

Society and Science

As a **co-learner** (though marked in the register as a visiting faculty) with you in *Liberal Arts*, **I propose** a few things for our consideration. This proposal will let you know about my ideas of learning about '*Society and Science*'. Before I begin, let me clarify a few issues. The first and foremost thing is that this proposal is **neither binding** on us **nor** is it **compulsory**. I am putting forth my ideas only so that we have a starting point. Each person, who has opted for the course (or even an outsider) has a legitimate right to **suggest** additions or reductions, to **modify** content and its order, to **alter** or to rectify method of discussion, etc. The only condition is that it must be done **in a rational, democratic way**.

"No statement deserves blind faith and each statement deserves rational enquiry" will be the main idea based on which we will discuss the **nature of Science and its connection with society**. I feel this is a rational, democratic way of learning anything, not only issues related to Science. In our course, which is a beginner's course in Science and Society, the main thrust would be on **the process** of development of Science in the context of contemporary societies and **not on technical details** of inventions, discoveries, etc. We will concern ourselves a little with the importance of critical thinking and the social atmosphere for this thinking as the basis for doing Science.

Objectives:

I think, an **interdisciplinary course** like ours, can broadly keep the following objectives in view so that at the end of it, we feel equipped to march on the road ahead.

1. Developing a habit of thinking critically on our own.
2. Dealing with the 'glorified aura' of Science from humanities point of view.
3. Enabling the thoughtful use of technology.
4. Understanding social nature of Science through its History and Philosophy.
5. Moving a step towards 'scientific attitude'.

Methods of Learning:

To meet these objectives to the best possible extent, we shall try to evolve **different methods of learning**. This **Centre** and also the course, being **the first of its type**, we shall develop methods that suit us and cater to our needs. Group discussion, paper presentation, power point presentation, writing essays and articles, designing and arranging poster exhibition, taking photographs, making films, browsing the internet, carefully watching movies and documentaries, interviewing people, etc. can be some of the methods. The traditional '*one-to-many lecture*' method is not completely discarded, but is not encouraged. Suggestions are most welcome on this.

Syllabus:

It is required that we give a formal structure to activities like learning new things so that we can measure outcomes of our efforts. Keeping this in mind, some of the **essential topics** (only broad heads) for our consideration can be:

1. History of Science in various cultures.
2. Major events in modern Science and their connections with social changes.
3. Science as a way of thinking
4. Philosophers and thinkers in Science
5. Technology – its impact of Science and vice versa, as a requirement of society, some important issues in hi-tech versus low-tech.
6. Superstitions, ‘pseudo’ Science and human relations.
7. Science for societal upliftment – People’s Science.

Evaluation:

Evaluation does not necessarily mean examination. Personally, I strongly oppose our regular system of schooling, **the excluding system**, where examinations are used to prevent the majority from education by their demoralization. But we need to **evaluate ourselves** so that we **get an idea of our capacities and also get hints on directing our efforts**. This will be our main requirement of evaluation. *Continuous and comprehensive evaluation* would be followed for assessing our achievements. Self-evaluation, evaluation by fellow learners, facilitator’s remarks on participation in the class, etc. are some of the ways of this.

One thing is for sure that nobody would fail in the course.

I hope that, together, we would do a good course. A **reminder again**, you can **give your suggestions on every aspect of this course**, *i.e.* learning methods, syllabus, evaluation, etc. and I assure you that I would definitely try to accommodate your suggestions. The course, by **no** chance, is meant to **burden** you. It will rather help you in **evolving your outlook** about various issues around us. You are the first batch and hence very special to me and to the Centre as well. Let us **enjoy working together**. A separate list of references would be supplied to you. My best wishes to all of us.