

Stanford



Usha Iyer

Assistant Professor of Art and Art History

Art & Art History

Bio

BIO

Usha Iyer's research and teaching interests lie at the intersection of cinema, performance, and gender and sexuality studies, with a specific focus on film and performance histories, body cultures, and Global South cultural traffic along the vectors of race, gender, caste, and religion.

Iyer (she/they) is the author of *Dancing Women: Choreographing Corporeal Histories of Hindi Cinema* (Oxford University Press, 2020), which examines constructions of gender, stardom, sexuality, and spectacle in Hindi cinema through women's labor, collaborative networks, and gestural genealogies to produce a corporeal history of South Asian cultural modernities. Through a material history of the labor of producing on-screen dance, theoretical frameworks that emphasize collaboration, aesthetic approaches to embodiment, and formal analyses of cine-choreographic "techno-spectacles," *Dancing Women* offers a variegated, textured history of cinema, dance, and music. The book was awarded the British Association of South Asian Studies (BASAS) Book Prize.

Iyer's next book project is an examination of the affective engagements of Caribbean spectators with Indian cinema in relation to discourses of belonging and citizenship that have developed around the histories of African enslavement and Indian indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, and Guyana. Examining as well the impact of Caribbean cultural forms on the Indian film industry, the project engages with transnational perspectives on race, ethnicity, performance, and migration to produce a multi-sited analysis of the traffic of sensory, embodied forms of knowledge across informal networks between South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Iyer's essays have appeared in *Camera Obscura*, *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, *Feminist Media Histories*, *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies*, *South Asian Popular Culture*, and edited collections such as *Figurations in Indian Film*, *The Evolution of Song and Dance in Hindi Cinema*, *Industrial Networks and Cinemas of India*, *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films*, and are forthcoming in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Theory*, *The Blackwell Companion to Indian Cinema*, among others. Iyer is Associate Editor of *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*.

Iyer is affiliate faculty in Stanford's Center for South Asia, the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE), and in the Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (FGSS) program. She is a 2021-22 FGSS faculty fellow, and her research has been supported by fellowships from the Stanford Humanities Center, The George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation, the Clayman Institute of Gender Research, CCSRE, and Stanford Global Studies.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Assistant Professor, Art & Art History

ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Director of Undergraduate Studies, Film and Media Studies Program, Dept of Art and Art History, (2017- present)

BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Faculty Steering Committee, Center for South Asia (2019 - present)
- Faculty Steering Committee, Center for Comparative Studies of Race and Ethnicity (2019 - present)

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- PhD, University of Pittsburgh , Film Studies (2014)
- MA, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, India , Literary and Cultural Studies (2006)
- MA, University of Pune, India , Mass Communication (1996)

LINKS

- South Asian Studies at Stanford podcast interview, 2020: <https://shows.acast.com/south-asian-studies-at-stanford/episodes/usha-iyer-dancing-women>
- Feature on "Dancing Women": <https://humsci.stanford.edu/feature/womens-agency-expressed-through-dance-hindi-cinema>
- "Examining the unexcavated histories of Hindi cinema's dancing women": <https://gender.stanford.edu/news-publications/gender-news/examining-unexcavated-histories-hindi-cinemas-dancing-women>
- Stanford Global Studies Course Innovation Grants: <https://news.stanford.edu/thedish/2019/09/04/three-stanford-faculty-awarded-global-issue-course-innovation-grants/>
- "Folded Corporeal Histories of the 1950s-60s Hindi Film Dancer-Actress" (UC Santa Cruz, Center for South Asian Studies, 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7DtbT15QE&feature=emb_logo
- "Dancer-Actresses as Choreographers of New Mobilities" (Columbia University, South Asia Institute, 2020): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUtuSdX8c3A&t=4381s>
- "Teaching Indian Cinema in Trinidad: Rethinking Globalization Paradigms" (Stanford Global Studies, 2018): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiXzCU-oo3c&list=PLmsK9JBjBwI7KmlP6lPAH3-MgD-B5Ih0>
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies Aca-Media podcast interview, 2019: <http://www.aca-media.org/episode50?fbclid=IwAR06EYkgW-QjelSmgJhiOdnSJBMyfbX9QZqFznuVnQj2QO6kRAjyPQf9-04>

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Film studies, South Asia, Caribbean, Gender, Diaspora, Race and ethnicity

Teaching

COURSES

2021-22

- Graduate Workshop: Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (Queer Cinemas around the World): FEMGEN 299 (Spr)
- History of World Cinema III: Queer Cinema around the World: ARTHIST 164, ARTHIST 364, FILMEDIA 100C, FILMEDIA 300C (Spr)

2019-20

- Art History Proseminar: ARTHIST 600A (Win)
- History of World Cinema III, 1960-Present: FILMSTUD 100C, FILMSTUD 300C (Spr)
- Hollywood/Bollywood: The Musical Two Ways: FILMSTUD 152, FILMSTUD 352 (Spr)
- Love in the Time of Cinema: FILMSTUD 137, FILMSTUD 337, GLOBAL 110, GLOBAL 211 (Aut)
- The Body in Film and other Media: ARTHIST 448, FILMSTUD 448 (Win)

2018-19

- History of World Cinema III, 1960-Present: FILMSTUD 100C, FILMSTUD 300C (Spr)
- Introduction to Film Study: FILMSTUD 4 (Win)

- The Art Cinema of India: FILMSTUD 134, FILMSTUD 334 (Win)
- Theories of Melodrama: FILMSTUD 213, FILMSTUD 413 (Spr)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Doctoral Dissertation Reader (AC)

Sariel Golomb, Suhaila Meera

Orals Chair

Annika Butler-Wall

Doctoral Dissertation Advisor (AC)

Ankita Deb

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **"Smuggling, Infiltrating, Usurping: Why Globalizing the Film and Media Studies Curriculum is Essential to Decolonizing It."** *The Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*
Iyer, U.
2022; 61 (6)
- **A Pedagogy of Reparations Notes toward Repairing the Film and Media Studies Curriculum** *FEMINIST MEDIA HISTORIES*
Iyer, U.
2022; 8 (1): 181-193
- **Song-and-Dance Sequence** *BIOSCOPE-SOUTH ASIAN SCREEN STUDIES*
Iyer, U.
2021; 12 (1-2): 174-177
- **Dancing Women: Choreographing Corporeal Histories of Hindi Cinema**
Iyer, U.
Oxford University Press.2020
- **"Bringing Bharatanatyam to Bombay Cinema: Mapping Tamil-Hindi Film Industry Traffic through Vyjayanthimala's Dancing Body"** *Industrial Networks and Cinemas of India: Shooting Stars, Shifting Geographies and Multiplying Media*
Iyer, U.
Routledge.2020; 1
- **"Dispassionate Repetition and the Enfoldings of History"**
Iyer, U.
Chatterjee & Lal Art Gallery, Mumbai, India.
2019 ; Exhibition catalog for the film, Vrindavani Vairagya (Dispassionate Love, Ashish Avikunthak, 2018)
- **"Dance Musicalization: Proposing a Choreomusicological Approach to Hindi Film Song-and-dance Sequences."** *South Asian Popular Culture*
Iyer, U.
2017; 15 (2-3): 123-138
- **"Looking for the Past in Pastiche: Intertextuality in Bollywood Song and Dance Sequences."** *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films*
Iyer, U.
Equinox Publishing.2016: 207–226
- **"Stardom Ke Peeche Kya Hai?/What Is behind the Stardom? Madhuri Dixit, the Production Number, and the Construction of the Female Star Text in 1990s Hindi Cinema"** *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*
Iyer, U.
2015; 30 (3): 129-159

- **"Nevla as Dracula: Figurations of the Tantric as Monster in the Hindi Horror Film"** *Figurations in Indian Film*
Iyer, U.
Palgrave Macmillan.2013: 101–115

PRESENTATIONS

- "Teaching Indian Cinema in Trinidad: Rethinking Globalization Paradigms" - Stanford Global Studies EPIC symposium (May 19, 2018)