

Introduction to Human Sciences Notes

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Course structure

Modules: 6 modules of 4 classes each:

- Sociology - Radhika Krishnan
- Economics - Anirban Dasgupta
- History - Aniket Alam
- Politics - Aakansha Natani
- Psychology - Priyanka Srivastava
- Literature - Nazia Akhtar

Grading Scheme: Absolute grades

- A for exceeding expectations.
- B for meeting expectations.
- C for doing less than expected.

Creativity matters and will be graded.
No assignments.

0.1 Reading

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1 Introduction

Why Human Sciences? Engineers and scientists need an introduction to some information of the goings on around the world acc to policy makers (makes sense tbh). We need to understand how the world functions. But the way it engg is taught doesn't quite convey this.

Humanities, Social sciences are still debated whether they are different sections and whether some disciplines fall under either. Economics for example, does Economics come under either at all? Broadly, Humanities consists of Literature, Psychology, etc.

IIIT uses 'Human Sciences' because we follow the Francophone tradition, which divides between Natural and Human Sciences. Also, Human Sciences manages to cover all disciplines necessary to be taught. Additionally, it settles debates (linguistics is no longer a bane :P).

What do we do in the Human Sciences? Essentially a quest for knowledge naturally separate from Natural Sciences (:P).

In the pre-modern world, knowledge wasn't classified as we know it. All knowledge was thought to be emanating from a common (divine or otherwise) source: Science à la Creationism. The point of science back then was to understand the Divine Plan, per se.

Enter the Heliocentric Revolution, not limited to its lead singer Galileo. This led to an understanding that the laws of nature are the same everywhere and that the Sciences are completely bereft of Divinity (gasp). Often in philosophy, this is called the decentering of creation or disenchantment of nature, because earlier, Nature was seen as some sort of mystical phenomenon that was not always explainable.

History went from the study of God's Will to the study of human behaviour.
—Aniket Alam

What is Knowledge? Earlier, when theology was considered the Prime Science, because everything was attributed to a Divine Will; now Philosophy is considered the Mother discipline, with no trace of theology. History shifts from God's story to humanity's story.

Origin stories of disciplines? A lot of disciplines (pretty much every Human Science) has colonialism as a major influencer, but what most people fail to consider is that decolonialism is also just as major of an influence in pretty much any discipline in Human Sciences.

Perspective plays a huge role in every Human Science, because some social roles see very basic things in very different lights, which can actually give deeper insight into things. This for example leads to a style of study called ‘subaltern study’ which involved the study of societies from the perspective of the people in socially lower strata.

2 Sociology

2.1 What even is sociology?

2.2 ‘Modern’ Sociology

2.2.1 Development of Sociology

Revolving Science and Nirvana European Enlightenment and the advent of the Scientific Revolution was possibly the first time Sociology was moved away from Theology, and society was looked at in a more individualistic way as opposed to a deistic way. Major players in this revolution were big shots like Copernicus, Galileo, etc. The Scientific Method was becoming more and more popular.

Colonization innit The spread of European ideologies along with the ‘discovery’ of ‘new’ landmasses and cultures also increased in the importance of Sociology as a subject. The spread of Capitalism

Revolving Industries?

Not Narcissism, trust me

More revolving stuff

As you will, Your Grace

2.2.2 Development of Sociology in India

3 Economics

3.1 Ye kya cheez hai?

Definitely not something to do (necessarily) about the stock market. Economists who deal with it usually do it out of interest or out of a specialization of sorts.

Not necessarily something to do with money either. It usually does, but not by definition.

Some common definitions

- The science which studies Human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses. - *Lionel Robbins (1932)*
- The study of the allocation of scarce means to satisfy competing ends. - *Gary Becker (1971)*
- The study of incentives. - *Steven Levitt, Freakonomics (2005)*

What isn’t Economics? There is a question of is there even a clear boundary that can determine whether something is an economic question or not. For example:

- Disproportionate division of women’s burdens including household work and childcare,
- Concentration of lower castes in manual labour
- Civil War in West African countries

- History of Technological progress
- Is all social phenomenon essentially Economic? (Economic determinism)

These are all questions that strain the bounds, if any, on the field of Economics, and (possibly) show how interdisciplinary the Human Sciences are. There are several situations that at first glance look like they are far from Economics, but when thought over clearly, have an economic insight or aspect to them. Looking at problems from an interdisciplinary lens is absolutely necessary to fully understand situations.

3.2 School that thot!

Fields of Economics

- Microeconomics
- Macroeconomics
-

Schools of economic thought

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3.2.1 Micro vs Macro

Microeconomics deals primarily with individual behaviour and how that affects the economic situation of a society. It attempts to model individual behaviour on the basis of some well-formed assumptions on the way people think. It also involves the extensive use of mathematical techniques like calculus.

On the other hand, Macroeconomics deals with aggregates of individual agents. Note that this is not simply an aggregation of Microeconomics but rather incorporates the interactions and feedback lines between the agents in question. It is concerned with economic growth, inflation, employment, etc.

3.2.2 Mozart? Is that you?

Essentially the first structured body of economic thinking emerging in the late 18th Century was Classical Economics, then called ‘Political Economy’, stemming almost primarily from Adam Smith’s *An inquiry into the nature and causes of wealth and nations* (1776). Notable classical economists include David Ricardo, Thomas Malthus and Karl Marx (who was more of a critic btw).

Some key ideas of classical economics are ‘The Individual Hand’, efficacy of free trade between nations through comparative advantage, supply creating its own demand (see Say’s Law).

3.2.3 What if I told you there’s another?

The Neoclassical school is arguably the most dominant school of thought to date. Trivially, it arose after the classical school fizzled out around the 19th Century in the works of Jevons and Walras. The analytical unit here was the individual or the firm, instead of classes in society. So, this is sort of the beginning of Microeconomics. The broad principle was that the unit has clearly defined goals of optimizing their self-interest and participating in market transactions.

This is where Economics got the label of a ‘Science’ instead of the name of ‘Political Economy’. Major contributors here were

3.2.4 Full Marx in School