

Foundations Course 2015
Mandatory 3 Credit Course for Incoming Cohort

Course Coordinator:

T S Gopi Rethinaraj

Teaching:

NIAS faculty

Course Format: Lectures and Discussion

Course Description:

The main purpose of this course is to introduce students to the foundations and central ideas of various traditional academic disciplines and interdisciplinary streams of inquiry. Ideas of knowledge generation, history and structure of academic disciplines, and multi/interdisciplinary approaches to problem solving will be reviewed in this course. Academic disciplines connected to the practices of teaching-learning- research went on to make up the character of higher education in the 19th century. Over the course of the late twentieth century, however, the subtle shift began to occur towards particularisation and specialisation of knowledge on the one hand, and towards growing trends of comparative studies and hybrid disciplines on the other. The permeability of boundaries between disciplines opened up new areas of inquiry, highlighted new language of analysis, and it brought in new, combinatorial partnerships-- universities, government agencies, think tanks, industry research units, NGOs, and social movements-- to name a few. Keeping in mind this context, it is instructive to note that the term “interdisciplinary” is used to talk about approaches, methods, perspectives and even a discipline! The variance in the understood meaning of the term and a lack of definitional clarity are good starting points for this class. The course begins with a lecture outlining the differences between disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge generation, followed by viewing and discussing a documentary based on the Pulitzer-winning nonfiction book *Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond. Two lecture discussions on logic will follow as a useful preparatory for subsequent discussions on the foundations of various academic disciplines and interdisciplinary streams of inquiry. Team-taught by NIAS faculty, the Foundations Course will look at historical and theoretical underpinnings of various traditional academic disciplines, and practical orientations of interdisciplinarity using interdisciplinary fields of inquiry.

Course Objectives:

- (i) To introduce students to the various ways of knowledge generation in different disciplines
- (ii) To understand the history of ideas in disciplines and questions that remain unresolved
- (iii) To learn to read key texts and respond to them in reflective and critical engagement
- (iv) To carry out a short multi/interdisciplinary research project

Course Design:

The course consists of 16 lectures of 3 hours, meeting once a week (Tuesday: 9.30 am – 1.00 pm).

Texts: The speakers will provide readings in advance for each session. Some speakers will hand out readings after their session.

Evaluation:

Students will be required to write an individual term paper (40% of the grade), engage in a collaborative research project with their peers (30% of the grade), and class presentation based on their term paper (15% of grade). Attendance and participation in class would be counted for 15% of the total grade.

NIAS Foundation Course 2015 Schedule

Sl No	Date	Time	Topic /Theme	Faculty
1	Tue, Aug. 11	9:30-1:00	Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity	TS Gopi Rethinaraj
2	Tue, Aug. 18	9:30-1:00	Guns, Germs, and Steel: Discussion	Dilip Ahuja
3	Tue, Aug. 25	9:30-1:00	Approaches to Logic	Narendar Pani
4	Tue, Sept. 1	9:30-1:00	Fallacies in Logic	Narendar Pani
5	Tue, Sept. 8	9:30-1:00	Foundations of Political Science	Anshuman Behera
6	Tue, Sept. 15	9:30-1:00	Foundations of Economics	Chidambaran Iyer
<i>Thursday, September 17, Ganesha Chaturthi</i>				
7	Tue, Sept. 22	9:30-1:00	Foundations of History	S. Settar
<i>Thursday, September 24, Bakrid</i>				
8	Tue, Sept. 29	9:30-1:00	Foundations of Sociology	Carol Upadhya
<i>Friday, October 2, Gandhi Jayanthi</i>				
9	Tue, Oct. 6	9:30-1:00	Foundations of Physics	Sisir Roy
<i>Monday, October 12, Mahalaya Amavasye</i>				
10	Tue, Oct. 13	9:30-1:00	Foundations of Biology	Anindya Sinha
11	Tue, Oct. 20	9:30-1:00	Understanding Animal Behavior	Sidhu Radhakrishna
<i>Thursday, October 22, Ayudha Pooja</i>				
<i>Friday, October 23, Vijayadashami</i>				
12	Tue, Oct. 27	9:30-1:00	Understanding Social Cognition	V V Binoy
13	Tue, Nov. 3	9:30-1:00	Understanding Consciousness	Sangeetha Menon
<i>Tuesday, November 10, Naraka Chaturdashi</i>				
<i>Wednesday, November 11, Deepavali</i>				
14	Tue, Nov.17	9:30-1:00	Understanding Energy Sustainability	Shoibal Chakravarty Hippu S K Nathan
15	Tue, Nov.24	9:30-1:00	Understanding International Security	M. Mayilvaganan Arun Vishwanathan
16	Tue, Dec.1	9:30-1:00	Understanding Archaeological Science	Sharada Srinivasan
17	Tue, Dec. 8	9:30-1:00	Understanding Education Policy	Shivali Tukdeo
18	Thu, Dec. 10	10:30-4:30	Project Presentation	Evaluation Committee

