

COURSE NO.: SS 607N: METHODS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

M.Phil. 2nd Semester; Compulsory Course; Winter Semester: January– May; Credits: 4

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Course Description

The module seeks to introduce students to epistemological assumptions underlying research designs and projects by focusing on the major philosophical and methodological debates in contemporary social sciences. The construction and comprehension of social reality, the question of objectivity, reason and rationality, causal explanations as opposed to interpretations and value judgments would be discussed and debated with reference to the works of some of the major sociologists and philosophers. Partially, the module would also engage with the processes of category formation, the influence of western assumptions and constructs—the processes of objectification of the erstwhile colonised world.

1. Scientism, Inductive method and the question of causality and explanation

Focuses on the philosophical and epistemological aspects of positivist social science and its critique. The Vienna Circle and theories of falsification become critical subjects of discussion.

2. Interpretive method, understanding and inter-subjectivity

Examines the interpretive social science, the influence of German romanticism, *verstehend* method and developments in cultural anthropology and ethnography.

3. Post-modernism and feminist methodology--debating reason and rationality

This session will focus largely on what are often called post structural or post-modern methods and feminist approaches to social research and their assumptions, standpoints and critiques.

4. Eurocentrism, Category Formation in the Non-West and the subject of indigeneity

In this section, students would be introduced to the processes of social construction of reality and the politics of knowledge--how the anxieties and assumptions of colonial modernity influenced key methods of sociological enquiry. Does the quest for indigeneity resolve this tension?

5. Debates and Practices in Ethnography

This session focuses on the emerging debates and practices in the field of ethnographic inquiry and the modes of representation of the 'cultural other'. The discussion also tracks the questions of subjectivity-objectivity, reflexivity, experience and ethics in the practice of ethnography.

6. Questions of Inter-disciplinarity and Social Inquiry.

This session looks at a number of possible new directions the philosophy and methodology of social science might be taking at a critical juncture where disciplines are experiencing radical shifts in their form, content and institutional structures and practices.

Course Evaluation

This course is worth 4 credits - 2 credits for a research project and 2 credits for a combination of book review and presentations. Apart from the end-term submission of a write up for the research project (of not more than 5000 words), there will be two mid-term assignments of 1 credit each; 1. A book review with a focus on the methodological aspects along with a

presentation and submission of a write up (of not more than 2500 words) on specific **topics/themes**. **2. A term paper to be submitted by deploying a specific method/technique on** a topic from the course themes (of not more than 2500 words). Format of presentation, review, deadlines of submission and other modalities will be detailed and finalized during the introductory classes. The students before submitting their paper should give an undertaking that the term paper and project report are not plagiarized.

Readings

- Asad, Talal. 1994. "Ethnographic Representation, Statistics and Modern Power" in *Social Research*, Vol. 61, No. 1. pp. 55-88.
- Behar, Ruth and Deborah Gordon (eds). 1995. "Women Writing Culture" University of California Press.
- Bourdieu. P. 1990. "In other words: Towards a Reflexive Sociology" Stanford university Press.
- Clifford, James and George Marcus (eds). 1985. "Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography". University of California Press.
- Cohn, Bernard. 1996. "Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India". Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Deleuze, Gillis. 2004. "Desert islands and Other Texts". Mass and London, MIT Press.
- Desai A.R. 1985. "Relevance of Marxist Approach" in Oommen .T.K. P. Mukherjee: Indian Sociology: Reflections and Introspections, Popular Prakasham, Bombay: pp: 193-213.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. "Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object? New York: Columbia University Press.
- Guru, Gopal and Sundar Sarukkai. 2012. The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory. Oxford University Press. [Selected Chapter]
- Guha, Ranajit, ed. 1982. Subaltern studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society" (Vol. 1) Oxford University Press, Delhi. [Chapter. 1]
- Gadamer, HG, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edn, trans. J. Weinsheimer & D. Marshall, Crossroad, New York, 1975.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1975. *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Hutchison, London, (chapter 1)
- 1974. "From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding" in *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 28, No. 1. pp. 26-45.
- Hollis, M, *The Philosophy of Social Science*, Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1994.
- Habermas, *Knowledge and Interest* (selected chapters)
- Mahajan. Gurpreet. 1992. Explanation and Understanding in the Human Sciences. Oxford University Press.
- Ortner, Sherry. 1984. "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 26, No. 1. pp. 126-166
- Rabinow, Paul (ed). 1984. "The Foucault Reader" New York: Pantheon Books.
- Rorty, R, 'Inquiry as recontextualization: An anti-dualist account of interpretation', in David Hiley, James Bohman, & Richard Shusterman (eds), *The interpretive turn: Philosophy, science and culture*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1991, pp. 59-80.
- Wagner, P, 'Sociology and Contingency: Historicizing Epistemology', *Social Science Information*, vol 34, No. 2, 1995, pp. 179-204.

- Wallerstein, I, et al., *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1996.
- Westphal, M, 'Positive postmodernism as radical hermeneutics', in Roy Martinez (ed.), *The very idea of radical hermeneutics*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands NJ, 1997, pp. 48-63.

Additional Readings

- Collingwood, RG, *The Idea of History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1946.
- Comte, A, *A Discourse on the Positive Spirit*, William Reeves, London, 1903.
- Denzin, N, 'The logic of naturalistic inquiry', *Social Forces*, vol. 50(2), 1971, pp. 166-82.
- Dirks, N.B. 2001. "Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India". Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2001. Reader.
- Dostal, RJ, 'Gadamer's relation to Heidegger and Phenomenology', in RJ Dostal(ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 2002, pp. 247-266.
- Geertz, C, *Available Light: Anthropological reflections on philosophical topics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2000.
- Guru, Gopal. 2010. "How Egalitarian Are the Social Sciences in India" in Achin Vanaik and Rajeev Bhargava ed. *Understanding Contemporary India: Critical Perspectives*. Orient Blackswan.
- Hempel, CG, 'Explanation in Science and History', in RG Colodny (ed.), *Frontiers of Science and Philosophy*, Georg Allen & Unwin, London, 1964, pp. 9-33.
- Inden, Ronald. 1986. Orientalist Construction of India, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.20, No.3.
- Latour, B, *We have never been modern*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1993.
- Rege, Sharmila., *Dalit Women's standpoint*
- Smith, JK, *The Nature of Social and Educational Inquiry: Empiricism versus Interpretation*, Ablex, New Jersey, 1989.
- Thapan, Meenakshi (ed). 1998. "Anthropological Journeys: Reflections on Fieldwork". New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Toulmin, S, *Cosmopolis: The hidden agenda of modernity*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL, 1990.
- Mahmood, Saba, *Politics of Piety*,
- Weber, Max. *Methodology of Social Sciences*,
- Winch, P, *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1958.