

## A New Critical Theory of Recognition

The concept of recognition emerged in modern Western European philosophy. One of the prominent contributors is G W F Hegel, who discussed the idea of recognition in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* in terms of *master and slave dialectics*. Further, it has been widely interpreted in contemporary Western social-political philosophy. In his *Politics of Recognition*, Charles Taylor claims that identity is a *vital need* in a multicultural society that demands recognition. Critical Theorist Axel Honneth advanced the concept of recognition that not only provides a norm of *rights, respect, love and solidarity* this provides a framework to philosophise the post-industrial society and history of social movement.

Interestingly, the robust debate between Honneth and Nancy Fraser, known as *Recognition and Redistribution*, offers possibilities of a radical interpretation in understanding capitalism and the history of social movements. Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter* allows us to interpret the complexity of human bodies that seek distinctive recognition as a person. However, these theorists do not precisely focus on race or caste but provide a theoretical framework to comprehend the question of gender, class, and identity, respectively. It is only the writings of W E B Dubois, James Baldwin and other African American writers that offer a metaphysics of Black lives that philosophises the people of colour – *that is race – a stigma* that needs equal recognition.

In South Asia, the question of recognition is inevitably tied to the question of identity, caste, gender, region, religion, race, and class. A thinker like B. R. Ambedkar is a significant contributor to construing the concept in a meaningful way. Particularly, in the Indian case, the question of identity is deeply complex, unlike race in the U.S. For example, the caste category is multifaceted, arguably, almost a determining factor of any person to be known or identified, despite modernity, democracy, the constitution, and individualism. Caste is not only a social identity but also deeply embedded in class, gender, and sexuality. Moreover, gender is equally complex in society. It is no longer a singular identity but a gender constitutive of identities. So, the concept of recognition is deeply intersectional to pursue recognition as they are.

In studying the concept of recognition through race, caste, class, and gender, it is inevitably interconnected with rights, respect, representation, and redistribution in a democracy. Arguably, recognition becomes more meaningful when all these concepts are studied in a relational term and applied to the above-mentioned issues. For example, people of colour in the US fight against racism to reclaim that they are too human; it was witnessed during the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dr Ambedkar led a campaign against caste that spells out similar connotations. Along the way, one can draw a parallel example across the gender line in which groups and persons are fighting for their identity rights across the globe. It is explicit that there are limits to law. The legal and social are two aspects of human life; it is, however, complementary to each other. Therefore, to develop a new critical theory of recognition, it is imperative to put forth rights, respect, representation, redistribution and ethics to demonstrate a case in which the structure of race, caste, class, and gender determines how individuals and communities are misrecognized, humiliated, oppressed, etc.

The objective of this course is to offer a theoretical understanding of the critical theory of recognition available in Western and Indian political philosophy. Moreover, this course studies different thinkers (Hegel, Honneth, Fraser, Butler, Ambedkar, Du Bois, Davis, and others) across time and space through the critical lens of recognition in addressing race, caste, class, and gender in contemporary society.

## **A. Course Aims and Objectives**

- To understand the historical trajectory of the concepts of the critical theory of Recognition
- Discipline and sub-discipline (History, Philosophy, political philosophy, ethics, social theory, Race studies, Caste studies, Gender studies, class studies).
- To apply conceptual ideas from social political theory to a concrete understanding of social realities.
- To foster critical and informed discussion and debate
- To develop a basic familiarity with the process of conducting small qualitative research projects, theoretical and linking them back to concepts studied in the course

## **A note on Readings**

Interpreting, in this course, has been carefully selected to provide basic to advanced reading on the critical theory of recognition. Some of these are challenging, dense, abstract and philosophical. The vocabulary and concepts are employed as we discuss them in class in detail. I invite to bring these doubts into class and meet meduring office hours.

There are four sections in the course manual. The first section of the course deals with the conceptual and historical development of the critical theory of recognition. We commit to reading the original and the interpretation by the authors. The second, third and fourth parts of the course will delineate both conceptual and case-based study. The aim of reading is to engage with original primary reading to develop a philosophical understanding that would help to interpret society, politics, and law at large. Further, the course intends to develop research-oriented internal assignments to equip students with the skills to write a research paper as part of an internal assignment.

## **A. Grading and Grade Scales**

IT is not only to pass this course, students are expected to attend and participate in each

of the classes, a student must read the readings, attend the debates and understand the concepts. The students will be assessed throughout the class in the semester. Coursework for this purpose means those ways in which students are assessed other

## Part III

### Keywords:

Recognition, Political and social philosophy, Social Structure, Agency, social movement, capital, class, class struggle, class consciousness, working class, consumption, body, gender, Race, caste, patriarchy, atrocity, oppression, modernity, capitalism, democracy, representation, redistribution, Ethics and Morality.

### Lecture Schedule

No.	Module	Week
1	Introduction to Concept of Recognition	
2	A Dialectic of Consciousness Hegel	
3	Politics of Recognition Charles Taylor	
4	Intersubjectivity: Love, Right and Solidarity Honneth	
5	Recognition and Redistribution (Honneth and Fraser)	
	<b>Question of Race and Recognition</b>	
6	Ambedkar, Humiliation, recognition and Caste, Guru	
7	Dalit Autobiographies Jhootan, Bama	
8	Gender and Recognition Butler	

9	Feminism and Recognition	
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## **Readings:**

### **First Sections**

#### **Compulsory Reading**

Taylor, Charles (1975). "Self-Consciousness" in *Hegel*, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 148-170

Taylor, Charles. (1997). "Politics of Recognition" in *Philosophical Argument*, Harvard University Press, USA, pp. 225-256

Honneth, Axel. (1995). *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Translated by Joel Anderson, Great Britain: Polity Press, pp. 30-63, 92-130.

Fraser, Nancy and Honneth, Axel (2003), *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso.

#### **Suggested Readings**

Hegel, Georg W. G. (1977). *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Honneth, Axel (2012). *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*, Translated by Joseph Ganahl, UK: Polity Press.

Fraser, N. (2008). *Social justice in the age of identity politics*, New Delhi: Critical Quest.

Williams, R. Robert. *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, University of California Press: New York.

Losurdo, Domenico. 2011. "The Struggle For Recognition by the Instruments of Labour in the Metropolis and the Reaction of the Community of the Free" in *Liberalism: A Counter History*, Verso: London

### **Second Section**

#### **Compulsory Reading**

Du Bois, W. E. B.. (1994). *The Souls of Black Folk*, New York: Dover, pp. 1-24

X, Malcolm (1964). *The Autobiography of Malcolm X, (As told to Alex Haley)*, New York: Penguin Random House, pp. 371-389.

Baldwin, James, 2017. *I am not your Negro, compiled and edited by Raoul Peck*, Penguin Random House UK. (Encouraged to read the complete book).

Frantz, Fanon. (2008). *Black Skin, White Masks*, United Kingdom: Pluto Press, pp. 82-108

### **Suggested Reading**

Melvin L. Rogers and Jack Turner, (2021). *African American Political Thought: A Collected History*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, pp. 1-29.

Meer, Nasar, 2019. "W. E. B. Dubois double consciousness in the spirit of recognition," *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 67(1) 47–62.

Jenkins, David, 2019. "James Baldwin and Recognition", *American Political Thought: A Journal of Ideas, Institutions, and Culture*, vol.8 (Winter), 82-107.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi, 2015. *Between the World and Me*, United States by Spiegel & Grau, Random House: New York.

### **Third Section:**

#### **Compulsory Reading**

Ambedkar, B. R. (1987). "The Hindu Social Order: The Essential Principle", Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Maharashtra Bombay Education Department. (Vol 3), page 95-116.

\_\_\_\_\_ Waiting For Visa,  
[http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt\\_ambedkar\\_waiting.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt_ambedkar_waiting.html),  
accessed 10, September 2022.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1989). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches (Vol. 5). Maharashtra Bombay Education Department, pp. 89-94, and 108-112.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2003a). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches (Vol. 17, Part I). Maharashtra Bombay Education Department, pp. 1- 50.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1982). Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches (Vol. 2). Maharashtra Bombay Education Department, pp. 503-509.

Valmiki, Omprakash. (2003). *Jootan: A Dalit's Life*, Translated from Hindi by Arun Prabha Mukherjee, Kolkata: Samya, pp. 105-134. (Encouraged to read complete book)

Bama, 2012. *Kuruku*, Translated from Tamil by Lakshmi Holmström edited by Mini Krishnan, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, pp.1-47. (Encouraged to read complete book).

### **Suggested Reading:**

Fuchs, Martin. (2021). "Ambedkar's Theory of the Social: The Universal Condition of Recognition", In Aakash Singh Rathore, *B. R. Ambedkar The Quest for Justice: Social Justice* (ed) pp. 1-25, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2017). "Recognition across Difference: Conceptual Considerations against Indian Background", In Dieter Gosewinkel and Dieter Rucht (eds), *Transnational Struggles for Recognition: New Perspective on Civil Society since the Twentieth Century*, pp. 252-76, New York: Oxford University Press.

Guru, Gopal, (ed). (2008). "Rejection of Rejection: Foregrounding Self-respect" in *Humiliation: Claims and Context*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Jensenius, R. F. (2017). *Social Justice through Inclusion: The Consequence of Electoral Quotas in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mahanand, Jadumani (2020). "Ambedkar's Critique of Recognition", *Studies in Indian Politics*, Sage (8) I, pp. 22-38.

\_\_\_\_\_. (2021) "Recognising Ambedkar: An Identity or an Idea" *Economic Political Weekly*, Vol LVI, 49, December 4, pp. 28-31.

## **Four Sections**

Baum, Bruce. (2004). "Feminist Politics of Recognition", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 29, No.4, pp. 1073-1102.

Butler, Judith (1993). *Bodies That Matter*, Routledge: New York, pp. 1-27.

Devis, Y. Angela (1983), *Women, Race and Class*, Penguin Random House: New Delhi, Chapters three and four.

Ambedkar, B. R. "Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development", [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealc/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt\\_ambedkar\\_castes.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealc/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt_ambedkar_castes.html), 10 September 2022

