**Forum on Contemporary Theory**
**XVII Theory Praxis Course held at EFL University, Hyderabad**
**May 19-31, 2025**
**A Report**

The XVII Theory Praxis Course was jointly organized by FCT Baroda and EFLU, Hyderabad during May 19-31, 2025. We had the inaugural session on May 18, 2025 which was graced by the Vice Chancellor, Professor N. Nagaraju. There were 25 participants from places like Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Bhatinda, Coimbatore and Kaladi. Nineteen of them were Ph.D. scholars and six of them were Assistant Professors. The objective of the course has been to equip research students with in-depth knowledge of the concepts and methods of interdisciplinary literary studies, an aspect that is not quite often emphasized in their coursework. The course had been designed keeping in mind the research needs of Ph.D. scholars and young faculty. Eminent faculty drawn from the humanities were engaged to teach the course. The in-person talks supplemented by customized guidance, discussions and presentations by the participants was beneficial for the participants. Participants were given inputs through lectures in areas like digital humanities, environmental ethics, refugee narratives, literary space studies, disability studies and philosophical foundations of language and meaning. They were provided with study materials such as 11 books and 30 research papers. The participants were also educated in research methods necessary for their research. Two special lectures were arranged to give participants a broader view of research areas in arts and aesthetics and in Sanskrit Reflective Traditions. These lectures were left open to the university community. Participants picked up concepts and ideas from the lectures and materials and applied them in their research and made short presentations. For instance, Shreya Manna picked up the idea of Tagore's surplus from the extension lecture delivered by Professor Amitabha Dasgupta and applied them in reading two novels. Another scholar, Maharajalaxmi used narrative construction of the self, a lecture delivered by Professor Amitabha Dasgupta in studying Meena Alexander's *Nampally Road* and Yaa Gasi's novel *Homegoing.* These participants were highly motivated and focused on their studies. They were given reading membership of the library during the course. That made their presentations of good quality. Another feature of the course was that the participants were mentored adequately. Resource persons met each participant individually, enquired about the research areas and gave them adequate inputs.

Earlier, the Theory Praxis courses were taught by two foreign experts. This year we pulled up local resources and organized it for two weeks. And it proved to be effective, economical yet successful. The feedback of a participant has been appended. One of the participants after listening to two lectures on the first day, asked, "Sir, how did you select such good resource persons?" In response he was told,

the resource persons were chosen carefully. The abstracts of lectures were scrutinized. Unlike other literary forums, which only organize one annual conference, FCT organizes one annual international conference, two national seminars and a theory praxis course. It also brings out a good quality journal called *Journal of Contemporary Thought*. It nurtures research students in their research and promotes excellence in their areas. One of the resource persons, has written a letter of appreciation of the Couse and suggested that this should be a regular event. He writes: "I have come to value the need for such a forum, a community of thought across disciplines all the more when we see around us a regrettable indifference to quality and purpose in humanities research and teaching. Besides, perhaps, a free fall I sometimes see in ethical and professional standards. I must personally thank you for inviting me to participate in the T-P Workshop at EFL University. Preparing for and delivering the talks to young scholars were largely beneficial to me. Let me hope the results were good on both sides. Anand, as always, was both unobtrusively mindful of his work as Coordinator, and caring as a gracious host." We all value the forum and the course as well. We enjoyed working for the course. We thank Professor P.C. Kar for collaborating with us. We also thank the honourable Vice Chancellor, Professor N. Nagaraju for the support and guidance. He came and sat through some of the lectures setting an example that VCs can also be receptive and perceptive scholars. We also thank the Registrar, Professor Narasimha Rao for his administrative support and guidance. We thank all the resource persons at the course. We also thank the office staff for their ever-willing help. Thank you, dear participants, for being such a wonderful group. You have been receptive, non- complaining and cordial. We wish you all best in your life and career.

Anand Mahanand
Course Coordinator

**Feedback from Participants**

Yeaseen Mondal

It was both an honor and a pleasure to attend the enriching course titled "Two- week Theory Praxis Course in Interdisciplinarity in the humanities." Over the past eleven days, we participated in

insightful sessions, engaged in meaningful dialogues and explored new methodologies. It was a wonderful experience for me to engage in such enriching sessions. I really liked the content discussed in most of the sessions. I am grateful to Prof. Pramod K. Nayar for acquainting me with some important concepts of Environmental Humanities. Dilip Kumar Das' session on "Symbolic Geography, Maps and the Representation of Space" was significant to me. Another crucial session that resonated with me was Shilpa Anand's lecture on Disability. Her lecture provided me with new insights. I want to mention Prof. T.T Sreekumar for his lecture on Digital Humanities and Prof. P.V Amith Kumar for Memory Studies.

I want to express my gratitude to other distinguished resource persons who have shared their knowledge and perspectives. Your sessions have not only been informative but also inspiring. You have sown seeds of knowledge that we will carry back to our respective institutions.

I am grateful to Prof. Anand Mahanand and Dr. Asmita Kundu. A sincere thanks to the organizing committee and the support staff. Your efforts helped run the course smoothly.

Pem Doma

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire team behind the Theory Praxis course on Interdisciplinarity in Humanities offered by FCT. Participating in this course has been an intellectually nourishing experience that has significantly deepened my understanding of how interdisciplinary approaches can enrich both research in the humanities.

The course struck a rare balance between theoretical depth and practical insight. Each session was thoughtfully designed, with readings and discussions that invited us to question disciplinary boundaries and think critically about the frameworks we often take for granted. For instance, revered Prof. Narayan Chandran's lectures on discipline of Interdisciplinarity compelled us to think and question about the fundamentals of English language and literature as a discipline. Prof. Amitav Dasgupta and Prof. R.C. Pradhan's lectures on idea of self, surplus and Art as a creative principle and the Philosophy of language and deepened our horizons on the philosophical aspects of English as a discipline. Prof. T.T. Sreekumar's lecture on humanities and technology helped us to understand the dialectical tension between human creativity and machine generated art. Dr. Venkat Rao's sessions on Cultures and Technology and his public lecture on Sanskrit Reflective Traditions has left us to think critically about the asymmetry in Indian Universities. Prof. Dilip K. Das' lecture on symbolic geography and counter-mapping provided a

useful framework for my research. I wish we had more sessions with Dr. Rajkumar Eligedi on Research Methodology.

Thanks to everyone who all who made this course a success. Let us stay connected and keep the spirit of academic excellence alive. I especially appreciated how the course encouraged dialogic learning-where perspectives from literature, philosophy, history, and the social sciences could converge in productive ways.

It was particularly refreshing to see an emphasis on care, reflexivity, and decolonial thinking woven into discussions-not as token themes, but as the very foundation upon which Interdisciplinarity can be practiced with genuine meaning and purpose.

I leave the course with not just a broader toolkit of concepts and methodologies, but also with renewed curiosity and confidence in navigating the often messy yet rich terrain of humanistic inquiry. Thank you for this generous, thoughtfully curated learning space-it has left a lasting impression on my academic and personal growth.

Shreya Manna

The Theory Praxis Course was not just another academic module; it was a genuinely enriching experience that stirred thought, sparked dialogue, and, in many ways, shifted how we understand the space between theory and practice. Over two intense and invigorating weeks, we found ourselves traversing an expansive intellectual landscape; challenging old assumptions, unlearning familiar frameworks, and learning to ask better, deeper questions about what knowledge means in and beyond the humanities.

A heartfelt note of gratitude to Prof. N. Nagaraju, our Vice Chancellor, for not only presenting us with this invaluable opportunity but also for making the time; despite his packed schedule, to interact personally with each and every one of us. His presence and thoughtful engagement added a rare warmth and sense of encouragement to the entire experience. The course brought together a stellar lineup of speakers, each one bringing their own rhythm, depth, and provocation to the table:

Prof. K. Narayana Chandran laid a strong foundation for us to build upon. Beginning with the distinctions between "discipline" and "field," his lectures swept through the dense terrains of the oft-ignored relational aspects of reading practices. Prof. K.C. Baral offered a compassionate yet critical lens on diversity and disciplinarity. The examples that sir used making it easy for us to understand the the overlapping of discipline and the malleable nature of literature. Prof. T.T. Sreekumar’s sessions were some of the most electrifying. His critique of techno- capitalism and

deep dive into the politics of algorithmic aesthetics peeled back the sleek surface of digital creativity to expose the uneasy truths beneath. His lectures didn't just inform; they provoked, unsettled, and demanded we rethink how we talk about "authenticity" and "art" in an increasingly mediated world. Many of our later conversations found themselves circling back to his provocations.

Dr. R.C. Pradhan and Prof. Amitabha Dasgupta offered a quiet depth that stood out. While Dr. Pradhan led us through the philosophical roots of language, meaning, and holism, Prof. Dasgupta's reflections on Tagore and the narrative self, brought those ideas to life. Together, their sessions reminded us that meaning isn't just constructed; it's lived, embodied, and felt.

Nayar Sir's sessions on *Deep Time and Ecological Plots* opened entirely new dimensions for thinking about literature, not just as a reflection of the human condition but as a space where the planet itself becomes a narrative subject. His discussions made it impossible to separate literary study from ecological thought. Shilpa Anand's lectures on *Disability Studies* and the use of *Narrative Sources as Historical Material* were deeply moving and intellectually transformative.

Dr. Rao brought a philosophical and cultural richness to the table with his sessions on *Cultures and Technologies* and his lecture on *Sanskrit Reflective Traditions Today*. That urged us to re-examine the epistemic ruptures and continuities between tradition and digital modernity. For migration scholars, especially in the Indian context, these reflections offer a framework to understand how displaced communities carry, adapt, and reimagine cultural memory across generations and geographies. Rajkumar Sir's Research Methodology Workshop served as a pragmatic, hands-on supplement to theoretical discussions, grounding participants in the 'how' of academic work. Dr. Amith Kumar's lectures gave the course its shape, clear, layered, and open. As someone straddling literature, sociology, and policy, I felt seen. He made theory feel like a space I could belong to.

Finally, Dr. Dilip K. Das brought the course to a close with a powerful three-part series on *Symbolic Geography and the Representation of Space*. His lectures gave us the tools to interrogate how space is never neutral—how every map, every city, every border carries an embedded ideology. This is essential to my work, especially in understanding how the North-East is imagined in mainstream discourse, often as a periphery or "frontier" rather than a lived, vibrant centre of migration, identity, and negotiation.

Special thanks are due to FCT, Asmita, and especially Anand Sir for organizing this intensive program with such care and commitment. Anand Sir deserves particular appreciation for consistently ensuring that every participant's comfort, logistics, and academic needs were met with sensitivity and foresight, his tireless presence and attentiveness did not go unnoticed.

Finally, gratitude to prem Sir for taking care of our logistic needs.

Aniket

Feedback given during Valedictory Session

Good afternoon, all! I am Aniket, a PhD candidate from the Department of English, Banaras Hindu University. Having been a participant of this two-week theory and praxis course on Interdisciplinarity in the Humanities, I stand here for the valedictory to give my feedback for this course. And I am certain that I speak on behalf of all when I say that there is a long line of people and resource-persons who deserve our thanks.

First, I must thank the Vice-Chancellor of EFL University Prof. N. Nagaraju, the chief patron of this course who facilitated what Prof. Anand Mahanand had envisioned for this course as its convenor. Credit where it is due—I cannot claim of any other university's Vice-Chancellor to have shown this much interest and attended any lecture fully in the classroom with students. Prof. Nagaraju made time to interact with all of us on a dinner. On that note, this is an aberration to me. And I hope it does not remain an aberration.

Thanks are also due to the Forum of Contemporary Theory, Baroda for this collaboration with the EFL University to bring together a whole gamut of resource-persons from FCT, EFLU, UoH, and BITS-Pilani Hyderabad. Personally stating, I would have never deemed it possible to hear these professors in- person, and that too at the same place.

Now coming to the course. When Prof. Mahanand asked me to give my feedback for the course, I kept wondering how I should come about that. I will put it this way:

I had my doubts and partly misconceptions about the everyday research concepts in English Studies and the lingual politics of knowledge. Our core faculty Prof. K. Narayana Chandran ensured that some of those are addressed and corrected. If I have to problematize interdisciplinarity in the context of diversity and responsibility, I can refer to Prof. K. C Baral's lectures. Because of Prof. D. Venkat Rao's lectures, I have much clarity about the techniques and configurations of cultures, and cultural forms. I work in Disability Studies and my understanding of the field did not remain untouched after Dr. Shilpaa Anand's lectures. And during the second week, Prof. Amit Kumar P V ensured that I do not remain limited just to my field. If I have to work with contemporary theoretical perspectives in the fields of Memory Studies, Posthumanism, and Comparative Literature, I can refer to the notes that I took during his cohesive lectures. After lectures by Prof. Pramod K. Nayar, I can find some sort of reconciliation for the conflicting love that I have for both Humanities and Sciences. Should I study any pre-human text or come across an ecological plot, I will be paying more attention now than before. With Prof. T. T. Sreekumar's lectures, I have a holistic idea of the debate on 'authenticity' in this

age of rising AI, generative art and aesthetic abundance. To understand symbolic geography and refugee narratives and the politics of space overall, I will go back to the notes I took during Prof. Dilip K. Das's lectures. With two resource-persons Prof. Amitabha Dasgupta and Prof. R. C. Pradhan from the field of Philosophy, I can ruminate over concepts like self and the triad of language, mind and meaning. After a workshop-like session with Dr. Rajkumar Eligedi, we have a rudimentary idea of how peer review functions and can aid our own perspectives.

I cannot talk about the course and limit myself to mere classroom and public lectures for we have spent twice the time outside the classroom than inside. Of course, I am pointing at the dinner hall, our hostels, and the campus of EFLU. The staff at the Guest House managed our meals well. When in campus, I could not miss a single meal. That partly owes to my love for Telugu and Hyderabadi cuisines. This campus has been immensely accommodating for us candidates. A senior of mine had once described this campus as "walkable" and I can vouch for it empirically since I have often taken post-meal walks to the point that I was hungry again!

Last but not the least, I must thank two people without whom the logistics would have been seemingly impossible. In addition to being a participant herself, Dr. Asmita Kundu has been present as an active representative of the FCT and aided Prof. Mahanand in the smooth conduct of this course. The next person we must thank preceded us everywhere. The classrooms were air-conditioned and presentation- ready before we took our seats. Our meals were present to be served before we lined up in the dinner hall. And our attendance sheets reached both these places before us. I thank Prem Anna for ensuring these diligently.

There cannot be any feedback without some directions for the future. My personal and only suggestion would be that the lectures during these FCT courses be recorded and made accessible to the present and would be members of the forum. Some lectures have been too good to be left at the mercy of what Prof. Venkat Rao would call "alithic memory." Thank you all!