

CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES,SSS,JNU

MPHIL OPTIONAL COURSE TEXTS IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY (PO 630)

What is a text? How should we read a text? Is it enough to move from sentence to sentence, page by page, from the beginning to the end of a text? How do we arrive at the meaning of the text? Should we focus on the author's intended meaning? Can we arrive at the meaning of a text that was written in a different historical period? What is the purpose of reading texts? What constitutes the text? Does the text have clearly marked boundaries?

Drawing upon the debates in the philosophy of the social sciences, in particular in and around the hermeneutic tradition, the aim of the Course is to - i) introduce students to some of the methodological and philosophical issues involved in reading a text and understanding its meaning; b) appreciate the complex issues involved in interpreting a text by systematically reading an identified text.

This year, the Course will examine one major text in western political philosophy and one text from the Indian political tradition. The students would be required to read the prescribed text along with interpretations of the text in order to understand the nature of the knowledge claims embedded in our reading of a text.

Each student will be asked to initiate discussion on specific sections of the identified text and submit one Term paper. Evaluation of these would be supplemented by an end term examination where students would be required to write an Essay around the texts that have been collectively read and discussed.

Readings

Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas", *History and Theory*, 1969.

Hans G Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, London: Sheed & Ward, 2nd edition, 1989, Part Two, section II, subsection a) and b)

Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distantiation", in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981

James Tully [ed.], *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980

Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique*, London: Routledge, 1980

Kurt, Mueller-Vollmer, [ed.], *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, Continuum Reprint Edition, 1988

Hugh J. Silverman, *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, London: Routledge, 1994

Lawrence, K. Schmidt, *Understanding Hermeneutics*, Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2014

Anthony C. Thisleton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, William B. Eerdmans, 2009