HPSC1007 Investigating Science and Society

Course Syllabus

2012-13 session | Dr Karen Bultitude | karen.bultitude@ucl.ac.uk

This module provides an introduction to the academic skills and research methods that underpin all elements of science and technology studies. Content includes basic research and scholarly writing techniques (including identifying appropriate sources, avoiding plagiarism, and writing a convincing argument), as well as an introduction to both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. In addition to becoming familiar with the underpinning theory and research context, students will also have the opportunity to apply data collection methods practically, for example designing questionnaires and/or conducting interviews relating to a topic of their choice.

Basic course information

Course website:	http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/staff/bultitude/1007
Moodle Web site:	[search 'HPSC1007']
Assessment:	#1: Reflective Essay [1,200 words; 20%] #2: Presentation [20 minutes per group; 40%] #3: Written Analysis [2,400 words; 40%]
Timetable:	www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/hpsc
Prerequisites:	No pre-requisites
Required texts:	No required texts; a list containing key readings will be provided each week
Course tutor:	Dr Karen Bultitude
Contact:	karen.bultitude@ucl.ac.uk | t: 020 7679 4431
Web:	http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/bultitude
Office location:	22 Gordon Square, Room 4.2
Office hours:	Wednesdays 11.00 – 12.00

Schedule

UCL Week	Topics Covered	Date	Preparation Work#
20	**Welcome & key skills** Module overview; using the library; citation libraries and other useful electronic tools.	4 October	• Groupwork to complete PBL* task.
21	**Referencing: getting it right** Presentation of PBL* tasks; referencing, bibliographies & avoiding plagiarism.	11 October	• Prepare draft for assignment #1.
22	**Writing for academic assessment** Writing effectively; assessment submission & marking; peer feedback on assignment #1.	18 October	• Finalise assignment #1. • Review methods papers provided.
Assignment #1 due on Friday 19th October 2012 at 17.00 via Moodle			
23	**Introduction to research methods** Qual vs quant methodologies; key factors when planning data collection approaches.	25 October	• Decide focus for assignments #2 & #3. • Complete PBL* task
24	**Research design** PBL* reports; practical factors associated with qual & quant research; ethical considerations.	1 November	• Prepare data collection materials. • Conduct ethical review.
25	**Reading Week**	8 November	
Your research protocol & review of ethical considerations (1 per group) must be submitted to the module tutor via email by 12noon on Tuesday 13th November at the latest. You MUST have approval from the module tutor before data collection occurs.			
26	**The science and society interface** Reminder of key elements of theory & practice relating to the events selected.	15 November	• Prepare for assignment #2 presentations.
27	**Presentation skills** Top tips for the assessed presentations. Opportunity for groupwork & feedback.	22 November	• Prepare for assignment #2 presentations.
28	Assessed group presentations to be delivered within class time (assignment #2)	29 November	• Review reports from existing relevant survey approaches.
29	**Introduction to data analysis & presentation** Discussion of key elements relating to analysis & presentation of qual & quant data.	6 December	• Conduct initial data analysis for assignment #3.
30	**Data analysis workshop & feedback** Opportunity for specific practical advice regarding analysing your data.	13 December	• Finalise assignment #3.
Assignment #3 due on Monday 7th January 2013 at 17.00 via Moodle			

*PBL = Problem Based Learning: this interactive and student-led approach will feature throughout the course. It involves discussing and agreeing specific topics of focus that are of interest to the students within class. You will work together as a group to research your chosen topic, to be briefly presented back to the rest of the group either within the same session or in the following week.

Note that specific readings (journal papers, book chapters and/or relevant reports) will additionally be set each week.

Assessments

Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit
#1	Reflective Essay	Friday 19th October 2012 by 17.00 *via Moodle*	1,200 words
#2	Group Presentation	Thursday 29th November 14.00-17.00 (in class) *schedule tbc*	20 minutes per group
#3	Written Analysis	Monday 7th January 2013 by 17.00 *via Moodle*	2,400 words

Assignment Details

#1: Reflective Essay [1,200 words, 20%]

The first assessment consists of a reflection on the content covered within the first three sessions of this module, and in particular your planned approach to your future assessments (e.g. the purpose of referencing; what referencing approaches/tools you prefer and why; how to avoid plagiarism and why). You are expected to identify five or six primary sources (NOT websites) to substantiate your arguments, and to provide clear reference to those sources within your text. You are not required to agree with every statement within those sources and indeed are encouraged to explore similarities and contrasts between different sources, coming up with your own conclusions.

Although you are welcome to build upon arguments made within group discussions in class, you must enter an individual assignment. The assessment criteria will pay particular attention to the research undertaken in search of information and to the use of critical reasoning skills.

This assessment will be submitted in standard essay format as discussed in class; you are expected to use appropriate presentation e.g. at least 1.5 spacing, headers, referencing etc. The STS general criteria for assessment will be used to grade this work, and you will have an opportunity to discuss those criteria within the appropriate session in class.

Assignment #1 must be submitted via the 'TurnItIn' function on the module's Moodle page.

Assignments #2 & #3 will build on data that you will collect at an event run by an external organisation that is designed to bridge the interface between science and society, whether from a public engagement, science policy, or science communication perspective. You will be randomly allocated into groups; each group will select an upcoming event or activity of interest to evaluate (a detailed list of possible choices will be available on Moodle). Your group will work together to design your research protocol, conduct the data collection and prepare and deliver the presentation. Each student is individually responsible for preparing at least two questions within their group's research protocol; you must be clear within your submission regarding who prepared which questions. You will then individually produce a summary report resulting from your data analysis, presenting the main findings and any key recommendations for future similar events.

#2: Presentation [20-minute group presentation, 40%]

The group presentation (20 minutes per group) will involve all the students in the group in some way and will provide an overview of your methodology (including ethical considerations), a justification of your chosen approach and why it is particularly appropriate to your chosen event. You are expected to include the following elements within your presentation (note these are not restrictive and you are welcome to mention other additional relevant factors, or introduce these elements in an alternative order if you prefer):

- Brief description of the event and/or external organisation involved.
- Outline of your research question / aims / objectives.
- Overview and justification of your chosen methodology.
- Details regarding your data collection methods (including specific factors such as sampling approaches and maximising response rates) that you have taken into account when designing your research protocol.
- Any relevant ethical considerations, and how you have addressed these.

You are welcome to use appropriate computer software to support your presentation. You are expected to draw on relevant academic literature to support your arguments. After your presentation there will be 5-10 minutes of questions from your peers and the markers; your group's response to those questions will also form part of the assessment. Details of the assessment criteria for the presentations will be available via Moodle. All students within the group will receive the same mark for assignment #2.

A separate written version of the research protocol and review of ethical considerations will also be submitted (1 version per group) in written form and will contribute to the overall mark for this component. This document should be submitted via email to the module tutor (karen.bultitude@ucl.ac.uk) by 12noon on Tuesday 13th November at the latest (sooner if you wish to collect your data earlier than this).

The presentations will be held within class on Thursday 29th November. Note that in order to complete this assessment **you will need to work with your group to collect data at an external event outside class time**. Your group **must also receive official approval from the module tutor before you begin collecting any data**; otherwise you will receive zero for this component.

#3: Written analysis [2,400 words, 40%]

The third assignment consists of a written analysis of the data collected using the research protocol developed in assignment #2. Your report should be completed individually and consist of:

- An overview of the event in question and your group's chosen approach.
- Justification of your individual chosen questions & phrasing.
- Presentation & analysis of key data (especially those relating to 'your' questions).
- Conclusions / recommendations.
- Reflection on the processes involved (including both your own and the rest of your group's roles & input); what you would do differently in future etc.

Again, these elements are not designed to be exhaustive, and you are expected to draw on key literature to support your arguments.

Assignment #3 must be submitted via the 'TurnItIn' function on the module's Moodle page.

Criteria for assessment

The departmental marking guidelines for individual items of assessment can be found in the STS Student Handbook available at www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/handbook. Additional criteria for the presentations will be uploaded onto Moodle.

Course Overview

Aims & objectives

The aim of the course is to introduce students to the academic skills and research methods that are essential for science and technology studies. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. demonstrate effective researching and critical reading skills
2. create relevant and critical bibliographies for STS research projects
3. be able to conduct a critical analysis of specific issues/topics and report such analyses persuasively and coherently
4. design and apply a range of basic research methods employed in the social sciences
5. present their work effectively both orally and in writing
6. demonstrate critical and constructive self- and peer-assessment
7. demonstrate constructive reflection through informal writing
8. demonstrate techniques for improved time and project management, and the ability to work effectively in a team

Reading list

For ease of use an electronic reading list is provided for this module. To access it please visit http://readinglists.ucl.ac.uk/modules/hpsc1007.html. It is also available via a dedicated link within Moodle.

Course expectations

This module is taught in 'workshop' format, with each session containing a mixture of mini-lectures interspersed with set tasks and discussion of key issues. Elements of problem-based learning approaches, incorporating student-led elements, will increase the focus on interactivity and student involvement. Students are expected to engage fully with the in-class activities, which includes reading the necessary texts prior to attending class each week. Additionally, specific 'preparation tasks' are set each week that feed into the session content and build on the elements required for the assessments. Former students have noted that this approach worked well to keep them focused and up-to-date with their reading/research elements, and ensured that they received the maximum possible in-class benefit to their assessment preparation.

Finally, it is important to note that students taking HPSC1007 will be expected to work in their group outside class time to collect data with an external audience of their choosing.

Important policy information

Below are listed some important points of policy. Further details of all these policies can be found in the STS Student Handbook www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/handbook.

Late submission of coursework

Penalties for late coursework submission are as follows:

- loss of 5 marks for work submitted less than 24 hours late
- loss of 15 marks for work submitted between 1 and 7 days late
- loss of all marks (i.e. work is graded 0) if submitted more than 7 days late

These rules are statutory and non-negotiable.

Coursework word limits

Penalties for over-length coursework are as follows:

- Assessed work should not be more than 10% longer than the prescribed word count. Assessed work with a stated word count above this maximum cannot be accepted for submission, but will be immediately returned to the student with instructions to reduce the word length. The work may then be resubmitted, except insofar as penalties for late submission may apply.
- If submitted work is subsequently found to have an inaccurately stated word count, and to exceed the upper word limit by at least 10% and by less than 20%, the mark will be reduced by ten percentage marks, subject to a minimum mark of a minimum pass assuming that the work merited a pass.
- For work which exceeds the upper word limit by 20% or more, a mark of zero will be recorded.
- Footnotes and endnotes **do** count as part of the word limit
- Bibliography, tables, pictures and graphs **do not** count as part of the word limit.

Extensions

If unforseeable circumstances prevent the completion of a piece of coursework, students may request an extension to the set deadline. Please consult the STS Student Handbook for further guidance on acceptable grounds for requesting an extension. Extensions must be negotiated in advance with the course tutor. Students to whom STS is parent department may also request an extension from their Personal Tutor. No extension is considered official without written approval.

The request for extension form can be found at: www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/study

Plagiarism

The *UCL Student Handbook* defines plagiarism as "the presentation of another person's thoughts or words or artefacts or software as though they were [your] own". Students are expected to know the College and Department policies in detail and to avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behaviour. In the first demonstrated instance of plagiarism or other irregularities in this course, students normally will receive a 0 F for the course and will be referred to the department and College officials for further action. All course work is subject to scrutiny against past papers and other materials for irregularities. Electronic and other checks will be conducted; see the *STS student handbook* for additional information.

Attendance
Regular attendance is mandatory.

Requirements to complete modules
Students are required to be 'complete' in all modules. Normally all assignments must be attempted in order for students to be considered complete. This is different from 'passing' a module which requires a minimum overall module mark of 40%.

Assessment and additional examiners
Assessed materials are marked by the course tutors. These provisional marks will be distributed to students at the first opportunity. To ensure fairness, materials subsequently are scrutinised by a second examiner within the Department, and a consensus is reached on these separate assessments. All assessed materials and the consensus marks are made available for scrutiny by an examiner external to UCL. Marks are considered final only after the Board of Examiners for Science and Technology Studies has approved them in their annual meeting near the close of Term three.

Disputed marks
Students must endeavour to discuss any grievances over marks informally with the course tutor in the first instance. If informal discussion fails to resolve the matter satisfactorily and there appears to be genuine and substantive grounds for appeal, the student should submit a written explanation of their grievance to the chair of the board of examiners. A final formal written appeal can be made to the College Registrar.

Mechanisms for student feedback
Students have a variety of means for commenting on the module and module tutor. These include written module evaluations at the end of term, regular lecture assessments offered by the module tutor, and in-session opportunities. Students are welcome to bring comments and criticisms to the module tutor in the first instance, by anonymous note if necessary, then to their personal tutor or the STS undergraduate tutor. The department schedules regular meetings of the Undergraduate Student Staff Consultative Committee to which all students are invited.