

With a wide array of subjects and universally relevant courses that lead to understanding of human life and holistic personality development, humanities is the best bet for bright young minds

The Art of Arts

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ALTHOUGH humanities as a concept has not been theorised to everyone's agreement, it is a fact that humanities is an English word with a known etymology, with cognates in most European and Asian languages, and with a well documented semantic history. However, humanities should not be regarded as a class at all, but as an aggregate — an aggregate of a highly complex and relative cultural knowledge, acquired through experience of modes of discourse that humanities is supposed to include. In fact, since classical times, it has been believed that humanities, which is written material such as literature, philosophy, sociology, etc., especially works of imagination characterised by excellence of style and expression and by themes relating to the beliefs and values of society, is a form of discourse which has a special and significant relationship with the world. In fact, the knowledge it produces makes it a major instrument of ideology and social force in human society.

Humanities is not now thought to be conveying abstract, universal truths, but is supposed to promote changes in societies and readers, purging or integrating their emotions.

Literature, which is often regarded as one of most important and tempting courses in humanities, has, for example, the useful function of instructing the reader. Wellek and Warren express it thus: "literary language wants to influence the attitudes of the reader, persuade him, and ultimately inspire him to discard the veil of average life perception and see the world in a new light. The epigram for believers in the moral and civilising qualities of humanities was provided by Arnold in 1880: "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to (literature, poetry in particular) to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry."

In brief, literature has the dual goal to



CLEAR PATH: HUMANITIES IS NO LONGER AN OPTION PREFERRED BY STUDENTS WITH A BLURRED VISION OF FUTURE

"delight" and "instruct" the reader. The key term for the first half of the conjunction is pleasure, defined in various ways: it could be a feeling of the sublime, the relief of cathartic purging of violent negative feelings, "a harmonisation of impulses"—the studying of which is the business of philosophy. Thus the subjects of literature and philosophy should go hand in hand.

However, a corpus such as humanities has objective and describable social, cultural, economic and "institutional positioning and links." For example, literature (English literature in particular) has determined relationships with publishing industry, with other media, with business sectors, with education. To say something more on the latter point, people are employed in schools, colleges and universities to teach English as a language and a literature, and what is being taught has an important national and spiritual role for the population outside the institution's

walls. Job opportunities could also be available in bank, communication and translation businesses.

In the present context of humanities courses in our country, both literature and philosophy or, for that matter, sociology and history, fit within the humanities model for the pursuit of knowledge within the existing institutional framework. But what we see today is the decline in credibility of such great subjects, a decline that is in direct proportion to the preeminence given to technology from the beginning of industrialisation to the present revolution in information technologies.

No doubt, we need to grow and be effective in science and technology to be truly independent, but we also need to restore and strengthen students' interest in literature, philosophy, history, social sciences and the world cultures — their distinctive and distinguished past. Without active involvement in humanities courses, no excellent science will emerge: it will rather

be too selfish and sterile to generate its own technology, too limited in scope to produce "joy in the heart and a song on the lips." In other words, both teachers and parents have to relearn to put the same "searchlight" on humanities as on contemporary science and technology.

Perhaps it is because of this negligence that our best educational institutes have so far failed to reach the standard of the best Western institutes, where students are encouraged to opt for courses in literature, philosophy, history, ethics, women studies, Oriental studies, cultural traditions, creative arts and music. Western people are aware of the fact that humanities shape researches and perceptions even among scientists about the proper scope and role of the sciences, as well as the sciences' relations to ancient literatures, ancient philosophies, myths, legends and rituals.

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Blending of classical subjects and a modern ethos has made the arts stream a heady cocktail that promises to equip students with a skill-set that makes them fit for every sector

The Choices Multiply

SEERAT TOOR GREWAL

THE varied set of subjects and new interdisciplinary fields enhance the abilities of students of humanities stream to appreciate and relate to every aspect of human-empowerment. A degree in humanities is way different from the professional streams that lead to default careers. It will instead put you on a firm footing when you pick up any career. A simple scan through the top-most professionals around the world reflects that humanities students have proven their expertise in all areas of human endeavor. There are umpteen examples of successful politicians, professors, bureaucrats, diplomats, top-brass in army, famous writers, actors, directors, singers, corporates, social activists, etc. who started their careers with degrees in various streams of humanities. Some of the subjects that can set new benchmarks for your career goals are:

Psychology

This traditional science of human mind is among the most vibrant and versatile humanities courses at present. Psychologists are in demand in every sector and in a variety of roles — as counselors, mentors, HR-experts, motivation-drivers etc. in hospitals, hotels, defence forces, sports, prisons, courtrooms, corporate-offices, social welfare organisations, research establishments, rehabilitation centers, manufacturing hubs etc. The only thing that defines your monetary intake is your work-experience and your exposure. These criteria which gave freshers' sleepless nights can be tackled early-on in life. One should try and pick up summer jobs, internships, volunteering opportunities etc. during school or college. The course is provided by most arts colleges that offer specific degrees in various streams viz. sports psychology, child psychology, organisational psychology, social psychology, media psychology, life-span developmental psychology, behavioral economics, parapsychology, experimental and cognitive psychology, environment psychology, adolescent psychology, forensic psychology etc. The scope is endless and thus the intake levels are catching up with the competition.

Philosophy

Yet another traditional discipline that has carved a niche for itself in the modern space and is back with a bang is Philosophy. A study



In Fine Fettle

The field of creative arts like applied art, painting, sculpturing and graphic design is the ideal path for those with a creative bent of mind and some inborn talent and skill in these areas. The Bachelor of Fine Arts and applied arts is an all encompassing course for the artistically inclined. The course curriculum and instructional route is entirely different from other disciplines as the focus is on honing the inborn talent of a student. The four-year BFA course that students can opt for after Class XII in any stream provides the first step to a career in the world of art. An integrated course is offered in the first year, and the remaining three years are allocated for specialisation in applied art. The specialised branches in the second year will be offered on basis of the students' aptitude. Some of illustrious institutes in the region are Delhi College of Art, New Delhi; Apeejay College of Fine Art, Jalandhar; Government College of Art, Chandigarh.

of philosophy enhances analytical, communication and arbitration-skills. It is a unique skill-set which is currently in demand in an extraordinary number of professions worldwide viz. the diplomats, news analysts, social and aid workers, disaster management, conflict zones, B2B communications, marketers etc. As the subject sharpens your logic and critical ability, many combine it with economics and turn investment bankers, consumer analysis with many financial data firms, share-market to predict the buying and selling behaviour, lawyers, doctors, etc. As companies and nations become more character conscious, the demand for employing philosophers will keep rising.

The field is also picking pace on an international platform. There are international concerns like automobiles, engineering, FMCG segments etc. who are evaluating their ethical quotient while breaking global deals and expansions. Thus, philosophy has come a long way from armchair philosophy which dealt with examining classical texts. Stu-

dents enter into combinations of subjects with majors in hard sciences with philosophy to master the art of logic and communication. Such combos are giving effective results on job-fronts as it is accepted that this classical discipline has time-tested knowledge to interpret and deal with contemporary issues facing every concern and the world at large.

Conflict Transformation and Peace-building (CTPB)

The new geostrategic equations and divisions have pushed many parts of our world into extended conflicts and civil wars. The new questions of climate change, water diplomacy, oil and minerals are bound to breed more and more unrest in times to come. This course thus finds its significance in dealing with discord at every level in a peaceful way and suggests non-violent solutions. It covers areas as conflict analysis and transformation, building skills in dialogue, mediation, facilitation, negotiation, human rights, gender sensitivities, justice and reconciliation etc. It

offers a 360° student enhancement and equips one for prestigious and noble professions as in peace-keeping, human rights cells, NGOs, conflict management, media specialists, etc. Lady Shri Ram College for Women has a Diploma programme in this.

Public Policy

The sinking morals and the perils in development send clear signals to reinvent and rejuvenate the policy environment in the governing bodies. This not only demands experience but also technical skills which can be acquired through this subject. This field aims to endow future policy-designers to get closer to real-time situations and be more real in dealing with them. Students pick up skills to assimilate, and compare relevant international perspectives in determining and framing requisite policies to ease out the unevenness caused by the distrust and shortage of resources. Course is multi-disciplinary, covering subjects like sociology, politics, economics, law, history, philosophy and ethics, the natural sciences and medicine. The logic is to find more innovative solutions to difficult policy challenges. Thus, it prepares youth to take up challenging situations more wisely and respond to intricacies and address the lacunae in public governance.

Social Work

A much respected subject choice which bestows the ability to help the poor and destitute. It is designed to let the students gather momentum and the appropriate skill-set to meet the demands of various organisations involved in social work at regional, national and international levels. This degree has found a place in most of the top-ranking arts colleges in the country. It is offered at both the undergraduate and master's level. The curriculum clearly segregates the students' area of interest thus helping them take up jobs in relevant fields like youth development, urban community development, Family Social Work/Mental Health and Social Work/Rural and Tribal Community Development, etc.

Thus, humanities has come a long way from times when it was opted for by students with a blurred vision of their future. It helps one to master the dwarfs better than Snowwhite as it brings about overall enhancement in ethos, outlook and approach towards life — a contemporary skill-set which finds place in every work-place and concern

TOP Humanities colleges

St. Stephen's College

New Delhi

www.ststephens.edu

Seats: English(Honours) 60; Economics(Honours) 100

Cut off: Over 97.75 per cent

USP: Besides English and Economics, the college also offers honours courses in History, Philosophy, Sanskrit, Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics.

Lady Shri Ram College for Women

New Delhi

www.lsr.edu.in

Seats: 625

Cut off: 96 per cent

USP: A wide range of courses like B.A. Honours in Economics, English, Hindi, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sanskrit and Sociology, B.Sc. Honours in Mathematics and Statistics., B.Com. Honours in Commerce and Professional Courses in Elementary Education, Journalism & Mass Communication and a One Year Diploma course in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding.

MCM DAV College for Women,

Chandigarh

www.mcmdavcw-chd.edu

Seats: BA (800)

Cut off: Over 65 per cent

USP: State-of-the-art infrastructure amply supported by high academic standards, job placements, remedial courses, bridge courses, counseling services etc.

Government College for Girls

Chandigarh

www.gcg.org

Cut-off: BA (gen) 62 per cent

USP: In recognition of its outstanding all-round performance, the college has been accredited with A Grade by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

DAV College, Sector 10

Chandigarh

www.davchd.com

Seats: BA (General) - 700

Cut-off: Over 55 per cent

USP: The college has been holding computer literacy classes for senior citizens free of cost.

St Bede's College,

Shimla

http://stbedescollege.in

Seats: 60 in each subject of the arts stream

USP: Still carries the British aura, known for English honours course and famous alumni

Government College of Art,

Chandigarh

www.artcollegechandigarh

Courses offered: Diploma, Bachelor and Master Degree courses

USP: Approved by All India Council of Technical Education, this Institution is a platform where the method of practice of Art can be learnt by the up coming artists to bring out their creative talents. It is the only nucleus institution of its kind in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir

Government College for Girls,

Ludhiana

principal@gcgiludhiana.org

Seats:550

Cut off: 60 per cent

USP: Maximum university positions in different undergraduate courses and national championships in Sports.

Dayanand Anglo Vedic

Post Graduate College

Dehradun,

Website www.davpgcollege.com

Courses offered: BA, BSc, BCom, Law

Claim to fame: It is the biggest college of Uttarakhand. A total of 18,000 students are enrolled in the college. The college has former Mauritius Primer Minister Shiv Sagar Ram Ghulam, Late Union Minister HN Bahuguna and Late Army Chief Gen BC Joshi among its alumni.

Jat College,

Rohtak

www.jatcollegerohtak.org

Cut-off: Between 45 to 60 per cent, depending upon the course and availability of seats.

Claim to fame: Described as "Mecca of Sports" in North India by the NAAC Peer Team in its report for accreditation.

(Based on selected lists from India Today, Outlook and other national surveys)