

# MPhil Research Methodology 2015

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## 1. Course Outline

- A. The Research Methodology course is the only obligatory MPhil course, and it comprises three components that count for grading – Academic Reading and Writing (ARW), Research Skills (RS), and Literary Historiography (LH). The students will be divided into two groups –Group A and Group B – for all the sessions pertaining to these components. The two groups will meet their respective tutors in parallel sessions. All the sessions of ARW will be held in Room No. 63. The corresponding parallel session (of RS or LH as the case may be) will be held in Room No. 54.
- B. Apart from the first meeting (which will be an introductory session), joint meetings will be held on the days of the orientation on library resources on 14 September, talks that are part of RS on 5 October, faculty presentations on 16 November, and the feedback session on 23 November. The combined meetings will be held in Room No. 63. The activities in the joint meetings will *not* be counted for evaluation.
- C. Table 1 below shows the relative weightage of the three components that count for grading:

**Table 1: Relative weight of the components**

Sl	Component	Weight	Tutors
1.	Academic Reading and Writing (ARW)	25%	<i>Hany Babu</i>
2.	Research Skills (RS)	30%	<i>Subarno Chattarji &amp; Ira Raja</i>
3.	Literary Historiography (LH)	45%	<i>As given in Table 2</i>

- D. The ARW component is intended to give students training in basic skills of academic reading and writing. There will be seven sessions of ARW, five of which that are one and a half hours long. The remaining two sessions are an hour long each. Students are expected to do both in-class and take-home assignments as part of ARW. Classroom activities will be based on the worksheets provided in the class. The activities will enable the students to understand the basic features of an academic text, and also will train them in various types of writing that are needed for academic purposes. This component makes up 25% of the total evaluation. The grade obtained in this component will not be used for the computation of the final grade for the Research Methodology course. Nevertheless, a student has to qualify obtaining a minimum of Grade B- (B minus) in the component, failing which she will be required to repeat this component.
- E. The RS component is meant to introduce students to the methods and tools of research in the study of literature. This part of the course will take up three class hours. All sessions will be of one-hour duration each. This component will also require many independent research hours outside of the class to fulfill the requirements of its three take-home assignments, coded RS1, RS2, and RS3. This component accounts for 30% of the course in terms of evaluation.
- F. The LH component comprises essays related to literary historiography, hermeneutics, dialectics, and translation. It takes up five sessions and accounts for 45% of the evaluation. Each of the five sessions is one and a half hours long and will

run parallel to the ARW sessions. There are specific readings assigned for each of the five sessions of LH. The readings are aimed at helping students develop a sense of literary historiography, alongside an understanding of the art and craft of reading and writing. Here literary history is to be taken beyond the “background” that helps throw light on primary questions pertaining to authors, genres and movements, but related to the presuppositions, both philosophical and practical underlying all of literary activity. To this end, we will look at the question of different genres of writing, the literary object as differentiated from the field of art and/or culture in general, the question of truth and objectivity in literary interpretation, the relationship between historical and rhetorical hypothesis, close and distant readings, the question of periodizing, continuity and rupture as ways of understanding traditions.

- G. As part of the LH component, each student is supposed to do a written assignment under the guidance of a supervisor assigned to her. Apart from this, the students are required to participate in discussions that are structured as follows:
- i. Each group will be divided into five subgroups of four/five members each. The subgroups of groups A and B will be numbered A1 to A5 and B1 to B5 respectively.
  - ii. The readings for LH are numbered 1 to 5 as given in Table 3.
  - ii. On each of the meetings of LH, the members of a particular subgroup will lead the discussion on the reading assigned for that day. That is to say, on the day of LH1, the subgroups A1 and B1 will lead the discussions in their respective groups.
  - iii. Each member of the subgroup is expected to play an active role in leading the discussion.
  - iv. The leading points for the discussion will have been arrived at after extensive debate and discussion with the respective group A or B, prior to the class discussions. This discussion can be carried on via Dropbox, since it allows us to store files online. These can be viewed by anyone, including professors, tutors, and anyone else who has been invited to share those files. But the real discussion will take place in the classroom where each student will contribute in his or her individual capacity, and not by means of a rehearsed (individual or joint) presentation. The supervisor will moderate as well as aid in the discussion, but the burden of the discussion rests on the students.
  - v. Each of the students leading the discussion will be marked by the respective supervisors, which will contribute to 5% of the total evaluation.
  - vi. It is imperative that each member of the entire group (i.e. Groups A and B) read each of the readings allotted as per the schedule.
- H. In addition to the above three components (all of which will be graded), on 5 October, there will be two talks as part of the Course: one on plagiarism and the other on publishing. On 16 November, some of the faculty members will discuss their own work purely from the point of view of *methodology*. There would be four

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or five presentations of about 20 minutes each. Each presentation will be allocated 10 minutes time for discussion.

- I. Those who fail to meet the deadlines will be penalized in any of the following ways: reduction of grade, repetition of the specific component(s), or expulsion from the course. Those who fail to secure the required grade would be asked to redo the assignment(s), repeat the specific component(s), or the course, as the case may be.
- J. The overall outline of the course is given in Table 2 below. The list of the readings for the LH component can be found in Section 2 (Table 3). The details of the assignments for RS and LH are given in section 3 (Table 4). Section 3.1 is a guide to the RS assignments. Section 4 has two tables: Table 5 presents the schema for evaluation, and Table 6 gives the important dates at a glance. Section 5 provides a brief gloss of the weekly readings for LH.

**Table 2: Timetable**

Week	Date	Time	Group A	Group B	
I	31.08.	2.45 – 3.45	<i>Introduction to the MPhil Research Methodology Course</i>		
II	14.09.	2.45 – 4.45	<i>Orientation to Library Resources</i>		
III	21.09.	2.45 – 3.45	ARW – 1	RS – 1	
		3.45 – 4.45	RS – 1	ARW – 1	
IV	28.09.	2.45 – 4.15	ARW – 2	LH – 1 ( <i>Anjana Sharma</i> )	
		4.15 – 5.45	LH – 1 ( <i>Anjana Sharma</i> )	ARW – 2	
V	05.10.	2.45 – 3.45	RS – 2: “Plagiarism” ( <i>Subarno Chattarji</i> )		
		3.45 – 4.45	RS – 2: “Getting Published” ( <i>Ira Raja</i> )		
VI	12.10.	2.45 – 4.15	ARW – 3	LH – 2 ( <i>Tapan Basu</i> )	
		4.15 – 5.45	LH – 2 ( <i>Tapan Basu</i> )	ARW – 3	
VII	19.10.	2.45 – 4.15	ARW – 4	LH – 3 ( <i>Christel Dewadawson</i> )	
		4.15 – 5.45	LH – 3 ( <i>Christel Dewadawson</i> )	ARW – 4	
		<b>Submission of Assignment RS1</b>			
VIII	26.10.	2.45 – 4.15	ARW – 5	LH – 4 ( <i>Tapan Basu</i> )	
		4.15 – 5.45	LH – 4 ( <i>Tapan Basu</i> )	ARW – 5	
IX	02.11.	2.45 – 3.45	ARW – 6	RS – 3	
		3.45 – 4.45	RS – 3	ARW – 6	
		<b>Submission of Assignment RS2</b>			
X	09.11.	2.45 – 4.15	ARW – 7	LH – 5 ( <i>Christel Dewadawson</i> )	
		4.15 – 5.45	LH – 5 ( <i>Christel Dewadawson</i> )	ARW – 7	
XI	16.11.	2.45 – 5.45	<i>Faculty Presentations on Research Methodology</i>		
		<b>Finalization of topic and supervisor for LH Assignment</b>			
		<b>Submission of Assignment RS3</b>			
XII	23.11.	2.45 – 3.45	<i>Feedback Session</i>		
<b>08.01.2016</b>		<b>Submission of LH Assignment</b>			

## 2. Readings

Table 3 below gives you the details about the readings for Literary Historiography.

**Table 3: Readings for LH**

Code	Week	Date	Text	Tutor
LH 1	IV	28.09.	<b>M. M. Bakhtin</b> (1970), "Response to a Question from <i>Novy Mir</i> " (pp. 1-9); <i>The Problem of Speech Genres and Other Late Essays</i> , University of Texas Press, 1986.	Anjana Sharma
LH 2	VI	12.10.	<b>Walter Benjamin</b> , "The Author as Producer", <i>New Left Review</i> , I/62, July-August 1970, pp. 83-96.	Tapan Basu
LH 3	VII	19.10.	<b>Bertolt Brecht</b> , "Against Georg Lukacs", <i>New Left Review</i> , I/84, March-April 1974, pp. 39-53.	Christel Devadawson
LH 4	VIII	26.10.	<b>Walter Benjamin</b> , "The Task of the Translator", <i>Illuminations</i> , Schocken Books, 2007 (pp. 69-82).	Tapan Basu
LH 5	X	09.11.	<b>Franco Moretti</b> (1983), "The Soul and the Harpy: Reflections on the Aims and Methods of Literary Historiography", <i>Signs Taken for Wonders</i> , Verso, 1988, (pp. 1-41).	Christel Devadawson

## 3. Assignments

Table 4 below provides the details of the assignments for the Research Skills and Literary Historiography components. The guidelines for the Research Skills assignments 1 and 3 are given in section 3.1.

**Table 4: Assignments for RS & LH**

Code	Week	Date	Task	%
RS1	VII	19.10.	Choose an essay from a major journal/ or book in their field of interest and write an analysis in which you do the following: a. Discuss the main questions the essay attempts to answer. b. Examine the kinds of evidence used in the essay. c. Discuss the essay's organization. d. Determine its critical orientation. e. Evaluate its effectiveness. (Word Limit: 1500 words)	10%
RS2	IX	02.11	Take-home bibliographic exercise discussion. The assignment will be given by email and/or hard copy in Week VIII, 26.10.	5%
			Select a canonical text (poem, play, novel, work of prose), based on which you will undertake the following exercises:	

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<b>RS3</b>	XI	16.11.	<p>a. Make a bibliography of significant studies of that work during the last fifteen years.</p> <p>b. Make another bibliography of textual studies of that work.</p> <p>c. Write an essay of no more than four pages in which you characterize recent directions of criticism and scholarship on the text, paying special attention to the effects of theoretical developments like feminism, gender studies, new historicism, cultural studies, and so on.</p> <p>List the sources you use in drawing up your bibliographies, and comment briefly on the usefulness of each. (Word Limit: 1500 words)</p>	15%
<b>LH</b>	08.01.2016		<p>Write a 2500 word theoretical essay based on themes emerging from the readings in the historiography course in consultation with the supervisor. (<i>Topic and supervisor to be finalized by week XI, i.e. by 16.11.</i>)</p>	40%

### 3.1 Guide to Assignments RS1 and RS3

The word limit for both the assignments is 1500 words (each).

#### **RS1**

This is a comprehension exercise, training students to read academic writing critically, with a view to its approach, its argument, its evidence (does it use historical evidence, does it use textual evidence/ quantitative or qualitative, and so on?). Basically anything that you observe about a scholarly piece of writing. It is an exercise that, apart from teaching you to read texts critically also encourages you to notice how an argument is structured, what are the different elements that go into structuring an argument, the craft of academic writing if you will. This first exercise forces you to delve into the text and grapple with it in a critical fashion (and this may involve identifying its critical approach -- is it feminist, Marxist, postcolonial or a mix).

#### **RS3**

This takes you outside the text to see how it has been received over a period of time. Imagine you are a teacher putting together a bibliography for your students. What kind of books would you put in the bibliography? What editions of the text are available, whether new ones have come out (your accompanying essay should explain the strengths and limitations of the various essays)? Then there will be textual criticism (i.e. critical writing focused on a close reading of the literary text in question) followed by a representative sample of the major critical perspectives from which the text has been approached in the last howsoever many years. Looking at critical writings on a Shakespearean text over the last century would give you a good sense of the major developments in literary criticism, starting with new criticism, Marxism, structuralism, post structuralism, feminism, new historicism, post colonialism, post-humanism and so on.

Some texts are more approachable from one perspective than another. For example, some may attract postcolonial enquiry others may draw feminist criticism. Basically not all texts would have been approached through all these different critical perspectives so

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you will have to identify which approaches have been dominant at what times in the text you are looking at. Your accompanying bibliographic essay will have to explain these trends in textual/ theoretical criticism.

### 4. Evaluation Schema and Important Dates

Table 5 gives you the evaluation schema in a nutshell. Table 6 gives you the important dates at a glance.

**Table 5: Evaluation**

Sl	What	How	When	%	Remarks
1.	<b>ARW</b>	Writing tasks given in class	Weeks III to XI	25%	Students are required to qualify with a minimum grade of B minus.  The 75% of these components will count towards the final grade.
2.	<b>RS</b>	3 take-home assignments	RS1: Week VII: 19.10.	10%	
			RS2: Week IX: 02.11.	5%	
			RS3: Week XI: 16.11.	15%	
3.	<b>LH</b>	1 take-home assignment	Finalization of Topic: Week XI: 16.11. Submission: January 08, 2016	40%	
		Discussion	During the respective LH sessions	5%	

**Table 6: Important Dates**

What	When
Course begins	Week I: <b>August 31</b>
Submission of Assignment RS1	Week VII: <b>October 19</b>
Submission of Assignment RS2	Week IX: <b>November 02</b>
Submission of Assignment RS3	Week XI: <b>November 16</b>
Finalization of topic and supervisor for LH Assignment	Week XI: <b>November 16</b>
Submission of LH Assignment	<b>January 08, 2016</b>

### 5. Gloss of Literary Historiography Readings

<p><b>LH 1 (Week IV: 28.09.)</b>  <b>The Specificity of the Literary (Anjana Sharma)</b></p> <p><b>M. M. Bakhtin</b> (1986), "Response to a Question from <i>Novy Mir</i>", <i>The Problem of Speech Genres and Other Late Essays</i>, University of Texas Press, pp. 1-9.</p> <p>Bakhtin asserts the open unity of the aesthetic and the socio-cultural, the fact that the full meaning of a work of art can be understood only when it is seen as possessing a temporality beyond its contemporary ethos: a culture reveals itself profoundly and fully only through the eyes of an outsider.</p>
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**LH 2 (Week VI: 12.10.)**

**The Problem of Political Correctness or a Revolutionary Stance (*Tapan Basu*)**

**Walter Benjamin**, "The Author as Producer", *New Left Review*, 1/62, July-August 1970, pp. 83-96.

This is a foundational essay that discusses the relation between political correctness and literary merit or quality. Through the category of the author as producer, Benjamin opens up the question of writing as not merely supplying a particular apparatus of production, but also imparting skills and techniques, which will transform the productive process, by turning more and more readers into producers and writers.

**LH 3 (Week VII: 19.10.)**

**Defining Popularity and Realism (*Christel Dewadawson*)**

**Bertolt Brecht**, "Against Georg Lukács", *New Left Review*, 1/84, March-April 1974, pp. 39-53

Brecht attacks the constricting definition of realism proffered by Lukács as devolving into an unproductive opposition between form and content. Against formulaic aesthetic standards, Brecht outlines the revolutionary understanding of a reality that is always changing and the need to keep up with it through a constant updating and cleaning of the imperatives of popularity and realism.

**LH 4 (Week VIII: 26.10.)**

**Translation as Interpretation (*Tapan Basu*)**

**Walter Benjamin**, "The Task of the Translator", *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, 2007, pp. 69-82.

While Gadamer puts forth the idea of translation as interpretation and not reproduction, he still holds on to the concept of loss in translation, as opposed to a conversation in which the conversing parties surrender their respective authorities and fall into a dialogue that has a spirit of its own. By contrast, for Benjamin translation is a gain, a vehicle for expanding and transforming the translated language as well as creating a greater "pure language" whose purpose is not to impart information but reinforce the intentions of languages as a whole, otherwise lost in the concreteness and excess of literary content. Accuracy or literalness in translation is important but only in so far as the internal fragments in the translated language match each other in the smallest unevenness of their details however unlike they may be from the original language.

**LH 5 (Week X: 09.11.)**

**Literature as Mediation (*Christel Dewadawson*)**

**Franco Moretti** (1983), "The Soul and the Harpy: Reflections on the Aims and Methods of Literary Historiography", *Signs Taken for Wonders*, Verso, 1988, pp. 1-41.

Moretti argues for a "slower" and more "discontinuous" literary history that emphasizes taking into consideration a history of rhetorical forms, genres and the entire matrix of conventions on which literary exceptionalism (the dominant organization of literary criticism) is founded. Through a historical and theoretical exploration of aesthetics in Lukacs, Hegel, Schiller and Freud, the aesthetic field is located in a necessarily post-tragic world view, tragedy being defined as only possible in a world "which is ceasing to be organic, but which is still only able to think of itself as organic". In other words, a correct historiography is based on periodizations that ultimately derive from recognition of the function of literature as compensation and reconciliation.