

SESSIONAL

LESSON PLAN

Book Review

For this course, students are asked to choose any two books from the list of books mentioned below, and write a review essay (5000 words) on the thematic connection between the books. The books provided below cover a wide range of issues, such as imperialism, anthropological methods, postcolonialism, capitalist transformation in agrarian societies of the non-European world, everyday ethics, state and violence, history of science, and others. Students are expected to meet the course instructor regularly and discuss amongst themselves the connections they perceive between these apparently disparate works. In the process, they read, debate, and discuss chapters of the books closely, and learn from each other's set of choices. Every book in the list engages with the question of the formation of European modernity, both within and outside Europe, thereby outlining the constitutive possibilities and limits of such a formation. Some of them probe this issue historically, while others use ethnographic methods, all the while reflecting on the methodologies themselves. The books investigate different sites of the formation of modernity, critically unpacking the orthodox constructions of these sites. Taussig works with entanglements between religion and capitalism in South American rural societies, Daniel examines the violence of the links between state-formation and ethnicities in Sri Lanka, Chakrabarti interrogates the foundation(s) and limits of European epistemologies, Latour deconstructs the orthodox separation(s) between 'science', 'society' and 'politics', focusing on Pasteur's 'inventions', Pandian unravels the moral universe of quotidian life across colonial and postcolonial periods in Tamil countryside, and Singh, Das, and Kleinmann track the anthropological careers of philosophical concepts.

Book List

1. Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
2. Daniel E. Valentine, *Churred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropology of Violence*, (Princeton University Press, 1996)
3. Dipesh Chakrabarti, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton University Press, 2000)
4. Veena Das, Michael D. Jackson, Arthur Kleinman, Bhargupati Singh (ed.) *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy*, (Duke University Press, 2014)
5. Anand Pandian, *Crooked Stalks: Cultivating Virtue in South India*, (Duke University Press, 2009)
6. Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, (Harvard University Press, 1993)

Assessment: Continuous assessment on the basis of weekly discussions, and presentation and submission of a term paper (5000 words) at the end of the term.

Marx and political economy

This course exposes students to the ways in which Karl Marx read different traditions of political-economic thought in nineteenth century Europe. Focusing on select portions from different volumes of *Capital* and *Theories of Surplus Value*, along with *Grundrisse*, students are asked to reflect on some of Marx's critical concepts, like 'labor', 'commodity', 'abstract-concrete' and 'history'. We also turn towards Marx's formulation of the *Asiatic Mode of Production*, in the light of these concepts, and discern how Marx engaged with the Ricardian system of concepts. The course also makes students aware of the basic tenets of the different schools of political economy, influential in different countries of Europe at that time, particularly England, France and Germany. It familiarizes them with 'Physiocracy', 'Mercantilism', 'Utilitarianism', and the historical-institutionalist approach in political economy, in order to find out where and why Marx reconfigured their analytical legacies. It asks whether it is useful to undertake such an exercise in order to theorize the global order of capitalism from within political economy, and whether Marx can be claimed for this project.

Readings

1. Karl Marx, *Capital* (Volumes 1-3) (Penguin Classics edition, 1992) (select chapters)
2. Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value* ((select chapters)
3. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (select chapters)
4. Lawrence Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Sources, Development and Critique in the Writings of Karl Marx* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975)
5. Utsa Patnaik (ed.) *The Agrarian Question in Marx and His Successors* (Leftword, 2007)
6. E. Hobsbawm (ed.) *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (1964)

Assessment: Students are asked to write a term paper (5000 words) and present it at the end of the course. During the course, they meet regularly in groups to discuss the progress of the paper amongst themselves, and with the instructor.

The Nature of Life

How do populations, living in extreme natural environments, make sense of social life? Do natural environments figure in the same way in informing social forms in relatively more settled and sedentary geographies? Is this distinction between the natural and social universally imagined and practiced, or there are specific spatio-temporal determinations which have worked to produce this distinction differently for different human collectivities across the world? This course will attempt to examine these questions by reviewing a huge range of ethnographic, historical, philosophical, and social-theoretical works on nature, and by conducting small ethnographies of local populations. Students will be particularly encouraged to read the recent debates in the anthropology of landscape, cognitive sciences, and science studies, to pursue these questions.

Readings:

1. Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language amongst the Western Apache* (University of New Mexico Press, 1996)
2. K. Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forests: State making and environmental change in colonial India* (Stanford University Press, 1999)
3. Viveiros De Castro, *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds*, (University of Chicago Press, 2016)
4. Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, (University of Chicago Press, 1966)
5. Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imagination: The Biological Expansion of Europe*, (CUP, 2004)
6. K. Harstrup, (ed.) *Anthropology and Nature*, (Routledge, 2014)
7. A. Goodman, D. Heath, and M.S. Lindee, (eds.) *Genetic Nature/Culture: Anthropology and Science beyond the two culture divide*, (University of California Press, 2003)
8. E. Kirksey (ed.) *The Multispecies Salon* (Duke University Press, 2014)

Assessment: Students are asked to write a term paper, and present it at the end of the semester (5000 words). The progress of the paper is supervised through regular meetings.

Methodological problems in anthropological research

This course runs for approximately sixteen weeks.

Type: compulsory

Programme: UG and PG

Semester: 5 (UG) and 1 and 3 (PG)

Credits: 4

Description: This course is primarily aimed at helping students think about epistemological issues concerning the methodology of conducting social science research. The way in which this critically differs from the compulsory courses on methods and methodology in Sociology/Anthropology is its integral connection with the ethnographic work that students themselves do as part of their research work. The focus is on making students think about how they went about doing their research by employing qualitative research methods, how these methods had to be altered in accordance with the needs of the research, and what therefore becomes of conceptual definitions of these particular methods. One of the thrusts of the course is on interrogating whether there is any concrete method that can be employed to understand the 'other', and what bearings such analyses have on the question of methodology. It is expected that the course will attain two goals: make students sensitive to critical methodological issues of their own research, and able to reflect on epistemological issues concerning methods and methodology in general.

Select readings:

Thomas J. Csordas. 1990. 'Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology'. *American Anthropological Association, Ethos*, Vol. 18, No. 1. pp. 5-47.

Robben, Antonius C. G. M., Jeffrey A. Sluka. (eds.) 2007. *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*. Australia: Blackwell Publishing.

Amit, Vered. 2000. *Constructing the Field: Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary World*. London: Routledge.

Russell, Bernard H. (ed.) 1998. *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. London: Altamira.

Davies, James and Dimitrina Spencer. 2010. *Emotions in the Field: The Psychology and Anthropology of Fieldwork Experience*. California: Stanford University Press.

Assessment: A detailed field report, a term paper, a presentation, and continuous assessment through the semester.

The Five Senses

This course runs for approximately sixteen weeks

Type: compulsory

Programme: UG and PG

Semester: 6 (UG) and 2 and 4 (PG)

Credits: 4

Description: This course is influenced by the sensual revolution in anthropology wherein the shift is from the “empire of signs” to the “empire of body and senses”. It urges students to understand not only how people or communities act, organize, and live their lives, but also how they represent, use, and feel emotive economies. The primary focus of the course is on comprehending relations, objects, places, communities, cognition and politics, in terms of sensory experiences. It tries to bring to the fore how various aspects of culture classify, engage, order and hierarchise the five senses. Students are also made to think of their own research work in terms of these questions. This paper brings under its theoretical canvas the potentials that sound, smell, touch, sight, and taste have in relating to language, and thereby, to social and moral worlds.

Select Readings

Howes, David. Ed. (2003). *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*. University of Michigan Press.

Howes, David. Ed. (2005). *Empire of the Senses. The Sensual Culture Reader*. London: Berg Publishers.

Rodaway, Paul. (1994). *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place*. London: Routledge.

Stoller, Paul. (1989). *The Taste of Ethnographic Things- The Senses in Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Stoller, Paul. (1997). *Sensuous Scholarship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Assessment: A detailed field report, a term paper, a presentation, and continuous assessment through the semester.

Popular Religion in Bengal

This course runs for approximately sixteen weeks

Type: compulsory

Programme: UG and PG

Semester: 5 (UG) and 1 and 3 (PG)

Credits: 4

Description:

The course aims to inculcate among students a habit of extensive and critical reading of texts, narratives and practices pertaining to popular religious traditions of Bengal, which they have grown up with, encounter, or read about. Apart from the usual associations of 'popular religion' with cognate categories such as 'folk religion', religion of the masses', subalternity etc., the term is also interrogated through students' field or text-based research. 'Popular religion' is critically engaged with other conceptual concerns like mainstream religiosity, alternative models, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, system and dissonance. From Sakta tantras to Vaishnavism, kartabhajas and bauls to the Brahmo Samaj, from pilgrims of Dakshineswar to Gajan festivities, Manipuri dance to dhakis, pirs and shrines to Buddhist thought, this course aims at helping students work on any aspect of religion in Bengal, and define the idea of popular religion through their research. Working on popular religion in Bengal would provide critical insight into some of the ways of understanding religious processes of other contexts of the Indian subcontinent, and should serve as a prism to make sense of several performances of Asian faith.

Select Readings:

Banerjee, S. 2002. *Logic in a popular Form: Essays on Popular Religion in Bengal*. Calcutta: Seagull Books.

Brooks, D. R. 1990. *The Secret of the Three Cities: An introduction to Hindu Sakta Tantrism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Cashin, D. 1995. *The Ocean of Love: Middle Bengali Sufi Literature and the Fakirs of Bengal*. Stockholm: Association of Oriental Studies.

Chakrabarty, R, *Vaishnavism in Bengal (1486-1900)*. Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.

Dasgupta, S. 1976. *Obscure Religious Cults as Background of Bengali Literature*. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press.

Dimock, E.C. Jr. 1966. *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaisnava-Sahajiya Cult of Bengal*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Morinis, E.A. 1984. *Pilgrimage in the Hindu Tradition: A Case Study of West Bengal*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Assessment: A detailed field report, a term paper, a presentation, and continuous assessment through the semester.

Sessional on Gerontology

World has witnessed increased longevity with the advent of new sophisticated treatment procedures and medicines. This has a profound effect on the ageing population of the 21st century both in the developed and developing parts of the world, and has been regarded a global phenomenon. It has become a cliché to discuss about this ever expanding ageing population for the range of implications it has on individuals' life and society in general. Ageing is considered an inevitable reality that most people have to face, that starts with greying and thinning of hair, wrinkles and skin creases. Ageing slows down metabolic activities and psychomotor responses and makes bone mass brittle. Old age is perceived as an age of senility, and is often associated with decline in regenerative capacities of the old which makes one vulnerable to become ill more easily. However, old age is a social construction which is given shape by the cultural notions and institutions of society that undergo changes from time to time and varies from place to place. Within the changing social structures, aging has become a very important subject especially because of its effect caused by the fluctuating economic, social, political and other processes of the structural agents. Ageing is accompanied by a chapter where the elderly steps into a phase of retirement. Therefore, they are often seen to create a social and economic crisis as they are deemed to be a burden on the welfare states and families for not being financially independent anymore, and sometimes for not being physically active. There are ranges of difficulties that aged people face starting from social isolation to abuse. Also, the society, culture and economic spheres of life hold certain expectation from each its members, and being old often posits people in a very challenging position as actively participating often becomes a serious issue for them. Aged people when are not able to meet this challenge often become victims of ageism where the elderly person is treated as a burden on society. Even United Nation acknowledged prevalence of such a practice and defined it as a process which "reinforces a negative image of older persons as dependent people with declines in intellect, cognitive and physical performance. Older persons are often perceived as a burden, a drain on resources, and persons in need of care".

The study which deals with the process of studying old age is defined as gerontology, and the study which revolves around the diseases which affects the elderly is called geriatrics. With such a vast array of dimensions that ageing has, it is very important to bend our focus on this cross-cutting domain. The way ageing is portrayed as a social problem for the reasons mentioned above, it has serious consequences on the physical and psychological aspects of elderly people belonging to different sections of the society.

Therefore, students are encouraged to participate and work by choosing from the following subtopics of their own choice and come forward with original and innovative ideas that would enhance the quality of work in the field of gerontology.

These are the following subtopics from which students are welcome to choose:

1. Economic and Demographic Perspectives on Aging
2. Elderly abuse and politics of daily life
3. Family system and the issues of ageing
4. Medical Perspectives on Aging, Health, Wellness
5. Ageing and Social Change
6. Life-Course and ageing

Referential Reading

1. Idler, E. & Kasl, S., 1997. *Religion Among Disabled And Nondisabled Persons II: Attendance At Religious Services As A Predictor Of The Course Of Disability*. 306-316: The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences.
2. Idler, E. L., 1987. Religious Involvement and the Health of the Elderly: Some Hypotheses and an Initial Test. *Social Forces*, pp. 226-238.
3. Idler, E. L., Kasl, S. V. & Hays, J. C., 2001. Patterns of Religious Practice and Belief in the Last Year of Life. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, pp. 326-334.
4. India, G. o., 2002e. *Project OASIS complete report*, New Delhi: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
5. India, H., 2014. *REPORT ON ELDER ABUSE IN INDIA*, s.l.: s.n.
6. Iwamasa, G. & Iwasaki, M., 2011. A New Multidimensional Model Of Successful Aging: Perceptions Of Japanese American Older Adults. *J Cross Cult Gerontology*, pp. 261-278.
7. Joseph, J. C., 1988. Integration Between the Old and the Young. *Social Welfare XXXV (b)*, pp. 7-23.

INEQUALITY IS THE BASIS OF ALL SOCIETY: DEBATE AND DISCUSS

The sociology of social stratification includes many basic and complex theoretical issues, which relate to the nature of social order, social equality and inequality, social justice, power and the nature of man. The conceptual and theoretical frames of sociology of stratification have therefore naturally struck points of convergence with other social sciences.

From the root word 'strata', we can recognize that social stratification refers to a ranking of people or groups of people within a society. Social stratification refers to a system with rather predictable rules behind the ranking of individuals and groups. The existence of a system of social stratification also implies the unequal distribution of valued goods, services and prestige and even beyond that and also implies some forms of legitimation of the ranking of people. Social stratification is the basis of social inequalities or rather it is a theoretical understanding of social differences. Social inequalities is based on some forms of social stratification – caste, class, gender, status, prestige, sex, age, occupation and many more. I have discussed some of these forms of social stratification to argue that "Inequality is the basis of all society".

We must recognize that the impact of social stratification is certainly increasing for both rich and poor nations. One has to be cautious about overstating the impact of globalization on domestic systems of social stratification around the world. Furthermore, social stratification and new comparative analysis of political economy more generally show that a nation's competitive position in the modern world system is affected by the nature of its system of social stratification. Since the earliest known writings on the nature of human societies, there has been recognition that social stratification is a central part of all human organization (Lenski 1966).

Thereby, students are requested to come forward and work on the following subtopics and are also welcome to reproduce innovative topics of their choice

1. The Role Social Stratification and Social Function
2. What Contributes to Social Strata
3. Impact of Social Stratification on Society
4. Class inequality and mobility
5. Inequality in education
6. Social exclusion
7. Place of Caste system in contemporary society

Referential Reading

1. Dumont, Louis(1970) Homo Hierarchicus : The caste system and its implications. New York :Oxford
2. Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. New York: Greenwood.
 3. Engels, F. (2010). The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. New York: Penguin UK.
 4. Marx, k. (1967). Capital: The process of capitalist production as a whole. International Publishers.

Situating Dalit Identity in the Caste Discourse of India

This sessional tries to look into the emergence of Dalit identity in contrast to mainstream caste discourses of India and would try to focus on - what it shows - how it shows - how is it different. Attempt in this sessional is drawn for an understanding so as to de/scribe the changing consciousness of Indians with regard to their caste identity. In this attempt, the students are encouraged to engage with few studies and theoretical writings on caste and Dalit for a critical understanding of the emerging alternatives in caste discourse in India.

1. Srinivas, M.N., 1952, "Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India", Oxford : Oxford Clarendon Press.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1976, "The Remembered Village", Delhi: Oxford University Press.
3. Zelliott, E., 2003, "Dr. Ambedkar and the Empowerment of Women", Edited in Rao, "Caste and Gender", New Delhi: Kali for women.
4. Ghurye, G.S., 2011, "Caste and Race in India", Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
5. Hardtmann, Eva-Maria, 2011, "The Dalit Movement in India: Local Practices, Global Connections", New Delhi : Oxford University Press.
6. Omvedt, Gail, 2011, "Understanding Caste: From Budha to Ambedkar and Beyond", New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited.
7. Dumont, Louis, 1966, "Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications", Delhi: Vikas Publications.

8. Fuller, C.J. (ed), 1997, "Caste Today", Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Doing Oral History

Programme UG 5th Semester, PG 1st and 3rd semester

This Course Runs for sixteens weeks

In this course students are at first introduced to certain preliminary texts on Oral History. As the sessional group of UG 5th semester students complete a major course on Qualitative research Methods in the previous semester, students are also asked to consider the possibilities of using oral history in sociological research. The sessional group meet weekly and design projects of their own, using interviews, videos, transcribing etc. on themes they choose. Discussions and reflections about techniques of oral history, ethical questions, theoretical debates are primarily addressed in discussions about the presentations. One of the crucial points on which the sessional group learns to reflect, is the various ways and implications of using Oral History in sociological research. Creating archives is one of the objectives of this course.

Assessment is continuous and based on discussions, the archives created and the projects designed by the students

Selected Readings:

Thompson, P. (2000). *Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Oxford University Press.

Dunaway, D.K. and W. K. Baum, (ed.) (1996). *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. 2nd ed. Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press.

Ingersoll, F. & J. Ingersoll. (1987). Both a Borrower and a Lender Be: Ethnography, Oral History, and Grounded Theory. *Oral History Review*. Spring 15, 81-102.

Baum, W. 2007. The Other Uses of Oral History. *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 34, Issue 1, pp. 13-24

Book Review: Sociology and History of Childhood

PG 2nd and 4th Semester

For this course students are asked to begin with a close reading of Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* to acquaint them with the beginning of a scholarship on childhood as a distinct biographical category. During the course students are asked to identify and review Aries' book as well as two other texts of their choice which are thematically linked to either the "discovery of childhood" or the sentimental transformations associated with privileging childhood as a special period. They are expected to chart out through the choice of texts the trajectory of Aries' work in contemporary historical and sociological research on childhood.

Assessment is continuous and based on discussions and a final 5000 word report that reviews and links the different texts.

Readings:

Aries, Philippe (1973): Centuries of childhood. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Book Review: Kinship

PG 1st semester

In this course students are asked to closely read two texts, Claude Levi Strauss's *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and David Schneider's *American Kinship*. The two texts afford postgraduate students a sweep of two compelling strands of theoretical work in Kinship research. Students also locate the texts within the oeuvre of the two authors as well as explore the various ways in which the arguments of the texts are developed on by contemporary research on Kinship eg. Janet Carsten's work on biogenetic material and connectedness to name one.

Assessment is continuous, based on class discussions and a final 5000 word report reviewing and discussing the divergence and intersection of the two texts.

Exploration of informal and formal dichotomy in urban spaces: A case study of Kolkata

Offered to PG students

Total Credit: 4 (50 Marks)

Urban Spaces are imbued with wide cultural, social, political and economic structures which constantly inform, engage and create urbanism in distinct character. It is a complex category which needs to be understood in its proper context. Formal and informal often overlap in these spaces as the very process of production of urban space is carried out by various social categories such as caste, class, religion and ethnicity. Social identity of urban spaces get defined through this interaction. Hence streets, markets, public and private spheres of interaction, modern gated communities, persistence of traditional villages in cities, ghettos and slums all these become critical geographical spaces. Cultural and material goods and artefacts are produced, distributed and consumed in accordance of the order of circulation. Cities become symptomatic with such consumption patterns. Local characteristics of urban spaces interact in a very peculiar way with global flows of distant cultures and commodities. How far urban spaces are able to withhold and sustain localism in the face of globalism is an important aspect to be probed in contemporary times.

Students are required to take up field of their choice to interrogate above concerns. Through the semester they need to prepare exhaustive list of readings related to their field work. They also need to collect data in their respective fields and critically analyse that in a long essay towards the end of the semester.

Based on the reading material that they collect they need to discuss it weekly in the classroom.