

CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA



Auditing Individual Courses offered under Research Training Programme (RTP)

The 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. The full programme is for a duration of ten months, but interested students may also take individual courses being offered under it as auditors. The list of courses on offer in the academic year 2024-25 along with the fees and the maximum number of auditors permitted in each course (if applicable) is given in Table 1. The outlines of all courses offered under RTP 2024-25 are given at the end.

Each course will run for seven weeks, with two 2-hour classes each week (that is, a total of 28 teaching hours). Courses will be spread across four slots between August 2024 and April 2025 and students may apply until a week before the start of courses (details for each course given in Table 2). All courses will be taught off-line. The medium of instruction and assignments will be English.

Eligibility criteria for auditors is a Masters degree or equivalent in any discipline with at least 50 percent marks. Applicants can directly apply to the course coordinator via email (addresses given in Table 2) and should be copied to the Research Cell (researchcell@cssscal.org). Once the application is approved by the course coordinator, further processing will be done by the Research Cell.

Auditors will be awarded a certificate for the course they take if they complete all course requirements (including attendance and written assignments). Auditors cannot miss more than five classes in the course.

Table 1: Names and details of courses on offer in 2024-25

No	Name of the Course	Course Coordinator and email contact	Fees	Maximum Number of Auditors
1	Vocabulary of the Social Sciences	Asha Singh asha@cssscal.org	5,000	05
2	Research Methods in Social Sciences	Satish satishchennur@cssscal.org	6,000	15
3	Introduction to Modern Social Thought	Rosinka Chaudhuri rosinka@cssscal.org	4,000	No upper limit
4	Feminism in the Social Sciences	Trina Nileena Banerjee trina@cssscal.org	4,000	No upper limit
5	Games and Culture(s)	Souvik Mukherjee souvik@cssscal.org	8000	10
6	Perspectives on Development	Priya Sangameswaran priya@cssscal.org	3,000	10

7	Rethinking Political Theory	Maidul Islam maidul@cssscal.org	3,500	No upper limit
8	World History From Late Antiquity to Early Modernity	Rajarshi Ghose rajarshighose@cssscal.org	4,000	No upper limit
9	Advanced Macroeconomics	Pranab Kumar Das pkdas@cssscal.org	8,000	05
10	Rethinking Performance Studies	Trina Nileena Banerjee trina@cssscal.org	5,000	No upper limit
11	Critical Caste Studies	Satish satishchennur@cssscal.org	3,000	No upper limit
12	Situating 'Science': Making of a Discipline	Anirban Das anirban@cssscal.org	3,500	No upper limit
13	South Asia and the Early Modern World	Prachi Deshpande pdeshpande@cssscal.org	4,000	No upper limit
14	Introduction to softwares for data mining, data representation and data analysis	Sattwik Santra sattwik@cssscal.org	5,000	No upper limit

Table 2: Course slots and deadlines for application

	Slot in which course offered	Class timing	Deadline for application
Courses 1 and 2	August-September 2024	Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11.30 am to 1.30 pm and 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm respectively	29 th July, 2024
Courses 3 to 6	October-November 2024	Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11.30 am to 1.30 pm	23 rd September, 2024
Courses 7to 10	January-February 2025	Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11.30 am to 1.30 pm	24 th December, 2024
Courses 11 to 14	March-April 2025	Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11.30 am to 1.30 pm	24 th February, 2025

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 Mukherjee

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

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 Mukherjee

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 in religious 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

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: 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.


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