

Jawaharlal Nehru University
Center for the Study of Social Systems
School of Social Sciences

Course:

Textual Analysis in Cultural Contexts(SS 630N)

Ph.D: Semester I, March – June, 2023, Credits: Four

Course Teacher: Dr.Ratheesh Kumar

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Class Hours: Monday and Wednesday: 3.30pm - 5.30pm

Contact Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

The course seeks to explore the modes and meanings through which textual strategies and representations of culture are constructed and circulated in different historical contexts. By doing so, it foregrounds the emergent debates in social theory and practices in the understanding of society and culture. A reconfigured articulation of textual analysis implies here to navigate beyond the borders of normative and conventional notions on the concept of text that confines the form within the frame of the 'written'. The course offers scope for unraveling the history and political economy of ethnography and other forms of representational practices through a multi-dimensional sensorial approach. This conceptual treatment of the 'textual' would explore the acts of seeing, listening and other ways of experiencing cultural forms, relations and artifacts beyond the literal idea of 'reading'. The focus of this course would be on contexts within which texts in various forms are perceived, negotiated and contested along the notions of tradition, modernity, authenticity and cultural identity. A concerted effort will be made to analyze the intersections in the conceptual domain of text, author and the reader(s)/viewer(s)/listener(s) from a methodological perspective. The course will examine the possibilities of understanding critical events and everyday life as potential sites of textual analysis and thereby offering a methodological realignment in the approach to the study of culture and society.

The course will look at the contemporary debates in ethnography and textual analysis and will highlight issues of power dynamics, resistance and the questions of politics and ethics of representation. Overall, the course will enable students to critically engage with texts, both archival and contemporary; and texts of multi-sensorial experiences produced in different cultural contexts and subjective locations. It would facilitate students with analytical tools in order to examine the multiple layers of social signifiers that constitute cultural texts such as print, image and sonic forms of representation. The course includes lecture sessions, students' presentations and written assignments.

Course Evaluation

This course is worth 4 credits- 2 credits for a combination of review papers and class presentations (mid-term assignments of 1 credit each) and 2 credits for a research project. The division of assignments is as follows: 1. A review of chapter/article, with a focus on the methodological aspects pertaining to the course themes, enlisted in the supplementary reading list, which should be examined in light of the core readings and theme of the section, with a presentation and write-up on the same (of not more than 1500 words). The reading will be assigned to one presenter and two discussants (all students are mandatorily required to make one presentation as the primary respondent/presenter and participate as discussants for two). 2. A term paper (of not more than 3000 words) critically examining the methodological aspects of a monograph, preferably a work which engages with the student's research area. 3. The end-term submission will comprise a review of literature (of not more than 5000 words) of the student's research area by deploying methods of textual/narrative/discourse analysis related to the course themes. Format of presentation, review, deadlines of submission and other modalities will be detailed and finalized during the introductory classes. The students, before submitting their paper should give an undertaking that the term paper and project report are not plagiarized.

Course Themes and Readings

Section 1. Text, Textuality and Textual Analysis: Disciplines and Debates

Core Readings:

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2018. Trans: Peter Collier. *Classification Struggles: General Sociology, Volume I. Lectures at the College De France, 1981–82*, Cambridge: Polity Press. {Lecture 1}.
- Foucault, Michel, 1984. What is an Author? In Rabinow, Paul (ed). *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Warner, Michael. 2004, "Uncritical Reading", in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. Jane Gallop. New York: Routledge, pp 13-38.

Supplementary Readings:

- Barthes, Roland, 1984. *The Death of the Author, Image, Music, Text*. Fontana
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 1978. *Myth and meaning*. London: Rutledge {Selected Chapters}.
- DuBois, Andrew and Frank Lentricchia. 2002. *Close Reading: The Reader*. Durham: Duke University. {Introduction}.
- Hanks, W.F, 1989, Text and Textuality, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 18. pp. 95-127.

Section 2. Text, Time and Context: Poetics and Politics of Ethnography

Core Readings:

- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object?*, New York: Columbia University Press. {Selected Chapters}.
- Asad, Talal. 2002. "Ethnographic Representation, Statistics, and Modern Power", In *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Futures*, Brian Keith Axel(ed), Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pp: 66-93.

Supplementary Readings:

- Crapenzano, Vincent. 1986. Herme's Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description", in James Clifford and George Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press. Pp: 28-41.
- Aquil, Raziuddin. & Chatterjee, Partha (eds). 2008. *History in the vernacular*. Ranikhet : Bangalore : Permanent Black[Selected chapters].
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1997. "The Interpretation of Culture(s) after Television", in *Representations*, No. 59, Special Issue: The Fate of "Culture": Geertz and Beyond. pp. 109-134.

Section 3. Cultural Texts: Reading, Interpretation and Analysis

Core Readings:

- Ambedkar, B. R, 1916. "Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development", paper presented at the *Anthropology Seminar* organized by Dr. A. A. Goldenweizer , Columbia University.
- Pandian, M S S. 2010. 'Writing Ordinary Lives', in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.) *Subaltern Citizens and Their Histories*. New Delhi: Routledge.
- Moten, Fred. 2003. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press [Selected Chapters].

Supplementary Readings:

- Hall, Stuart. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London, New Delhi: Sage/ Open University Press.
- White, Hayden. 1980. The value of narrativity in the representation of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No. 1, On Narrative. pp. 5-27.
- Viramma et al. 1997. *Viramma: Life of an Untouchable*. Verso Publications. [Selected chapters].

Section 4. Text and Form: A Sensorial Approach

Core Readings:

- Simmel, G. 1997 (1907). 'Sociology of the Senses', in D. Frisby and M. Featherstone (eds), *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, London: Sage.

- MacDougall, David. 2006. 'The Visual in Anthropology'. *The Corporeal Image Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Howes, David. 2003. *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Supplementary Readings:

- Seremetakis, C. Nadia (ed). 1994. *The Senses Still: Memory and Perception as Material Culture in Modernity*, Boulder: Westview.
- Erlmann, Veit. 2006. But What of the Ethnographic Ear? Anthropology, Sound and the Senses, in Veil Erlmann (ed). *Hearing Cultures. Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity*. Berg Publishers.
- Guru, Gopal and Sundar Sarukkai. 2012. *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*. Oxford University Press [Selected Chapters].
- Zielinski, Siegfried. 2006. *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of hearing and seeing by Technical Means*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Section 5. Text as Event: Methodological Concerns

Core Readings:

- Meinert, Lotte and Bruce Kapferer (Eds). 2015. *In the Event: Toward an Anthropology of Generic Moments*. Berghahn Books {Introduction}.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2009. Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide? *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 35, No. 4. The Fate of Disciplines Edited by James Chandler and Arnold I. Davidson.

Supplementary Readings:

- Bernstein, J. Richard. 2018. *Why Read Hannah Arendt Now*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Das, Veena. 2020. *Textures of the Ordinary: Doing Anthropology after Wittgenstein*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan {Selected Chapters}.
- Fassin, Didier. 2014. 'The Parallel Lives of Philosophy and Anthropology' In *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy*, edited by Veena Das, Michael Jackson, Arthur Kleinman and Bhri Gupta Singh. Durham and London: Duke University Press.