

**Department of Sociology**  
**Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**South Asian University**

**Social History of South Asia**

*(Optional Course for M.A.)*

**Total Credits: 04**

**Objectives of the course**

History is a discipline of contention not only among nations but also among different communities. There have always been efforts at hegemonising history writing because past has been considered formative for the present as well as crucial in defining the political contours of the present. While this contention is true at its own level it is also a terrain of contesting perspectives, which are essential for social sciences, an area which has been at centre of discourses post-Enlightenment. Woven into these contestations is the need to know and understand how social, economic, political and cultural change has happened over ages. Without this knowledge any reading of society will be myopic and irrelevant. This course makes an effort to introduce the students to these contestations as well as to the idea of society as a process that continually evolves. Given the nature of this course it will be largely a reading course.

**Unit 1: The Idea of History**

This unit looks at how different scholars have looked at history. Through the work of the following scholars the students will be introduced to the questions regarding role, purpose and characterisation of history. The section also explores how historically ideas about different parts of world developed and in order to demonstrate this aspect the works of Dussel have been taken.

1. Arendt, Hannah (1961) 'The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern', in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, The Viking Press: New York, pp. 41-60
2. Carr, E.H. (2008) *What is History*, Penguin: New Delhi
3. Dussel, Enrique (2000) Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism, *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3, Duke University Press
4. Dussel, Enrique (1993) Eurocentrism and Modernity, *Boundary 2*, Vol. 20, No.3, pp. 65-76

5. Hobsbawm, Eric (2011) *On History*, Hatchette: London (Selected Chapters)
6. Jenkins, Keith (1995) *On 'What is History?' From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White*, Routledge: London and New York, pp.1-42
7. Kosambi, DD (1989) *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Vikas Publishing House: New Delhi, pp. 1-25

## **Unit 2: History as Contestation**

This unit introduces students to a critical take on history. In order to do so, it introduces them to the original texts, which were part of early phase of subaltern studies as well as to the writings of people who have been part of movements and have reflected on history and history writing.

1. Ambedkar, B.R. (1947/2014) 'Who were the Shudras?' in *Collected Works of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Vol.7*, Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India: New Delhi
2. Lohia, Rammahohar (1966/2011) 'History Writing', in Kapoor, Mastram (ed.) *Collected Works of Rammanohar Lohia*, Vol. 06, Anamika Publications: New Delhi, pp. 463-470
3. Lohia, Rammahohar (1955/2011) 'Wheels of History' in Kapoor, Mastram (ed.) *Collected Works of Rammanohar Lohia*, Vol. 06, Anamika Publications: New Delhi, pp.117-140
4. Ranajit Guha (1982/2005), 'On Some Aspects of Historiography of Colonial India', in Guha, Ranajit (ed.) *Subaltern Studies, Vol. I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, pp. 1-8
5. Ranajit Guha (1983/2005), 'The Prose of Counterinsurgency', in Guha, Ranajit (ed.) *Subaltern Studies, Vol. II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, pp. 1-42
6. Roberts, Michael (1978) 'Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka and Sinhalese Perspectives: Barriers to Accommodation', *Modern Asian Studies*, 12, 3, pp. 353-376

## **Unit 3: History as contentious**

History has always been mired in controversies, specifically vis-à-vis the state and the political forces that control state. Consequently, it gave rise to history writings of different kind - invocations of idea of secular versus religious sectarianism; making history a source of nationalist frenzy among other things.

1. Daud Ali (2014) *The idea of the medieval in the writing of South Asian*

- history: contexts, methods and politics, *Social History*, 39:3, 382-407
2. Asad, Talal (2003) *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, pp. 1-20
  3. Delhi Historians Group (undated) *Communalisation of Education: The History Textbooks Controversy*, Delhi Historians Group: New Delhi
  4. John Seed (2014) 'Secular' and 'Religious': historical perspectives, *Social History*, 39:1, 3-13
  5. Gunawardana, R.A.L.H. (1990) 'The people of the lion: the Sinhala identity and ideology in history and historiography', in Spencer, Jonathan (ed.), *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, Routledge: London and New York, pp.45-86
  6. Hellmann-Rajanayagam, Dagmar (1990) The politics of the Tamil past, in Spencer, Jonathan (ed.), *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, Routledge: London and New York, pp. 107-124
  7. Nayyar, A. H. and Salim, Ahmed (undated) *The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan: Urdu, English, Social Studies and Civics*, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad
  8. Jalal, Ayesha (1995) Conjuring Pakistan: History as Official Imagining, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27, pp.73-89
  9. Ayesha Jalal (Jul., 1996) 'Secularists, Subalterns and the Stigma of 'Communalism': Partition Historiography Revisited', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 681-689

#### **Unit 4: Narratives of/as History**

This unit will introduce students to the idea of how autobiographies of different authors can become sources of knowing history keeping in mind the fact the history is contentious and controversial. Autobiographies are not only reflections of one's individual state of being but present the conflicts and changes undergoing in a society.

1. Amery, Jean (1980) *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington
2. Dasgupta, Subhoranjan (2002) History's creative counterpart, *Seminar*, No. 510
3. Dasgupta, Subhoranjan (2000) *Elegy and dream: Akhtaruzzaman Elias' Creative Commitment*, Shipra Publications: New Delhi
4. Galeano, Eduardo (2010) *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, Leftword: New Delhi
5. Poniatowska, Elena (1971) *The night of Tlatelolco: Chronicles of Oral History*, ERA: Mexico
6. Valmiki, Omprakash (2003) *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*, Columbia University Press: New York