



INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

The Future of Humanities Challenges and Prospects

30-31 March, 2018

Organised by
Department of English
Banaras Hindu University
Varanasi, India

Humanities as a discipline is currently at crossroads, and an air of despondency lingers over its stakeholders. As Weber instructs, the Italian Renaissance's notion of the 'human,' which underlies that of the 'Humanities', has been largely understood as designating a mode of being that has been regarded as self-producing. To think of humanities is to follow a model of unity that is founded upon a certain notion of the human in opposition to the non-human/animal world. But the Cartesian notion of the human has been undermined by a more dynamic and more self-referential conception. However, the logic of production is reinforcing the need for the model of unification. The actualization of human and humanities was in the form of self-determining capacities through labor that has been destabilized by the economic logic of profit and loss. For example, budget cuts have threatened humanities programmes all across the globe.

Although the number of students in India who pursue courses in Humanities generally remains very high, it can be observed that in the absence of required employability, the future of students and scholars of humanities is surely in crisis. However, the question that needs to be addressed is: how judicious is it to evaluate the role of humanities in sheer instrumental terms, in terms of its material and occupational value? In *Not for Profit*, Martha Nussbaum offers some very powerful arguments in defence of the arts and humanities, which policymakers and other stakeholders often cast as “useless frills”. She considers the corrosion of Humanities as an instance of “the silent crisis” to democracies, and argues that the importance of Humanities must not be judged in terms of profit but in terms of its ability to foster “cultivated capacities for critical thinking and reflection which are crucial in keeping democracies alive and wide awake.”

This seminar has its origin in the increasing skepticism apropos the value of humanities as a discipline. The fundamental question that the seminar seeks to address is: is Humanities really in crisis and, if so, what are the reasons, and solutions to this crisis? However, this seminar is not only about the crisis in humanities—budget cuts, decreasing enrolment numbers, lack of job opportunities for humanities students and so on— but also about the crisis within humanities which refers to developing methodologies of addressing contemporary issues of social conflict and formulating alternative contemporary interdisciplinary studies. The seminar does not reject the possibility that the so-called crisis in Humanities may only be a rhetoric. Therefore it also envisions a counter-narrative to this rhetoric. However, the goal of the seminar is not limited to the discursive theorization of disciplinarity. The seminar also hopes to take within its purview the history as well as future of Humanities, in particular, literary studies and other disciplines such as philosophy, history, languages in general. The approaches and philosophical aspects of the sciences and social sciences that intersect and contribute to the making of new humanities shall also be the subject of discussion. The objective is to arrive at some common understanding regarding the direction humanities studies may take in the twenty-first century. The new disciplines and methodologies of doing humanities such as digital humanities, medical humanities, neuro-aesthetics and so on are

also the intended subjects that will be interrogated in the seminar.

Our guiding questions include:

1. What would be the project of humanities after the central pillar of the liberal humanist notion of the human has been thoroughly deconstructed?
2. How do we conceptualize the role of humanities in contemporary times when any critical scholarship in the domain of humanities is constantly being seen with suspicion?
3. Consequently, can we start to rethink about the relationship between institutions of humanistic studies and the state and the people?

Notwithstanding the above, the Seminar Committee will consider research papers and roundtable proposals in line with the following thematic strands:

Human Values and Critical Humanities

Philosophy and Literature

Literature and Sociological Theory

Medical Humanities

Identities and Beliefs

Science, Technology, and Culture

Digital Humanities and Media

Societal Mores and Values

Post-humanism and Trans-humanism

Cyborgs and Gene-Culture

Literature of Peace and Understanding

Oral and Tribal Literatures

Literature-Theory Interface

The question of pedagogy for Humanities

Emergences of 'New Knowledge(s)' within Humanities



REGISTRATION FEE

Teachers : ₹ 3000.00

Students: ₹ 2000.00

The Registration fee includes seminar kit, lunch during the days of conference. This does not include accommodation. Limited accommodation can be arranged in campus guest house/city hotels on the payments basis if intimated in advance.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Please submit either abstract (in about 300 words) and/or full paper containing the paper title, full details of the corresponding authors including title (such as Mr., Dr. etc), field of research (such as subaltern studies, disability studies etc) and contact emails. Interested participants should send their abstract to seminarenglishbhu18@gmail.com. All submission will go through double blind review process and review outcome will be notified within reasonable time. Every participant will have to make a 20 minutes presentation which shall be followed by 10 minutes respondent moderated discussion.

DEADLINES

Last Date for Abstract Submission: **25.02.2018**

Author Notification : **28.02.2018**

SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

Selected papers will be published with ISBN in a book form.

WRITTEN REVIEW REPORT

Review reports via email on every paper presented at the conference will be provided to assist the authors to revise and improve their papers.

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

Established in 1916, Banaras Hindu University is one of the leading universities in the world and the largest residential university in Asia. The illustrious founder of this university, Bharat Ratna Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji had firm belief in the holistic model of education and that vision made the University a unique “capital of knowledge” where the East meets the West. The Department of English is a true embodiment of this vision. The Department has grown rapidly since its inception in 1916 and has played a major role in the intellectual life of the country by promoting debates in *literature, culture and arts*.

TRAVEL

The University is well-connected by both air and rail. It is around 30 kms from the airport, 7 kms from Varanasi Junction and 20 kms from Mughal Sarai Junction. Pre-paid taxis/auto rickshaws/cabs are available at all these locations.

CHIEF PATRON

Vice Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University

PATRON

Dr. M. S. Pandey, Professor. & Head
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Department of English, Banaras Hindu University

Treasurer
Dr. Umesh Kumar
Department of English, Banaras Hindu University

For further Details :
9919020500, 8400043960, 9532119949

INVITED SPEAKERS

D Venkat Rao



D Venkat Rao is Professor at the Department of English Literature, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. An eminent teacher and researcher, he has published extensively on Critical Humanities, Mnemocultures and Oral literatures. His recent books include *Cultures of Memory in South Asia: Orality, Literacy and the Problem of Inheritance* (*Sophia Studies in Cross-cultural Philosophy of Traditions and Cultures*), *Purāpi Navam: Mnemocultures of the Puranas*, and *Priya Shatruvu* (a translation into Telugu of Ashis Nandy's *Intimate Enemy*), (Emesco) and a translation of *The Last Brahmin* (2007). Over the past many years, he has offered various teaching courses at UG and PG levels and none has been repeated so far during the decade.

Shelley Walia



Currently Professor Emeritus at Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Shelley Walia is a renowned scholar in the field of Postcolonial studies and has devoted several years to teaching, writing and speaking on subjects ranging from literature to culture and from socio-political matters to international affairs. His books include *Evelyn Waugh: Witness to Decline, Between History and Truth: Perspectives on Culture, Politics and Theory* and *Edward Said and the Writing of History* (which has been translated into six languages). His articles have appeared in leading international journals which include *Race and Class*, *Times Literary Supplement*, and *Social Sciences Research Journal*. Professor Walia has travelled widely and lectured at

prestigious universities both in India and abroad. He was elected Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, University of Oxford (1994 and 2004) and subsequently at the University of Cambridge for a similar position.

Maya Pandit



Maya Pandit is Professor at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. She is an activist who is involved with the women's and teachers' movements in Maharashtra for the last three decades. She has published extensively on women's movement, translation as well as education. She has been closely associated with alternative Marathi theatre and has translated Marathi plays into English.

Ranjan Ghosh



Ranjan Ghosh teaches English at the University of North Bengal in India. Among his many books include *Presence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, with Ethan Kleinberg, 2013); *Thinking Literature across Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, with J. Hillis Miller); *Transcultural Poetics* (London: Routledge, 2017); *Aesthetics, Politics, Pedagogy, Tagore: Towards a Transcultural Philosophy of Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); *Philosophy and Poetry: A Continental Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018)

Rahul K. Gairola



Rahul K. Gairola is the author of *Homelandings: Postcolonial Diasporas and Transatlantic Belonging* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016) and co-editor (with Amritjit Singh and Nalini Iyer) of *Revisiting India's Partition: New Essays on Memory, Culture, and Politics* (Orient Blackswan,

2016). He has held funded research positions at Cornell University, Cambridge University, Yale University, Leipzig University, and the Humboldt University of Berlin. His current research examines digital humanities and South Asian Studies. He is an Article Editor for *Postcolonial Text*, and the co-editor (with Alpana Sharma) of *salaam*: the newsletter of the south asian literary association. He sits on the Executive Committee of the South Asian Literary Association (SALA) and the Australasian Association of Digital Humanities (aaDH), and is a founding member of the Digital Humanities Alliance of India (DHAI). He has published and presented papers widely around the globe, and is working on two book projects at the moment. He holds a joint PhD in English Literature and Theory & Criticism from the University of Washington, USA, and has taught there and at Seattle University, the University of Washington at Bothell, the University of Maryland at Baltimore County, The City University of New York (Queens College and York College), and the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee.

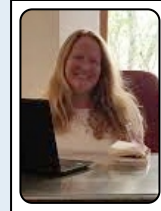
Mart Stewart



Dr. Mart Stewart is a professor in the Department of History and an affiliate professor in the Huxley College of the Environment at Western Washington University. He teaches courses in U.S. and global environmental history, cultural history, and American studies, and his research specialty is in environmental history, especially of the American and global South. In recent years he has done fieldwork in the Mekong Delta, and has organized several workshops and conferences and edited volumes about environmental problems in this region. He is the author or editor of many books, essays, articles, and book chapters. He has served on several editorial boards and is

currently the co-editor of the *Flows, Migrations, Exchanges* book series at the University of North Carolina Press.

Shealeen Meaney



Dr. Shealeen Meaney is associate professor of English and director of the Helen M. Upton Center for Women's Studies at Russell Sage College in Troy, NY. She earned a BA in English from the State University of New York at Geneseo, an MA in English from the University of Tennessee, and a PhD in English from the University at Albany. Since 2007 she has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in American literature and women's studies at the Sage Colleges, where she also established an academic program in American studies in 2009. Her scholarship on American literature and women's travel writing been published in books and journals including *Journal of Narrative Theory*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, and *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, among others. In April 2012 she guest edited an issue of *Women's Studies* on travel studies, and she is currently at work on a follow-up issue of the journal focused on women's travel writing.

