

HPSC0127 Public Engagement for Social Justice

Course Syllabus

2024-25 session | Profs. Emily Dawson & 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, familiarity with relevant themes and theories of social justice 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, more just, equitable and inclusive relationships between scientists and the public. The module will invite students to explore contemporary forms of engagement and communication using academic theories, including those specific to theories of social justice, 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.

Moodle Web site:	Search "HPSC0127"
Assessment:	See moodle
Timetable:	Term 1, Tuesdays 2-4pm.
Prerequisites:	None
Required texts:	See syllabus, library reading list & moodle
Course tutor(s):	Prof. Emily Dawson Prof. Simon Lock PGTA: Davy Tennison
Contact:	Simon.lock@ucl.ac.uk , STS-DoR@ucl.ac.uk
Office location:	Simon Lock: Rm 2.2, 22 Gordon Square Emily Dawson: TBC
Office hours	Emily: Thursdays 2-4 (term time only) Simon: Tuesday 11-1 (term time only)

Schedule

UCL	Topic	Date	Preparation Activity
6	Introduction: What are public engagement and science communication and why does power matter? (ED & SL)	1.10.24	Essential readings Practical activities to be agreed in class
7	Key theories and themes in social justice: Pt 1. (ED)	8.10.24	Essential readings Practical activities to be agreed in class
8	Key theories and themes in social justice: Pt 2. (ED)	15.10.24	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
9	Who Decides? Policy Engagement (SL)	22.10.24	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
10	Queering Science Institutions: Museums as Sites of Colonial, Heteronormative, and Classist Power (SL)	29.10.24	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
11	READING WEEK	5.11.24	
12	"Radical Infrastructure for Communal Healing": Citizen Science and Co-Production (SL)	12.11.24	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
13	Vaccine Hesitancy: Who Should Publics Trust? (SL)	19.11.24	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
14	Trapped in the Matrix: Technoscientific Conspiracy Theories (SH)	26.11.24	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
15	You're in Denial About Climate Change: The Infinite Power of Emotion (SH)	3.12.24	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class
16	Where Does the Power Lie? Engaging Marginalised Groups in Healthcare Research (SL)	10.12.24	Essential readings Practical activity to be agreed in class

Assessments

Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit	Deadline for Tutors to provide Feedback
Coursework	Essay	6 th January, 5pm	3000 words	4 weeks from due date

Essay

Each student must write a 3000-word 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 also use the case study to tell us something about the theory (e.g., representations of co-production imagine diversity without difference, collapsing different identities into the category of the cute).

Students must use these insights about the relationship between theory and practice to develop a nuanced 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). 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 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 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 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. 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.