

# HPSC0036 Engaging the Public with Science

## Course Syllabus

2024-25 session | Prof. Simon Lock & Dr Stephen Hughes

### Course information

This module focuses on the many different ways in which publics engage with science in face-to-face contexts. It also will examine the engagement of specific public groups, such as patient and citizen groups, to engage with scientific and medical research. Students will critically reflect on the theory and context that underpins such activities, making use of models of publics and audiences, rationales for engagement in different contexts, and reflecting on wider policy contexts and historical trends. We will use concepts from social justice theories to help us interrogate power, equity and diversity in public engagement with science settings.

No prerequisites.

Moodle Web site:	Search "HPSC0036"
Assessment:	See moodle
Timetable:	Term 2, Tuesdays 2-4pm.
Prerequisites:	None
Required texts:	See syllabus, library reading list & moodle
Course tutor(s):	Prof. Simon Lock Dr Stephen Hughes PGTA: Nayim Patel
Contact:	simon.lock@ucl.ac.uk, stephen.hughes@ucl.ac.uk
Office location:	Simon Lock: Rm 2.2, 22 Gordon Square Stephen Hughes, Rm 2.4, 22 Gordon Square
Office hours	<b>Simon:</b> Tuesday 11am – 1pm (Drop-in in person or email for online appointment) <b>Stephen:</b> Thursdays 1pm - 3pm. Please email to book an appointment.

## Schedule

UCL	Topic	Date	Preparation Activity
21	Introduction: What are public engagement and science communication and why does power matter? (SH & SL)	14 Jan	Essential readings Practical activities to be agreed in class
22	Key theories and themes in social justice: Pt 1. (ED)	21 Jan	Essential readings Practical activities to be agreed in class
23	Key theories and themes in social justice: Pt 2. (ED)	28 Jan	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
24	Who Decides? Policy Engagement (SL)	4 Feb	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
25	Queering Science Institutions: Museums as Sites of Colonial, Heteronormative, and Classist Power (SL)	11 Feb	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
26	READING WEEK	18 Feb	
27	“Radical Infrastructure for Communal Healing”: Citizen Science and Co-Production (SH)	25 Feb	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
28	Vaccine Hesitancy: Who Should Publics Trust? (SH)	4 Mar	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
29	Trapped in the Matrix: Technoscientific Conspiracy Theories (SH)	11 Mar	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
30	You’re in Denial About Climate Change: The Infinite Power of Emotion (SH)	18 Mar	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
31	Where Does the Power Lie? Engaging Marginalised Groups in Healthcare Research (SL)	25 Mar	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class

## Assessments

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### Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit	Deadline for Tutors to provide Feedback
Coursework	Essay	28 <sup>th</sup> April 2025, 5pm	2500 words (or 3000 for iBSc students only)	4 weeks from due date

### Essay

Each student must write a 2500-word (BSc students) or 3000-word (iBSc students) essay that critically analyses a public engagement case study, drawing on themes of social justice and power, as well as other concepts, ideas, and theories discussed throughout the module and provide relevant insights about that example.

Relevant, here, refers to the kinds of concerns discussed throughout the module (e.g., public trust, queer/decolonial politics, emotional dynamics). For example, an essay might use affect theory to discuss a public engagement case study, but would need to relate how affect theory was applied to the case study to themes of social justice and power.

Students must use concepts and theories from the lectures and course literature to tell us something about the case study (e.g., Ngai's aesthetic theory of the cute demonstrates how the visual culture of co-production situates its participants as diminutive, subordinate, and unthreatening and then relate that aesthetic theory back to social justice and power).

Students must use these insights about the relationship between theory and practice to develop a critically informed position on how we ought to build just relationships between science and society (E.g., it is important to represent the conflicted and uncomfortable realities of co-production that realistically portray imbalances of power without depicting communities as cute or inferior). Critically informed, here, refers to the subtlety, depth, and complexity of your position (e.g., not stating something simple and self-evident like, "science should be inclusive". But rather demonstrating how the combination of theory and example tells us, in a

detailed way, how science needs to be inclusive).

We strongly recommend that students explicitly address how their essay has addressed the following marking criteria (preferably in the conclusion):

- Use concepts and theories from the lectures and course literature to provide relevant insights about the case study
- Use insights about the relationship between theory and case study to develop a critically informed position on how we ought to build just relationships between science and society

## **Course Aims & Learning Objectives**

### **Aims**

This course aims to critically explore how scientists, policymakers, innovators, and a range of public groups build relationships between science, technology, and society, with a focus on power and social justice. It aims to equip students with the skills and theoretical sophistication to critically evaluate existing public engagement activities and using those insights to develop new approaches to engagement that are just, equitable, and impactful for a diverse range of audiences.

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- demonstrate a practical understanding of public engagement with science activities in a range of public contexts and how these relate to social justice themes and theories
- offer analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of practical activity in this area, with an emphasis on social justice.
- understand the historical and policy context within which public engagement has developed in relation to power.
- recognise the needs, priorities and motivations of specific stakeholder communities and be able to work in partnership to develop appropriate, socially just project ideas suitable for those contexts
- evaluate the effectiveness of public engagement processes in particular social contexts including social justice perspectives
- reflect on the purpose, relevance and effectiveness of public engagement in relation to broader social justice themes and theories.

By the end of the course, students should also be able to demonstrate:

- research skills appropriate to post-graduate taught modules
- time and project management, working to tight deadlines
- independence and initiative in project work
- sensitivity and aptitude for working in partnership with wider community groups and/or relevant stakeholders

- effective oral and written communication skills with a wide range of audiences

## Reading list

See weekly lists on Moodle.

## Course Expectations

In addition to submitting assessed material, students are expected to watch all lectures, join all seminar discussions and critically read all essential readings. They are expected to be able to discuss the essential reading each week and be willing to discuss the lecture content.

## 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](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/handbook). All students taking modules in the STS department are expected to read these policies.

## AI/ChatGPT Policy 2024-25

The use of ChatGPT or any other AI platform or tool to generate either ideas or written content, or to produce any other material is prohibited in this module. This aligns with [UCL's Category 1 guidance for students here](#).

This policy is for a number of reasons, many of which we encourage you to explore as part of your time studying science and technology studies, as they are all good case studies in the politics, ethics and cultures of technology in society, and how these intersect with social and environmental justice:

- This class is designed to improve your research and writing skills; if you're not learning how to do research for yourself, think for yourself and write for yourself, you're not developing the skills you came here to learn nor improving them.
- Using AI opens up academic honesty issues, both because it raises the question of whether the work is "your" work, and also because tools like ChatGPT rely on taking uncredited material from scholars and writers mostly without their permission.
- Using AI does not produce reliably accurate results. See [here](#).
- ChatGPT has serious negative environmental impacts, particularly in relation to water usage (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) for more info).
- Open AI has exploited workers from the global south, especially workers in prisons and refugee camps, and workers in Kenya, the Philippines, Colombia, and elsewhere (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) & for more info).

To put it more bluntly: there are thousands of people in the world who would love to be in your position-getting to be a student at a major UK research university with relatively small class sizes and extremely prestigious faculty. Education like this is not available to everyone. Furthermore, someone is paying for you to be here (whether that's yourself, parents/relatives, scholarships/grants, loans, etc).

If you choose to spend this (both incredible and incredibly expensive) opportunity to learn by trying to avoid doing the work and learning through the use of AI tools, you are only cheating yourself-and contributing to environmental harms, copyright infringement and labour exploitation in the process.

For these reasons, the use of ChatGPT or any other AI tools is not a part of this classroom community, no exceptions.