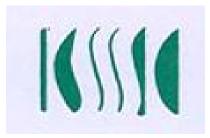# CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA

RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAMME

PROSPECTUS
2024-2025

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Research Training Programme 2024-25

About the Centre

The Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC) was founded in February 1973 to conduct and coordinate research in the social sciences. It is an autonomous body financed primarily by matching grants from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (Government of India) and the Government of West Bengal. The Centre's faculty is drawn from a wide range of disciplines, including history, economics, political science, development studies, sociology, gender studies, cultural studies, and social anthropology. In addition to research rooted within particular disciplines, the Centre has a culture of interdisciplinarity which allows for research in fields that might not find support in traditional department-based institutions. The Centre offers a PhD programme (that has been affiliated to Jadavpur University since 2009); it also used to offer a Research Training Programme until 2008 and an MPhil programme from 2009 to 2021.

Research Training Programme

Objectives

The current Research Training Programme (RTP) is an intensive, multi-disciplinary course meant to provide students with a general grasp of the main intellectual concerns of social science research and introduce them to important recent trends in different disciplines. RTP 2024-25 will run between August 2024 and June 2025. At the end of the programme, students who have successfully completed all requirements will be awarded a certificate and grade card issued by CSSSC.

The programme is aimed at students who are looking to read more in preparation for a PhD, wish for a firmer grounding in conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approaches, and have a general inquisitiveness about studies across the social sciences and humanities. An important aspect of the programme is the opportunity that it offers to do courses across the social sciences and humanities that people may not be able to do in conventional disciplinary departments. In addition to the coursework, students will have to undertake a short research project at the end of the programme [details given in the section on **RTP requirements and course details**]. By the end of the programme, students are expected to gain a better grounding in the social sciences and humanities and also develop an understanding of what is entailed in doing research.

Eligibility

Potential applicants must have a Masters degree or equivalent in any discipline with at least 50 percent marks. There is no age limit for application.

[There are **no restrictions** on working or doing other degree courses simultaneously with RTP as long as the student is able to fulfil all requirements.]

Application Process and Selection Procedure

The maximum number of students that may be admitted to the Research Training Programme 2024-25 is twenty. Applications should be sent in the prescribed application form along with a writing sample of 3000-4000 words, a statement of purpose/research interests of 500 to 1000 words, and final mark sheet of Masters. Shortlisted candidates will be called for an interview. The final selection will be made on the basis of the student's performance in the interview, writing sample and statement of purpose.

For full details on the above and the schedule of the application and admission process, please see the Information and Instructions sheet for RTP 2024-25.

Fees

The total fees to be paid by each student for the Research Training Programme is Rs. 20,000 (non-refundable). The fees may be paid in two installments, with the first installment of Rs. 10,000 due at the time of admission and the second installment of Rs.10, 000 due by 1 December 2024.

In addition, those who wish to avail of borrowing facilities at the library will have to pay a deposit of Rs. 1000, which will entitle them to borrow one book at a time.

The Centre will provide full fee waivers for **two** students. The waivers will be need-based.
Application for waivers of RTP fees will be invited after the selection process is completed and the decision about the waiver will be communicated before the admission process begins.

Mode of instruction

All courses will be taught off-line. In addition to attending classes, RTP students are also expected to participate actively in the academic life of the Centre.

Reading material

All courses are reading-intensive. Wherever available, soft copies of the readings will be made available. One set of hard copies of readings will be available for reference in the Centre's library. In addition, the Centre can also provide interested students with a full set of readings (hard copy) for each course <u>on payment of the cost of photocopying and spiral-binding</u>.

Medium of instruction

The medium of instruction, term papers, assignments, and student presentations, will be English.

Library, archive and computer facilities

The library of the Centre will be open to RTP students on all working days of the Centre from 10.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. Students will be subject to the general rules and procedures of the library.

Availing borrowing facilities will require payment of a separate library deposit.

RTP students may also consult the CSSSC Archive with prior permission.

A common room for reading and with provision of basic computer facilities is available at the Centre for RTP students.

Other information

The Centre cannot offer any accommodation facilities to the participants.

RTP requirements and course details

RTP is an intensive programme including two compulsory and three optional courses (with a total of 142 teaching hours) followed by a final project. RTP will be spread across five two-month slots. In the first slot (August-September 2024), students will have to take two compulsory courses – Vocabulary of the Social Sciences and Research Methods in Social Sciences. In the second, third and fourth slots (October-November 2024, January-February 2025 and March-April 2025), students can choose to take any one optional course from among the optional courses on offer in that particular slot. Please note that there is a wide variety of disciplinary and multidisciplinary optional courses that are available. However, only some of these will be on offer in each slot in a given academic year. The slot-wise list of courses in RTP 2024-25 (names, coordinators, instructors, and brief descriptions) is given at the end of this section. Students are expected to choose the optional courses around the end of August 2024 (that is, one month after they have joined). The minimum number of students required for an optional course to run is three.

Coursework requirements include attendance of all classes and doing the required readings and assignments. Students cannot miss more than five classes in each course; otherwise the grade for the course will be withheld except in case of mitigating circumstances (such as medical reasons or bereavement). The mode of assessment of each course will be decided and communicated in advance by the respective course instructors. The final grade for each course will be given on a ten-point lettering grade scale [A+ = 9; A = 8; A— = 7; B+ = 6; B = 5; B— = 4; C+ = 3; C = 2; C— = 1; F = 0].

In the fifth slot (May-June 2025), students are expected to conduct a research project under the supervision of a faculty member. Depending on the research topic, the output of the project could take the form of a written paper along with a presentation or production of a media object or a performance. Supervisors will be assigned in the beginning of 2025 and students can start working towards their project well in advance. Final projects will also be graded on the same scale as the coursework.

The RTP grade card will show the grades obtained in individual courses as well as the Cumulative Grade Point Average.

A summary of the RTP requirements is given below:

Slot No.	Period	Course	Teaching hours per week	Total teaching hours in slot
1	August-September 2024	2 Compulsory courses (Vocabulary of the Social Sciences and Research Methods in Social Sciences)	4 hours per week for each course x 2 courses = 8 teaching hours per week	8 hours per week x 7 weeks + additional 2 hours = 58 teaching hours
2	October-November 2024	Optional 1 (to be chosen from list given below)	4 teaching hours per week	4 x 7 = 28 teaching hours
3	January-February 2025	Optional 2 (to be chosen from list given below)	4 teaching hours per week	4 x 7 = 28 teaching hours
4	March-April 2025	Optional 3 (to be chosen from list given below)	4 teaching hours per week	4 x 7 = 28 teaching hours
5	May-June 2025	Final research project Deliverable: Written paper and presentation OR production of a media object OR a performance	RESEARCH UNDER ASSIGNED SUPERVISOR	

Courses in Slot 1 (August-September 2024) with names of coordinators:
 Two compulsory courses

1. Vocabulary of the Social Sciences – Asha Singh
             and
2. Research Methods in Social Sciences – Satish

Courses on offer in Slot 2 (October-November 2024) with names of coordinators:
 any *one* course to be chosen by students

   1. Feminism in the Social Sciences – Trina Nileena Banerjee
      or
   2. Introduction to Modern Social Thought – Rosinka Chaudhuri
      or
   3. Games and Culture(s)- Souvik Mukherjee
      or
   4. Perspectives on Development – Priya Sangameswaran

Courses on offer in Slot 3 (January-February 2025) with names of coordinators:
any *one* course to be chosen by students

1. Rethinking Political Theory – Maidul Islam
   or
2. Rethinking Performance Studies – Trina Nileena Banerjee
   or
3. World History From Late Antiquity to Early Modernity – Rajarshi Ghose
   or
4. Advanced Macroeconomics – Pranab Kumar Das

Courses on offered in Slot 4 (March-April 2025) with names of coordinators:
any *one* course to be chosen by students

1. Critical Caste Studies – Satish
   or
2. Situating 'Science': Making of a Discipline – Anirban Das
   or
3. Introduction to softwares for data mining, data representation and data analysis – Sattwik Santra
   or
4. South Asia and the Early Modern World – Prachi Deshpande

In addition to the taught courses on particular topics, students also have the option of taking a reading course in Slot 4. The reading course would involve students (individually or in groups) doing directed readings with discussion and/or written assignments under one or more faculty on a topic of their interest. Evaluation criteria of the reading course will be communicated in advance by the concerned course coordinator.

Course outlines

VOCABULARY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
Course Coordinator: Asha Singh

Instructors: Asha Singh, Maidul Islam, Prachi Deshpande, Saibal Kar, Trina Nileena Banerjee

This course will focus on a number of concepts that are key to the social sciences. Such concepts not only define the social sciences as a distinct field of enquiry, they have also been durable, as well as malleable over time, in helping scholars understand social phenomena. A familiarity with these concepts will introduce students to the diversity of social science analysis, as well as some of the common questions that are key to social scientific frameworks across different disciplines. The course will take up five such concepts for closer scrutiny: language, culture, caste, property, and development. How does language as a category help understand social communication, hierarchy, power, and identity? What are the social

aspects that a focus on language helps illuminate, and what are the limits of language as a social marker? How do we understand caste as a category in changing socio-economic and political contexts? Do we approach it as a cultural subset of religion or as a dynamic force that shapes and is shaped by religion, economy, law or region? We will reflect on the conceptual possibilities and perils of using caste as an analytical frame to understand the realities of the subcontinent. We look at the concept of 'Culture' through the works of the Frankfurt school, trying to understand culture's relationship to 'commodity' and 'capital' in the modern world. We also explore the work of major social and cultural anthropologists of the twentieth century, examining their ideas about culture's relationship to social transformation, ritual structures, crises and 'social drama'. The category of property is essential in understanding the relationship between human beings and nature as well as among fellow humans. In this respect, the readings on property will primarily ask three questions. How did private property emerge in human societies? Are there any moral justifications for acquiring property? What are the limitations of property in the presence of state and individual and with propertied and propertyless classes? In answering these questions, we will examine the liberal, libertarian and Marxist views on property. The category of development shall engage with the core tenets of development economics and review the contemporary analytical and empirical research on aspects of income distribution, migration, and public policies.

RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES
Course Coordinator: Satish
Instructors: Pranab Kumar Das, Rajarshi Ghose, Satish, Souvik Mukerjee

This course offers students a foundation of the methods in the social sciences and humanities, followed by basic statistics, ethnography, interviews, and digital methods. The principle concern here is to make students familiar with both conceptual and research techniques/procedures pertaining to methods so as to train them to make their own choice of research methods as well as to enable them to engage critically with the different fields and respondents and deploy methodological tools.

FEMINISM AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
Course Coordinator: Trina Nileena Banerjee
Instructors: Anirban Das, Trina Nileena Banerjee, Debdatta Chowdhury, Asha Singh, Vibhuti Nayak

This course will explore the success with which feminist theory has recast or challenged the social sciences. In particular, reference will be made to developments – conceptual, methodological, and empirical – within the realms of history, political science, sociology and sexuality studies. One set of questions within this course will examine how feminist scholarship has changed the dominant models of research on politics and society by forging new theoretical and conceptual apparatuses as well as new methods of enquiry. It will discuss the question of feminism's challenges to theorizing on knowledge and experience, and look at its encounters with questions of nation, state, citizenship and law, as well as its intersections with caste and race. It will briefly explore the influence of feminist criticism on the fields of literature, film studies, visual art and performance studies, as well as feminist historiography and ethnography.

INTRODUCTION TO MODERN SOCIAL THOUGHT
Course Coordinator: Rosinka Chaudhuri
[instructors to be announced]

This course will focus on selected themes and issues that are central to an understanding of recent academic approaches to the philosophy of modernity, modern forms of power, governmental techniques, nationalism, Orientalism, postcoloniality, cultural studies, and social practice. The course will also address issues such as colonisation, decolonisation, neo-colonisation, postcolonial theory and critical traditions, empire, the nation, and the subaltern. The lectures will be built around individual texts, among others, of Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, Bruno Latour, Edward Said, Benedict Anderson, Talal Asad and Elizabeth Grosz, mainly using single books read over three classes, as well as some essay readings where appropriate.

GAMES AND CULTURE(S)
Course coordinator and instructor: Souvik Mukerjee

This course will look at play as a crucial yet much neglected aspect of culture; as historian Johan Huizinga describes it culture as *sub specie ludii*, loosely translated as 'in the guise of a game'. Introducing key themes in the still nascent area of game studies, the lectures will address ideas of agency, perception, temporality, telos, being/becoming, plurality and identity by looking mainly at videogames, board games and artificial intelligence. The course will challenge and add to traditional concepts of narrative and play through the lenses of hypertextuality, critical software studies and platform studies.

On completing this course, students should be able to:
  a. provide an overview of Game Studies and situate it within larger Humanities discourses.
  b. critically read games and apply the principles of play to the Humanities and Social Sciences.
  c. contribute ideas towards creating games for global contexts, such as, particularly questions of conflict, climate change and discrimination

If you are interested in researching games and digital humanities, then this course is for you. Game-designers, practitioners of electronic writing and those with a general curiosity about the field may also apply. The course will require regular participation and interaction with digital and board games. The final assignment will be a 10-12 page review essay or an original digital/ board game object.

PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT
Course coordinator and instructor: Priya Sangameswaran

This course aims to give an overview of different approaches to think about 'development'. It starts with a history of the term and its changing meanings (with respect to economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions). Different critical approaches to mainstream discourses of development are then discussed such as Marxist and the post-development critiques. Moving away from metanarratives, the course then turns to the question of what anthropological approaches, with their focus on 'process' and 'meaning,' have to offer to the understanding of how development works. Finally, the course will introduce students to different ways of thinking about the set of policies and ideologies that are broadly referred to as 'neoliberalism'. While it would not be possible for a single course to deal with all the concepts and themes that have been central to development, a limited number of them (such as planning and expertise, nature,

and the interaction between agriculture and industry) will be explored while discussing different approaches.

RETHINKING POLITICAL THEORY
Course Coordinator and instructor: Maidul Islam

This course aims to examine the linkages between political theory and political philosophy, political theory and political ideology, and political theory and political economy. More specifically, it will examine why political theory is important, the lessons of political theory, how political theory responds to demands of justice, demands of capitalist development, demands of democracy, the concepts of liberty and equality, and conceptual issues to the study of political ideologies.

RETHINKING PERFORMANCE STUDIES IN INDIA: PERSPECTIVES, THEORIES AND METHODS
Course Coordinator and instructor: Trina Nileena Banerjee

This course will introduce students to the broad disciplinary field of Performance Studies, with a focus on forms of embodiment and presence, on spaces of practice, production and reception, as well as on modes of reproduction, circulation, communication and perception. We shall concentrate on different modes of analysing and theorizing diverse performance practices, the skills of 'thick description', semiotic analysis as well as contextual framing but also engage with the historical debates around the phenomenological experience of performing and witnessing a performance, and everything that lies in between. The course will look at the historical development of Performance Studies as a disciplinary field in the US, its roots in social and cultural anthropology, and its links and divergences with Theatre Studies as it was known in Europe. It will also examine the new modes of pedagogy and writing that developed within the field and its interactions with performance practitioners. We will also look at the theoretical and political challenges that some of the early formulations of Performance Studies faced from the global south and its relationship to the disciplines of History and the traditional social sciences. Most importantly, we will try to examine the specific relevance of these histories to the Indian context, the possible interfaces and conflicts with theories of performance that belong to this subcontinent and the particular challenges of Performance Studies pedagogy in South Asia. The course will also examine the most long-standing debates in the field about what constitutes the 'ontology' of performance, and what makes for its specificity as a phenomenon, an event or a form of art. We will study the implications of issues of 'liveness' and 'presence' in performance; the roots of visual/linguistic interpretation and ethnography in the realm of ritual performance; the possibility of having a textual or visual archive of performance genres; the problems with a discursive translation of embodied performance; the semiotics of the performing body as well as the embodied transmission of history; as well as the problems of understanding spectatorship within the limits of the alleged transience of performance as an experience. In short, we will attempt to ask, what is performance? How to understand it? How does performance make history? What remains when a performance is over? What is the relationship between an archive of performance and a repertoire of living practices? What are many divergent methods and approaches that make the field of Performance Studies historically? What is their specific relevance in South Asia? How does the theoretical field of Performance Studies interact with performance practitioners? How might theory and practice transform each other in their encounter with the diverse modes of thinking about and experiencing performance? The course will take students through the basics of Performance Studies theory, and organise screenings, discussions and workshops/seminars on these questions.

WORLD HISTORY FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO EARLY MODERNITY
Course Coordinator and Instructor: Rajarshi Ghose

This course explores the third to the eighteenth century as a period in world history. Besides several other epochal events, this millennia and half witnessed the fall of the Roman Empire, the rise and expansion of the Islamic Empire, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Europe, the rule of the Song and the Ming dynasties in China, the establishment of the Mongol empire, the rise of the Ottoman, the Mughal, and the Safavid dynasties, and the beginnings of European seaborne empires.

The main focus of this course will be to understand how political authority was constituted and social power was forged across heterogeneous cultures over a millennium and half. We will study transformations inreligious imaginaries during the period, changes in the notions of sovereignty and legal cultures, the impact that bureaucratic and juristic innovations had on the social production of knowledge, and the articulation of political thought at the intersection of religious and legal discourses.

The course will examine the discursive and material processes of legitimation that pre-modern regimes evolved and the various literary and aesthetic registers that they established for the purpose. It will probe why political ideas and legal conventions developed by some dispensations endured over millennia, and why at times new regimes preferred to work with institutional practices, legal conventions, and political languages innovated by older ones.

Thus, through a survey of some historiographical debates on a period spanning a millennium and half, the course will seek to grapple with the problem of how the "new" enters the world, how continuities and/or ruptures are fashioned in human history, and how such claims are superseded in social and political domains. Even though the course is not designed to be presentist in its orientation, we will be reflecting in class on why and how traces of the "pre-modern" continue to powerfully mold politics and sociality around us.

There will be plenty of reading for every class, and students will be required to critically engage with them. The final assignment will comprise a 12-14-page review essay.

ADVANCED MACROECONOMICS
Course Coordinator and Instructor: Pranab Kumar Das

The course engages with the below mentioned objectives.

1. The issues and the agenda in macroeconomics and the evolution of the different schools of thought.
2. Ramsey-Cass-Koopmans (RCK) model as the basis of advanced macroeconomic analysis.
3. Overlapping Generations Model (OLG) – Derivation and comparison with dynastic household.
4. Application to Public Finance, Pension, Financial Sector, Monetary policy.
5. Demographic Transition and Growth.
6. Human Capital, Education and Growth.

CRITICAL CASTE STUDIES
Course Coordinator and Instructor: Satish

This interdisciplinary course will study the metamorphosis of caste, foregrounding more on the issues unfolded in contemporary times. It critically engages with two sets of literature, focusing on the articulations around privileges and the sources to retain them, and secondly, the resistance towards these privileges. This course attempts to bring them together while engaging at three levels: theoretical, methodological, and substantial. Some of the research themes that are going to be discussed in this course are domination and exploitation, redistribution and recognition, hermeneutics of suspicion, and hermeneutics of faith through the writings of/on MK Gandhi, BR Ambedkar, Karl Marx, Pierre Bourdieu and others.

More particularly, this course would address questions such as:

How are categories and practices of "caste" constructed and contested over time and across geographies?
What are the key institutional sources for caste identities, positions, and sources of power?
How are caste identities and positions subjected to social positions based on other institutions based on social identities?
How have social movements framed and challenged caste discrimination and identities?
How does "caste" in its various representations compare to other hierarchical systems globally?

SITUATING 'SCIENCE': MAKING OF A DISCIPLINE
Course Coordinator: Anirban Das
[instructors to be announced]

This course will address the history, sociology and philosophy of the sciences and will trace the contours of the changing paradigms—both in the western tradition and the Indic space—in thinking about knowledge and matter. Students will be introduced to a set of debates regarding methodology for the study of science (for example, Popper, Kuhn, Feyerabend, Lakatos on the one hand and Bachelard, Canguillhem, Foucault on the other). Two or more of the following themes will be discussed in each year – (a) perspectival conflicts between realism and relativism (b) tensions between sociological, anthropological, historical and conceptual analyses of the sciences (c) the Marxian and the poststructuralist turns that induced, in opposition or in unison, the multiple forms of questioning the authority of Science (d) Sciences in the context of colonization and decolonization (e) science's relation with technology on the one hand and with the social sciences and humanities on the other (f) the Feminist interventions in the study of science. The course will lay an especial emphasis on the self-definition of 'modern science' and subject it to a critical scrutiny.

INTRODUCTION TO SOFTWARES FOR DATA MINING, DATA REPRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS
Course coordinator and instructor: Sattwik Santra

This course provides an introduction to the fundamental concepts and tools used in data mining, data

representation, and data analysis. Through a combination of lectures, hands-on exercises, and real-world examples, students will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of modern data analysis software.

Course Objectives:

- To understand the principles and techniques of data mining, data representation, and data analysis.
- To familiarize students with popular software tools used for data mining and analysis.
- To develop practical skills in manipulating, visualizing, and interpreting data using software.
- To enable students to apply data mining and analysis techniques to real-world problems.
- To cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving abilities in the context of data analysis.

SOUTH ASIA AND THE EARLY MODERN WORLD
Course Coordinator and Instructor: Dr. Prachi Deshpande

This course focuses on the Indian subcontinent during the 'Early Modern Period', roughly the period from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. This was a period of great expansion in global scale, with the emergence of large empires such as the Mughals, Safavids and Ottomans, the discovery of new sea by European explorers, and the establishment of new trading relations and networks across different regions of the globe. People, plants, animals, manufactured goods, raw materials, as well as ideas, manuscripts, words, and skills moved along these routes and networks, and set off many changes in agriculture, language, community, social relations, and political and cultural practices. India and South Asia played a critical role in the making of this expanded, 'connected' world. The Mughal empire was established, along with many regional states such as the Marathas, Sikhs, and others. There was much ferment in political and bureaucratic systems, in linguistic and cultural practices, as well as in community formation at different local, regional, and transregional levels. We will read the recent scholarship on this period, which has drawn on multiple historiographical approaches, such as microhistory, art history, and global history. It has also focused on many different groups from scribes, mercenaries, merchants, and explorers to Sufis, painters, legal scholars, and weavers. The course objective is to introduce students to this diverse historiography, with a view to understanding South Asia on the eve of colonialism, and the complexity of the Indian subcontinent's connections to the wider early modern world. There will be plenty of reading for every class, and students will be required to critically engage in discussions and comment on the readings. The final assignment will comprise a 10-12-page review essay.

Auditing individual courses offered under Research Training Programme.
Interested students may take individual courses being offered under the Research Training Programme. The fees and number of auditors permitted will vary by course. Further details will be announced shortly on the CSSSC website (under Academic Programmes).