



The Human Sciences in Society

HPSC 2008

2010-2011 session

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Office hours: 11-1pm on Tuesdays, G.1, 22 Gordon Sq.

Term 1: 4-5pm Tuesdays,
Weeks 1-5: Chemistry Auditorium
Weeks: 7-11: Foster Court 130
Term 2: 3-4pm Tuesdays – Christopher Ingold LT

Aims

This course provides a collective activity for an otherwise dispersed group of students. It allows them to develop their knowledge of a topic of their choice in the human sciences; to gain some insights in the social relations of science; to develop the interpersonal and organisational skills required for working in groups; to develop skills in research, argument and communication; and to understand values that they may not share.

This course is different from every other course you have so far undertaken at university. You may find it surprising, or even disturbing – and if so, you can be sure that you are learning something. Responsibility for learning will lie very largely with the student, as you will organise your work yourselves. Because it involves group work, the course also requires students to act as teachers, sharing their knowledge and expertise with other group members. Because the course expects you to take responsibility for your own learning, you will not be given detailed instructions. Instead, you will be given goals to be reached. There are very many good ways to reach those goals, and your group will decide which ways to choose. A significant proportion of your thought and energy for this course will be consumed by the organisational and interpersonal demands of the group environment.

Administration

This course is run by the Department of Science & Technology Studies and its rules and procedures apply. Please see the *Student Handbook* on the Departmental website: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts>.

The course runs for one hour per week over two terms. The minimum attendance requirement is 70%, the College standard, and will be logged at each meeting. However, some parts of the course are compulsory: the library sessions in Term 1 and the debates in Term 2. Students who are unable to attend the compulsory sessions should document their reason. Students who do not meet the attendance requirement will be deemed not to have completed the course.

Outline

The course begins with a taught introduction to studies of the social relations of the human sciences, lasting five weeks.

This section of the course can be seen in two ways. Firstly, it is about the key social issues that confront working scientists in their careers, and should be of value to you in the long term. Secondly, it serves to highlight for the aspects of the social relations of science that the examiners will be looking for when they mark your coursework.

Short readings for this part of the course will be available as appropriate. Should students wish to build upon the grounding offered in theoretical issues in STS, useful books are:

Massimiano Bucchi, 2002, *Science in Society: An Introduction to Social Studies of Science* (London: Routledge) – a good general introduction to social studies of science

Steve Yearley, 2005, *Making Sense of Science: Understanding the Social Study of Science* (London: Sage) – a little bit more theoretical than Bucchi, but chapters in Part III are especially relevant background material to this course.

Jane Gregory and Steve Miller, 1998, *Science in Public* (New York: Plenum/Perseus) – a survey of issues around public understanding of science.

Mark Erikson, 2005, *Science, Culture and Society – Understanding Science in the 21st Century* (London: Polity) – a very readable general overview of STS

Students then work in groups. Group work is difficult: it requires many different strategies and a degree of tolerance for differences among group members. Groups will have different problems and will need to develop their own solutions. Some useful pointers can be found at:

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/service/fli/campus/grpwork.pdf>

<http://www.studyskills.soton.ac.uk/studyguides/Working%20in%20Groups.doc>

The groups research a contentious topic with a view to developing a motion that they will propose in a debate such as might be held e.g. in a local council chamber or alongside a public inquiry. The topics should be chosen to allow ample scope for the discussion of values, and impinge on a range of areas outside science such as the economy, education, human rights or the law. Motions proposed in the past have included:

‘This house believes that ...:

GM crops should not be given as aid to developing countries

Prospective parents should have the right to choose the sex of their baby
Patients with self-induced diseases are entitled to the full extent of NHS care
Heroin should replace methadone in the in the treatment of addicts
Cod fishing should be suspended immediately
The use of placebos in double-blind drug trials is not immoral
Surrogate motherhood should be professionalised

The examiners will expect to see the content of the taught introduction to this course reflected in your choice of topic and in your treatment of it.

Within each group, each student will take on one of the following roles: proposer; seconder to the proposition; opposer; seconder to the opposition; diary manager; research manager; writer; editor; debate chair and communications manager. The communications manager will serve as the primary point of contact for all group members and between the course tutor and the group.

The particular responsibilities of each role will be described in class, and particular skills will be discussed and developed in tutorials. It is the responsibility of any student who attends a tutorial to report back to the rest of his or her group. Information communicated in tutorials attended by one group member will be considered to have been communicated to the whole group.

Roles should be allocated by agreement within the group, and be reported to the course tutor as soon as possible. These roles serve to distribute responsibility only: they do not distribute workload. Your job title means that you oversee a task or ensure that it is done – it does not mean you do all the work yourself; nor does it mean that you do not contribute in other roles. Everybody will be contributing in several different ways to the group effort.

It is the responsibility of all group members to see that workload is distributed fairly among group members. Strategies for encouraging participation will be discussed in class. Please note:

- Non-contribution by any student can result in a mark penalty.
- It is the responsibility of the group to ensure that non-participation is addressed at a point when the non-contributor can still make good their contribution.
- The course tutor will intervene to ensure participation if asked to do so.
- People work in different ways, and contributions may be of equal value even if they take different amounts of time or involve different challenges.
- No one group member can set either the standard or the pace of work: these must be arrived at collectively.

Students should keep a course log-book or diary. You may choose the format of this document. You may be asked to present it at any time, as a record of your contribution to your group's work. It might contain notes from meetings, print-outs of emails, research materials and so on. Any student who can not produce a log-book when asked to do so will be deemed not to have participated and will incur a mark penalty to be decided by the examiners. You may consider asking other group members to sign your log-book when you meet. This log-book is not assessed.

At the end of term 1, each group will be informed of the topic that they will oppose in their second debate. They will do this irrespective of their personal point of view on the issue.

The course will conclude with a series of debates, each lasting one hour. Each group will provide two speakers, the proposer or opposer and the seconder, on each of two occasions: when they propose and when they oppose the motion. Prepared contributions will last around 20 minutes from each side. Groups take responsibility for ensuring that their speakers are confident, well-informed and rehearsed. The audience will then discuss the issue and vote on the motion. In previous years, students have made very similar judgements about the quality of the debates to those made by the examiners. You should therefore consider yourselves well-qualified critics when you develop your team's speeches.

History of, and rationale for, this course

This course was developed in response to comments, over a number of years, from the external and internal examiners on the Human Sciences Board of Examiners. It exercises and develops skills that were often missing from the rest of the Human Sciences degree, but which the Board of Examiners has now decided are essential for Human Sciences graduates. The Human Sciences degree syllabus is largely selected by the individual students, who tend to choose courses that they are interested in and good at. So we can imagine that at least some of the missing skills that ones that students routinely chose to exclude, perhaps because they don't enjoy them or are not good at them. Finding these skills lumped together in a compulsory course is therefore understandably not a welcome experience for some students. However, by designing a single course that includes all of these missing elements, and making it compulsory, the Board can thereby allow you the freedom you still enjoy to choose the rest of your syllabus.

'Will I enjoy it?'

This course is one of those experiences where your attitude and commitment will make a big difference to how you feel about it. In general, students on this course start out rather skeptical of it; they feel a bit down about it towards the middle of the course; and they perk up when the start to get marks back for their coursework. The debates at the end are usually the high point – worth the wait!

Coursework

Each group will submit **a briefing paper of no more than 2000 words for each of their two cases**, in a format that would be useful e.g. to a journalist who plans to report on their debates. The aim of this exercise is to produce a document that conveys appropriate content to a non-expert who needs the information in a hurry. It is up to the groups to decide how to present their document. Each paper counts for 20% of overall marks. The deadlines for submission are:

- 'Proposing' paper: 4pm on **Friday 14 January**, to the course tutor in the classroom
- 'Opposing' paper: 4pm on **Friday 4 February**, to the course tutor in the classroom

Note that an STS Department coversheet, with the declaration of originality signed by all group members, is required with each item of written coursework. The coversheets can be found in the chest of drawers in the STS Departmental Office at 22 Gordon Square.

Group marks will also be allocated for the debates, considering preparedness, quality of argument and communication skills. Each of the two performances counts for 20% of overall marks.

Each student will write a critical commentary of no more than 2000 words on one debate in which they were not involved in a format that would be useful e.g. to an MP facing a similar issue or to a journalist preparing an article on the topic. Note this should not simply be a blow-by-blow account of the debate but should be written in the style of your choosing and content tailored for a specific audience and context. The commentary counts for 20% of overall marks. The deadline for submission is

- 5pm on Friday 25 March

to Dr Lock's mailtray in the STS Department. Note that this task should be undertaken by each student individually. Students are not permitted to share notes of the debates and should not discuss their recollections of them for the purposes of this exercise. Students are not permitted to record the debates for the purposes of preparing this coursework.

Late submission of coursework

Late submissions will be penalized: **please note the new college wide rules for late submission of coursework**. The full allocated mark should be reduced by 5 percentage points for the first working day after the deadline for the submission of the coursework. The mark will be reduced by a further 10 percentage points if the coursework is submitted during the following six days. After one week coursework will not be marked.

Course plan

Term 1

Week 1 – 5 October

Introduction to the organization of the course. Groups meet and students are charged with choosing the topic that they will propose in their first debate.

Weeks 2–4, 12 Oct – 2 November

Over these three weeks, classes will consider the key institutions and issues that shape science in society. We will look at the politics of science, science in the media, the public understanding of science, and questions of risk and trust.

These classes are to provide a general grounding in science studies and to suggest various angles that you might take with your debate topics. They should therefore be seen as a possible means to possible ends. Readings will be provided where appropriate.

From the week before reading week, students will come to tutorials in their groups to discuss their ideas for their first debate, where they will propose the motion. The tutorials will last 45 minutes. Students from other groups are welcome to drop by towards the end of the scheduled hour should they have any questions. Students are also scheduled for a library session in the Wellcome Information Centre on Euston Road, where they will be introduced to online and other research resources. You will be given more information about these sessions will be issued nearer the time. Students not scheduled either for a tutorial meeting or for a library session should meet their group independently and further their thinking and research for their first debate topic. The tutorial schedule is:

Week 5 – 2 November – Groups 1 and 2

Week 6 – 8-12 November - **This reading week, so there is no class.**

Week 7 – 16 November - Groups 3 and 4

Week 8 – 23 November - Groups 5 and 6

Week 9 – 30 November - Groups 1 and 2

Week 10 – 7 December - Groups 3 and 4

Week 11 – 14 December - Groups 5 and 6

The groups and schedule for the library tours will be allocated nearer the time.

Towards the end of term, groups will be informed of the motion that they will oppose in their second debate.

Term 2

The next five tutorials are for students in particular roles. Other group members should continue with their research.

Week 1 – 11 January

All research managers, writers and editors, to discuss the content and final form of the written coursework.

Week 2 – 18 January

All proposers, to rehearse their role in the debates

Week 3 – 25 January

All opposers, to rehearse their role in the debates

Week 4 – 1 February

All seconders, to rehearse their role in the debates

Week 5 – 8 February

All chairs, to rehearse their role in the debates

Reading week – 14-18 February

No class

After reading week: the debates

The audience is an essential component of a debate, and students from all groups are expected to contribute to the discussion at each debate. A second marker (tbc) will attend the debates and contribute to the assessment. Some guests associated with the Human Sciences degree may also attend. If we can agree a suitable time, a wider audience will be invited.

Each student will write a report on one debate in which they are not directly involved.

The debate schedule

| | Date | Proposer | Opposer | Chair | Motion |
|----|-------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | 22 February | Group 1 | Group 3 | Group 5 | This house ... |
| 2 | 1 March | Group 2 | Group 4 | Group 1 | This house ... |
| 3 | 8 March | Group 3 | Group 5 | Group 2 | This house ... |
| 4 | 15 March | Group 4 | Group 1 | Group 6 | This house ... |
| 5a | 22 March | Group 5 | Group 6 | Group 4 | This house... |
| 5b | tbc | Group 6 | Group 2 | Group 3 | This house... |

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GROUP 1

1. Paula Blomquist
2. David Vick
3. Hollie Stone
4. Candice Ashmore-Harris
5. Ilona Brenninkmeijer
6. Hayley Capp
7. Assel Limpin
8. Oliver Warley

GROUP 4

1. Abigail Webster
2. Lucy Rothwell
3. Nadia Bruney
4. Pia Melichar
5. Katherine Stedman
6. Sophia Keen
7. Olivia Dyer

GROUP 2

1. Catherine Harvey
2. Yin Tong
3. Eilis Keeble
4. Tamanna Sidika
5. Nathan Hayes
6. Lucy Bohoslawec
7. Nicola Brown
8. Kirsten Shastri

GROUP 5

1. Stephanie Brazil
2. Imogen Singh
3. Amy Yau
4. Stuart Moss
5. Alizae Ismail
6. Tessa Jones
7. Jennifer Mahoney

GROUP 3

1. Emily Groves
2. Oliver Graham
3. Anna Herdman
4. Orchideh Vishkaiy
5. Mihika Kothari
6. Celine Murer
7. Freya Riddel

GROUP 6

1. Rosina Pryor
2. Ellen Quinn
3. Julia Bourne
4. Tom Lewis
5. Lucinda Dimpleby
6. Jordanna Mancina
7. Charlotte Brand

Human Sciences in Society

What will happen at the Debates

Standard debating rules are based on Parliamentary practice – you'll see this reflected in some of the terms used. Your arguments will not be taken necessarily to reflect your personal view, but they should be delivered with conviction.

We will do our best to start promptly at 3.05pm. The four speakers and the Chair will sit at the front of the lecture theatre. Other group members may decide to sit near their speakers or among the audience.

3.05 pm **The Chair will state the motion**, which will also be displayed on an overhead which the proposing group should bring along. It is usual to introduce the motion with the phrase: 'Our motion today is that This House believes that...'. **After stating the motion, the Chair will introduce by name the first speaker, the Proposer of the Motion.** 'To propose the motion, NAME'.

The Proposer speaks for no more than ten minutes. They set out the case for the motion. The task for all speakers is to be emphatic, assertive, persuasive, clear and accurate about their case. It is the Chair's job to silence any speaker who overruns.

3.15 pm **The Chair then introduces the Opposer**, who sets out the case against the motion. The 10-minute limit applies.

During the Opposition and Proposition speeches, group members may pass information to their Seconder. This should be done in complete silence and with the absolute minimum disruption or distraction for the speakers.

3.25pm **Then the Chair introduces the Seconder of the Proposition**, who speaks for 10 minutes. They should be reacting to the Opposition speech and reminding the audience of the key arguments of the proposition.

3.35pm **The Chair introduces the Seconder of the Opposition**, who has 10 minutes in which to respond to arguments already made and to sum up the Opposition case.

3.45pm **The Chair opens the debate to The Floor** – the audience. This is NOT a question and answer session after a talk. The audience should make new points, demand justification of stupid arguments, insist on confirmatory evidence, mock the speakers' rationales, point out omissions and expose flaws in logic. Raise your hand and the Chair will invite you to make your point, but you may also feel the need to just interrupt. Group members may wish to pose as ordinary members of the audience in order to make certain points or to steer the argument in particular directions. A key message of this course is: arguments are about more than just the facts.

3.55pm **The Chair silences the mob and conducts the Vote.** Referring to the Motion, votes are invited for and against. The Chair then declares the motion either upheld or defeated, and states what This House believes.

Jobs in each group

Please would one group member add the names of the student undertaking each role, and return the form to Dr Lock.

Group number:

| | | Name and email address |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Proposer | |
| 2 | Secunder to the proposition | |
| 3 | Opposer | |
| 4 | Secunder to the opposition | |
| 5 | Writer | |
| 6 | Diary and communications manager | |
| 7 | Research manager | |
| 8 | Debate chair | |