

PhD course: Towards a counter-hegemonic bottom-up creation of concepts.

Aim and content

That theoretical concepts never fit perfectly with empirical reality is a well-known tenet in all disciplines of the social sciences and humanities. However, this problem of definition has become especially pertinent for methods where the researcher takes a close interest in the insider perspective of the people they study, like ethnography and different forms of ethnomethodology; for anyone working within critical traditions like feminism and postcolonialism; and indeed for anyone working with marginalised groups, where the question of how key scholarly concepts like democracy, trust, or technology are infused by hegemonic power always demonstrates its relevance.

The aim of the course is to critically examine key concepts that anchor our approaches to the social sciences and the humanities, and critically engage with their application in developing research methodologies. With an emphasis on embracing counterhegemonic perspectives and ethnography, the course aims to raise researchers' awareness about social and cultural diversity, and how well-established scholarly concepts and research methods reproduce hegemonic understanding of our social and cultural world. This calls for developing cultural capabilities that require continuous development and practice in understanding cultures, openness to examining one's own beliefs and values, and devising culture-sensitive and bottom-up methodologies. The subject offers examples of ethnographic methodologies developed by academics who could create space for diverse voices and knowledges, as well as bottom-up perspectives. In addition to general understanding and recognition of these issues, the subject will also walk the participants through their own current projects in order to rethink and re-examine the concepts and constructs they rely on within a more diverse context, in order to devise a roadmap towards re-storing them.

The course is suitable for PhD candidates and postdocs from all fields of the social sciences and the humanities who work on empirical research projects, but is especially targeted

towards everyone working with ethnography, ethnomethodology or doing research with marginalised groups.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course the participants should be able to:

- deal with theories about counter-hegemonic methodologies
- explain the necessity of understanding different definitions of concepts in a way that validates and values diverse cultural, historical and contemporary experiences
- understand and use research methods that are grounded in counter-hegemonic perspectives, ethnographic methodology and bottom-up creation of concepts
- rethink concepts and constructs in diverse contexts and create practical plans for re-storying them
- incorporate the new knowledge in developing methodologies that unmask and defy the hegemonic understanding of concepts
- recognize and understand the definition problems that have muddled most of the existing qualitative research in social sciences and humanities
- inform best practices in culturally competent research that seek to promote multiperspectival paradigms

Course plan

In advance of the course:

The students will read the assigned literature, and identify a key concept from their research and some challenges they have met in applying this concept in empirical research.

NB: All the learning activities will be introduced with concrete examples at the beginning of each activity in order to make them more clear for participants.

Day 1 of the course:

Welcome (30 minutes).

PART 1: Recognizing (60 minutes).

Team up with people from different disciplines to yours. Provide some context of your research. Narrate the vision for your research and your chosen core concept. Discuss your challenges.

15 minute break

Keynote/lecture by professor Radha S. Hegde. Questions and discussion (90 minutes)

LUNCH.

PART 2: Rethinking (3*45 minutes)

-Think of a prototype of the concept (image, description, metaphor, real life case etc.)

-Report to teammate

-Work out description/s of the prototype (engage with teammates and ask and answer questions)

-Link the descriptions to the initial definition of the concept and see if you can add more definitions

Develop a short (5 minute) presentation of your concept and present it to the group as a whole, the keynote speaker and the course convenors. Plenary discussion and comments from keynote speaker.

Day 2 of your course

3) Re-storying

Group and individual work (2*45 minutes):

-Put the concept back into your intended context

-Redefine the concept within the given context

Present the outcome of your group work/re-storied concept to the group as a whole and the course convenors (2*45 minutes)

Thank you, good bye.

Syllabus:

Alcoff, L. (1992). The Problem of Speaking for Others. *Cultural Critique*, (20), 5-32.

Hegde, R. S. (2016). *Mediating migration*. John Wiley & Sons, 2016. 240 pages

Tao, J. (1990). The Chinese Moral Ethos and the Concept of Individual Rights. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 7(2), 119-127.

Willems, W. (2014). Beyond normative dewesternization: Examining media culture from the vantage point of the Global South. *The Global South*, 8(1), 7-23.

Total: 290 pages

