

2B HIST LEC 1: Social Knowledge and Social Power

TR 11:00A -- 12:15P

ROYCE 362

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There are NO prerequisites for this course. NO previous knowledge of social sciences is presumed. In my experience there will be students in this class from all majors and every stage of undergraduate careers.

Catalog Description:

History of social knowledge and social power in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Everyday ideas and practices about human nature, common sense, and community and relation of those practices to social thought, social engineering, and social science. Themes include development of social knowledges through public activities and discourses; how social knowledge differs in agricultural, mercantile, industrial, and information-based political economies; and how social science addresses these issues.

Fuller Description:

A conventional course on the history of social thought and the social sciences during the 18, 19, and 20 centuries would focus on the period 1780-1940. Such a course would emphasize a history of ideas, those who wrote the important books and articles, and, incidentally, the sites where this great work was done. There are many historical surveys of this sort, and some of them are excellent.

This course explores the historical changes in everyday ideas and practices about 'human nature', sensible conduct, 'common sense', and community; we examine how those changing practices have been related to changes in social thought, social theory, social engineering, and social science. The focus is on the various kinds of social knowledges developed during the 19/20 centuries, especially since 1940.

We ask how different kinds of knowledge making about social worlds have been crafted, reproduced, maintained, and disrupted during the last four centuries around the world; the focus is on the last 75 years. We will examine how social knowledges have been introduced, appropriated, and shaped through a myriad of public activities and discourses. The knowledge-agents include communities, cultures, religions, industries, governments, as well as bureaucrats, researchers, and leaders from specific civic, religious, economic, and academic organizations.

We examine how social knowledge has differed in agricultural, mercantile, industrial, and information-based political economies in different countries. We discuss how social knowledges have circulated differently through our political, economic, religious, and educational institutions. We ask how different forms of social knowledge have acquired and lost power; we delineate how access to powerful forms of social knowledge has been determined. We survey some important ideas about the history of social knowledge making from the social sciences and humanities.

Case studies are drawn from education and research, entertainment and sports, medicine and engineering, social policies and practices, schools, housing, leisure, families, public spaces, armies, governments, prisons, marketing, churches, work, bodies, businesses, and hospitals, for example.

Pedagogy:

In this course students are expected to focus on formulating questions, recognizing research strategies, and identifying interpretations of research. The focus is not on finding existing answers to questions provided by the instructors. The course is designed to teach the skills listed below, enabling you to access and analyze the most current research, as well as to formulate your own ideas. The pedagogical focus will be on

1. locating research materials on the themes of the course
2. identifying significant topics for inquiry
3. understanding various research strategies
4. recognizing various analytic strategies
5. writing analytic reviews of what you read

More tersely, the focus is on how to develop good questions and on the skills needed to address them. There is NO textbook and there are NO examinations. Readings will be provided via links at the course webpage.

The full syllabus will be posted soon.