

Modular Overview of First Semester Courses

HPFH 501 Foundations of History (3 credits)

A. Sources and Methods (12 hours)

This module provides a general overview of the kinds of historical sources that survive across the region. It discusses the site, the material, the production, the preparation, the text of the sources and their comparative spread and present-day availability. With the help of a set of specimens, we will analyse the implications of different kinds of sources for history and for our understanding of history.

Focus: General understanding of the meaning of source and significance of source diversity in history, assessment of the nature of individual source materials with focus on their tangible properties and how these properties influence their role and place in historical narratives, along with a general awareness of various methods of source criticism, and source repositories across space and time in and about Southasia.

B. Interpretations and Arguments (12 hours)

Through case-based discussions, this module demonstrates the flexibilities inherent in historical interpretations and arguments. Taking our knowledge on sources from the first module as collateral, it exhibits the existence of different kinds of interpretations around a particular source, and subsequently, to the variegations in the construction of arguments, counter-arguments and reconciliatory resolutions. We learn to transliterate and translate sources, to compare and check the accuracy of transcriptions, and further, to critically trace the manner of incorporation of sources into building historical narratives and their limits.

Focus: Critical approach to the construction of interpretations and arguments and to the assessment of the affinity between sources and their interpretations, understanding the limits to such interpretive and argumentative constructions, awareness of the discursive nature of argument constructions and their real-world implications, and attention to the availability of multiple standpoints in interpretive disciplines.

C. Imagination and Theories (12 hours)

This module explores the crafting of historical imaginations, through various forms of (non)narratives, and through theories regarding the past on the basis of historical evidences. For instance, the linear approach to history based on evidence arranged in accordance with universalizing forces versus episodic histories based on evidence as fragments. We analyse the relation between historical evidence and theory building and the processes of imaginations and re-imaginings according to availability, additions and revisions in evidence.

Focus: Critical evaluation of dominant theories about history and historical processes from marginal and non-historical standpoints; significance of evidence for historical imagination and theory; awareness of the genesis, growth, amendment and decline of imaginations, ideas, theories; revisions and contestations to dominant ideas and theories in light of emerging evidence.

D. Crafts and Practices (12 hours)

This module examines the craft and practice of history writing taking select historians (broadly understood as people bringing the awareness about past in the present) in and about Southasia as cases; an intensive study of their life and work with reference to dominant ideas, events and contemporaneous individuals, the correlation between these and the practice of history. We explore the connections between evidence, agency, ideology and practice in order to understand the extent to which the historian is and is not a representation of her time.

Focus: Contextualise historians' craft and practice; adopt a critical case-based evaluation of chronology, individual and collective representations and influence of traditions on historians' works; adopt a historical and philosophical approach to personal, collective and social biographies; appraise imaginations and theories in relation to craft and practice.

Essay 1

Choose one of the topics above and write an essay that critically analyses a specific problematic issue related to sources and methods, interpretations and arguments, imaginations and theories or crafts and practices.

HPHT 502 History and Taxonomy (3 Credits)

A. History of economy (12 hours)

This module explores core concepts in economics such as making and unmaking of value through processes such as production, exchange, consumption and waste; it analyses the historical trajectory of these processes and questions economic definitions in time and space and assess the influence of factors such as technology, natural resources, human resources on economic ideas and how the changing relation between these have historically shaped different economic systems prevalent across space and time in Southasia.

Focus: Adopt a broadly evaluatory (genealogical and/or archaeological) approach to economic concepts regarding valuation of labour, institutions, and natural resources; reassess dominant ideas on linear economics such as growth, transition, pathways; integrate economics within the larger questions of livelihoods, skills, geographies and natural resource availability, and examine these relations across different communities and populations in Southasia both in history and in the present.

B. History of social arrangements (12 hours)

This module explores basic social units and objects of analyses such as vertical and horizontal structures, individuals and their collectives, institutions and their reproductions, and the commons across Southasian time and space. We will lay out the long arc of human collective activities in shaping these social junctures including at, for instance, public-private, individual-collective, quotidian-sporadic, micro-macro dualities and, through them, examine vertical and horizontal practices in history. We will adopt a multidisciplinary approach to integrate such historical questionings of the social with anthropology, geography, technology, ecology, demographics etc.

Focus: Critical views on tensions related to supra-personal spaces and structures such as communities and the state, ruptures and repairs in the relations between individual and collectives or in the spheres denoted as the private and the commons.; constructions of the social not just as the stratifications within or among humans but also simplexes such as between the human and non-human, and between life and non-life forms.

C. History of culture (12 hours)

This module approaches the history of culture through its core concepts of values, norms and symbols and their enactments. We will analyse factors such as power, ideologies and perceptions in the evolution of cultural practices and themes, and vice-versa. Adopting an eclectic approach, we explore the shaping of collective behaviours and standards as well as prejudices, omissions and segregations across time and space and the historical processes by which values, norms and standards are reproduced or contested.

Focus: An evaluation of ideas surrounding norms and standards such as those of the normal, the ordinary, the general and the conventional, as well as their counter-concepts; assess ideas on cultural constructions and collective behaviours; identifying ruptures and continuities in the long formative processes of cultural notions, units and objects, identifying issues related to shared values and beliefs and currents that (de)emphasise the sharing.

D. History of the political (12 hours)

This module explores history of the pathways of power and its accretions through select lenses of inclusion- exclusion, hegemony-incorporation, and dominance-insubordination. We will analyse the historical processes by which political units such as states, governments, political parties, citizens are defined, enclosed and re-defined and also the fluidity in ideological underpinnings of political units; we will reevaluate the issues of scale and complexity in both macro- and micro-historical approaches and find ways to challenge the claims both about the general and local, and the aggregates and segregates of the political units of analysis.

Focus: Broad understanding of political concepts and questioning the political glossed and their alternatives; a critical approach to macro- and micro-historical approaches to the origins, pathways and performances; revisions in the histories of nation-states and in ideas of territory, forms and units of governance, political periods; reassessment of the definitions of violence, warfare, resistance, subversion, co-option in historical experiences of the Southasian populations.

Essay 2 and Presentation

Choose one of the topics above and write an essay that critically analyses a specific issue related to history of economy, social history, cultural history or political history. Prepare a presentation on the topic of your choice.

HPFP 503 Foundations of Philosophy (3 credits)

A. Text and Context (12 hours)

This module explores on the work of a leading philosopher from or relevant to Southasia, taking key texts as the basis from which issues such as objectivity, evidence, interpretations are discussed. The aim is to study the social, political, economic, religious, emotional perspectives in which the philosopher proceeds or to re-embed ideas in philosophy into the context and to explore the pathways of interpretations, re-interpretations, translations while we remain anchored in key texts. The approach will be broadly socio-historical while the analysis will be hermeneutical.

Focus: Insights into key texts in philosophy by taking texts of one philosopher from or relevant to the Southasian life-worlds; differentiate its contextual roots from that of its subsequent interpretations; understanding the trajectories of fundamental questions in philosophy as imprinted on the select texts.

B. Doing philosophy (12 hours)

This is an open-ended, applied module on both inductive and deductive approaches (and their counterparts such as analogical and metaphorical paths) to philosophising as a vocation. Taking 'fragments' (such as a phenomenon, an event, a bundle of meanings) as the basis for discursive meditation and theory building, it examines the ways such fragments build into apparently cohesive principles and schemes. We will evaluate the appearance of general knowledge on both the claims to generality and knowing.

Focus: Case studies on 'origins' of philosophical thoughts in both Classical and non-classical philosophies relevant to Southasia; challenges in examining and comprehending properties, potentials and mappings of the fragments for generalisations and transcendental enquiries; the difference between empirical and theoretical; critical assessment of characters of induction and deduction as well as example, analogy and ellipsis and other unconventional thinking, reasoning and feeling processes.

C. Philosophical Methods (12 hours)

This module explores the historical (genealogy and archaeology) and philosophical (analytical and synthetical) methods in philosophy; studying the development of an idea over time and across horizontal branching or over time and across vertical layers as well as the representational or investigative nature of philosophical positions; analytical and dialectical methods and their aims and objectives as well as their roles in knowledge and meaning making.

Focus: Topological history of philosophical ideas such as axioms, problems, conjectures and solutions; varied foundations of knowledge claims and systems; philosophical methods from non-philosophy perspectives; relations between and among objects in the world, meaning making, distinguishing interpretations, categories, frameworks and principles.

D. Problems and solutions (12 hours)

This module explores the making and unmaking of philosophical problems and ways to build their (re)solutions as well as limits to such ways. It reassesses changing criteria and properties of defining philosophical problems and their resolutions, and thereby helps understand, for instance, how philosophies in one socio-historical milieu are taken as theologies or folk wisdoms in another. It is a preliminary exercise in developing critical perspectives on comparative research across philosophical traditions.

Focus: Examining problems in one of the Southasian philosophical traditions from the vantage of another (such as Jaina philosophers' interpretation of Nyaya means of knowledge and early Arabic and European interpretations of Southasian soteriological and metaphysical categories), or comparing the treatments of a single (non)problem in two or more traditions (such as construction of reality across a range of philosophical traditions including empiric-rationalist standpoints of Classical and vernacular belief systems), to understand significance, justifications and rationales developed within their unfolding;

Essay 3

Write an essay on the origins and development of a philosophical problem.

HPOL 504 Other Languages (3 credits)

This immersive course is aimed at acquainting the student with the linguistic structures of one language of her choice (preferably, one of the minority or endangered languages in Southasia) other than the mother tongue, to induce a general understanding of the relations between language and history/philosophy on the one hand, and language and individual/social constructions on the other. In the process, the historical roots, alternative perspectives and philosophical foundations embedded within other/endangered languages become inducements along with a rupture from popular and familiar knowledge traditions.

Essay 4

Write an essay that analyses a specific issue related to the implications of endangered languages for dominant historical/philosophical intuition and knowledge.

HPLB 505 History and Philosophy Ideas Lab (3 credits)

One project, field work/film-photograph-essay

This experimentation module brings concrete situations of history and philosophy to the fore and thereby helps students to gain practical insights into doing history and philosophy. It consists of six experiments. The nature and aims of the actual experiments are subject to change, depending upon the availability of sources, interests of the students and expertise of the subject teacher, but broadly four of the experiments will deal with History courses and two will focus on Philosophy courses offered in the semester. For example, the experiments may include:

1. Problems of 'discovery' of a historical source and of its dating (8 hours)
2. Making of 'controversy' in history and their resolutions (8 hours)
3. Variations in interpreting given time-series data (8 hours)
4. Alternative approaches to quantifying history of emotions (8 hours)
5. Working with philosophical fragments such as rituals and shaman songs (8 hours)
6. Design and implementation of an ethical dilemma (8 hours)
