

DSSC 8111 Fall 2009

Approaches to Knowledge and Truth: Ways of Knowing in Development Studies and Social Change

Blegen Hall 115

Fridays 1:30-3:30 pm

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This course presents complex challenges. While the main title, “Approaches to Knowledge and Truth,” suggests that the course should focus on essentially philosophical and epistemological questions, the subtitle goes on to restrict the field considerably. Indeed, the subtitle poses its own questions by linking two categories whose relation is by no means unproblematic: “development studies” and “social change.” As you know, the very paradigm of “development” has come under increasing scrutiny in the past decade, such that it is no longer clear whether the kind of “social change” envisaged by a development paradigm is necessarily desirable.

But though the title does not provide a clear sense of the course objectives, it does open up a series of themes and questions that we will collectively study in the course of the semester. In selecting our topics and readings, I have been guided by three aims:

1. To make a case for the significance of conceptual categories and non-empiricist knowledge in the Social Sciences and the Humanities.
2. To introduce you to some of the ways in which postcolonial work has either challenged, reworked, or actively extended European frames of thought.
3. To introduce you to scholars working in very diverse areas and to engage, in the most critical way, the notion of “interdisciplinarity.”

Course Requirements:

You will be expected to attend class regularly and punctually, and to participate actively in class discussion. A web “blackboard” will be set up and you will be asked to post short comments on the readings each week before class. These comments (a substantial paragraph will suffice) will give you an opportunity to think in a focused manner about the readings before coming to class, and it will also give you an idea about how others in the class are reading the same texts.

Apart from that, you will write one 10-15 page paper. A 1-2 page paper proposal will be submitted ahead of time.

Tentative Schedule of Readings (Subject to Revision)

9/11: Introduction

9/18: The Question of Knowledge

Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*

Jacques Ranciere, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Chapters 1 and 2

9/25: Louis Althusser, "Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists"
(Lecture 1)

Wendy Brown, "The Time of the Political"

10/2: History and the Archive

Michel Foucault on history and genealogy (reading TBA)

Selected Subaltern Studies (selections)

10/9: Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*, Chapters 4 and 6

Guest Lecturer: Professor Premesh Lalu, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

10/16: Rights and Wrongs

Hannah Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (selections)

Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, Selections

Talal Asad, "Redeeming the Human through Human Rights" (*Formations of the Secular*)

10/23: Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (selections)

Nivedita Menon, "Rights: Putting History Back in"

10/30: Marxism in the Social Sciences

Section on Marx (Reading TBA)

Guest Lecturer: Professor Eric Sheppard, Geography Dept, UMN

11/6: Questions of Legality (Reading TBA)

Guest Lecturer: Flavia Agnes, Women's Rights Lawyer, India (Tentative date)

11/13: Migration Studies

Guest Lecturer: Professor Helga Leitner, Geography Dept, UMN

11/20: Questioning Experience

Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, Selections

Joan Scott, *The Evidence of Experience*

11/27: Thanksgiving Break

12/4: Nationalist Discourse

Fanon: The Pitfalls of Nationalist Consciousness (*The Wretched of the Earth*)

Shamim Meer, "In Search of Freedom"

12/11: Butler and Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation State*