

CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA



RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAMME

**PROSPECTUS
2025-26**

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Research Training Programme 2025-26

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, social anthropology, and geography. 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. In 2024, it recommenced the Research Training Programme with a new structure.

Research Training Programme

Objectives

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. RTP 2025-26 will run between August 2025 and June 2026. 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, have a general inquisitiveness about debates across the social sciences and humanities, and wish for a firmer grounding in the concepts, theories, and methodologies of different disciplines. An important aspect of the programme is the opportunity that it offers to do courses across the social sciences and humanities which 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. Students who are appearing for their final exams in the Masters or awaiting their results can also apply for RTP 2025-26 provided they are able to **provide proof of their result and of the fulfillment of eligibility criteria at the time of admission**.

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 2025-26 is twenty (20). 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 1000 words, and Masters mark sheet. **Please**

note that if the writing sample or statement of purpose/research interests is found to exceed the designated length, the application will be immediately rejected and not be considered for shortlisting. Candidates will be shortlisted for the interview process on the basis of the statement of purpose/research interests, writing sample, and fit with the Centre's faculty interests and areas of expertise. The final selection will be made on the basis of the student's performance in the interview, writing sample and statement of purpose/research interests.

For full details on the above and the schedule of the application and admission process, please see the Information and Instructions sheet for RTP 2025-26.

Fees

The total fees to be paid by each student for the Research Training Programme is Rs. 30,000 (non-refundable). The fees may be paid in two installments, with the first installment of Rs. 15,000 due at the time of admission and the second installment of Rs. 15,000 due by 1 December 2025.

In addition, there is a refundable library fee of Rs. 2500.

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 list of selected candidates is declared 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 on payment of the cost of photocopying and spiral-binding.

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.

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 RTP students.

RTP requirements and course details

RTP is an intensive programme including two compulsory and three optional courses followed by a final project. RTP will be spread across five two-month slots. In the first slot (August-September 2025), 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 2025, January-February 2026 and March-April 2026), 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 2025-26 (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 2025. 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 letter 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 2026), 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 2026 and students can start working towards their project well in advance. Final projects will 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 | Class Timing | Total teaching hours in slot |
|----------|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| 1 | August-September 2025 | 2 Compulsory courses (Vocabulary of the Social Sciences and Research Methods in Social Sciences) | Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11.30 to 1.30 pm and 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm | 8 hours per week x 7.5 weeks = 60 teaching hours |
| 2 | October-November 2025 | Optional 1 (to be chosen from list given below) | Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11.30 to 1.30 pm* | 4 x 7 = 28 teaching hours* |
| 3 | January-February 2026 | Optional 2 (to be chosen from list given below) | Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11.30 to 1.30 pm* | 4 x 7 = 28 teaching hours* |

| | | | | |
|---|------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| 4 | March-April 2026 | Optional 3 (to be chosen from list given below) | Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11.30 to 1.30 pm* | 4 x 7 = 28 teaching hours* |
| 5 | May-June 2026 | Final research project Deliverable: Written paper and presentation OR production of a media object OR a performance | RESEARCH UNDER ASSIGNED SUPERVISOR: No regular classes. However, students are expected to meet regularly with their assigned supervisor, devote time to their research, and present their final output at the Centre. | |

* If the reading course option is chosen, there will be no in-class teaching involved. Students will be expected to meet with the reading course coordinator at pre-fixed times during the slot.

**Courses in Slot 1 (August-September 2025) with names of coordinators:
Two compulsory courses**

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

**Courses on offer in Slot 2 (October-November 2025) with names of coordinators:
any *one* course to be chosen by students**

1. Feminism in the Social Sciences – Trina Nileena Banerjee
or
2. Games and Culture(s) – Souvik Mukherjee
or
3. Critical Caste Studies – Satish
or
4. Situating ‘Science’: Making of a Discipline – Anirban Das
or
5. Reading course [details given at end of section]

**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. South Asia and the Early Modern World – Prachi Deshpande
or
4. Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity - Kumari Vibhuti Nayak
or
5. Reading course [details given at end of section]

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

1. Introduction to softwares for data mining, data representation and data analysis – Sattwik Santra
or
2. Introduction to Modern Social Thought – Rosinka Chaudhuri
or
3. World History From Late Antiquity to Early Modernity – Rajarshi Ghose
or
4. Perspectives on Development – Priya Sangameswaran
or
5. Reading course [details given below]

Instead of the taught courses on particular topics, students have the option of taking a reading course in any one of the slots for optional courses (Slot 2, Slot 3, or Slot 4). The reading course would involve students (individually or in groups) doing directed readings with discussion and 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. The faculty members who are available to coordinate reading courses in each slot will be communicated to students by the time of Orientation.

Note: Students cannot do more than one reading course as an optional course in RTP. Students may also choose to only take the taught optional courses and not do any reading course.

Course outlines

VOCABULARY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Course Coordinator: Priya Sangameswaran

Instructors: Anirban Das, Priya Sangameswaran, Rajarshi Ghose, Rosinka Chaudhuri, Satish

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, but they have also been durable as well as malleable over time. 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. This year, the course will take up five such concepts for closer scrutiny: space, culture, temporality, theory, and nature.

RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Course Coordinator: Asha Singh

Instructors: Asha Singh, Maidul Islam, Rajarshi Ghose, Rosinka Chaudhuri, Sattwik Santra, Souvik Mukerjee

This course offers students a foundation in the methods of the social sciences and humanities, with an introduction to basic quantitative techniques, qualitative methods, gender and fieldwork, historical method, reading critically, and digital methods. The principal concern here is to train students to engage critically with methods in different fields and enable them to make an intelligent choice of methods for their own research.

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.

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.

Challenging and adding to traditional concepts of narrative and play through the lenses of hypertextuality, critical software studies and platform studies, these lectures will raise key questions that will involve a reappraisal of topics in the Humanities and Social Sciences. It will also help bring the focus back on cultures of play that are now much-neglected in academia.

If you are interested in researching games and digital humanities, then this course is for you. Gamedesigners, 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.

CRITICAL CASTE STUDIES

Course Coordinator and Instructor: Satish

This inter and multi disciplinary course will study the metamorphosis of caste, engages with categories and practices of caste and how it has fore-grounded over time and across geographies 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. Though it appears to be pitched at binary, but an attempt is to transcend antinomies either through combine or alternate between the two opposite perspectives or even think beyond these, probably arriving at synthesis (Hegelian way) or structuration (Giddens way). More particularly, this course would address some pointed questions such as: 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: Arunima Chakrabarty, Priya Sangameswaran, Anirban Das

This course will address the history, sociology and philosophy of the sciences and will trace the contours of the changing paradigms 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.

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: 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.

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 and ferment in agriculture, language, community, social relations, and political and cultural practices. India and South Asia, comprising played a critical role in the making of this expanded, 'connected' world. The Mughal empire was established, along with many regional states. There was much ferment in political and bureaucratic systems, in linguistic and cultural expression as well as in community formation at different local, regional, and transregional levels. We will read the recent research on this period, which has drawn on multiple historiographical approaches, such as microhistory, art history, global history, and focused on many different players, from scribes, mercenaries, merchants, and explorers, to Sufis, painters, legal scholars, and weavers. The course aims to introduce students to the richness of this research, with a view to understanding the complexity of South Asia's connections to the wider early modern world, on the eve of colonialism.

Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity: Theories, Intersections, and Power **Course Coordinator and Instructor: Kumari Vibhuti Nayak**

This course offers an in-depth exploration of the concepts of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity. It examines foundational theoretical frameworks, the social construction of these categories, their complex intersections with other social identities, and their profound relationship with power structures across diverse global contexts. This course engages with foundational thinkers (Fanon, 1952; Said, 1978) to deconstruct race, ethnicity and Indigeneity as fluid yet materially consequential social formations.

Building on Crenshaw's (1989) intersectional framework and Delgado & Stefancic's (2001) critical race theory, we interrogate how these categories function as what Foucault termed "technologies of power" in global and Indian contexts. The course apply Memmi's (1965) theory of colonization and Tuck & Yang's (2012) critique of decolonization to analyze: - to the biopolitics of structural racism (Mbembe, 2019), the racial formations (Guru, 2009), to Indigenous cosmologies versus settler coloniality (Simpson, 2017).

Through case studies from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to India's Adivasi movements, this course challenges liberal multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 1995) and expose what Mohanty (2003) calls the "racialized boundaries of citizenship." Finally, the course explores Santos' (2014) epistemologies of the South, centering subaltern resistance as praxis.

INTRODUCTION TO SOFTWARES FOR DATA MINING, DATA REPRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Course Coordinator and Instructor: Sattwik Santra

This course is a well balanced course tailored for those aspiring to harness the power of softwares for data-driven decision making. This course serves as a gateway to understanding and applying the essential techniques of data mining, data representation, and data analysis, using softwares.

Course Overview

In today's data-centric world, the ability to analyze and interpret vast amounts of data is crucial and this course is structured to provide a grounding from basic syntax to advanced data manipulation and visualization techniques.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand the fundamentals of computers and programming.
2. Develop skills in data mining techniques to uncover patterns and relationships within large datasets.
3. Learn methods of data representation to effectively communicate findings.
4. Gain proficiency in data analysis and the ability to apply statistical models and predictive analytics.

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 module 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 Immanuel Kant, Michel Foucault, Karl Marx, Edward Said, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Giorgio Agamben, mainly using a variety of articles and chapters read over three or four classes by individual instructors.

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.

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.

Auditing individual courses offered under Research Training Programme.

Students who are not able to do the full 10-month RTP may take individual courses being offered under the RTP. The fees and number of auditors permitted will vary by course. Details will be available shortly in a separate note on the CSSSC website (under Academic Programmes).

Dated: 05.05.2025


Registrar
CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN
SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA