

CENTRE FOR COMPARATIVE POLITICS AND POLITICAL THEORY, SIS.

Ph.D. Coursework: CP 651 N

Comparing the Political: Concepts and Practices

Course Teacher: **Mollica Dastider**

Credits: **3**

Contact Hours: **4** hours per week

Course Title and type: **Comparing the Political: Concepts and Practices**

(Optional)

Course Objectives:

This course diversifies the 'political' in its ideas, concepts and practices.

A course on diversifying the Political, above all, would contribute to the Non-Western interventions in the Global Political thought.

The universality of western modernity as the model philosophy for the rest of the world has come under serious contestation in the societies of non western world. The global assertion on multiple knowledge epistemologies instead point towards the need for an engagement with multiple knowledge worlds and their distinctive political thinking.

This divergence in the 'political' perhaps is best manifested in the political reality in non western societies where the actual political practices and functioning differ widely from the normative or the universal Western Political Theory. The universality of western modernity as the model philosophy for the rest of the world has come under serious contestation in the societies of non western world. Thus when engaged with the contestations, diversities, and the lived-practices of the multiple knowledge worlds, not only can we *evaluate* the claim of universalism or foundationalism of the Western Theory, but can also Expand and Diversify the Scope and role of the Political into Ecology and Environment; into Ethics and Values; into Indigenous sovereignty as self governance; or even in the contingency or limitation of Anthropocentric control over the Non-human world.

The Course therefore would educate on the widened the scope of the 'Political'; from its narrow anthropocentric notion of governance to a 'worldview'. A worldview that situates the (human-only) Democracy within the Diversity and the Dynamism of the Non human world.

COURSE OUTCOME:

A Course on Diversifying the Political, above all, would contribute to the Non western interventions in the Global Political thought.

In identifying the limitedness of the human agency in the dynamism of the Non-human world, this course will inform, educate and sensitize researchers on the current challenges that the age of Anthropocene poses before the Global governance

Public policy formulations in the post pandemic world *are* but entwined with climate and public health emergencies. Political economic decisions will have to take cognition of the constraints posed by the Crisis in Ecology. Expecting adequate rainfall for good crop production; or retention of a country's water resources by conserving glacier fed river systems of the land, for instance, would be crucial for any political regimes. This course therefore would also work towards educating students about the new and crucial areas of Policy Advocacy.

The content of the Course would make the students informed and aware of the widened scope, and the role of Political governance in the new area of Ecology. As political ecological policies would influence the political-economic decisions of a state on (a) Energy planning; (b) Water policy; (c) Conservation of renewable Natural resources; (d) Urban Air quality manangement. In addition to the policy initiatives on Public Ethics in times of health emergencies and air quality crisis; and in incorporating Community Knowledge practices in the sustenance of fragile ecologies.

Evaluation Method: Out of Maximim100 marks

70 marks for the Term Paper (20 marks for class presentation; 50 marks for the revised and final version of the submitted paper)

30 marks for End semester examination.

Course Contents

Comparing the Political: Concepts and Practices is a course that primarily understands the *political* in its ideas, concepts and practices. The contingent nature of the Foundation/Ground/Essence of the modern Western Political Philosophy perhaps is best evident in the manifestation of modern day politics in the non western societies. The *political difference*, therefore, has to be understood in the difference between the ‘Norms’ of Western Political Theory and the dominant political practices of a given region.

I What Is Political

In its constant interrogation of the grounds of foundation- such as totality, universality and essence- ‘the political’ point towards an impossibility of a *final* ground or an ultimate foundation. The necessary contingency of theories help understand ‘the political’ in its contingent foundations, and doesn’t limit *it* within the narrow confines of European Enlightenment reason alone. Understanding ‘the political’ beyond the universalism modern structures of power also helps us distinguish between ‘the political’ and ‘politics’(which in the light of European modernity *is* but public actions and practices in relation to the institutions of power). The idea of the political hence has strong connection with moral in contrast to the contemporary understanding of politics as episteme of power relations. This section will introduce the ontological character of the political to understand the *political difference* in post-Foundational political thought as well as in Non western political philosophies.

Readings:

Marchart, Oliver (2007) *Post Foundational Political Thought : Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press. (Chapters: Introduction and Chapter One)

Cook, Deborah (2008) *Theodor Adorno: Key Concepts*, Durham, Acumen Publishing Ltd. (Chapters I and V. “Theodor Adorno : An Introduction” and “ Between Ontology and Epistemology”)

Chatterjee, Partha (2013) *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black.

Schmidt, Carl (1996) *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press

II Ethics in a Secular Age

The need for ethics and ethicality in the age of secular-reasoning will be explored in this section. Apart from the Gandhian intervention in Global Political Thought on the imperatives of ethics (or religious virtues) in politics, in the early 20th century; the pragmatic role of religion as the source of ethics in public life was advocated by none other than B R Ambedkar. Buddhist *Dhamma* or the social code of righteousness, Ambedkar wrote, was essential for public life and society. Scholarship on Secular Modernity too have pointed out how the *Judeo-Christian distinction between the Sacred and Secular*, is practically absent in other world religion and philosophies; and that this complete absence of (sacred) moral and ethical guidelines in the public life is much responsible for the ecological disequilibrium that the Earth is facing today.

Readings:

MacIntyre, Alisdair (2014) *After Virtue*, London, Bloomsbury Academic

Cooper, Barry (1992) “Modern Western Political Thought” in Anthony Parel (ed) *Comparative Political Philosophy: Studies Under the Upas Tree*, Oxford, Lexington Books.

Iyer, Raghavan Ed., (1986) *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Oxford, Clarendon Press

Gandhi, M.K. (1961) “Neither a Saint Nor a Politician” in *Non-Violent Resistance*, New York: Schocken Books.

Ambedkar, B.R. (2014 reprint) “The Buddha and His Dhamma” in *Writings and Speeches* GOI, Volume 11.

Inglehart, Ronald “Changing Values, Economic Development and Political Change” *International Social Science Journal*, 47 (3) 1995 pp 379-403

III Liberal Individualism and Collective Self

The section will locate liberal individualism of western political theory in the idea of collective selfhood. In other words making sense of an embedded self in her community vis a vis the liberal premise that individual right must have priority over questions of common good. Whereas

adjustments and compromise are valued by many knowledge cultures as ethical norms; and point out that concrete selves work in collective obligation and hence can live with difference.

Readings:

Partha Chatterjee, "Community in the East", *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 33 No.6 (Feb. 7-13, 1998); and "A Response to Taylor's Modes of Civil Society", *Public Culture*, 3, 1, Fall 1990, pp119-32

David Bennett and Homi Bhabha (1998) "Liberalism and Minority Culture" in David Bennett (Ed) *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity* London, Routledge.

Nandy, Ashis (1983) *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Delhi, Oxford University Press

Gilbert, Jeremy (2014) *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in Age of Individualism*, London, Pluto Press.

Elwin, Verrier (1965) *Democracy in NEFA*, Shillong: North-East Frontier Agency

IV

Sovereignty and Self Governance The political concept of sovereignty can have different meanings and cultural interpretations. From the sovereign power of the Modern state as the final arbiter in the modern knowledge world; to that of Gandhian interpretation of self rule (*swaraj*) as both internally and externally autonomous individuals ruling over their own selves; to the thinking of the Indigenous peoples of the world. The indigenous sovereignty of cultural communities - who as per their traditional knowledge govern and conserve their native land, and natural habitation dependent livelihood practices- and hence offer the world many sites of well conserved forest lands.

Readings:

Scott, James (1998) *Seeing like a State* New Haven, Yale University Press.

Mamdani, Mahmood (2012) *Define and Rule: Native as a Political Identity* Harvard, Harvard University Press

Esteva, G. & Perez, C. (2001) "The Meaning and Scope of the Struggle for Autonomy", *Latin American Perspectives* 28(2) 120-148

Corntassel, J. (2008) "Towards Sustainable self Determination" *Alternatives: Global, Local and Political* Vol. 33 (1) pp.105-132.

Gandhi, M.K. (1909) *Hind Swaraj*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad

V

Political Economy and Political Ecology

What is hitherto perceived as a specialized field of study viz. Environmental Laws; or the Environmental guidelines in trade and commerce essentially has become an important area of Political governance. Be it as Political-economic decisions on Energy planning; Water policy; urban Air quality governance; Afforestation; or in the fields of Public health guidelines and Conservation of renewable natural resources. The deep industrialization based developmentalism of western modernity has evidently changed the global climate; the political economic policies that have yielded extra ordinary growth in the world economy are the same ones that are destroying its support systems. Civilizational and knowledge practices that ensure the well being of both the human and the non human world (and were rendered irrelevant in the universalism of modern knowledge) - have become relevant again for us to deal with the crises of climate change and pandemics. The section would also dwell on the human limitations vis a vis the dynamism of the *non-human* world; and the challenges that the Anthropocene (human agency affecting the planetary health) poses for the global governance.

Readings:

Guattari, Felix (2000) *The Three Ecologies*, Bloomsbury, London

Aggarwal, Arun (1995) "Dismantling the Divide between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge" *Development and Change* 26 (3) pp. 413-439

Esteva, G (1992) "Development" in Wolfgang Sachs (ed) *The Development Dictionary*. London, Zed Books

Brown, Lester R (2002) *Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth*, Hyderabad, Orient Longman.

Dastider, Mollica (2020) "Practices as Political: Tribal Citizens and Indigenous-Knowledge Practices in East Himalayas" *Economic and Political Weekly* 55(46) pp. 49-5

Please Note: Each Thematic Section in the Course is provided with a list of basic Readings. It may however be noted that New readings/References could be added in ensuing teaching semesters.

Additional Readings

Hirst, Francis, et.al (1900) *Liberalism and the Empire: Three Essays*, London: Brimley Johnson

Connel, Raewyn (2007) *Southern Theory: Social Science and the Global Dynamics of Knowledge*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin

Schmitt, Carl (1996) *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago, Chicago University Press

Jameson, Frederic (2002) *Singular Modernity: Essays on the Ontology of the Present*, London, Verso.

Parel, Anthony (Ed) (2000) *Gandhi, Freedom and Modernity* Maryland:Lexington Books

Gandhi, Leela (2014) *The Common Cause: Postcolonial Ethics and Practice of Democracy*, Ranikhet, Permanent Black.

Marchart, Oliver (2007) *Post Foundational Political Thought*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press

Said, Edward (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Vintage.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2000) *Provincializing Europe: Post Colonial Thought and Historical Difference*. New Jersey, Princeton University Press.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2021) *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press

Nandy, Ashis (2005) *Exiled at Home* New Delhi: OUP.

Nandy, Ashis (2003) *The Romance of the State*, Delhi, Oxford India Press

Breckenridge, Carol et.al (2002) *Cosmopolitanisms*, Durham, Duke University Press,

Chatterjee, Partha (2013) *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black.

Bhargava, Rajeev (1998) *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press

Gilbert, Jeremy (2014) *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in Age of Individualism*, London, Pluto Press.

Kumar, Aishwary (2019) *Radical Equality: Ambedkar, Gandhi and Risk of Democracy* New Delhi, Navayana.

Singh, Akash and Mohapatra, S.(eds) (2010) *Indian Political Thought: A Reader*, Oxon: Routledge.

Sen, Amartya (2005) *The Argumentative Indian*, London: Penguin

G. N. Devy et al. (2014) *Knowing Differently: The Challenge of the Indigenous* Routledge.

Rawal, Suresh et.al (Eds) (2008) *Forms of Knowledge in India: Critical Revaluations*, Delhi, Pencraft International

Scott, James (2010) *The Art of Not Being Governed*, New Delhi, Orient Black Swan

Gilroy, Paul (1992) *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard, HUP

Lear, Jonathan (2006) *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*, London, Harvard University Press

Muzaffar Alam, *Languages of Political Islam in India* Section: 2,(Delhi 2004);

Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Cultural Pluralism, Empire and the State in Early Modern India' in her book *At the Edges of the Empire* (Ranikhet, 2014)

Iverson, Duncan.(2002) *Postcolonial Liberalism*, Cambridge, CUP.

Inglehart, Ronald (1991) *Culture Shift in Advanced Societies*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

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