

What are the Human Sciences?

Introduction to the Human Sciences

Lecture 1

02 Jan 2018

World of Knowledge

- Not divided into categories like we know it today; whether between natural and human sciences or sub-divided further within these
- All creation was considered emanating from the same divine source and interlinked in a divine law/plan
- Thus knowledge about the world was interlinked and there could not be a division...
- ...once we know divine will, we would know everything there is to know about the world, the humans and everything else

EVERYTHING WAS THE WORK OF GOD OR DIVINE WILL

Heliocentric View

- Archaic knowledge systems held world to be the centre of creation
- The Sun, Moon and Heavens moved around the earth (which was flat)
- Major shift: Sun the centre of the solar system and earth merely one among many planets
- Physical laws same everywhere and explain physical world
- Natural Sciences are bereft of any divine will (other than first causes)

Centring the Human

- In Archaic society, human action mere expression of Divine Will
- Study of history was study of God's actions; or morality
- Shift towards study of Man and his actions in its own right, not as an agent of God
- First in arts and literature, then in the study of history
- Emergence of Humanities, or Human Sciences
- Like natural sciences, bereft of any divine will

HUMANISM: IDEA THAT SUBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE IS
HUMAN BEING

What is Knowledge

Archaic Society

- Theology: real knowledge is UNDERSTANDING divine will; God's creation
- Philosophy: knowledge about how to make the world work; subservient to divine will.
- Understanding, not Explanation

Modern Society

- Philosophy elevated to mother discipline; Theology vanishes
- History shifts from God's story to Man's story
- History is about both understanding and explaining
 - Society
 - Economy
 - Polity

Aims of the Course

- Introduction to the origin of each modern discipline
 - Main framing questions of each discipline
 - Present state of knowledge; in India.

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- Start with the study of the past
- Continue with the study of the social organisation
- Then how society is governed and power exercised
- Study production and consumption
- Conclude with the big questions of philosophy

Structure

- Each discipline will be taught in a module of five lectures
- First mid-sem exam will have questions from History and part of Sociology modules
- Second mid-sem exam will have questions from Politics module and parts of Sociology and Economics modules
- Final exam will have questions from all modules with extra weightage for Philosophy module
- Students will select one module for writing a term paper (~1500 words); submission dates will be informed shortly.

Expectations

- Deadlines for submission of term papers will be strictly adhered to
- Plagiarism in term papers will lead to zero marks in submission
- Contact TAs if you are unsure about what counts as plagiarism
- Questions (and term papers) will be based on both lectures and readings given for each module