

Vision Statement

School of Humanities and Social Sciences at TCG CREST

With its location in Kolkata, this new School of Humanities and Social Sciences at TCG CREST is envisioning a revitalisation of the city's lineage of interdisciplinary research, teaching programmes and collaborative projects, by bringing in fresh energies and cutting-edge talents of senior and younger scholars from all over the country. It breaks new ground by moving away from traditional disciplinary silos and inaugurating a group of new thematic clusters of scholarship. Qualitative tools of analysis pulled from distinct disciplinary traditions, such as History, Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science or Literary Studies, will be brought to bear within these clusters to illuminate specific objects of analysis such as art, science, urban life, and digital cultures.

The School's focus is on "Applied Humanities", with *applications* being understood in the broadest possible sense to involve social engagement and contextual embedding. It will begin its teaching mission by offering a PhD and a MA programme. The PhD will be in 'Integrated Humanities & Social Sciences' and will involve two years of coursework. The coursework will be tailored towards producing an integrated methodological toolkit to research.

1. Art History, Visual Culture and Media Studies

This cluster will be studying the main methodological and conceptual shifts that have redefined the discipline of art history and the growth of the accompanying fields of visual culture and museum studies, as critical supplements to the older discipline. The cluster will offer compulsory courses in Research Methodologies and Vocabularies that will explore Art History's interface with the more traditional Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines as well as with newer fields of Cultural and Media Studies and Digital Humanities. A key area of interest will be to explore the interface of object and image worlds, juxtaposing the place of original sites and artworks with the work of collection, reproduction, dissemination and circulation. It will also develop optional courses with a focus on the themes of nationalism and modernity, religion and politics, global and local entanglements that have shaped the art-worlds and art-institutions of modern South Asia. Students will encouraged will develop a short research project bearing on these themes as part of the M.A. programme and first year of course work, before proceeding towards their larger four-year Ph.D. research.

2. History and Sociology of Science

Science is all around us: sometimes in spectacular events, like space missions, and sometimes in more mundane choices, like a stream to study in high school. In its protean forms, science also intersects with many different arenas of social existence to produce new forms of economic activity (think apps and gig economy), new forms of policing (forensics and digital surveillance), new forms of artistic expression (bio art), or new forms of family life and kinship (surrogacy, genetic ancestry).

In the shadow of these self-conscious versions of science, there also thrives the humbler bodies of organized knowledge of carpenters, fishermen, cowherds or farmers, which too might be called subaltern sciences. This cluster seeks to study science in all its many forms but always in

relations to the larger social, economic, cultural, and political entanglements through which it becomes part of our shared history. The M.A. programme or the first year of Ph.D. course work will expose students to a range of scholarship and methodologies from History of Science, Science and Technology Studies, and Medical Anthropology, and include a research project to hone the application of these tools to newer themes. The Ph.D. programme will initially be dedicated mainly to pursuing the histories of modern science in South Asia.

3. Critical Urban Studies

This interdisciplinary cluster moves away from traditional urban studies to reengage urban phenomena through a lens of social justice and the operations of power. Drawing on traditions of urban history, it sees urban spaces as a palimpsest of historically evolving practices of living, adapting, regulating, and claiming spaces, facilities and resources. Based on the rich scholarship of critical urbanism, it will develop courses that will look closely into themes such as - architecture and built spaces; new forms of urban labour and work; histories of streets, slums and neighbourhoods; changing forms of commerce and consumption; contending rights to public spaces; and threats to environment and ecological sustainability. This cluster aims to develop a close focus around the city of Calcutta/Kolkata, encouraging new research and public projects on this city, while also expanding interests towards other cities of eastern and north eastern India.

4. Archives and Public Histories

As critical practice and new technologies intersect, there emerges new objects and ways of archiving. The documentation of manuscripts and texts have now been joined by the digitization of still and moving images, music and sound, oral histories, popular print cultures and other kinds of ephemera. Recently, even old websites have been archived, and efforts have now begun to find ways to archive performances or gestures by digital geometry. The classical tools of cataloging, indexing and preserving are cross-fertilizing with technologies of digitization and file sharing and even newer methods of digital tagging, visualization and text recognition - all of which now exist in an expanding toolkit of archiving. The task of archiving, once the preserve of hallowed institutions connected to the state, is now much more varied and taken up by a heterogeneous set of actors and communities.

From individuals to companies and from hospitals to hobby groups, several people and institutions now collect, catalogue, and curate the diverse traces of the past. With this diversification has come a diversification of the audiences these collectors and collections serve. It is this intersection between a new and plural public history and archiving that will be the focus of this cluster. The cluster will both serve and study the communities of archivists, librarians, collectors, and others who participate in archiving and public history.

5. Digital Humanities and Culture

This cluster will study a history of the Humanities in an age of digital computing and cultural informatics, by critically looking at themes such as - Database as form and its function in knowledge, art and governance; Open Networks, Digital Commons and New Legalities; Ethics and the Digital Community, and the Representation of Knowledge. The key objectives of the

courses it will offer are as follows: (i) Outlining multiple definitions of the digital humanities (ii) Exploring debates about the digital humanities within the emerging field (iii) Applying digital techniques to archiving and data analysis (iv) Analysing data from multiple sources (including social media) by applying a set digital tools and software (v) Understanding the applications of artificial intelligence (vi) Creating digital tools for data-mining and analysis. Some of the main modules to be taught are – Software Studies in Humanities; Digital Cartography; Scholarly Editions Online; Statistics for Digital Humanities; Digital Ethnography; Electronic Literature and Game Studies.