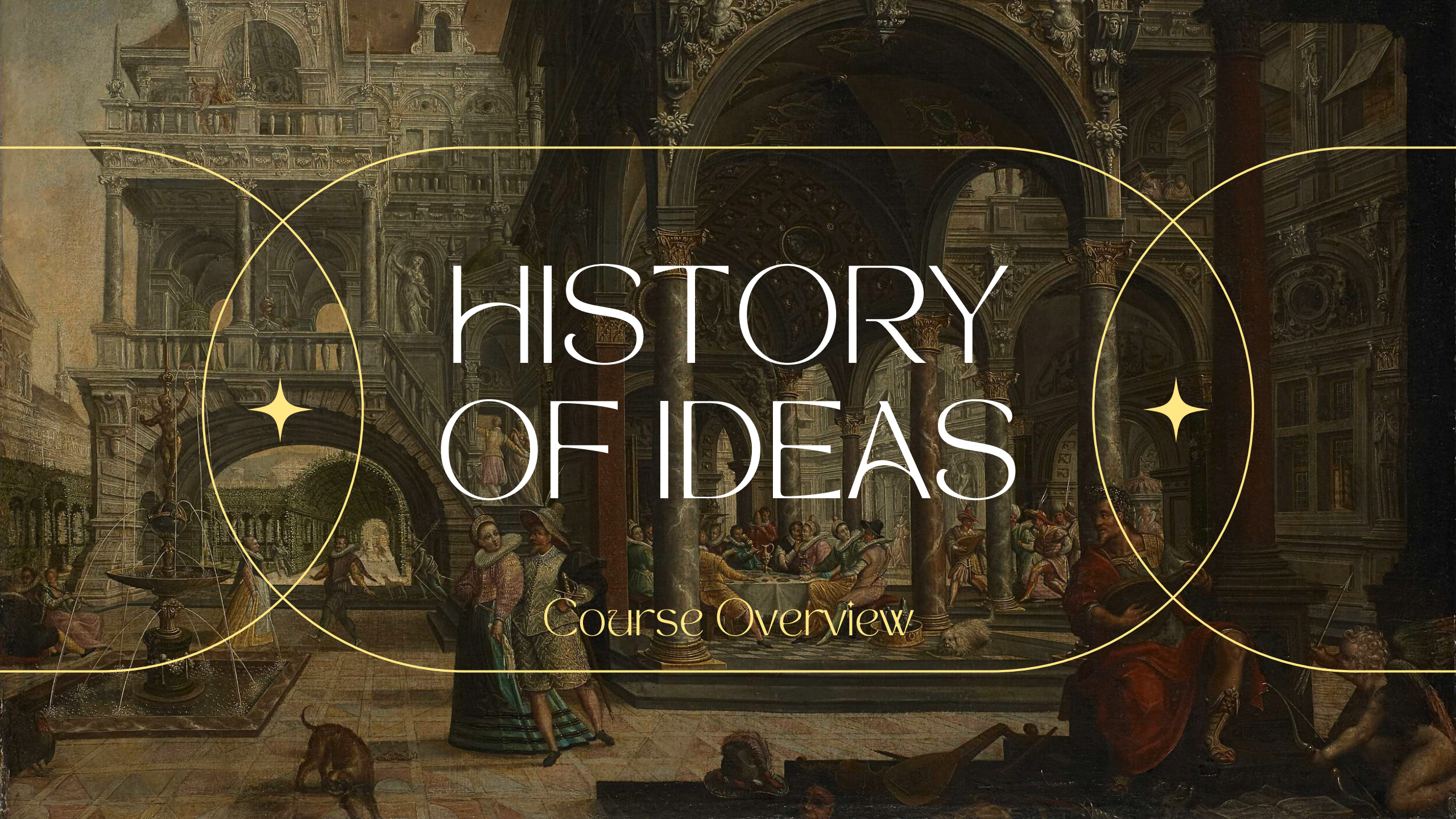




HISTORY OF IDEAS

Course Overview



COURSE OVERVIEW

The History of Ideas: Foundations, Transformations & Impact

Course Description:

This course critically examines the intellectual, political, and cultural currents that have shaped modernity, tracing their evolution from medieval socio-political structures to the complexities of contemporary global crises. Through an interdisciplinary approach, students engage with historical events, philosophical texts, and cultural artefacts to interrogate how power, ideology, and technological transformation inform the human experience.

Students will explore the dialectical relationship between the crises of our times and historical upheavals, interrogating themes such as the rise of capitalism, colonialism, and its anticolonial resistance, the evolution of communication technologies, and the socio-political ramifications of global conflicts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will:

- Develop a historical consciousness, enabling them to critically engage with the continuities and ruptures that define modern civilisation.
- Analyse the material and ideological foundations of feudalism, capitalism, colonialism, and globalisation through critical historiography.
- Examine how modes of communication, from medieval town criers to contemporary social media, mediate public discourse and shape political agency.
- Engage with primary texts by Karl Marx, Max Weber, Slavoj Žižek, Eric Hobsbawm, Geeta Kapur, among others, fostering an understanding of historical materialism, modernity, and cultural memory.
- Apply interdisciplinary methodologies to study art, architecture, and visual culture, tracing their embedded histories in power structures and social movements.
- Construct original arguments through comparative analyses of past and present crises, reflecting on the politics of memory, representation, and historical narrative.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH & TEACHING STRATEGIES

Lecture & Critical Dialogue

Engages students in discussions that foreground historical continuity, rupture, and transformation, using primary and secondary texts.

Archival & Multimedia Engagement

Integrates curated documentaries, archival footage, and digital humanities tools to enhance historical literacy.

Comparative Histories

Students conduct case studies on past and contemporary crises, interrogating governmental responses, public discourse, and socio-economic consequences.

Material & Visual Culture Analysis

Incorporates artworks, architectural forms, and visual media to examine how cultural artifacts encode political histories.

Interactive Exercises & Public History

Students participate in historical role-playing, digital exhibits, and collaborative research projects.

Writing & Research Workshops

Develops critical reading and writing skills through thematic essays, analytical responses, and research presentations.



ASSESSMENTS & FINAL PROJECT

Mid-Semester Project: Crisis & Response in Historical Perspective

Students will conduct a comparative analysis of historical and contemporary crises, such as:

- The Black Death (1347-1351) & COVID-19: Public health responses and societal transformations.
- The Great Depression (1929) & the 2008 Global Financial Crisis: Economic models and state intervention.
- Colonial Famines in British India & Modern Food Insecurity: Political economies of starvation and global inequalities.

ASSESSMENTS & FINAL PROJECT

Final Project: Cultural Artifacts as Historical Testimonies:

Students will select a cultural artifact—a painting, film, architectural site, or literary text—and analyse its historical significance. They may choose one of the following approaches:

- **Comparative Temporal Analysis:** Examine how a cultural artifact's meaning and reception have shifted over time. For example, Frida Kahlo's self-portraits in the 20th century vs. their contemporary feminist interpretations.
- **The Politics of Cultural Memory:** Investigate how museums, digital archives, and public institutions mediate historical narratives and collective memory. For example, the representation of Partition in Indian and Pakistani national museums.
- **Art & Resistance in Conflict Zones:** Analyse artistic production in spaces of political struggle. For example, the role of Palestinian poster art during the Intifada or protest art in contemporary Hong Kong.
- **Monumentality & Power:** Explore the role of architectural forms in shaping historical consciousness. For example, the transformation of Soviet-era monuments in post-communist states or debates around Confederate statues in the U.S.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

This course draws upon foundational texts and critical interventions in historiography, cultural studies, and political theory.

Primary Texts & Foundational Readings

- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1962. *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1888. *The Communist Manifesto*. Edited by Samuel Moore. London: Socialist Labor Party.
- Weber, Max. 1930. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1936. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Translated by J.A. Underwood. London: Penguin.
- Žižek, Slavoj. 2008. *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. New York: Picador.

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- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Berger, John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books.
- Kapur, Geeta. 2000. *When Was Modernism? Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*. New Delhi: Tulika Books.
- TASCHEN. 2021. *Frida Kahlo: The Complete Paintings*. Edited by Luis-Martín Lozano. Cologne: TASCHEN.

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- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2007. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Nora, Pierre. 1996. *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. New York: Columbia University Press.