Objective of the Course

Social sciences as indicated through a plethora of works cannot be read in isolation from the historical contexts within which they emerge. For some scholars social theory becomes a contested field where politics of times is reflected. In a similar vein of arguments it becomes relevant to reflect why a Parsonian framework or the notion of post-industrial society, for instance, would emerge during the Post-World War II situation. Similar questions would emerge concerning any other social theory. The debate on social theory and how to make sense of it led some scholars to make a distinction between two different ways of looking at the question of theory building in the context of ideologies. They pointed that while “the positivist believes that objective scientific inquiry will yield knowledge of society in the same way that it yields knowledge of nature” the “theorist of ideology charges that the positivist is under an illusion” because the knowledge of society gets influenced by the dominant social group. Historically, we have witnessed that the theoretical domain, which appears as a reflection of the experience, has been a battlefield where the challenges have not only posed by assertion of the diverse social groups on the margin such as the emergence of a Dalit challenge to the whole orientation of Indian sociology itself but schools of thought have emerged challenging the existing body of knowledge and its orientation such as the subaltern school or feminism. This course would make an effort to introduce students to the significance of ideology and historical contexts in making of theories or producing particulars forms of knowledge.

1. Contextualising the Theoretical Domain: This section will engage students with one of the significant debates concerning Enlightenment and positivism. In the same context it will look at the history of social science and some of the efforts to characterize it.

Suggested Readings (selected chapters)

Adorno, Theodor W., et.al. (1977) *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, Heinemann: London (selected chapters)


2. Society and Theory-The Linkages: This section looks at the linkages between the society and theory and explores how intellectuals are products of their socioeconomic contexts. And therefore the knowledge produced itself becomes part of the whole process. It also introduces the emergence of alternatives because scholars felt that there has been a disjunct between the societal dynamics and knowledge produced.


3. Ideology in social science: This section looks at the role of ideology in the shaping of social sciences and how the theoretical domain becomes an ideological domain as well.


4. Social Science and its orientations: This section looks at the way social sciences and sociology in particular as a discipline is shaped in particular kind of larger socioeconomic and political environs. It also makes an effort to dwell upon on how scholars have indicated at biases, orientations and prejudices within disciplines.


