

Department of Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences
South Asian University - New Delhi

Methodology of Social Sciences
(Compulsory Course for M.A)

Total Credits: 4

This course seeks to understand various approaches to sociological knowledge. Unlike the course on methods, tools and techniques of doing sociological research, it deals with the methodological perspectives, grounded in the essential epistemological issues. Unearthing the history and philosophy of science, it seeks to raise the following abiding question: *what is sociological, what is sociological way of seeing, what does it mean to be sociological, what are the ways employed in sociology to arrive at knowledge; and to sum it up, what is the location of sociology at the interface of philosophy, science, history and arts, inter alia?* Given the socio-cultural context of the students from various parts of the region of South Asia, the course creates a creative opportunity for the students to bring their contextual specificities in face to face with the textually informed debates. The mode of transaction of the course will entail substantial lecturing, debating, recapitulation and discussions based on readings in workshop mode.

Unit 1: Epistemological Question: Gulbenkian's Open versus Enlightenment's Close Perspective

Methodology was a bone of contention in the Gulbenkian Report. This section briefly introduces the key epistemological question, such as what is knowledge and how to approach it, with a focus on the Gulbenkian Commission report, to be read and debated by the class.

The outcome is juxtaposed to the epistemological quests in the philosophical tradition of Nyaya, Buddhist Sunyawad inter alia. Subsequently, it turns to the debates with reference to Descartes' meditation and Kant's submission on the key idea of the Enlightenment.

Selected Readings

***Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences.* Stanford University Press, Stanford**

Ganeri, Jonardan. 2001. *Philosophy in Classical India: The Proper Work of Reason.* Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas. (pp. 1-60)

Cassirer, Ernst. 2009. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment.* Princeton University Press (Page 1-50)

Extended Readings

Russell, Bertrand. 2004. *History of Western Philosophy*. London: Rutledge (p. 453-455, 484-498, 511-520, 551-560, 600-650)

Descartes, Rene. 2008. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press (p. 10-15)

Descartes, Rene. 2006. *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*. New York: Oxford University Press (p- 5-35)

Kant, Immanuel. 1998. *Critique of Pure Reason*. New York: Cambridge University Press (Introduction)

Sartre, J. P. 1968. *Search for a Method*. London: Vintage

B K Matilal. 1986. *Perception: An Essay On Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*. London: Oxford University Press. (pp. 1-88)

Gouldner, A. 1970. *The Coming Crisis in Western Sociology*. New York: Basic Books

Nisbet, R. 1976. *Sociology as an Art Form*. London: Oxford University Press.

Mills, C. W. 2000. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press. (last chapter)

Berger, John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books.

Obeyesekere, G. *The Awakened Self*, Chicago (Introduction)

Unit 2- Against Phantoms alias Positivism: Philosophical Background and Sociological Promises

This section unfolds the philosophical background of the positivism as a distinct approach to knowledge. Starting with a modest reference to Rene Descartes' meditation and Kant's critique of Pure Reason, this section deals with the 'Rules' propounded in the functionalist work of Emile Durkheim and its impact on sociological and social anthropological works. While germs of positivism are not entirely absent in Marx's approach to knowledge, there also surfaces another significant approach of historicism stressing on historical materialism.

Selected Readings

Giddens, Anthony. 1978. Positivism and its Critics, in Tom Bottomore and Robert Nisbet edited. History of Sociological Analysis. London: Heinemann, page: 237-286

Durkheim, Emile. 1982. *Rules of Sociological Method*. London: Free Press (Introduction & Chapter 1)

Marx, Karl. 2010. *The German Ideology*. Delhi: People's Publishing House (Chapter 1)

Weber, Max. 2011. *Methodology of Social Science*. New York: Transactions (Introduction & Chapter 1)

..... . 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*. California: University of California Press (Introduction & Chapter 1)

Extended Readings

Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman & Tim Futing Liao. Ed. 20014. *Ethnographic Realism*, in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. London: Sage

Timasheff, N.S., 1957. *Sociological Theory, Nature and Growth*. New York: Random House

Turner, J. H. 1985. "In Defense of Positivism." *Sociological Theory*, 3:24-30

Mukherji, Partha. Ed. *Methodology in Social Research: Dilemmas and Perspectives*. Delhi: Sage (Introduction)

Unit 3- Debating Science: Ways beyond Positivism

This section attempts at a succinct debate on the nature and scope of science, its limitations and possibility in the domain of social science, and imperatives to find the approaches beyond positivism. It begins with the famous dispute, among others, in social sciences, known as the Positivist Dispute in German Sociology. Furthermore, with reference to the arguments of Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper, and Feyerabend, it seems to chalk out alternative methodological approaches to sociological knowledge. It draws also from sociology of knowledge to underline the anti-foundational, as it were, methodological propositions.

Selected Readings

Adorno et al. 1981. *Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. Pp. Introduction chapter

Kuhn, T.S. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (Chapters 1 and 2)

Feyerabend, Paul. 2010. *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge*. 4th edition. New York: Verso (chapters 1, 2, and 3)

Popper, Karl. 2002. *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. London: Routledge (chapters 1 & 2)

Mukherji, Partha. Ed. *Methodology in Social Research: Dilemmas and Perspectives*. Delhi: Sage (Introduction)

Unit 4- Interpretative and Everyday Life

This section discusses the interpretative approach in Weber's sociology marking a hermeneutic turn in methodological approach to sociological knowledge. Furthermore it looks at the methodological propositions emerging from Phenomenology and Ethnomethodology. It attempts to place the methodological propositions in the larger framework of debate between structuralism and post-structuralism. It settles with the account of the 'social construction of reality' approach.

Selected Readings

Pathak, Dev Nath. 2018. Methodology of Being: Ruminations on the Field-Hermeneutics, In *Living and Dying: Meanings in Maithili Folklore*, Delhi: Primus. pp. 66-97

Schutz, Alfred. 1967. *Phenomenology of the Social World*. Northwestern University Press (Intro and chapter 1)

Garfinkel, Harold. 1991. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. London: Polity Press (Intro & chapter 1)

Sarukkai, Sundar & Guru, Gopal. 2012. *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*. Delhi: OUP

Gopal Guru, Sundar Sarukkai. 2019. *Experience, Caste and the Everyday Social*. Delhi: OUP

Extended Readings

Winch, Peter. 2007. *The Idea of a Social Science and its relation to Philosophy*. London: Routledge

Mukherji, Partha. Ed. *Methodology in Social Research: Dilemmas and Perspectives*. Delhi: Sage (Introduction)

Unit 5- Reflexivities: Indigenous, Subaltern, Dalit and Feminist

This section, in the background of methodological pluralism, seeks to comprehend the various ways in which alternative methodological approaches emerged. This is juxtaposed to the methodological possibilities arising from the reflexive turn in the methodological debates. The unit flags new methodological possibilities in engaging with contemporary issues, particularly the relatively under explored areas of visuals, performance and folklore. It elucidates an imperative for each contributor in social science to develop methodological approaches with an eclectic sense.

Selected Reading

Haraway, Donna. 1988. Situated knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the privilege of partial perspective, *Feminist Studies*, 14(3): 575-599.

Hekman, Susan. 1997. Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint theory revisited. *Sign: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 22(2): 341-365

Bourdieu, Pierre & Wacquant, Loic. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. London: Polity Press (Introduction)

Giddens, Anthony. 1993. *New Rules of Sociological Methods*. London: Polity Press (Chapter 2 & conclusion)

Gouldner, Alvin. 1980. *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*. Basic Books (Conclusion)

Extended Readings

Pathak, Dev Nath et al. 2017. *Modern South Asian Thinkers*. Delhi: Sage

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