

## COURSE OUTLINE

### WE LIVE, YOU LIVE AND THE MUTE ‘OTHER’

(Negotiating Human – Non-Human Historical Interactions in Pre-modern South Asia)

#### ‘OPEN ELECTIVE’ - OE 101

#### An IoE Course

### CONTEXT AND PERSPECTIVE

“There is that great proverb ---- that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. That did not come to me until much later. Once I realized that, I had to be a writer, I had to be that historian.....”

--Chinua Achebe (*The Paris Review*, ‘The Art of Fiction’, No.139)

The lion, and for that matter any other animal, is our mute ‘other’. So how do we write about them? For long periods of pre-modern South Asian history, we can do so by reflecting on their conceptualization and representation in a variety of literary texts and in their visual representations. Towards the end of the course we bring in archival material, oral narratives and performance enactments that help elaborate on the theme of the course.

### AIM

This inter-disciplinary course looks at time and space over the *longue duree* as defined by the French Annale School of historical research. Human interventions over long periods of time have had complex and delicate relationships with their ecological settings that were necessarily region specific. A continuous engagement of humans with ‘wild’ landscapes led to the evolution of socio-economic strategies that transformed human-non-human co-habitation followed by a domesticating of the ‘wild’ and finally, leading to its conquest. Examining this process becomes an intersectional theme that runs through this course.

The questions we ask are: Was this a one-way process? Was a dialogue with the ‘other’ possible? Did aggressive one-way imposition succeed? They arise because living entities have had to be in a constant state of negotiating space necessary for co-habitation with Animals, Trees, Grasslands, and Humans in sharing the Forest, the Pastures, the Hills, the Water Bodies in the creation of villages and other settlements.

Using a variety of sources and historical traditions we address the fundamental human-non-human relationship in all its manifestations. Negotiating to occupy space necessary for both ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ — Animals, Trees, hybrid-human, and Humans meant sharing the forest, co-habiting in created villages, evolving economic, religious and cultural interactions and defining narratives for preserving memory and performances.

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The course is divided into **SIX UNITS** with an additional **two sessions** (of two hours each) dedicated to “**Opening the Course**” and **Winding Up the Course**” at the beginning and end respectively. This course is **TEAM TAUGHT** by several faculty

#### Opening the Course: Special Lecture I

We begin the course with a Special Lecture on “Insect Societies and what Humans can Learn” through the lens of the Biological Sciences to enable students and faculty think about a dialectical relationship of the human and the non-human and of the past and the present

### **UNIT I: The Archaeological Landscapes**

Long-Term Histories and Co-Constructed Landscapes: Research Approaches  
Land use and herding resources – Neolithic, Early Historic to Medieval times  
Pastoralism as a Deccani way of life

### **UNIT II: Conceptualizing the ‘Other’**

Analysing words for domesticated/wild animals – focus on *Amarakosa*  
Human well-being and forest resources – Focus on *Ayurveda* texts  
Pastoralists, Hunters and Food Gatherers – Focus on *Arthashastra*

### **UNIT III: Representations in Literature**

Animals in Buddhist Imagination  
Stories — Engaging with animal imageries — the *Jatakas*  
Animal voices and the *Panchtantra*

### **UNIT IV: Representations in Art**

Animals in Indian Material and Visual Culture  
Early histories of art, of human-animal depiction in the Deccan  
Nature – integrating the animal world in various visual contexts

### **UNIT V: Colonial Past and our Present. Aggressive Attitudes**

Pre-colonial & colonial vision of local hunting and its apparatus  
Imperial attitudes towards animals of hunt  
The colonial vis-à-vis pre-colonial hunting practises

### **UNIT VI: Folk Culture Imageries**

Acculturation of Hilly and Forest Areas Nallamalai and Nilgiris  
Animal lore: conceptualization and portrayal of animals in folklore  
Human-Animal relationship in the Indian Traditional Performances

### **Closing the Course – Special Lecture II**

This lecture aims at presenting an overview of how Human and the Non-Human issues should be addressed together. This is most relevant in our contemporary times as the future of the ‘modern’ needs be linked to not only justice for humans but for non-humans as well.

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