Ambedkar University Delhi

Course Outline

Winter Semester

School: Liberal Studies (Kashmere Gate)

Programme with title: MA History

Semester to which offered: Only for Semester IV students of MA History.

Course Title: What Is Intellectual History in India?

Credits: 8

Course Code (new): SUS2HS3--

Course Code (old):

Type of Course: Compulsory: every MA History student is required to complete a 300-level 'research paper'.

For SUS only (Mark an X for as many as appropriate):

1. Foundation (Compulsory)
2. Foundation (Elective)
3. Discipline (Compulsory):
4. Discipline (Elective)
5. Elective:

Course Coordinator and Team: Denys P. Leighton (WS 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018)

Email of course coordinator: denys@aud.ac.in

Pre-requisites: Given location of this course in Semester IV of the programme, it is assumed that students undertaking the 300-level course have passed all four compulsory MA History courses (SLS2HS001. . . 004: 16 credits) and at least 24 credits of other MA courses, including MA History electives.

Aim: The 300-level research course is an 'independent study' exercise designed to test the research and writing skills acquired by the MA History student over the previous three programme semesters. The predominant mode of interaction is one-on-one between student and the research guide. There could be occasional group meetings of students assigned to the same guide.

Until fairly recently, *intellectual history* was usually understood as the *history of ideas*. Most intellectual historians studied the 'great' ideas of influential political thinkers, philosophers, men (rarely women) of letters, and counselors to the powerful. The ideas of the common people of any society were rarely noticed by intellectual historians; that was the realm of 'cultural history'. Today, intellectual history has been largely subsumed under socio-cultural history, with historians examining the wider history of culture and humans' exchange and uses of ideas and being especially attentive to language and 'discourse' as the medium of thought. In a move related to the shift towards study of cultural practices (of whole societies), intellectual historians today are attending to the intellectual lives of non-elite people: e.g., Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (2000). A key premise of intellectual history today is that thought and ideas can be studied in any human historical context, through many forms of 'evidence' (e.g., inscriptions, popular dramas, books, sculptures, buildings). While some societies and historical periods allow readier access to ideas and thought through concrete evidence than others, it is possible to study the intellectual history of any society and any grouo or 'category' within it. Intellectual history may involve but need not be reduced to study of the ideologies of ruling and subordinated groups.

This seminar provides a vantage point for studying ideas and their uses in India. Some particular problematics of intellectual history in India will be investigated. Students will choose their topics of investigation/writing with attention to ideas, people bearing or using them, 'events' and processes of change that can be studied historically in India. They will be oriented towards the processes of intellectual history by an initial course of reading of work by such historians as Quentin Skinner, Dominick LaCapra, Sheldon Pollock, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Kumkum Chatterjee.

Suggestive themes/rubrics:
Orientalism, the colonial gaze and colonial historiography
Symbols of kingship and authority in ancient (or medieval) India
Ideas of India in global context
Indian Europhiles and Europhobes: Rammohun Roy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Tagore, Aurobindo
Indian Marxism: origins and trajectories
History writing in India
The idea of caste as a factor in Indian history

Reading list and learning resources:

Annabel Brett, 'What is Intellectual History Now?', in D. Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now?* (London, 2002).

Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, 8 (1969): 393-408; reprinted in Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Vol. I* (Cambridge, 2002).

J. E. Toews, 'Intellectual History After the Linguistic Turn', *American Historical Review*, 92 (1987): 879-907.

Sheldon Pollock, 'Is There an Indian Intellectual History?', *Journal of Indian Philosophy,* 36

(2008): 533-42.

Kumkum Chatterjee, 'History as Self-Representation: the Recasting of Political Tradition in Late 18th-century Eastern India', *Modern Asian Studies*, 32 (1998): 913-48.

Kumkum Chatterjee, 'The King of Controversies: History and Nation-Making in Late Colonial India', *Am.Hist.Rev.*, 110:4 (2005): 1454-75.

Assessment schedule with details of weightage:

Same as for other MA History 'research papers': the major assessment is a 5000-word research essay submitted at the end of the semester (late April/early May). Other components of assessment are a mid-term 'progress presentation' (viva) in the month of March and the viva examination following submission of the final research essay.

{Denys P. Leighton}