

# HPSC0009 Introduction to History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science

## Course Syllabus

2020-21 session | Dr Chiara Ambrosio [c.ambrosio@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:c.ambrosio@ucl.ac.uk)  
Dr Erman Sozudogru [erman.sozudogru@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:erman.sozudogru@ucl.ac.uk)

This course is an introduction to history, philosophy, and social studies of science. We will think critically about key questions that have shaped, and continue to shape, this exciting and dynamic field of study. What grants the authority of science in our society? How have scientists constructed and maintained their identity through time, and has this come at the expenses of other social groups? What are the relationships between science, society and culture, and how have those relationships changed through time? What is the role of scientific experts in society? Should science today be a force behind positive social change, and if so how can we make it happen? Using historical and contemporary case studies, the focus of this module is to encourage students to start thinking critically about these questions, while at the same time developing their skills as independent, interdisciplinary and publicly engaged scholars. This course is intended as a foundation and sampler for later courses in science and technology studies.

### Basic course information

Moodle Web site:	<a href="https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=7418">https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=7418</a>
Assessment:	Three pieces of coursework: 10% Individual annotated bibliography 60% - Individual essay (2,500 words) 30% - blog (500 words)
Timetable:	<a href="http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/hpsc">www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/hpsc</a>
Prerequisites:	No prerequisites
Required texts:	See reading list below and online reading list via Moodle
Course tutor(s):	Course convenors: Dr Chiara Ambrosio, Dr Erman Sözüdoğru Teaching assistant: Héléne Maloigne
Contact:	<a href="mailto:c.ambrosio@ucl.ac.uk">c.ambrosio@ucl.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:erman.sozudogru@ucl.ac.uk">erman.sozudogru@ucl.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:helene.maloigne.10@ucl.ac.uk">helene.maloigne.10@ucl.ac.uk</a>
Office location:	Ambrosio: 22 Gordon Square, Room 1.2a Sözüdoğru: 22 Gordon Square, Room B14
Ambrosio office hours:	This year I will hold an open office hour every week. These will take place <b>every Monday</b> (starting <b>Monday 12 October</b> ), <b>9-10am</b> (UK time), Please look out for moodle announcements for further instructions on the platform I will use.
Sozudogru office hours:	Erman will have office hours specifically for this module <b>on Monday 26 October, 1-2pm and Monday 2 November 1-2pm</b> . You can email Erman for an appointment if you are unable to attend his allocated office hours.
Maloigne office hours:	Héléne will answer emails every Thursday between 9 and 12 (UK time). You can email her any time in the week, but this is her allocated time to get back to students on this module.

## How this module works

This is a difficult year, and we had to make some decisions about how to run this module in an inclusive manner. As you will see, the module runs online and most of the sessions are *asynchronous*: this means that the lectures and module activities will be online-based and most of them will not happen in real time, and you will be able to complete them independently of your time zone and location in the world. There are only two online live sessions scheduled for the entire term, these should appear on your timetable, and they are also listed on moodle.

You will be responsible for engaging with each topic on a weekly basis. If you do, we guarantee that you will acquire all the basic skills to continue to do further work in History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science at a more advanced level. Having said this, your module tutors will be present all along: we will facilitate your weekly skill development activities, we will lead the live sessions and one of us (Chiara) will also host an open office hour each Monday 9-10 (starting Monday 12 October; further details on moodle).

In normal circumstances, this module would include a one hour lecture per week (Monday, 10-11) and a one hour seminar (either Monday 11-12 or 12-1, or Tuesday 10-11 or 11-12). You would attend the lecture and be allocated to one of the seminar groups. With the move online, we recommend that you use the Monday 10-11 slots (in your own time zone) to watch the video lectures, and use your allocated seminar slot on Mondays or Tuesdays (in your own time zone) to engage in the weekly skill development activities: this will allow you to have some sense of structure as you work independently.

The moodle site for this module is organised in weekly topics. Each topic contains an annotated list of activities (top half) you are expected to engage in each week. It also contains a list of links (bottom half of each topic) with the online resources (readings, videos, forum, additional resources) that you will need to use to complete each activity.

Each week you are expected to do the readings (from beginning to end!), watch one or two short video lectures, and consult some additional materials which will help you understand the topic and clarify core concepts. You will also participate in the weekly skill development activities (details on moodle). Most of these activities will happen on the weekly forum. *It is crucial that you engage in these weekly activities*, as they are specifically aimed at helping you develop studying, referencing, and argumentation skills. They will also help you build toward each of the three assessments, and they are an opportunity to discuss the course material and assessment with your peers.

## Weekly Schedule

Date	Topic (watch video lectures on moodle)	Readings	Class development skills and activities
5 Oct 2020	Welcome and course overview	Chalmers <u>or</u> Erickson Read syllabus; read Assessment 1 and 2 instructions	<i>Getting to know each other – icebreaking exercise (see moodle for details)</i>
12 Oct 2020	What Makes a Scientist? The Philosopher's Answer	Medawar; Popper	<i>Exercise: Could you reference better than a Nobel Prize? Exercise: Argumentation (see Moodle for details)</i>
19 Oct 2020	What Makes a Scientist? The Historian's Answer	Whewell; Secord	<i>Exercise: reading and understanding primary sources; referencing (see moodle for details)</i>
26 Oct 2020	What Makes a Scientist? The Sociologist's Answer	Gieryn	<i>Exercise: Analysing and using case studies (see moodle for details) Format your references and prepare your presentation</i>
<b>2 Nov 2020</b>	<b>Assessment 1 due at 5pm</b>		
2 Nov 2020	Taking stock: the story so far, assessment criteria and essay troubleshooting	Read assessment 2 instructions, come prepared with questions	<i>Online live sessions: Group 1 Monday 11-12 Group 2: Monday 12-1 Group 3: Tuesday 10-11 Group 4: Tuesday 11-12</i>
9-13 Nov 2020	<b>Reading week – No readings, no online classes</b>		
16 Nov 2020	Ethics Matters!	Bharmal; Thompson	<i>Work on essay; last chance for assessment forum questions</i>
<b>18 Nov 2020</b>	<b>Assessment 2 (Essay) due at 5pm</b>		
23 Nov 2020	Toward a More Diverse Science?	Schiebinger	<i>Exercise: Writing in different registers for different audiences – Compare academic and popular texts (see moodle for details)</i>

30 Nov 2020	Picturing Science	Lynch	<i>Exercise: UCL Art Museum activity – guess the mystery object! (see moodle for details)</i>
7 Dec 2020	Policy, Experts and Social Change	Sözüdoğru (2 articles)	<i>Exercise: Identify the audience of your blog post (see moodle for details)</i>
14 Dec 2020	STS and The Meaning of Life	No readings this week. Complete pending readings, work on blog post.	<i>Finalise your blog post Exercise: Learning to be constructive in peer review - comment on each other's draft blog post</i>
<b>16 Dec 2020</b>	<b>Assessment 3 (Blog Post) due at 5pm</b>		

## Assessments

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	Description	Deadline	Word limit
10% of total mark Pass (100%) or fail (0)	Individual annotated bibliography (two references and 2 mins presentation on single powerpoint slide)	5pm, <b>2 Nov 2020</b>	n/a
60%	Individual essay	5pm, <b>18 November 2020</b>	2,500 Words
30%	Blog post	5pm, <b>16 December 2020</b>	1,500 Words

## Coursework

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All the coursework for this module is tailored around developing *studying, writing, and research skills*. You will start by learning the basics: how to locate, read, and annotate your sources. You will also be asked to briefly explain their relevance in an oral form (Assessment 1). You will then move on to academic writing

(Assessment 2), and will develop a coherent and supported argument on one of the suggested essay topics. Lastly, you will experiment with a different writing style aimed at a non-academic audience, and will turn your academic essay into a blog (Assessment 3).

Detailed instructions on each assessment component is available on Moodle, in the Assessment section.

Note that if you want to do well on the assessment *you need to engage with the class development skill activities planned each week*. These are geared toward building your skills gradually, and in parallel with the contents covered in each video lecture.

### **Criteria for assessment**

The departmental marking guidelines for individual items of assessment can be found in the STS Student Handbook. Criteria for marking are also explained in each Assessment Guidelines document.

## **Aims and Objectives**

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### **Aims**

The aim of this course is to provide students with an overview of foundational concepts, debates and methodologies in the field of Science and Technology Studies. Combining content and skill-building, the course will equip students with conceptual and methodological foundations to pursue further studies in history, philosophy, and social studies of science.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Understand and apply fundamental concepts in History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science;
2. Analyse a scholarly text, identifying and assessing its key thesis;
3. Research independently, locating literature and case studies and evaluating their relevance in relation to a specific research question;
4. Build a sound argument, justifying its main claims through evidence from the literature;
5. Test the validity and limitations of HPS/STS concepts against independently researched historical or contemporary case studies;
6. Understand and apply the difference between academic and popular writing, tailoring arguments to different kinds of audiences.

## Reading List

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### *Background readings*

General background texts for this module include:

- Lisa Bortolotti, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Science*. Cambridge: Polity, 2008  
[Note: this text is unfortunately not available as an e-book. The UCL library only has physical copies of it. You will not be penalised for not using it in your assessment, as we cannot guarantee access to it to the whole class]
- Alan Chalmers, *What is This Thing Called Science?* Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1999 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition).  
[This is available in electronic form via the UCL library]
- Harry Collins and Trevor Pinch, *The Golem: What you Should Know about Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition).  
[This is available electronically through the UCL library]
- Mark Erickson, *Science, Culture and Society: Understanding Science in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Cambridge, UK; Malden MA.: Polity Press 2016 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition).  
[This is available electronically via the UCL Library]
- Patricia Fara, *Science: A Four Thousand Year History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.  
[Note: This book is unavailable in an electronic version. The chapter on “Progress”, recommended as a further reading for lecture 4, has been scanned and you will be able to access it via the Reading list for this module. The book is also relatively affordable – if you are interested in the history of science and plan to do more work in that field you might want to consider purchasing it]

## Weekly schedule and readings

Below you will find a breakdown of the topics covered in each lecture every week, and a list of essential and further readings. For the full schedule of the weekly skill development activities please refer to the moodle site.

### **Topic 1 – Monday 5 October**

#### **Welcome and overview of the course**

This session will introduce the field of Science and Technology Studies. We will start thinking critically about science and its place in society, and explore how STS will allow you to dissect, evaluate and contextualise the legitimacy and authority of science in society and culture. We will also cover a lot of practical information about the course, its aims and objectives, and your coursework and assessments.

#### *Recommended Readings:*

This week you will be busy understanding the practicalities of student life, so the readings assigned are two chapters from books that we will use throughout this term. As you will see, these chapters will come back as suggested readings in subsequent sessions; however it would be good to start reading them in preparation for the first lecture of this module.

Chalmers, A. (1999) *What is this thing called science?* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Open University Press [chapter 1].

OR

Mark Erickson, *Science, Culture and Society: Understanding Science in the 21st Century*. Cambridge, UK; Malden MA.: Polity Press 2016 (2nd Edition) [chapter 1].

## Part 1 – What Makes a Scientist?

The first part of this module will look at a crucial question in History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science: how do we demarcate science from non-science? We will tackle the question via the construction of scientific identity, looking at how philosophers, historians and sociologists have differently investigated how scientists draw boundaries between their own practices and knowledge and other human activities.

## Topic 2 – Monday 12 October

### What Makes a Scientist? The Philosopher's Answer

“Science is identified by its method”: this has been a long standing common-sense view among practicing scientists, as well as in popular portrayals of scientific practice. In this section we will explore how some leading philosophers of science have tackled the question of “the” scientific method – and we will see that in doing so they set the foundations for the field of philosophy of science, at the same time constructing a portrayal of ‘the scientist’ that had lasting effects on practitioners themselves.

#### *Essential Readings*

Peter Medawar, “is the Scientific Paper a Fraud?”, in Peter Medawar, *The Strange Case of the Spotted Mice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 33-39.

Karl Popper, “The Problem of Induction” in Martin Curd and J.A.Cover, *Philosophy of Science: The Central Issues*. New York and London: Norton, 1998, pp. 426-432.

[Note: if you are accessing physical copies of this book, there is a second edition of this anthology, which you can also use].

#### *Further Readings:*

Lisa Bortolotti, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Science*. Cambridge: Polity, 2008.

Chalmers, A. (1999) *What is this thing called science?* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Open University Press

[especially chapters 1, 4 and 5. Chalmers has also individual chapters on each of the philosophers we will discuss in the lecture]

Mark Erickson, *Science, Culture and Society: Understanding Science in the 21st Century*. Cambridge, UK; Malden MA.: Polity Press 2016 (2nd Edition)

[especially chapters 1 and 3].

Each philosopher discussed in class has an entry in the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, which is a very useful online resource for any philosophy module you will take in the future:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/>

### Topic 3 – Monday 19 October

#### What makes a scientist? The Historian's answer

The word “scientist” is relatively recent. In this session we will examine the historical context and circumstances in which this term was introduced, and use this episode in the history of science to think about historiography and historical methods.

#### Essential Readings

Anonymous [William Whewell], “‘On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences’, By Mrs Somerville”. *The Quarterly Review*, vol. 51, 1834, pp. 54-68.

Available via Hathi Trust, here: [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b661406&view=1up&seq=64](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b661406&view=1up&seq=64) (the text starts half way through the page, so scroll down and you will find it!). The article is quite long – pay special attention to the introduction (pp. 55-56), pp. 58 (last paragraph) – 60, and pp. 64 to the end.

James Secord, “Mary Somerville’s Vision of Science”, *Physics Today*, vol. 71 no. 1, pp. 46-52.

#### Further Readings:

Patricia Fara, *Science: A Four Thousand Year History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [see especially the chapter titled “Progress”, pp. 237-245, available via the Reading list for this module]

James Secord, *Visions of Science: Books and Readers at the Dawn of the Victorian Age*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014 [chapter 4]

[note: this book is not available electronically via the UCL library. You will not be penalised if you cannot access it]

### Topic 4 – Monday 26 October

#### What Makes a Scientist? The Sociologist's Answer

Demarcating science from non-science is more than just an analytical exercise. When looked at from the perspective of practicing scientists, the issue of demarcation reveals that the reasons why scientists erect boundaries and divisions to separate their activities from other kinds of human enterprises are often ideological. In this session we explore how some key authors in the sociology of science can help us probe the complex relationship between science, power, institutions, and values.

#### Essential Reading

Thomas Gieryn, “Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists”, *American Sociological Review* vol. 48 no. 6, pp. 781-795.

#### Further readings

Mark Erickson, *Science, Culture and Society: Understanding Science in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Cambridge, UK; Malden MA.: Polity Press 2016 [chapter 3 and 5]

Thomas Gieryn, “John Tyndall's Double Boundary-Work: Science, Religion, and Mechanics in Victorian England”, pp.37-64 in Gieryn, T.F., *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line*, University of Chicago Press, (Chicago), 1999.

## Topic 5 – Monday 2 November

### **Phew. Let's take a break and look at the story so far!**

In this session we will wrap-up the issue of demarcation and discuss what we have learned thus far. We will also discuss your next assessment, and troubleshoot on essay writing skills. Please attend the live seminars!

#### *Essential readings*

Please read carefully the instructions on Assessment 2 on Moodle, and catch-up with any unfinished readings.

## Monday 9 November

**READING WEEK – no classes**

## Part 2: Doing STS in the Real World

Now that you have acquired some basic concepts and methods in STS, we can start exploring how our discipline tackles research and problems in particular applied contexts. The second part of this course is case-based, and provides you with examples of how history, philosophy and social studies of science can serve as analytical tools as well as empirical methodologies to think critically about science in society, and to build a better science and a better future.

## Topic 6 – Monday 16 November

### **Ethics Matters!**

In this session we explore the ethical challenges arising from scientific research. Some challenges will focus on the results of research and the ways in which it is disseminated. Others will concern the process of research itself, and science and society's effort at self-regulation. We will focus on specific case studies, which will be discussed in detail and connected to various conceptual approaches to ethics.

#### *Essential Readings:*

Look up current news on the mission to colonise Mars. Then have a look at the articles below, where people are arguing for and against this mission.

Bharmal, Z. (2018) 'The case against Mars colonisation', *The Guardian*, 28 August. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2018/aug/28/the-case-against-mars-colonisation> (accessed 15 September 2020)

Thompson, D. (2018) 'Is Colonizing Mars the Most Important Project in Human History?', *The Atlantic*, 29 June. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/06/could-colonizing-mars-be-the-most-important-project-in-human-history/564041/> (accessed 15 September 2020)

*Further Readings:*

Stoner, I., 2017. 'Humans Should Not Colonize Mars'. *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 3(3), pp.334–353.

Zubrin, R., 2019. 'Why We Earthlings Should Colonize Mars'. *Theology and Science*, 17(3), pp.305–316.

Billings, L., 2019. 'Should Humans Colonize Mars? No'. *Theology and Science*, 17(3), pp.341–346.

General text on ethics:

Tännsjö, T. (2013) *Understanding Ethics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

## **Topic 7 – Monday 23 November**

### **Toward a More Diverse Science?**

The authority of science has often come at the price of exclusion or subjugation of a number of social groups. Drawing on historical as well as philosophical sources, in this section we explore what science would look like, if it was carried out from the perspective of these underrepresented groups, and if their voices and contributions were taken seriously.

*Essential Reading*

Londa Schiebinger (2009), "West Indian Abortifacients and the Making of Ignorance", in Robert Proctor and Londa Schiebinger (eds), *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 149-162.

*Further Readings*

Tanya Latty (2019), "Hidden Women of History: Maria Sibylla Merian, 17<sup>th</sup> Century Entomologist and Scientific Adventurer", *The Conversation*, 20 February 2020, available at: <https://theconversation.com/hidden-women-of-history-maria-sibylla-merian-17th-century-entomologist-and-scientific-adventurer-112057>

For the full story of the Peacock Flower see chapter 3 of Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*, Cambridge: Mass, Harvard University Press.

The key paper on intersectionality discussed in the lecture is Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available open access at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>

It is a long reading, but it is also a crucial text to understand where intersectionality comes from, and why it really matters in practical contexts.

## Topic 8 – Monday 30 November

### Picturing Science

Scientific knowledge takes many forms, which often comprise a range of visual tools and devices. This lecture explores the role images and other forms of visualisation play in scientists' arguments, how images and visualisation can serve as evidence for scientific claims, and how they participate more broadly in the legitimisation of scientific knowledge.

#### Essential Reading

Lynch, Michael (2015), "Visualisation in Science and Technology", in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), ed. James D Wright, Amsterdam: Elsevier.

#### Further readings

Note: There are a lot of sources on visual culture, and a simple search will allow you to locate a really large literature! A few good texts are:

Annamaria Carusi, Aud Sissel Hoel, Timothy Webmoor and Steve Woolgar, *Visualisation in the Age of Computerisation*. London: Routledge, 2015.

Cateljine Coopmans, Janet Vertesi, Michael Lynch and Steve Woolgar, *Representation in Scientific Practice Revisited*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2014.

[This is the updated edition of Michael Lynch and Steve Woolgar, *Representation in Scientific Practice*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990.

Boris Castel and Sergio Sismondo, *The Art of Science*. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2008.

## Topic 9 – Monday 6 December

### Policy, Experts and Social Change

Scientific knowledge plays an important role in our society, informing all aspects of life, including policy decisions. While we want our policies to be based on scientific evidence, it is not clear what should be the role of scientist in the process. In this session, we are going to look at some case studies (both historical and contemporary) and examine the role of scientists in the political process.

Sözüdoğru, E. (2020) 'Coronavirus: how values drive decisions in science, not data' *The Conversation*, 26 March. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-how-values-drive-decisions-in-science-not-data-134178> )

Sözüdoğru, E. (2020) 'Coronavirus: government advisory groups should include a wider range of experts' *The Conversation*, 13 May. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-government-advisory-groups-should-include-a-wider-range-of-experts-137734> )

Broader theoretical reading:

Millstone, E and van Zwanenberg, P (2003) 'BSE: A Paradigm of Policy Failure' in *The Political Quarterly* Vol.74 no. 1, pp 27-37

In addition, start looking at the following examples of blogs, and compare and contrast their styles (more

examples of blogs are provided in the instructions for Assessment 3):

Nature Blog: <http://blogs.nature.com/>

Our own departmental blog, the STS Observatory: <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/sts-observatory/>

Alice Bell (a former STS graduate who has gone on to a glorious career, first in academia and then in a climate change NGO): <https://alicerosebell.wordpress.com/about/>

Brigitte Nerlich's blog (this link is to an entry on Mary Sommerville):

<http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/makingsciencepublic/2016/12/30/science-communication-mary-somerville/>

Thony Christie's blog (history of science): <https://thonyc.wordpress.com/>

## Lecture 10 – Monday 14 December

### STS and The Meaning of Life

We got to the end of the road. But this is really only the beginning! In this lecture we will discuss what we have learned throughout this module, and where it will take you next.

And of course, who has time for the meaning of life when there is another coursework deadline looming? So yes – in the live sessions we will also discuss the blog assignment, and what it means (practically, conceptually and ethically) to write for a non-academic audience. We will also discuss peer feedback, and how to be a honest and constructive peer reviewer.

#### *Essential Readings*

Read the blog assignment guidelines again, and come to the live sessions prepared with relevant questions. If you can, start reading at least two drafts of blogs written by your peers.

## Important policy information

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Details of college and departmental policies relating to modules and assessments can be found in the STS Student Handbook [www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/handbook](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/handbook)

All students taking modules in the STS department are expected to read these policies.