

DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE (DSE): History of Labour in Colonial and Postcolonial India

Credit distribution, Eligibility and Pre-requisites of the Course

Course title & Code	Credits	Credit distribution of the course			Eligibility criteria	Pre-req the co any)
		Lecture	Tutorial	Practical/ Practice		
History of Labour in Colonial and Postcolonial India	4	3	1	0		

Course objectives: This course will trace major themes and issues of labour history from the colonial to the postcolonial period. It shall introduce students to important concepts through a broad historiographical survey of labour issues that have emerged. The course proceeds to delve into key case studies that will further familiarise the students about the major themes and debates in Indian labour history.

Learning outcomes: On completion of the course, students would be able to:

- Trace important historiographical issues informing labour history writing.
- Comprehend the historical as well as contemporary transformations unfolding within the world of labour.
- Examine how workers are positioned in different work settings.
- Trace how labour negotiates and contests different historically produced identities that also shape the work experiences.
- Evaluation of labour's contestation and resistance with respect to work regimes, living conditions and state policies.

Unit-1: Historiographical trends: This Unit familiarizes the students with key conceptual and historiographical contributions in the field of labour history. It introduces the students to broad trends in labour history writing. (Teaching time: 2 weeks)

- Ahuja, Ravi. (2020) “‘Produce or Perish’. The crisis of the late 1940s and the place of labour in post-colonial India,” *Modern Asian Studies*. 54 (5), pp. 1041-1112.
- Breman, Jan (2016). “Chapter-2: A Short History of Informal Sector. In *At Work in the Informal Economy of India: A Perspective from the Bottom Up*. New Delhi: OUP.
- Gupta, Ranajit Das and Dipesh Chakravarty (2019 reprint). *Some Aspects of Labour History of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century: Two Views (Social Science Across Disciplines)*. Delhi: OUP.
- Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan. (1997). “‘The Making of the Working Class’: E. P. Thompson and Indian History.” *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 43(1), spring, pp. 177–196.
- Joshi, Chitra, Prabhu Mohapatra and Rana P. Behal (2010). “India.” In *Histories of Labour. National and International Perspectives*, edited by Joan Allen, Alan Campbell and John McIlroy. Pontypool.

Unit-2: Different Labour Regimes and Work Settings: This Unit provides an overview of how different forms of labour have existed under different work settings and systems of control. It will also familiarize the students as to how these labour regimes have changed over time. (Teaching time: 5 weeks)

I. Labour in agriculture, plantations, domestic services and artisanal work:

- Breman, Jan (2008). *Labour Bondage in West India from Past to Present*. Delhi: Oxford University.
- Prakash, Gyan (ed.) (1992). “Introduction.” *The World of Rural Labourer*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Behal, Rana P. and Prabhu P. Mohapatra (1992). “‘Tea and Money versus Human Life’: The
- Rise and Fall of the Indenture System in the Assam Tea Plantations 1840–1908.” In
- *Plantations, Proletarians and Peasants in Colonial Asia*, edited by E. Valentine Daniel, Henry Bernstein, and Tom Brass. London: Routledge.
- Sen, Samita and Nilanjana Sengupta (2018). “Introduction.” *Domestic Days: Women, Work, and Politics in Contemporary Kolkata*. Delhi: OUP.
- Rai, Santosh Kumar (2021). “Introduction.” *Weaving Hierarchies: Handloom Weavers in Early Twentieth Century United Provinces*. Delhi: Primus.
- Roy, Tirthankar. (1999). “Introduction.” *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India*. Cambridge: CUP.

II. Labour in factories, workshops and urban informal employment:

- Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan. (2002). “Problems and Perspectives.” *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay 1900-1940*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Masselos, J.C. (1982). “Jobs and Jobbery: The Sweeper in Bombay under the Raj,” *IESHR*, Vol. XIX (2), pp. 101-39.
- John, M. (2018). “The ‘Half-timer’: Colonial Indian Regulation of Child Labourers.” In *Law and Time*, edited by Siân Beynon-Jones and Emily Grabham (Eds.). London: Routledge Social Justice Book Series. (pp. 162–78).
- Bandyopadhyay, Ritajyoti (2016). “Institutionalizing Informality: The Hawkers’ Question in Post-colonial Calcutta.” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 50(2) (March), pp. 675-717.

Unit-3: Labour and social identities: caste, gender, religion, nation: This Unit will familiarize the students with the interplay between key social identities and the class position of the labouring masses. (Teaching time: 4 weeks)

I. Caste and labour

- Gooptu, Nandini (1993). “Caste, Deprivation and Politics: The Untouchables in U.P. Towns in the Early Twentieth Century.” In *Dalits and Meanings of Labour*, edited by Peter Robb. Delhi: OUP.
- Sarkar, Tanika. (2013). “‘Dirty Work, Filthy Caste’: Calcutta Scavengers in the 1920s.” In *Working Lives and Worker Militancy*, edited by Ravi Ahuja. Delhi: Tulika.

- John, M. (2016). “(De)skilling Caste: Exploring the Relationship between Caste, State Regulations and the Labour Market in Late Colonial India.” In *The Vernacularization of Labour Politics*, edited by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya and Rana P. Behal. New Delhi: Tulika (pp. 267-293).

II. Gender and labour

- Sen, Samita. (2008). “Gender and Class: Women in Indian Industry, 1890–1990,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 42(1), pp. 75-116.
- Kumar, Radha. (1983). “Family and Factory: Women in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry,” 1919-39, *IESHR*, Vol. 20 (1), pp. 81-110.
- Forbes, Geraldine. (1996). “Chapter 4: Women’s Work in Colonial India.” *Women in Modern India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

III. Community and Nation

- Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi. (1988). “Swaraj and the Kamgar: The Indian National Congress and the Bombay Working Class, 1919-31.” In *Congress and Indian Nationalism: The Pre-Independence Phase*, edited by R. Sisson and S. Wolpert. Berkeley and Los Angeles, pp. 223-49.
- Chakravarty, Dipesh. (1989). “Class and Community.” *Rethinking Working Class History*. Princeton University Press.
- Joshi, Chitra. (1985). “Bonds of Community, Ties of Religion: Kanpur Textile Workers in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, Vol. 22(3), pp. 251-280.

Unit-4: Tracing labour resistance: This Unit will trace how labour has continued to resist and contest work conditions, living conditions and state policies in the colonial times as well as in the contemporary time period. It will familiarize the students with important typologies of labour resistance and movements. (Teaching time: 3 weeks)

- Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi. (2016). “Introduction.” In *The Vernacularization of Labour Politics*, edited by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya and Rana P. Behal. New Delhi: Tulika.
- Bhattacharya, Shahana. (2013). “Rotting Hides and Runaway Labour: Labour Control and Workers’ Resistance in the Indian Leather Industry, c. 1860-1960.” In *Working Lives and Worker Militancy*, edited by Ravi Ahuja. Delhi: Tulika.
- Breman, Jan. (2016). “Chapter-6: Resistance to Exclusion and Coping with Insecurity.” In *At Work in the Informal Economy of India: A Perspective from the Bottom Up*. New Delhi: OUP.
- Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan. (2004). “From Neighbourhood to Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Left in Bombay’s Girangaon in the Twentieth Century.” In *One Hundred Years, One Hundred Voices: The Mill Workers of Girangaon: An Oral History*, edited by Meena Menon and Neera Adarkar. Calcutta: Seagull Books.
- De Neve, Geert. (2005). “Introduction.” *The Everyday Politics of Labour*. Berghahn Books.
- Joshi, Chitra (1999). “Hope and Despair: Textile Worker in Kanpur in 1937-38 and the 1990s.” In *Lost Worlds*. Delhi

Suggested readings:

- Agarwala, Rina. (2013). *Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 2 & 3]
- Breman, Jan. (1996). *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Dupré, J. and Regenia Gagnier. (1996). A Brief History of Work. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 30 (2), pp.553-59.
- Joshi, Chitra. (2002). “Notes on the Breadwinner Debate: Gender and Household Strategies in Working-Class Families,” *Studies in History*, Vol.18(2): 261-27.
- Mohapatra, Prabhu. (2005). “Regulated Informality Legal Constructions of Labour Relations in Colonial India 1814–1926.” In *Workers in the Informal Sector. Studies in Labour History 1800–2000*, edited by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya and Jan Lucassen. New Delhi: Macmillan India.
- Ness, I. (2014). “Introduction: New Forms of Worker Organizations”; and Arup K. Sen, “Chapter-4: The Struggle for Independent Unions in India’s Industrial Belts: Domination, Resistance, and the Maruti Suzuki Auto Workers.” In *New Forms of Worker Organization: The Syndicalist and Autonomist Restoration of Class- Struggle Unionism*. PM Press, Oakland, CA.
- Oommen, T.K. (2010). “Indian Labour Movement: Colonial Era to the Global Age,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 26, 2009-January 1, 2010, Vol. 44 (52), pp. 81-89.
- Robb, Peter. (1993). *Dalits and Meanings of Labour*. Delhi: OUP. (Chapters 5, 7, 8 and 12). RoyChowdhury, Supriya (2015). “Bringing Class Back In: Informality in Bangalore,” *Socialist Register*
- Vol.51 (Transforming Classes). London: Merlin Press.
- Sinha, Nitin, Nitin Verma and Pankaj Jha. (2019). “Introduction.” *Servants' Past: Late Eighteenth to Twentieth Century South Asia*. Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Note: Examination scheme and mode shall be as prescribed by the Examination Branch, from time to time.