

Jawaharlal Nehru University

Center for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences

Course Title: **Textual Analysis in Cultural Contexts – Social Anthropology of Civilizations**
(SS 630N)

M.Phil: Semester I (Monsoon)
[July-December 2018]

Credits: Four
Course instructor: Ratheesh Kumar

Course Description

By foregrounding the debates and practices in ethnography, this course seeks to explore the modes and meanings through which textual representations of culture are constructed and circulated in different historical contexts. A reconfigured articulation of textual analysis implies here to navigate beyond the borders of normative and conventional notions of the idea of text that confines the form within the frame of the 'written'. By doing so, it attempts to unravel 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 received, understood, 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 modernity.

The course will look at the contemporary debates in ethnography and textual analysis and highlights 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 will have lecture sessions, students' presentations and written assignments.

Course Evaluation

This course is worth 4 credits - 2 credits for a research project and 2 credits for a combination of book review and presentations. Apart from the end-term submission of a write up for the research project (of not more than 5000 words), there will be two mid-term assignments of 1 credit each; 1. A review of monograph/article with a focus on the methodological aspects pertaining to the course themes, along with a presentation and submission of a write up (of not more than 2500 words) on specific topics/themes. 2. A term paper to be submitted by deploying methods of textual/narrative/discourse analysis related to the course themes (of not more than

2500 words). 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

- Hanks, W.F, 1989 , Text and Textuality, in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 18. pp. 95-127.
- Steiner, George, 1976, Text and Context, in *Salmagundi*, No. 31/32, pp. 173-184
- Barthes, Roland, 1984 (1067) The Death of the Author, *Image, Music, Text*. Fontana
- Foucault, Michael, 1984. What is an Author? In Rabinow, Paul (ed). *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books
- Derrida, Jaques, 1978, (1966), Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 278-294.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1978. *Myth and Meaning*. University of Toronto Press
- Schneider, Mark, 1987, Culture-as-text in the works of Clifford Geertz, in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 16, No. 6. pp. 809-839

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

- Clifford, James and George Marcus (eds). 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press [Introduction].
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object?* ,New York: Columbia University Press. {Selected Chapters}.
- Crapenzano, Vincent. 1985. 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.
- Asad, Talal. 1983. Anthropological Conceptions on Religion: Reflections on Geertz. *Man, New Series*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 237-259. Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.
- Ortner, Sherry. 1984. "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 26, No. 1. pp. 126-166.
- 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

- Ambedkar, B. R, 1916. Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development, paper presented at Anthropology Seminar organized by Dr. A. A. Goldenweizer ,

Columbia University,

- Viramma. 1997. *Viramma: Life of an Untouchable*. Verso Publications. [Selected chapters]
- Hall, S (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London, New Delhi: Sage/ Open University Press
- Argyrou, Vassos. 2002. *Anthropology and the Will to Meaning*. Pluto Press. [Chapter One and Two].
- White, Hayden. 1987. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and historic Representation*. Johns Hopkins University Press. [Chapter One and Two]
- de Certeau, Michel. 1995. *The Writing of History*. University of California Press [Introduction].
- Pandian, M S S. 2010. 'Writing Ordinary Lives', in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.) *Subaltern Citizens and Their Histories*. New Delhi: Routledge.

Section 4. Text and Form: A Sensorial Approach

- Marks, Laura. 2008. 'Thinking Multi-sensory Culture' in *Paragraph 31:2*, special issue on cinema and the senses, ed. Emma Wilson, pp: 123-137.
- Frake, Charles. 1972. The Ethnographic Study of Cognitive Systems in James Spradley (ed.) *Culture and Cognition: Rules, Maps and Plans*. Waveland Press. INC.
- Victor Burgin. 1993, "Seeing Sense" in Howard Davis and Paul Walton (eds,) *Language, Image and Media*. Blackwell.
- Erlmann, Veit. 2006. But What of the Ethnographic Ear? Anthropology, Sound and the Senses, in Veit 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].
- 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 Bhrigupati Singh. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Section 5. Text as Event and Text as Everydayness: Some Methodological Concerns

- Deleuze Gilles and Felix Guattari. 1987. 'The Postulates of Linguistics', in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Duncan, J. S. 1990. *The City as Text: The politics of landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- de Certeau, M. 1995. "Practices of Space", in Marshall Blonsky (ed.) *Signs*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Pp. 122-145
- Mahmood, Saba. 2005., *Politics of Piety. The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press [Selected Chapters].
- Fassin, Didier 2007. *When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa*. University of California Press