
5. **Final Project, 10+ pp.:** 30%

**Classroom Policies**

1. **Attendance:** Attendance in class is mandatory. If you find you are unable to attend on a particular day, tell me before you miss class, preferably through e-mail. Note that attendance is part of your class participation grade and that more than two unexcused absences will put that grade at risk.

2. **Cell phones:** Off. Checking your phone for messages, etc. while class is in session is a mark of disrespect to me, your classmates, and the College and—outside of an emergency context—will incur mockery from me or worse.

3. **Food and drink:** No eating in the classroom. Liquids are fine. If it were up to me you could smoke in class too, but if you took me up on that I suspect we could both get in hot water with the College.

*If you require a personal exemption from any of these rules, talk to me or e-mail me about it.*
4. **A general principle concerning the syllabus:** Read the whole syllabus. No, really. Like today.

5. **Another general principle concerning the syllabus:** The syllabus is subject to change through the course of the term. As your instructor, I may revise or augment what’s on the menu for any given day through the end of the term.

6. **A general principle concerning class discussion:** The classroom is a community, and class discussion is a collective project. Participation in class discussion is more than individual students bouncing their own ideas off the instructor. When you contribute, be aware that your audience is a roomful of comparably well-informed interlocutors. As the instructor I’ll do my best to guide discussion such that each member has a chance to express her or his own ideas, but it’ll help if each of you keeps in mind this basic point: *It’s not about me; it’s about the ideas—and contributing to a dynamic and collective discussion about them.*

7. **Please turn in all written assignments to me** (or my office mailbox) **on paper,** unless otherwise specified. It’s up to you to print it out in time, not up to me.

8. **Late assignment policy:** The language-learning component will only work if time discipline is strictly observed. The deadline for the final project is also non-negotiable, since it’s at the limit of what Dartmouth permits. Having said that, I invite you to get in touch with me if you need help with the assignments. I promise to be accessible—by e-mail, by office phone, and in person after class and at the office.

9. **Punctuality, yours and mine:** I will do my best to start class on time, and I really don’t like to deprive latecomers of important information, so I hope you also do your best to arrive on time. I confess to the bad habit of allowing class discussions to run overtime. Consider yourself notified: Class ends at 12:20 sharp. If we’re still talking, you may choose to stick around in the classroom out of interest or courtesy, but you are under no obligation to do so.

10. **My attitude towards grading:** Do the reading for each class and make informed contributions to class discussion when you see an opening. If you follow these two baseline principles, you’ll be well on the way to succeeding in my course.

    As for individual assignments: If you get the job done—namely, fulfill the requirements specified for the assignment, demonstrate comprehension of the sources you use, express yourself clearly and precisely, and conscientiously support your points with evidence—then I can promise you a score that falls within the range of B or higher. If you show me that you put something extra into your work, you’ll have a good shot at an A-minus—if you ask particularly sharp questions, make particularly thoughtful connections, press on with your intellectual curiosity.

    A straight-A project for me is one that exhibits excellence, and generally speaking there are two ways to do that. The first is to produce work that is letter perfect. In the
case of a paper, that means the argument is tight and it discusses the material at a level of sophistication that demonstrates mastery. The second way is to take an intellectual risk—and for that risk to pay off. As a teacher, I’m never more pleased than when I recognize work from a student that surprises me and teaches me something new.

A grade in the C range or lower generally indicates that something is wrong. I don’t give out many Cs, and when I do I am sure to identify the problem. I do recognize that some students may make the call to turn in C-grade work in my class because they have placed their priorities elsewhere, and that is a decision I can respect on a personal level. In other words, no foul—so long as you’re a) in control of the situation; and b) not under the illusion that you’re entitled to a good grade for something you didn’t work hard on.

**Academic Honesty Policy**


**Student Needs**

Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me before the end of the first week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

Student Accessibility Services: [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~accessibility/facstaff/](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~accessibility/facstaff/).

**Additional Support for your Learning**

Academic Skills Center: [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/).

Course Schedule

week 1—Introductions

Sept. 10 (M)
introductions of: members of the class; the general scheme of the class; its goals and standards; some basic terms and concepts: Where is South Asia? Where is North India?

12 (W)
readings: Benedict Anderson, from Imagined Communities; Peter van der Veer, from Religious Nationalism

14 (F)

week 2—The Bollywood Affect

17 (M)
readings: Christopher King, from One Language, Two Scripts; David Lelyveld, “Talking the National Language: Hindi/Urdu/Hindustani in Indian Broadcasting and Cinema”

19 (W)
reading: Rachel Dwyer, “Tales of Love”

21 (F)
reading: Stephen Alter, Fantasies of a Bollywood Love Thief, first half

week 3—Getting Started: Sounds and Letters

23 (Sun)
screening, 7:00 (Thornton 104): Omkara (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2006)

24 (M)
film discussion
reading: Stephen Alter, Fantasies of a Bollywood Love Thief, second half

26 (W)
language exercises: Snell, Script, Chap. 3: complete exercises (optional: front matter, Chaps. 1–2)

28 (F)
language exercises: Snell, Script, Chap. 4: complete exercises
week 4—Sounds and Letters into Words

Oct. 1 (M)
language exercises: Snell, *Script*, Chaps. 5–6: complete exercises

3 (W)
language exercises: Snell, *TYH*, Chap. 1: verb “to be,” Dialogue 1A
assignment of script-based exercise

week 5—Let’s Put those Words Together

9 (Tue, x-period)
Exercise 1A due and script-based exercise due

10 (W)
language exercises: Snell, *TYH*, Chap. 2: question words, Dialogue 2A
Exercise 1B due

12 (F)
Exercise 2A due

week 6—Basic Constructions and Review

14 (Sun)
screening, 7:00 (*Thornton 104*): *Dil Se* (dir. Mani Ratnam, 1998)

15 (M)
film discussion

16 (Tue, x-period)
language exercises: Snell, *TYH*, Chap. 3: postpositions and oblique case, Dialogue 3A
Exercise 2B due

17 (W)
Exercise 3A due
19 (F)  
in-class review session  
Exercise 3B due

week 7—Ethnography  

22 (M)  
IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

24 (W)  
*reading:* Peter Gottschalk, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim, selections*  
discuss final project

26 (F)  
*reading:* Peter Gottschalk, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim, selections*

week 8—Literary Voices I: Historical  

28 (Sun)  

29 (M)  
*film discussion*  
*reading:* Mukul Kesavan, “Urdu, Awadh, and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema”

31 (W)  
*readings:* Linda Hess and Shukdeo Singh, *The Bijak of Kabir, selections*; John Stratton Hawley, *The Memory of Love: Surdas Sings to Krishna, selections*

Nov. 2 (F)  
*readings:* Frances Pritchett, “A Desertful of Roses,” *selections*

week 9—Literary Voices II: Modern  

5 (M)  
*readings:* A. Sean Pue, “Rethinking Modernism and Progressivism in Urdu Poetry: Faiz Ahmed Faiz and N. M. Rashed”; Faiz Ahmed Faiz and N. M. Rashed, *selections*  
*film essay due*

7 (W)  
*reading:* Uday Prakash (trans. Jason Grunebaum), *The Girl with the Golden Parasol, first half*
9 (F)

**week 10—What is “Hindustani Music”?**

12 (M)

21 (W)
**Final Project Due: 5:00 IN MY MAILBOX, RELIGION DEPARTMENT**