MANAGEMENT THROUGH FILMS

1. **Course Code: MG-201**
   Course Coordinator (Prof. Devi Vijay (CC), OB
2. **Course Instructors:**

   Prof. Devi Vijay (CC)
   Prof. Bhaskar Chakrabarti (PPM)
   Prof. Rajesh Bhattacharya (PPM)
   Prof. Saikat Maitra (PPM)
   Prof. Vidyanand Jha (OB)
   Prof. Anirvan Pant (SM)
   Prof. Smeeta Mishra (BEC)
   Prof. Anup K. Sinha (VF)

3. **Course Description**

- The course aims at exposing students to a variety of social, economic and ethical themes through a select set of films to sensitize them to think more about these issues. This, we believe, will contribute to the making of a good manager and better citizen.
- Students will be encouraged to raise critical questions about individual choices, social and economic arrangements, and corporate cultures and values.
- Students will be asked to relate the cinematic themes to theories and core concepts from different branches of management such as economics, public policy, operations management, strategic management, human resources, organizational behavior and corporate ethics.
- Each chosen film will be presented by a different faculty member who will focus on one core theme of the film, around which questions will be raised for discussion. Discussion of the cinematic techniques and aesthetic features will only be incidental in the discussion of the core theme chosen to be highlighted by the concerned faculty.
- Students will be expected to prepare for classes through the assigned readings and discussion questions, to actively engage in the viewing of the movie in the classroom, and to contribute to classroom discussion by sharing their interpretations and analysis.

4. **Class Size:** For reasons of pedagogic convenience the class will have a maximum of 45 students.

5. **Learning Objectives:**

The objective is to sensitize students to larger social, political and moral issues that affect corporate decisions and hone their critical thinking skills. Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate evidence of well-argued critical thinking and the ability to imagine alternative state of affairs to improve human well-being.
- Demonstrate evidence of integrating and applying knowledge from various domains to practical problems and take decisions in complex and unfamiliar situations in the global economy.
- Demonstrate the ability to make connections between different cultures and contexts.
- Demonstrate traits of being a reflexive and responsible manager.

6. **Teaching Methods**

The course is anchored around using films as a pedagogical device. It is important to note that the course is not about the de-construction and critique of a film. Rather, the selected films create the context required within which management concepts can be illustrated. The visual

medium can enrich the learning experience by shifting from a linear to non-linear modes of knowledge acquisition, enhancing comprehension, and by facilitating the application of various concepts learned in the MBA program to the narrative of the film, thus serving as a beneficial complement to traditional teaching methods. Further, such a medium is particularly beneficial for those students who are visual and auditory learners. While this approach certainly makes learning enjoyable, students will be encouraged to actively engage with the film, take notes, and consider the screening of the films in the classroom as pivotal to the collective learning experience. Students will be provided with guiding questions prior to the screening which will later be picked up for discussion and debate. Viewing the film in the classroom creates a foundation for learning by crafting a common shared experience among students. Further, it is important to note that the film does not replace teaching but reinforces it. The role of the instructor here will be to as a guide who will illustrate ways to identify, analyze, and re-combine information and knowledge represented in the film.This pedagogy will provide space for students to interpret the movie from different positions and create new knowledge.

7. Course Format and the Session Plans

The introductory and concluding sessions are of ninety-minute durations. There will be two guest lecture sessions from academics/industry/film journalism of ninety minutes duration following the introductory and preceding the concluding session. The remaining 16 sessions will be in the form of eight three-hour sessions, with the movie screened in-class followed by class discussions. The course will involve screening of eight movies with seven instructors from different groups at IIM Calcutta and one Guest Lecturer, each of whom will be responsible for one class spanning over three hours.

8. Texts and Resources:

For term VI, 2017-18, the following films will be used in the course. Instructors will share readings that complement the film assigned to a session to set the context for the discussions. There is no textbook for this course.
The list of films is accompanied by the name of the instructor, a brief note on the film and associated readings.

1. **Movie: All the Way**
   Language: English
   Year: 2016
   Director: Jay Roach

Session Instructor: Anirvan Pant

'All the Way ', starring Breaking Bad star Bryan Cranston in the role of the 36th President of the United States Lyndon B Johnson, serves up a fascinating portrayal of Johnson 's first year as President. From the opening scene onwards, when the presidency is suddenly thrust upon Vice President Johnson in the wake of the tragic assassination of President John F Kennedy, we are witness to Johnson wrestling with the Civil Rights Bill and his own election campaign as he seeks to engage with friends, allies, and rivals for political goals, and as he secures and deploys political power. The movie enables a discussions along the cross currents of political power, strategic thinking, and the management of radical change.

Readings:
1. Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History*, Chapter 4, 'Sun Tzu and Machiavelli'
2. 'Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400-1434', Padgett, JF & Ansell, CK, *American Journal of Sociology*, 1993, 98(6): 1259-1319.

2. **Movie: *Seemabadhha* (Company Limited)**
   Language: Bengali

Year: 1971
Director: Satyajit Ray

Session Instructor: Anup Sinha (Guest Faculty)

Seemabadha *is based on a novel by the same name written by the popular novelist Shankar. The film is in black and white. It is one of three films Ray made on Calcutta during the politically turbulent time of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Company Limited along with two other films – The Adversary and The Middle Man are often referred to by critics as The Calcutta Trilogy.*

The film is about a young man from a lower middle class background who is good in academics and lands a job as a management trainee in a British fan manufacturing company in Calcutta. This was a period when there were still a few British companies left in the city and the English corporate culture of the "boxwallah" was very much alive. The protagonist named Shyamalendu rises fast in the corporate ladder and eyes the boardroom for an Executive Director's post for his next promotion. He has stiff internal competition in the office, and he also has to demonstrate that he has indeed completely imbibed the culture of the company, from playing golf to being able to carry his drink. It is a transformation fraught with anxiety and ethical compromises. Then a crisis suddenly arises in the office that, if unresolved, would mean a massive monetary loss for the company as well as a loss of its brand reputation. The climax of the film reveals what choice he makes and how the crisis plays out. It is about the tension between ambition, values, loyalty to the company, and coming to terms with one's own conscience.

Readings:

1.Seton, Marie, *Portrait of a Director* New Delhi : Penguin Books, 2003

2. Robinson, Andrew, *The Inner Eye*, University of California Press, 1989

3. Movie: Court
Language: Marathi
Year: 2014
Director: Chaitanya Tamahane

Session Instructor: Bhaskar Chakrabarti

Court, directorial debut of ChaitanyaTamhane, deals with a folk singer living in Mumbai, who gets arrested after one of his performances. The State alleges that a song he performed drove a manhole cleaner to commit suicide, and he is therefore responsible for the man's death. What follows is less of a courtroom drama, and more about apowerplay between the State and the Individual. With a witty focus on everyday democracy, *Court*asks if governance is to control the possible field of action of others using an ensemble formed by institutions and procedures. *Court* won the Best Feature Film Award in the 62nd National Film Awards in India, and was Best Filmat Venice International Film Festival, Best Film and Best Director at Singapore International Film Festival. The movie won other awards in Vienna International Film Festival, Hong Kong Asian Film Festival, Moscow Film Festival, and Mexico International Film Festival.

Readings:

1. Marinetto, Michael (2003). "The Governmentality of Public Administration: Foucault and the Public Sphere". *Public Administration*, 81 (3): 621-649).

2. Chakrabarti, Bhaskar (2012). "Contested Identity of Junglemahal Maoists: State Hegemony, Political Theatre and the Process of Alternate Representation". *The Eastern Anthropologist*, 65 (1): 1-13.

4. **Movie: Big Short**
   Language: English
   Year: 2015
   Director: Adam Mckay

The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine stars Christian Bale, Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling, and Brad Pitt. The film is based on a novel by Michael Lewis and is an account of the sub-prime crisis culminating into a global financial crisis. The film was a financial and critical success, grossing $133 million against a $50 million budget, and receiving positive reviews. The film was nominated for five Academy Awards and won the Best Adapted Screenplay. The story is told from the viewpoint of four hedge fund managers who predicted the housing market crash as early as 2004. These four people aggressively took "short" positions on mortgage-backed securities through the purchase of credit default swap (CDS). The protagonists initially met resistance from investors and bankers. But it did not take long for the investors to prove the skeptics. Their bets against the market would eventually pay off in the form of hundreds of millions of dollars. At the same time, of course, others were losing hundreds of millions with the tailspins of Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, and AIG. *The Big Short* is strong in conveying the drama in the midst of the crisis. The film excels in explaining the complicated investment strategies of those buying mortgage-backed securities and selling CDSs, and, conversely, those buying CDSs and shorting mortgage investments.

Session Instructor: Partha Ray

Readings:

1. Hellwig, Martin (2008): "Systemic Risk in the Financial Sector: An Analysis of the Subprime-Mortgage Financial Crisis", Max Plank Institute mimeo, http://www.coll.mpg.de/pdf_dat/2008_43online.pdf

5. **Movie: *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro***
   Language: Hindi
   Year: 1983
   Director: Kundan Shah

Jaane Bhi do Yaaro *was Kundan's Shah's debut film for which he received the Indira Gandhi Award for the best film of a Director in 1983. Kundan Shah is also credited with the story and screenplay (co-written with Sudhir Mishra). The film stars Naseeruddin Shah, Ravi Baswani, Om Puri, Pankajkapur, Satish Shah, SatishKaishik, Bhakti Barve and Neena Gupta. The film did not succeed commercially when released, but over time has become a cult classic.*

The film is a dark satire on the systemic corruption in Indian politics, bureaucracy, news media and business in the early 1980s, told from the point of view of two good-natured entrepreneurs trying to set up a modest business in Mumbai. The film shows how everything can go wrong when one tries to be an honest entrepreneur, facing a 'system' that has been usurped by those in power, those with connections and those with few or no scruples. The film holds a mirror to India of the early 1980s—a period of transition from a state-controlled economy to a liberalized economy—when there was a general perception of directionless-ness and despair as the institutions of democratic India lost much of their legitimacy. Using slapstick, satire and absurdism to represent the dark reality, the film is arguably the finest comedy in Indian film history.

Session Instructor: Rajesh Bhattacharya

Readings:

1. Kochanek, Stanley A. "Briefcase politics in India: The Congress party and the business elite." *Asian Survey* (1987): 1278-1301.
2. Khan, Mushtaq H. "Patron-Client networks and the economic effects of corruption in Asia." *The European Journal of Development Research* 10.1 (1998): 15-39.

6. **Movie:** *Deux Jours, Une Nuit* (Two Days, One Night)
   Language: French
   Year: 2014
   Directors: Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne

Session Instructor: Saikat Maitra

Directed by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, the Belgian-French-Italian film Deux Jours, Une Nuit is set in a small industrial town in Belgium. It explores the intense struggles of the lead protagonist Sandra, played by the French actress Marion Cotillard, as she desperately tries to save her job at a small factory. A mother and wife, Sandra had been forced to take time off from her work due to a nervous breakdown and in her absence the management realizes that she can be fired from her work if her colleagues work slightly extra hours. The sixteen co-workers in the plant are asked to vote their preference – either they work extra hours for an additional bonus to make Sandra redundant or they forego the bonus to retain Sandra.

Deux Jours, Une Nuit is the time that Sandra has in order to convince her co-workers to vote in her favor. As she frantically tries to persuade her colleagues, what ensures in the film is an emotionally charged vision of contemporary work practices in an increasingly globalized context and the kinds of relationships that such work practices foster. The film suggests how work today is increasingly defining the individual workers as social beings. The loss of work for Sandra does not only mean economic constraints but also the dissolution of her entire social worth as a person. In what ways and how effectively will she forge meaningful relationships with her colleagues beyond the immediate economic calculations of wages and bonuses is the central motif of the film. In addition to its focus on work and workers the film also raises complex ethical questions for the management, which must decide how to balance the demands for profitability and its concerns for the welfare of its workers.

Readings:

1. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/14/us/union-jobs-mexico-rexnord.html?smid=fb-share
2. Berlant, Lauren. "Nearly Utopian, Nearly Normal: Post-Fordist Affect in La Promesse and Rosetta". *Public Culture* 19:2. Durham: Duke University Press. 2007. pgs. 273 - 301. (https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/politicalfeeling/files/2007/10/berlant-la-promesse.pdf)
3. Silver, Beverly J. "Contemporary Dynamics in World Historical Perspective" in *Forces of Labor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2003. Pgs. 168 - 180.

7. **Movie: The Founder**
   Language: English
   Year: 2016
   Director: John Lee Hancok

Session Instructor: Smeeta Mishra

The Founder narrates the story of the founding of McDonald's fast food chain, as scripted by Robert Siegel. It is directed by John Lee Hancock and stars Michael Keaton as the businessman, Ray Kroc, who is credited with founding the McDonald's empire after taking the franchise from the McDonald brothers, Richard and Maurice, using highly questionable means. The movie engages with the concept of building a new business by re-inventing an old industry. It unpacks the values of capitalism and brings forth questions on business ethics, entrepreneurship and profit-making – all in the process of flipping burgers and preparing milk shakes in an assembly line.

Readings:

1.Holcombe, R.G. (2007). *Entrepreneurship and economic progress*. Routledge Foundations of the Market Economy Series. New York: Routledge. (chapter 3)

2. Lowenstein, R. (2017). *A great business movie is getting snubbed at the Oscars this year.* Retrieved fromhttp://fortune.com/2017/02/24/oscars-2017-the-founder-snub/

8. **Movie: *Massey Sahib***
   Language: Hindi
   Year: 1985
   Director: Pradip Krishen

Session Instructor: Vidyanand Jha

Massey Sahib *is based on a novel by Joyce Carey situated in Africa. This movie is an adaptation based in colonial India. It tells the story of a local level functionary of colonial administration, Massey and his relationships. Most importantly with his boss, played by Barry John, but also with other people around him. The film is a very good meditation on two issues.*

First is on the nature of authority. For a person coming from a traditional milieu, how is the experience of more formal organisations? How does this person negotiate his way through a bureaucracy. It does have important insights about functioning of organisations in the contemporary India and how we , as individuals, experience them.

Second aspect to the movie is about the experience of the colonised and their attempts at finding a life of dignity in a colonial set up. At some other level, it is a story about any case of upward mobility, but the movie is rooted in a colonial context, thus bringing insights about our post colonial lives."

Readings:

1. Weber, Max, "Legitimate Authority and Bureaucracy" in Derek S. Pugh (editor), *Organisation Theory: Selected Classic Readings*, Fifth Edition, 1924, London: Penguin Books, pg. 3-15

2. Nandy, Ashish," Preface" to *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, Second Edition, 2009, Delhi: OUP.

9. Copyright Issues

The instructors may need a DVD of the film for showing them to students and will make a few copies of the films available through the library for students.

10. Evaluation

a.	Class Participation	30 %
b.	Take Home Assignment	30%
c.	End-term Examination	40 %