

Introduction to Human Sciences Notes

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Spring – 2023

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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.

Reading

- Tim Callen - *Gross Domestic Product: An Economy's all* (2017)
- Diane Coyle - *Rethinking GDP* (2017)

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.

IIT 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

-

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

Marxian Economics is an analytical framework mainly derived from *Das Kapital* (1867-94) and is essentially a theory of capitalist dynamics. The main building blocks here are the forces of production: technology, machines, labour, etc. and the relations of production: property rights, employment relations and division of labour. The main question involved is how much of income should go to the labour and how much to the capitalist. Marx believes that all of the income should go to the labour, while nowadays, the capitalist decides how much of the income goes to whom, and in reality, it is only a (perhaps not insignificant) fraction of the income goes to the labour.

3.2.5 I'm sure you're Keynes to know more

Named after British aristocrat and economist John Maynard Keynes, Keynesian Economics is elaborated in his book *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936). It is essentially based on the experiences of the Great Depression and has been foundational in the development of macroeconomics. The main ideology here is the rejection of Smith's understanding of the market as a self-equilibrating mechanism, and instead advocating the involvement of governments in the form of boosting demand through public investment. However, modern macroeconomics is no longer limited to Keynesian ideas, and has expanded significantly from it. This is despite of the problems that led to the development of this school of thought to still persist especially recently.

3.2.6 The power lies in the Institution

3.2.7 That's an interesting choice you made

The school of Behavioural Economics takes into account human behaviour that influences economic decisions. It is a modification of the Neoclassical school in that it doesn't assume that human beings act rationally and selfishly. Herbert Simon is one of its pioneering scholars. Naturally, humans cannot be omniscient, they cannot know everything or make extremely deep decisions. They have to make decisions using the limited knowledge that they have, and the behaviouralist school takes it into account along with computational constraints. This is the crux of the principle of 'bounded rationality' as Behavioural Economics believes.

More recently, the behaviouralist school has extended to experimental verification of human behavioural patterns using randomized controlled trials.

3.2.8 Braaaaaaiinnnnss

The field of neuroeconomics is a very recently developed field where we try to see how different economic contexts have an effect on the human brain and how that affects decisions that people make. This is essentially an extension of Behavioural Economics as it treats decision-making as a core aspect of economic study.

3.3 Ew, that's Gross Domestic Product

Definition GDP is defined as the net monetary value of all **final** goods and services in an economy in a year.

Note, it is **final** because including produce that is used in other services and production leads to excessive overcounting and possibly loops.

Alternate aggregations are either the net value added at each stage of production, or the net income received at all inputs of production (wages, rents, profits, interests, etc.)

3.3.1 Why tho?

lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur

3.3.2 Why not GDP

It's mostly limited to marketed goods and services. Stuff that is not sold like excess grain, or household work mostly done by women is not considered at all. This also leads to moral questions like whether something like the emotional toll taken on a mother taking care of a child can be evaluated by hiring someone from the market.

Most informal or illegal activities are not captured at all. Even if it is captured, it's not a complete hold on whatever is happening. Some things aren't quite illegal, hence the *informal* in the first sentence. Again, whether to consider it as a measure of national welfare is a question, but there are people consuming out of it.

Another moral aspect of this is that a country's GDP can be substantially increases simply through investment in defense or even war. Through this, a country can simply appear to be extremely wealthy by simply warmongering or overinvesting in military fields. Whether this is a good enough indicator of welfare is a serious question.

GDP as a concept does not take into account resource depletion and environmental degradation. The depletion of resources and the environment that comes as a consequence of economic growth is extremely dangerous and should be considered in the calculation of how well a country is doing. Even services that don't apparently degrade the environment end up having an impact too. For example, financial executives also travel an obscenely large number of air-miles per dollar of income made (*based on a back-of-the-envelope calculation*).

Additionally GDP per capita is an average measure and like any other measure of central tendency, it ignores distribution. Inequalities in the distribution of income per capita is not captured in the least. (Recall Class 9 Economics)

3.4 Sab vele hain

Employment and Unemployment Employment is considered another key indicator of macroeconomic health of a country. Having access to meaningful employment is critical for ensuring a decent quality of life for the populace. The employment situation is often tracked through the unemployment rate: the percentage of working age adults actively looking for employment but not getting it at any given time. A higher unemployment rate indicates an economic crisis (heh, Ekonomikrisis) or a recession. However, this might not be a good indication of economic distress in a poor country. This indicator does not include the people who have given up on seeking employment due to inability to obtain it and this is also something that needs to be considered. There is also some amount of unemployment in every country (up to 4%) because of people who are in between jobs (those who have left their job in search of a better one.)

“The only thing worse than being exploited of your labour in capitalism is not being exploited at all.”

3.4.1 You have no power here

Add section on how poorer countries have no option of being unemployed, because of how unemployment is defined, and how it is a privilege to even be unemployed.

3.5 Let’s not inflate this too much

3.6 Fiscal deficit, fiscal deficit, fiscally fiscally fiscal deficit

Hi Dad This can be considered a sort of Accounting principle

Lots of missing classes

4 History

4.1 Why this module?

Think big! WhatsApp forwards of “We’ve been learning the wrong history! India me aise hua tha!!1” are good and all, but those are more aimed towards people who prefer to not think historically and instead just take facts for what they are. We aim to think more historically in this module, and to learn how to know what really happened. If we were to think back about last year, we would be able to verify our knowledge of what happened at a certain time using some form of record (May be WA chats or Moodle or something, but a record nonetheless).

Why history at all? How does knowing about what king won what battle help us today? Understanding how we obtain information about the past can help us verify or record information more accurately now, and that is extremely necessary.

4.2 Knowledge in the Pre-Modern World

Asking whether Moses accidentally dropped a tablet and only reported two tablets and ten Commandments because he chickened out? These are the kind of questions that historians regularly ask, and the answers to these are entirely dependent on the record of information. In the Pre-Modern World, knowledge was revealed on a ‘divine’ basis à la Sanjay du Mahabharat. Moses, Veda Vyasa are all ‘culprits’

All creation, whether animate, inanimate or even abstract was considered emanating from the same divine source. The belief was that the only way to obtain such Divine information was to cloister oneself and seclusion was considered supreme. Knowledge of a Divine Plan was considered supreme knowledge and obtaining it would give one the knowledge of everything in the world.

More revolving sciences! Whee! The Heliocentric Revolution and the Scientific Revolution was the beginning of the time when questioning the sources of such information and even its existence began becoming somewhat self-sustaining and more prominent among thinkers. Sometime around here is when some *ssance* business started to get *Renai*'ed.

Big shots like Copernicus and Galileo later on were the ones to properly document this information and not talk more about it instead. Countries more aligned to the Catholic Church, weirdly enough, were the first ones to jump at the opportunities that resulted from the consequences of these theories.

See further paragraph **What do we do in the Human Sciences**.

Slightly off-center The decentralisation of nature led to a lot of scientific development and more importantly, its recording. The Vitruvian Man, for example, is an expression of the proportionality in a human being as observed by one Leonardo da Vinci, which highlighted the mathematical structure hidden in creation, so to speak. The decentralisation of nature made the study of the world more human-centric.

4.2.1 So what is History?

The point of history is to shift from God's story to Man's story. We study human and natural causes of past events (things need not be either exclusively! Things are usually a bit of both). History is about both understanding and explaining the things that happened: analysing their causes and consequences. We also need to understand why things change, and have a theory for it.

"History is preoccupied with the fundamental processes of change" - E.H. Carr (*What is History*)

Everybody gets a history! History is effectively everywhere! The clothes we wear, the things that have been made. Language in itself is freaking history (historical linguistics whoo!).

History is implicitly contained in everything, but the job of a historian is to make it explicit. To understand the knowledge and make it known is essential to prevent misinformation. A good historian is one who can tell us what history can tell and what history *cannot*!

There can be No Objectivity, No Certitude

(Assassin's Creed reference 100% intended)

4.3 Let's do some History!

Questions framed in history are all well and good. They do in fact give essential information and resolve misinformation. However, for all information, there needs to be evidence that can be corroborated. There need to be methods that can be scrutinized and proved. We need universal standards of verifiability and falsifiability. Without these, there can be any variety of claims made and believed. That's not history anymore.