

The **Centre for the Study of Developing Societies** (CSDS, Delhi) invites applications for its two-month course on ‘Researching the Contemporary’. This cross-disciplinary course will critically examine the formation of the contemporary and its multiple histories, ideologies, forms and affects. The following four courses offered this year will enable participants engage with concepts, theories and methods to critically understand and analyse the contemporary:

Theory and the Global South

Course Instructor: Aditya Nigam

Building on its earlier iterations, the course addresses some of the recent global concerns emerging in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which are variously expressed as projects of ‘decoloniality’, ‘epistemologies of the south’, ‘decolonization of theory’ and so on. These different impulses define a complex relationship with what can, for shorthand, be called ‘Western theory’.

This course starts with the recognition that Western theory itself emerges by drawing from diverse bodies of knowledge – both philosophical and scientific – from different parts of the world and there is little to be gained from its outright rejection. At the same time, it questions its universalist claims, which render specific European experiences of ‘modernity’ and its ‘constituent’ processes like ‘secularization’, ‘individuation’, ‘industrialization’, ‘capitalism’ into norms to be aspired to by societies across the world. Taking historico-philosophical work produced by scholars – past and present – from India, China, the Arab and Persian world and Latin America as its point of departure, this course seeks to put the very idea of ‘modernity’ itself under the scanner. Key concepts of modernity, as well as the knowledge produced under its banner – in virtual oblivion of the experiences of the non-European world – will be opened up for examination during the course. The course however, seeks to go beyond simply providing critiques of Western knowledge and theory for it will also centrally be concerned with the question of what it means to do theory in and from the global south.

Reading Media: Historical and Contemporary

Course Instructors: Ravikant, Ravi Sundaram and Ravi Vasudevan

Building on its earlier avatars, the course will explore the historically constitutive role of media in shaping modern and contemporary human experience. The omnibus category of media will be broken into diverse devices, forms, materialities and their specific ways of producing social and cultural meaning in South Asia. Media will additionally be presented as an archive of itself as well as the world it seeks to represent and speak to. Its historical plurality and contemporary convergence places on us a demand that we also focus on intermediality or the relationship of one media with another.

The course will offer preliminary answers to basic questions about what it has meant to live in modern times; how cognition, sense perception, bodily and emotional engagement have

been configured at key junctures through mediated experience, including print culture (newspapers, novels, popular pamphlets, pulp and visual culture), sound technologies (gramophone, radio, cassette and digital formats), photography, film, and the broader ensemble called new media. Exploring media as a key site of historical experience, the course will explore what it has meant to read, listen, view, touch and feel, how this has constituted our everyday life and social and political engagement.

Media's own humongous archive-now increasingly digitised and circulated on app-driven multi-media platforms-is well worth some reflection. What is the nature of archival databases? Of documents? What do media offer evidence of? How is authenticity ascertained if copy-culture and media-manipulation are the new normal? How are the publics constituted and reconstituted by divergent media forms and devices? We shall grapple with such questions and more in a collective class-room spirit.

Touch: Forms and Meanings

Course Instructor: Priyadarshini Vijaisri

The course offers an unconventional critical way of exploring caste and themes of hierarchy, form, ideas and experience. Unlike conventional approaches, the course is designed around touch as an epistemic category and interweaves the overlapping conceptual approaches and the overarching themes thereby inaugurating critical ways of thinking. Deploying the idea of touch, the course will engage with questions about how tactile and other sensory experiences offer a critical understanding of the body, consciousness, inter-subjectivity and being. These methodological and thematic issues will be addressed through eclectic episodes and accounts woven around the conceptual grid of the senses. These topics will be introduced through sites and moments of ruptures and paradoxes from diverse literary, historical as well as ethnographic narratives.

The course will also ask what implications such an approach has for thinking about and beyond caste. The primacy of the West in shaping the discursive universe, especially of caste, poses fundamental epistemological and ethical challenges. The basic aim of this course is to critically rethink basic issues like the possibilities of creative and meaningful approaches to caste and the challenges posed by complex affective histories. More importantly, it brings to the fore questions concerning intellectual self-reflexivity and cultivation of particular kind of disposition in such engagements.

Research as Practice: Issues in Method

Course Instructors: Hilal Ahmed, Sanjay Kumar, Sanjeer Alam

This additional component of the course aims at exploring some of the fundamental questions in social science research, which are not given adequate intellectual attention. The component, broadly speaking, addresses three types of questions: (a) Issues related to academic presentation such as proposal writing, academic essay and thesis writing, and referencing. (b) Issues related to the practicalities of doing survey research such as

developing survey questionnaire and evolving sampling, data analysis etc., and finally, (c) the issues related to the identification of sources and usability of official statistics such as Census and National Sample Surveys (NSS).

This is an intensive course with compulsory readings and class discussions. Course materials will be made available. Participants are expected to make presentations and participate in a workshop at the end of the course period. A participation certificate will be awarded upon successful completion of the course.

The course will be conducted over 8 weeks between 4 July-31 August 2017. Classes will be held at CSDS on week-day afternoons, three days a week, from 2.30-5.30 pm.

Applications are invited from M.Phil/Ph.D students as well as independent researchers. As part of your application please submit your C.V. and a 1000-word description of your research question/topic. The candidate must indicate the category (SC, ST, OBC, GENERAL), to which s/he belongs, in the application. Selected out-station participants shall be provided with roundtrip travel expenses (3-tier AC) and a stipend of INR 25,000.

Total number of seats: 40* (Some seats are reserved for SC and ST categories).

Deadline: 10 May 2017

Applications may be sent to: [teaching\(@\)csds.in](mailto:teaching(@)csds.in)

For further details check: www.csds.in

** The number of seats is indicative and may increase or decrease depending upon the quality of applications.*