

HPSC0007

Investigating the Sociology and Politics of Science

Course Syllabus

2019-20 session | Dr Tiago Mata | t.mata@ucl.ac.uk

Course Information

This module introduces key problems and key concepts of research in the Sociology and Politics of Science. In the module we will review the central questions of science studies past and present. Through readings of classic and contemporary works we will identify the problems and questions that motivate contemporary research. Questions such as, Is there a specific culture of science? What is the relationship between science and political power? Is science a male field? Is science Western? You will be introduced to the main research methods that aid scholars in answering those questions and to probe the place of science within culture and the polity. You will learn some of the basic steps for designing and conducting robust original research and you will learn how to critically evaluate the appropriateness and reliability of evidence in published works.

Basic course information

Course website:	See moodle
Moodle Web site:	https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=7416
Assessment:	2 individual essays 2,5k words (further details below)
Timetable:	Thursday 2-4pm, Student Central 3D (double check timetable)
Prerequisites:	none
Required texts:	See below
Course tutor(s):	Dr. Tiago Mata
Contact:	t.mata@ucl.ac.uk
Web:	http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/staff/mata
Office location:	22 Gordon Square, room 2.3

Schedule

UCL Week	Topic	Date	Activity
21	Modernity and the social origins of the social sciences	16 January	What are the problems?
22	Bureaucracy (rationality I)	23 January	Discussion of Weber reading
23	Risk (rationality II)	30 January	Discussion of Beck reading
24	Public (democracy I)	6 February	Debate of Lipmann and Dewey readings
25	State (democracy II)	13 February	Discussion of Appadurai reading
26	Reading week		Reading week
27	Capitals (inequality I)	27 February	Discussion of: Bourdieu reading
28	Race (inequality II)	5 March	Discussion of Bell reading
29	Problems/texts/research	12 March	Discussion of media articles
30	Biopolitics (bodies I)	19 March	Discussion of Haraway reading
31	Queer (bodies II)	26 March	Discussion of: Butler reading

Assessments

Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit	Deadline for Feedback
1	Essay on big problems of STS	26 February; 5 pm.	2,500 words	As advised in class
2	Essay on social problem and research problem	18 March; 5 pm.	2,500 words	As advised in class

A coursework extension of up to one week may be approved by a Programme Director (or equivalent), Departmental Tutor or Chair of a Programme Board of Examiners. (Requests for extensions of more than one week must be forwarded to the Faculty EC Panel. Other members of teaching staff, including Module Tutors, are not permitted to grant an extension (see regulation [http:// www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/c4/extenuating-circumstances/coursework-extensions](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/c4/extenuating-circumstances/coursework-extensions)).

On presentation, referencing and submission guidelines (see STS student handbook). Both assessments must be submitted via the 'Turnitin' function on the module's moodle page. At our weekly meetings there will be ample opportunity to discuss ideas for each assessment.

Assignments

1. Essay on "research problems" in the sociology and politics of science (2,500 words)

Assessment 1 is an individually submitted short review essay.

Building from the discussions in class, especially that of our first meeting, *students should identify enduring research problems/questions in science studies and show how these link to broader research agendas in sociology and political science*. Students should reference authors reviewed in the module but also contributions otherwise not discussed.

The student must undertake a bibliographic search in contemporary sociology and politics of science (c. last 20 years) and identify 2-3 prominent "research problems." Students are encouraged to consult reference literature such as the *Handbooks in Science Studies* and *Handbook in the Sociology of Science and Technology*; survey articles in journals *Social Studies of Science*; *Science, Society and Human Values*; *Engaging Science Technology and Society*; *Minerva*, among others..., and query databases in academic literature, such as Web of Science and SCOPUS.

The assignment assesses the student's ability to 1) create a relevant bibliography, 2) use key concepts in the social sciences, and 3) understand what is a research question.

2. Essay on framing a social problem as a research problem (2,500 words)

Assignment 2 is an individually submitted proposal for a research study.

The exercise is to write a 2,500 word essay arguing how we might enrich our understanding of a social problem by studying it through the lenses of the sociology and politics of science. The essay should 1) describe a social problem of the student's choice, stressing its importance and urgency (NOT climate change); 2) identify what is known and not known about the phenomena/problem, making use of concepts and language from the module; 3) describe the scope of what we might discover through research, if possible drawing on examples for similar phenomena/problems, finally, 4) pose a research question(s) and ideally identify some research strategies for answer it.

Optional, not for assessment, "summative essays"

At the end of each of the four thematic sections of the module: rationality, democracy, inequality and bodies; students will be asked to submit a one page essay that brings the themes of the two weeks/sections together. The student is free to select whatever authors and themes that strike them as interesting. The main requirement is that literatures from two meetings be used.

The essays will be commented by the lecturer but not marked for assessment. The essays are due on Tuesdays and will be prompts for a discussion at the start of the following session (Thursday) and for individual feedback to students on essay writing and comprehension of module subjects.

The essays will be submitted via the "Turnitin" function of the module's middle page. They should be no longer than on single-spaced page, font no smaller than Arial 11pt. The deadlines are the following days:

Rationality and expertise – 4th February, 5 pm

Technologies of democracy – 18th February, 5 pm

Sources of inequality – 10th March, 5 pm

Biopolitics - 27th March, 5 pm

Aims & objectives

Aims:

The aim of this module is to introduce students to the foundational literatures for science and technology studies (STS): sociology and political science. The module offers a preliminary survey of key authors and writings that have shaped the research agenda of STS and gave it its central concepts. The module prepares students to observe and describe social problems and reframe them as research problems. It pays special attention to the ways concepts and

questions shape research inquiry. The module also introduces students to contrasting research practices and methods and offers strategies to compare them and evaluate them.

Objectives:

By the end of this module students should be able to:

- Identify and use key concepts in sociology and political science;
- Identify and describe key problems in the sociology and politics of science;
- Be able to differentiate between a social problem and a research problem;
- Demonstrate effective researching and critical reading skills;
- Be able to conduct a critical analysis of academic texts and report such analyses persuasively and coherently;
- Create relevant and critical bibliographies in the sociology and politics of science;
- Present their work effectively in written formats;
- Demonstrate critical and constructive self and peer evaluation;
- Work effectively on their own or in class collaboration and interaction;
- Apply the knowledge gained to interrogate the imprint of power and domination in our daily lives.

Reading list

General reference works:

The module is an overview of themes and problems in sociology and political science, to aid students in understanding some of the concepts, I suggest the following three reference texts.

- Calhoun, Craig (2002) *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony and Sutton, Philip W. (2017) *Essential Concepts in Sociology*. London: Polity.
- Heywood, Andrew (2015) *Key concepts in politics and international relations*. London: Palgrave.

There are numerous others “dictionaries,” “encyclopedias” and review articles that overlap with and/or supplement these texts. The resources of SAGE METHODS (available as electronic resource) are particularly rich.

NOTE: The readings on each week/session are separated into two kinds. The texts marked in red **MUST** be read before class since they will be part of a class activity. All other readings are either complementary to the lecture component of the weekly meeting and/or suggested readings for the assignments.

SESSION 1. Modernity and the social origins of social science, 16 January

Sociology and political science formed as academic disciplines at the turn of the 20th century. They shared one central problem: to understand the cultural and political impacts of rapid

industrialization and urbanization. These sets of concerns have never abandoned the disciplines but attitudes towards modernization has changed. By century's end, some authors critiqued the social sciences as compromised in the promotion of a narrow cultural project of modernity, while claiming to be pursuing impartial analysis. From this first meeting we come to grips with the contentious status of social science's knowledge claims and how they can be subject to political readings and uses.

! Class preparation: NONE.

Connell, R. W. (1997) "Why Is Classical Theory Classical?" *American Journal of Sociology* 102(6): 1511-1557.

Tönnies, Ferdinand (2001 [1887]) *Community and Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 15-21.

Parsons, Talcott (1964) "Evolutionary Universals in Society" *American Sociological Review* 29 (3): 339-357.

Liotard, Jean-Francois (1984 [1979]) *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*. Manchester : Manchester University Press: chapters 1,2, 4, 5, 8, 9.

SESSION 2. Bureaucracy (rationality and expertise I), 23 January

In common political discourse bureaucracy is used as a term of derision, used to denounce perverse organisations and their practices. But bureaucracy, defined as the rule of professionals and experts, is an inevitable feature of contemporary life, that has grown as our politics and economies have become dominated by complex techno-social systems. States, corporations, charities, even local clubs are bureaucracies, following codified rules of action, rationally designed and justified. Sociologists have looked to bureaucratic reason with admiration, puzzlement and concern. They have shown that alongside many worthwhile benefits, rationality comes at a cost of alienation and amoral conformity.

! Class preparation, please read: Weber, Max (2015) *Rationalism and Modern Society: New Translations on Politics, Bureaucracy, and Social Stratification*. Edited by Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters. Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 73-128, chapter 6 "Bureaucracy."

Arendt, Hannah (1963) *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. New York: Viking Press, chapter "VIII. Duties of a law abiding citizen"

Mannheim, Karl (1993) "The Sociology of Intellectuals." *Theory, Culture & Society*, 10(3), 69–80.

Marx, Karl (1844) "Estranged Labour" *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>

Merton, Robert K. (1938) "Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England." *Osiris* 4 :414-470, chapters IV and V.

Weber, Max (2004) *The vocation lectures*. edited by David Owen and Tracy B. Strong. Indianapolis : Hackett, chapter "Science as a Vocation."

SESSION 3. Risk (rationality and expertise II), 30 January

Through much of the twentieth century social scientists believed that they could develop a

science for “social control.” With the right knowledge and public support, policies could be implemented to cushion or remedy the ill effects of prosperity and share equitably its benefits. In the past 50 years, many social scientists have come to doubt their powers of foresight and design. They have come see the rapid development of science and technology, trade and finance, media communications and intercontinental travel and radically uncertain and resistant to control. The awareness of the limits of social engineering, indeed of any engineering, are not only a belief of academic sociologists but are shared by many of the mass public. Different scholars have characterized this age as a risk, network, liquid society.

! Class preparation, please read: Beck, Ulrich, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage Publications: chapter 2, “The Politics of Knowledge in the Risk Society.”

Merton, Robert K. (1936). "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action" *American Sociological Review*. 1 (6): 894-904.

Castells, Manuel (1996). *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell: chapter 7 “The Edge of Forever: Timeless Time” and 8 “Conclusion: The Network Society.”

Bauman, Zygmunt (2007) *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. New York: Polity Press: 94-110.

SESSION 4. Public (technologies of democracy I), 6 February

Most political regimes in the world today are representative democracies, in theory if not always in practice. Democracies derive their legitimacy and authority from the rule of the totality of its citizens, and yet no democracy, however inclusive, relies solely on its citizens to make decisions. Political appointees, civil servants, and processes of collective consultation are common mediators between the mass public and public policy. For most of the history of the social sciences views have been split between those that believe that the lay public should be an active participant in collective deliberation and decision making, and those that doubt the ability of the public sphere to sustain reasoned debate and choice.

! Class preparation, please read: Lippmann, Walter (1921) *Public Opinion*. Boston: Harcourt: part VIII “Organized Intelligence.”

AND: Dewey, John (1946) *The Public and its Problems*. Chicago: Gateway Books: 100-142 “IV. Eclipse of the Public”

Habermas, Jürgen (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*. Boston: MIT Press: 140-180, “V. The Social-Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere”

Hirschman, Albert (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press: chapter 3 “Voice.”

Spivak, G. C. (1988) “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

SESSION 5. Imaginaries (technologies of democracy II), 13 February

The institutions of mass communication underpin the machinery of government - shaping who makes decisions and how they are made. But the media and the institutions of public culture play a second and equally important role in contemporary democracies. It is through them that social groups develop a shared understanding and identity, giving collective life its animus and bond. The work of imagining nations, science, and futures are intertwined. In this session we review how social scientists have learned to study the work of the imagination.

! Class preparation, please read: Appadurai, Arjun (1996) *Modernity at Large*. University of Minnesota Press. Chapter 1. "Here and Now"

Anderson, Benedict (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso: chapter 2: "Cultural roots"

Beckert, Jens (2016) *Imagined Futures*. Harvard University Press. Chapter 11 "The Enchanted World of Capitalism"

Jasanoff, Sheila and Kim, Sang-Hyun (2015) *Dreamscapes of Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: chapter 1. "Future Imperfect."

Said, Edward (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 265-287 "Yeats and Decolonisation."

SESSION 6. Capitals (sources of inequality I), 27 February

In any contemporary society, it is easy to observe stark contrasts in social groups' access to resources, in their cultural status and in their political power. Classes of individuals seem to benefit in numerous ways from an underlying social structure. Social scientists have long debated over what is the architecture of this social structure, what mechanisms brought it into existence and continuously reproduce it. "Capital" has been a useful concept to study how some individuals accumulate social and economic power. From an initially mainly economic definition, the concept has gained a primarily social and cultural meaning.

! Class preparation, please read: Bourdieu, Pierre (1986) "Forms of Capital" English version published in J.G. Richardson's *Handbook for Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, pp. 241–258.

Bendix, R. (1974) "Inequality and Social Structure: A Comparison of Marx and Weber." *American Sociological Review*, 39(2): 149-161.

Coleman, James S. (1988) "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital" *American Journal of Sociology* 94:, S95-S120.

Marx, Karl (1990) *Capital, Critique of Political Economy. Volume I*. London: Penguin., chapter 4 "The General Formula for Capital."

Sen, Amartya (1985) *Commodities and Capabilities*. New York: Elsevier Science Publishing Company.

SESSION 7. Race (sources of inequality II), 5 March

To think of inequality through the prism of class and capital is to think of the attributes and positions of individuals. That analysis often neglects, or downplays, how inequality may be

based on gender and race discrimination. Color lines and gender lines are no less an object of social construction as economic power and privilege but they operate in distinct ways that are more insidious and covert. In this meeting we look at how social scientists have shown race to be not only a malady of contemporary societies but a damning blind spot of social research and theory.

!Class preparation read: Bell, Derrick (2018). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. Hachette UK: chapter "6. The Rules of Racial Standing."

Appiah, Anthony (1985) "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," *Critical Inquiry* 12(1): 21-37.

Collins, Patricia Hill (2002). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge. Part I. The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought, pp. 1-48.

Davis, Angela (2019[1981]). *Women, Race, and Class*. London: Penguin Classics: chapters "5 The meaning of emancipation according to black women" and "6. Education and Liberation: Black Women's Perspectives."

Du Bois, W. E. Burghardt (1898) "The Study of the Negro Problems." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 11: 1-23.

hook, bell (1981) *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Chapter "5 Black Women and Feminism"

SESSION 8. Problems/texts/research – 12 March

In this session we interrupt our tour of problems/concepts/literatures in the sociology and politics of science to introduce social research methodology. How to pose social research questions and how to design protocols to answer them is a field of inquiry in its own right. In this session we review how to reframe issues of social and political concern into researchable questions (which is at the heart of assignment 2). We will also define the fundamental methodological values of validity, reliability, generalizability and ethical robustness.

!Class preparation read: Excerpts from mass media, to be advised nearer to the meeting.

Earl Babbie (2015) *The practice of social research*. CENGAGE Learning, chapters 1, 2, 17.

Alan Bryman (2012) *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapter 1, 3, 4, 28.

SESSION 9. Bodies (biopolitics I), 19 March

It was the originator of the term "sociology" (a 19th century philosopher called Auguste Comte) who first advocated for a hierarchy of scientific disciplines, where the biological sciences would provide the foundation for the "human sciences." Today, few social scientists would accept this outlook. Conceptions of human nature, of sane behavior or normal sexuality, are not nature given but constructed in language and rituals. Once accepted by individuals they became vectors of self-control and government. Bodies are thus political objects, classified, monitored, intervened upon by medical doctors, police and law.

!Class preparation read: Haraway, Donna (1991[2013]) *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*. New York: Routledge, chapter “8. A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and the Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.”

Foucault, Michel (1990) *The Care of Self. History of Sexuality, volume 3*. London: Penguin. Part Four “The Body”

Foucault, Michel (1991) *Discipline and Punish*. London: Penguin. Chapter “Panopticism.”

Foucault, Michel (2003) *The Birth of the Clinic*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 9. “The Visible Invisible.”

Rose, Nikolas (1999) *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. Free Association Books. Chapters “9. The Expertise of Management” and “10. The Production of Self.”

SESSION 10. Identity (bodies II), 26 March

Acknowledging that our sense of self is not ours but rather a construct accomplished by institutions, practices, traditions and violence, has prompted a new discourse of critique. Social scientists have interrogated who establishes categories of normal and deviant, on what grounds and assumptions. The critical sociology of identity has become a tool for the self-determination of identities and for a politics that respects and empowers choice and difference.

! Class preparation, please read: Butler, Judith (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge Classics. Chapter 1 “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire.”

Lorde, Audre (2012). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Crossing Press: “The Uses of Anger: Women responding to Racism” 117-128.

Namaste, Ki (1994) “The Politics of Inside/Out: Queer Theory, Poststructuralism, and a Sociological Approach to Sexuality” *Sociological Theory*, 12(2): 220-231

Young, Iris Marion (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, chapter 5 “The scaling of bodies and the politics of difference” and chapter 6 “Social movements and the politics of difference.”

Sedgwick, E. K., & Frank, A. (2003). *Touching feeling: Affect, pedagogy, performativity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Chapter “2. Around the Performative: Periperformative Vicinities in Nineteenth-Century Narrative.”

Additional Resources:

UCL Study Skills pages: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/transition/study-skills-resources>

UCL Research Ethics: <http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk>

UCL Library electronic resources: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/eresources.shtml>

UCL Plagiarism Guidelines: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/guidelines/plagiarism>

UCL Guide to References, Citations and Avoiding Plagiarism:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/training/guides/webguides/refscitesplag>

Using Moodle: <https://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/display/ELearningStudentSupport/Moodle>

