

HPSC0009 Introduction to History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science

Course Syllabus

2021-22 session | Dr Chiara Ambrosio c.ambrosio@ucl.ac.uk
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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:	https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=7418
Assessment:	Three pieces of coursework: 10% Individual annotated bibliography (referencing skills) 60% - Individual essay (2,500 words) (essay writing/argumentation skills) 30% - blog (500 words) (communication skills)
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 assistants: Santiago Guzmán Gámez, Dario Galvão
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Ambrosio office hours:	Wednesdays 10-12 , on Zoom. Please email me to book an appointment, and I will send you a link.
Sözüdoğru office hours:	Mondays 13-15 , on Zoom. Please email me to book an appointment, and I will send you a link.
Galvão/ Guzmán Gámez office hours:	TBC – these will be posted on moodle.

How this module works

This course is an introduction to History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science, which aims at building **key skills**: reading and studying skills, locating bibliographical sources, referencing, argumentation/critical thinking, and oral and written communication skills. You will need these skills throughout your degree and they will be required in **all** modules in STS – but they will also be useful in your future professional life! Combining content and skill-building, you will have the opportunity to explore the field and acquire foundational concepts and methods to pursue further study in STS.

As the world slowly recovers from COVID (or not?), we are optimistically hoping to bring this course back to campus. Lectures will take place on campus on Mondays 10-11 am (please consult your timetable for the lecture venues). You will also attend one weekly tutorial (also listed on your timetable). However, we will follow the UCL guidance and quickly flip to online lectures and seminars if the situation changes at short notice. UCL has detailed information on its dedicated Coronavirus Information pages: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/coronavirus/>

If you are delayed in your arrival on campus, or if you need attendance adjustments, please email Chiara (c.ambrosio@ucl.ac.uk) as soon as you can, and we will make sure there is a provision in place so you will not stay behind on the course schedule and assignments. Please note that communication on this module is key: we are here to help you, so please email one of us if you have any needs or concerns. The module team also have weekly office hours (see above, please book your slot in advance!), which will give you a further opportunity to ask for help on the course.

Please familiarise yourself with the syllabus and with the Moodle page for this module. Make a note of the deadlines for each of the three assessments (detailed assessment instructions are also on Moodle, in the 'Assessment' tab). You will see that the Moodle page is organised in weekly topics. Each topic contains the activities you are expected to engage in each week. It also contains a list of links with the online resources (readings, videos, forum, additional resources) that we will use in the module.

Each week you are expected to complete the assigned readings (from beginning to end!), attend the lecture and seminars, and consult some additional materials which will help you understand the topic and clarify core concepts. You are also expected to use the UCL Library to locate additional literature that will help you gain a deeper understanding of the topics discussed each week (library skills will also be covered in the lectures and seminars). *It is crucial that you complete the readings and engage in the skill-building activities in the seminars*, as they are specifically aimed at helping you develop studying, referencing, and argumentation skills, build toward each of the three assessments, and discuss the course material and assessment with your peers.

Weekly Schedule

Date	Topic (covered in lectures)	Readings (see reading list below)	Skill-development tasks (covered in tutorials)
4 Oct 2021	Welcome and course overview	Chalmers <u>or</u> Erickson Read syllabus; read Assessment 1 and 2 instructions	<i>Reading a paper, identifying a thesis statement</i>
11 Oct 2021	What Makes a Scientist? The Philosopher's Answer	Medawar; Popper	<i>Critical thinking: how would you write an argument? Exercise: Could you reference better than a Nobel Prize?</i>
18 Oct 2021	What Makes a Scientist? The Historian's Answer	Whewell; Secord	<i>Reading and understanding primary sources; finding sources in the UCL Library and other archives</i>
25 Oct 2021	What Makes a Scientist? The Sociologist's Answer	Gieryn	<i>Analysing and using case studies. Exercise: how to reference, how to format a bibliography Format your references and prepare your presentation</i>
28 Oct 2021	Submit your list of references to your seminar tutor by 12.00 (midday)		
1 Nov 2021	Taking stock: the story so far, assessment criteria and essay troubleshooting	Read assessment 2 instructions, come prepared with questions	<i>2 mins presentations on your sources</i>
1 or 2 Nov 2021	2 minute presentation in your tutorial group		
8-12 Nov 2021	Reading week – No readings, no online classes		
15 Nov 2021	Ethics Matters!	Bharmal; Thompson	<i>Last-minute essay troubleshooting!</i>
24 Nov 2021	Assessment 2 (Essay) due at 5pm		
22 Nov 2021	Toward a More Diverse Science?	Schiebinger	<i>Writing in different registers for different audiences – Compare academic and popular texts</i>
26 Nov 2021	Picturing Science	Lynch	<i>Researching images and writing about them</i>
6 Dec 2021	Policy, Experts and Social Change	Sözüdoğru (2 articles)	<i>Convert your essay into a blog post. Who is your audience?</i>
13 Dec 2021	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>
15 Dec 2021	Assessment 3 (Blog Post) due at 5pm		

Assessments

	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) Skills: referencing; oral communication	12.00 (noon) 28 Oct 2021	n/a
60%	Individual essay Skills: essay writing; argument-building; critical thinking;	5pm, 24 November 2021	2,500 Words
30%	Blog post Skills: written communication skills; writing for a non-academic audience	5pm, 15 December 2021	500 Words

Coursework

All the coursework for this module is tailored around developing *studying, writing, research and argumentation 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 are available on Moodle, in the Assessment section.

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

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

Reading List

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 (3rd 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 (2nd edition).
[This is available electronically through the UCL library]
- Mark Erickson, *Science, Culture and Society: Understanding Science in the 21st Century*. Cambridge, UK; Malden MA.: Polity Press 2016 (2nd 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. However you can access copies in the UCL Library. 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 4 October

Welcome and overview of the course

This session will introduce the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), which comprises History, Philosophy and Social Studies of Science. 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?* 3rd 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 11 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?* 3rd 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/>

If you think, like Medawar, that Popper's philosophy can solve all the problems, a wonderful piece by Charlotte Sleight can give you a critical and historical perspective on some possibly unpleasant consequences of falsificationism:

Charlotte Sleight, “The Abuses of Popper: How Popperian Falsificationism Enabled the Rise of Neoliberalism”, *Aeon*, 16 February 2021, available at <https://aeon.co/essays/how-popperian-falsification-enabled-the-rise-of-neoliberalism>

Highly recommended!

Topic 3 – Monday 18 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. The book is available in hard copy in the UCL library]

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, but you will be able to access a hard copy via the UCL library]

Topic 4 – Monday 25 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 21st 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 1 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.

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. We will focus on three main ethical theories: utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics, and will consider their application to a concrete case study, 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.

This text explains utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics in great detail. It is entirely available electronically via the UCL library. Use it if you are planning to answer the essay question on ethics!

Topic 7 – Monday 22 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, 17th 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 29 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* (2nd 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 Somerville):

<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 13 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

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

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