

Report on AIPS Dissertation Workshops for CAORC

The reforms that Pakistan has undergone in higher education in the past decade has resulted in U.S.-based scholars engaged in Pakistan studies being increasingly requested to assist universities in Pakistan in such things as job searches, tenure and promotion reviews, and as external dissertation examiners. We recognize that AIPS can play a further significant role in facilitating scholarship within academe in Pakistan in our respective disciplines through the holding of doctoral dissertation workshops. AIPS held its first dissertation workshop May 11-13, 2009, and anticipates sponsoring a maximum of three dissertation workshops in any given academic year.

Dissertation workshops in effect serve multiple purposes for the long term benefit of higher education. At the individual level, they engage aspiring scholars and assist them in such things as developing and reformulating research questions, placing research within theoretical contexts, facilitating the organization and structure of the dissertation, and sharing global norms of scholarship in research, writing and citation structures. The effects on an institutional level may well be more compelling as they enable the long term thriving of substantive scholarship through the mentoring of a new generation of scholars who will, in turn, be more effective mentors with their own graduate students in the future.

Background

In November 2007 Anita Weiss, in her capacity as Treasurer of AIPS, met with Dr. Ishrat Husain, then head of the HEC Committee on Social Science Development, and with Dr. Sohail Naqvi, Director HEC, to get a sense of the level of interest the HEC might have in AIPS becoming involved in this endeavor. They were enthusiastically supportive and quite appreciative of AIPS wanting to assist higher education in Pakistan in this way. They anticipated that the HEC would be able to support this endeavor financially as well, most likely in the form of providing support to Pakistani scholars participating in the workshops. In October 2008, the AIPS Board of Trustees approved holding dissertation workshops in Pakistan. Shortly afterwards, David Gilmartin and Robert Nichols (U.S.-based historians of Pakistan and AIPS Trustees) submitted a proposal to AIPS to hold a doctoral dissertation workshop in history in early May 2009.

Professor Weiss met with Dr. Sohail Naqvi in November 2008 to finalize arrangements for holding the doctoral dissertation workshops. It was agreed that the first one would be in history, on 11-13 May 2009, that the HEC would advertise the workshop on their website, provide funding for selected doctoral students to travel to Islamabad for the workshop, and house the students in the HEC hostel in Islamabad. (In the event future workshops were held in Lahore, the HEC would provide that same support there as well.) AIPS would develop the ad for the workshop, contact history professors and departments to advertise the workshop further, bring in 1-2 senior scholars to run the workshop, provide the venue for the workshop at the AIPS Islamabad Research Centre (with the option to use the AIPS Lahore Research Centre as a venue in the future if the dissertation workshop leader(s) so choose), and provide meals and supplies to workshop participants.

In addition, Professor Weiss met with senior scholars from a wide variety of universities in Pakistan in November 2008 and in May 2009 to discuss ideas for future dissertation workshops. She also met with Dr. Sohail Naqvi in May 2009 to start planning the next dissertation workshop. Disciplines of high priority for future dissertation workshops include anthropology/sociology, economics, education, literature, and political science.

AIPS will now submit this report to its Board of Trustees and solicit proposals for a workshop for fall 2009, winter 2010 and spring 2010.

Goals and Structure of Workshops

The individual workshops are intended to bring together Pakistani doctoral students (based in Pakistan) in the humanities and social sciences who are: (i) developing dissertation proposals or are in early phases of research or dissertation writing; (ii) seeking to develop new, richer, more accurate, more subtle or robust understandings of their fields; and (iii) aspire to become viable scholars within the global intellectual community.

These dissertation workshops are discipline-based. Doctoral students completing a dissertation in such interdisciplinary fields as Pakistan Studies, Defense & Strategic Studies and Women's Studies are welcome to apply to a relevant disciplinary workshop.

Each workshop will be limited to 12 students, ideally from a broad array of universities within Pakistan. Each workshop will last three days; students will be responsible for completing assigned readings (if any) prior to the commencement of the workshop. Each day will include a buffet lunch and a relaxed dinner to facilitate further discussion.

The first day is to focus on discussions of major theoretical or substantive works, ideally which had been previously circulated. These works will likely consist of 4-5 articles important to the field today. It will also discuss issues such as developing research questions, methodologies, bibliographies, and review style guides for the discipline. The second and third days will constitute discussions of dissertation proposals by each participant (which had previously been submitted and circulated). Participants will address both theory, methods, substance, and structure of each dissertation proposal, and tie these to the discussions held on the first day.

AIPS hopes that after the conclusion of the workshop, dissertation proposals will continue to be circulated amongst the workshop participants and leaders for feedback and ongoing honing of arguments.

Participants

The workshop leader will be an established senior scholar who is: i) either an Individual Member or an Institutional Trustee of AIPS; ii) has a robust research portfolio; and iii) has ample experience in supervising graduate students. Applications to lead a dissertation workshop must be submitted to AIPS, which will then be reviewed by the AIPS selection committee (headed by Anita Weiss) which has been constituted for this task. Once accepted, mutually agreed upon dates will then be established. Workshop leaders will receive round-trip economy travel to Pakistan, four nights accommodation during the workshop and a \$1,000 honorarium. In the event two scholars prefer to run the workshop together, the honorarium will be split between them.

The workshop leader(s) may propose to invite, at their discretion, a senior Pakistan-based scholar to assist the workshop leader in conducting the dissertation workshop (although this is not required). Prior to issuing the invitation, the AIPS dissertation workshop selection committee must approve the Pakistani scholar to be included. Compensation will consist of round-trip economy travel to the Pakistani city in which the workshop will be held, four nights accommodation during the workshop, and a \$500 honorarium for assisting the workshop leader(s).

Workshop participants will consist of doctoral students enrolled in any recognized institution of higher education in Pakistan. Applicants will need to apply to a Request for Applications which will be circulated through the HEC, university networks, advertisements, and other medium. Applicants need not have advanced to candidacy but must have at least drafted a dissertation research proposal. Applications are also welcome from doctoral students in the early phases of writing their dissertations.

Applications will consist of two required items: i) two copies of a current Curriculum Vitae; and ii) two copies of the dissertation proposal. If the research and writing is well underway, a statement may be included of the specific issues being addressed, the intellectual approach being taken, and the materials being studied. Neither the proposal nor statement should exceed 10 double-spaced pages in length.

Application materials will be submitted to AIPS, which will forward them to the dissertation workshop leader(s). They may be submitted to the HEC as well, which will forward applications to AIPS. Each proposal will have a distinct deadline for submissions. The dissertation workshop leader(s) will have sole discretion in the selection of workshop participants, prioritizing the basis of the submitted project, the potential for useful exchanges among them, and a concern to include a wide range of perspectives, intellectual rigor, and somewhat related concerns. Applicants will be informed whether or not they have been selected for the workshop by the designated date noted in the call for applications.

Review of first dissertation workshop 11-13 May 2009

This workshop brought together Professors David Gilmartin and Robert Nichols and twelve doctoral students in history from campuses and locations around Pakistan. Participants included those developing dissertation proposals and those in various phases of research and dissertation writing. A total of twenty-five applications had been received.

The dissertation workshop was launched with an inaugural dinner at the Islamabad home of Constance Jones, CCAO US Embassy, Islamabad (funded by AIPS). AIPS invited a diverse group of guests to the launching, including officials from the Higher Education Commission, select faculty from Pakistani universities, U.S. government officials, former AIPS PLS (Pakistan Lecture Series) participants, dissertation workshop participants, as well as AIPS personnel.

Workshop attendees kept to a full schedule, which included discussions of common readings on approaches to History and presentations by each participant of his or her dissertation prospectus. Rounds of presentations and discussion generated rich and interactive conversations focused on assisting the participating doctoral students in such matters as developing and reformulating research questions, placing research within theoretical contexts, and thinking about the structure and organization of individual projects. The workshop offered an opportunity not only to receive substantial feedback on individual dissertation work, but also to develop collegial bonds with fellow doctoral students in History from across Pakistan.

A detailed evaluation form was distributed to all workshop participants. Unfortunately, we have not yet received the information from those evaluations. We will include that information in future assessments of the dissertation workshops.