



Bergen Summer Research School

> Global Development Challenges

BSRS2011: Norms, Values, Language and Culture 20th June – 1st July 2011

PhD-Research Course: *Emerging Normative Regimes*

Course leader:

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In collaboration with:

Professor [Roger Strand](#), University of Bergen, Centre for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities (SVT)

Invited guest lecturers:

- Professor [Anne Norton](#), University of Pennsylvania, Department of Political Science, USA
- Professor [Sudipta Kaviraj](#), Columbia University, Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies, USA
- Professor [Shijun Tong](#), Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, China

General background and objectives

The economic, political and cultural relations of domination on a world scale are in the process of radical transformation. In the last two decades we have witnessed the rise of a new economic middle class comprising 400 million Chinese and 200 million Indians, at least doubling its global size, the creation of new technological strongholds, economic power relations and international divisions of labor and consumption, and a new political assertiveness and influence especially on behalf of China and India.

On this background, it is timely to ask whether the global context of normativity is changing. To a considerable degree the specific European and North American historical experiences and lessons have functioned as the explicit and implicit context within which the most important global normative questions have been defined. The Westphalian peace, the French revolution, the Jewish question, the German question and the second world war, etc., produce a frame of reference for normative critiques, constructions, deconstructions, debates and struggles. The tensions between a non-interventionist principle of sovereignty

and an interventionist regime of human rights may be seen as an opposition within the European/North American historical discourse. However, the global domination of this context of normative problematics, may no longer be taken for granted. The new global position of China and India may be the most important indicators of a shift, or even a rupture. What kind of historical experiences and events are defining the normative questions and problematics within these emerging regimes? Clearly, the European lessons are no longer fundamental. To some degree China and India occupied a position within the European/North American discourse as exploited colonies and semi-colonies, but as poles of economic, political and cultural powers they are in many ways transcending this frame. If these new global centres of domination are able to constitute new global, normative regimes, the very structures, logics and substances of these should be explored. This is the tentative goal of the summer school course.

Tentative course description and themes:

There are several interlinked problematics and thematic frameworks which will be followed in the course:

- The Western experience between the transcendental and historically specific. This is an old debate, which is both repeated and renewed, continued and transformed, challenged by global realities. How are the core normative principles, if any, going to be expressed in the new historical context ? Are there any implicit Western perspectives of religious, socio-political and cultural nature, governing the practice and understanding of the explicit transcendental values, e.g. regarding human rights? If so, what should be the normative implications ?
- The Indian movement of liberation from the British colonial empire was dominated by an elite formulating the problematics of statebuilding, nationhood, political agency and general social and cultural development in modernistic concepts and discourses. Therefore, in the last decades, it has been an important intellectual project to reformulate the political history of India, exploring the meaning-dimension of the “other” India of the vast majority and to present and analyze the voices of the “subaltern” social subjectivities. What is the current status and importance of this project in the context of a much deeper penetration of the economic world market, technological intergration and economic liberalization ?
- Indian political, philosophical and cultural ideas have been influential in the Western world for the last century, exemplified by the Gandhian notion of non-violent resistance, and India had a leading role in the international struggle against apartheid. During the last decade, the caste-problematic has been globalized by Dalits translating it into the language and discourse of racism, and more generally, human rights. However, both government and some intellectuals criticized the direct juxtaposition of Western and “hindu” world-views. Which normative lessons can be drawn from such initiatives and controversies ?
- Historical experiences with war and revolutions have made social stability into a central value, dominating chinese political practice. However, the reconstruction of Confucianism as an official political and cultural ideology, and especially the centrality of the concept of an “harmonious society”, has challenged Western perspectives on individualism, autonomy, civil society, democracy etc. A direct translation into Western discourses creates a rather authoritarian understanding of state/society and leadership/people relations. But what are the premises for this translation, and are other perspectives possible, relevant and legitimate? How is it

possible to rethink the relation between transcendental and historical values in this new context?

Given the nature of the problematic, these are just non-exclusive examples of themes which will be elaborated in the course.

A reading list for the course will be provided by 1 of March.

Targeted students

The course is targeted at ph.d.-students from all social scientific and humanistic disciplines. However, the main criteria is a genuine interest in the new normative dilemmas outlined above, and a general willingness and ability to engage in open discussions of an experimental, intellectual character.

Course literature, which will be ready by 15 April 2011, must be read prior to the course. Group work and presentations will be set during the course. After the course, students are expected to present a written assignment relating their own research and project to the debates and perspectives of the course. Deadline for delivery will be specified by the course leaders. Students are required to attend all sessions of the course as well as the plenary events. 10 ECTS will be awarded upon participation of the full programme, including the delivery of a research paper approved by the course leaders.

Thorvald Sirnes
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