

HPSC0127 Engaging the Public with Science

Course Syllabus

2023-24 session | Dr Stephen Hughes | Dr Simon Lock

Course Information

Conspiracy theories, hype, vaccine hesitancy, and legacies of injustice trouble relationships between scientists and the public. Building better relationships requires sophisticated critical thinking skills and innovative forms of engagement practice. This module will enable students to critically reflect on a range of public engagement activities and to use these insights to develop more effective relationships between scientists and the public. The module will invite students to explore contemporary forms of engagement and communication using academic theories and empirical case studies. Students will investigate how relationships between scientists and the public are shaped by trust, identity, affect, and power, preparing them to design public engagement activities that are inclusive and impactful for a diverse range of audiences.

Basic course information

Moodle Website:	Search "HPSC0127"
Assessment:	Individual: 3000-word essay (100%)
Timetable:	See www.ucl.ac.uk/timetable
Prerequisites:	None
Required texts:	None
Course tutor(s):	Stephen Hughes, Simon Lock Teaching Assistant: Nayim Patel
Contact:	stephen.hughes@ucl.ac.uk simon.lock@ucl.ac.uk
Office location:	Stephen - Room 3.3, 22 Gordon Square Simon – Room 2.2, 22 Gordon Square
Office hours:	Stephen Tuesdays: 12pm – 2pm Simon Tuesdays: 11am – 12pm (In person) Wednesdays: 11am – 12pm (Online)

Schedule

UCL Week	Week Beginning	Topic	Activity
6	2 nd Oct	Introducing Public Engagement	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle
7	9 th Oct	Conflicts, Tensions, Uncertainties: Public Engagement is a Relationship	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle
8	16 th Oct	Who Decides? Policy Engagement	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle
9	23 rd Oct	Queering Science Institutions: Museums as Sites of Colonial, Heteronormative, and Classist Power	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle
10	30 th Oct	“Radical Infrastructure for Communal Healing”: Citizen Science and Co-Production	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle
11	6 th Nov	Reading week	READDDDDDDDDDD
12	13 th Nov	Energising Engagement: Energy Participation, Energy Democracy, and Energy Communities	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle
13	20 th Nov	Vaccine Hesitancy: Who Should Publics Trust?	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle
14	27 th Nov	Trapped in the Matrix: Technoscientific Conspiracy Theories	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle
15	4 th Dec	You’re in Denial About Climate Change: The Infinite Power of Emotion	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle
16	11 th Dec	Where Does the Power Lie? Engaging Marginalised Groups in Healthcare Research	Lecture and seminar discussion. Reading and activities on Moodle.
Essay Due 9th January, 5pm			

Assessments

%	Description	Deadline	Word limit
100%	Essay	9 th Jan, 5pm	3000 words

Essay

Each student must write a 3000-word essay which critically analyses a public engagement case study, drawing from the concepts, ideas, and theories discussed throughout the module.

Students must choose an example of a technology or piece of scientific research that publics are engaged with and use concepts and theories from the lectures and course literature to 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).

Students must use the practical example to tell us something new about the theories/ideas (e.g., bottom-up citizen science projects help us think about what is possible in new ways).

Students must use insights about the relationship between theory and practice to develop a nuanced position on how we ought to build relationships between scientists, engineers, innovators, policymakers, and a range of public groups. Nuanced, 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 tell 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 the case study to provide novel insights about the theory or concept
- Use insights about the relationship between theory and case study to develop a nuanced position on how we ought to build relationships between science and society

Marking criteria for the essay are available on Moodle.

Generative AI Statement

Students are permitted to use AI tools for:

- Drafting ideas and planning or structuring written materials
- Reviewing and critically analysing written materials to assess their validity
- Helping to improve your grammar and writing structure – especially helpful if English is a second language
- Experimenting with different writing styles
- Getting explanations

Students are **not** permitted to use AI tools for:

- Writing the entire essay or large chunks of an essay (e.g., more than a few sentences). Any use of AI must be documented (see below).

Students **must** correctly document their use of AI tools so that it can be appropriately acknowledged. Please see the library's guidance, here - <https://library-guides.ucl.ac.uk/referencing-plagiarism/acknowledging-AI>

Please be aware that you are responsible for ensuring that the assessment that you submit correctly references the use of other people's ideas and work. If you submit AI generated text that has used the work of human authors and it is not appropriately referenced, this may count as academic misconduct.

For further information on using AI in your assessments, please visit - <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/exams-and-assessments/assessment-success-guide/engaging-ai-your-education-and-assessment>

Course Aims and 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. 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
- offer analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of practical activity in this area.
- understand the historical and policy context within which public engagement has developed
- recognise the needs, priorities and motivations of specific stakeholder communities and be able to work in partnership to develop appropriate project ideas suitable for those contexts
- evaluate the effectiveness of public engagement processes in particular social contexts
- reflect on the purpose, relevance and effectiveness of public engagement.

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