Course Description:

This core seminar is designed to introduce graduate students to key themes, issues, and scholarship in the trans-disciplinary field of science and technology studies. We will draw from scholarship in the sociology, anthropology, history, and philosophy of science, as well as cultural and feminist studies, to explore how different disciplinary perspectives have contributed to the development of science studies and the ways in which this interdisciplinary field has in turn reshaped the questions, methods, and theoretical approaches within particular fields.

Centered around the production, consumption, and epistemologies of science, technology, and medicine, the readings for this seminar range from classics to new directions, highlighting important topics and themes such as realism/relativism, nature/culture, materiality, sex/gender, and race. The readings, themes, and topics have been chosen to place different theoretical and methodological approaches in dialogue with one another. In doing so, we hope that students in the seminar will gain a better critical understanding and appreciation of the commonalities and productive tensions across the trans-disciplinary playing field of science and technology studies.

At the end of the last century (mid-1970s-2000), social studies of science seriously attempted to tackle the problem of the social and cultural production of technoscience. Despite that language, the understanding was that the materiality of nature was also being used to produce particular kinds of societies. Today, we speak of the production of “natureculture” and the co-production of science and society, in order to be clearer about co-production of nature, science, and society. In this vein, we will examine science as practice, work, and culture. We will study the processes by which scientific knowledge and technological artifacts are produced, the organization of scientific work, and the socio-economic contexts (both local and global) within which scientific problems are formulated and solutions/technologies developed. We will also study the ways in which “nature” is deployed for particular socio-cultural agendas.

In the more recent period, social studies of science has turned towards studying the consumption of science, public participation in science, and the role of government in science—topics that dominated science studies in the 1960s and 1970s in the post-Cold War period and before the turn towards studying the production of science. Postcolonial
Studies of science is a new addition to these 21st century concerns. We will examine these rebirths and compare them with studies of the earlier period.

This is fundamentally a survey course. It will help you to prepare for qualifying exams and to teach in the field. However, our primary aim is to introduce you briefly to major works in the field so that you may then develop your own research interests.

This seminar is a required course for any graduate student interested in pursuing the new Ph.D. minor in Science and Technology Studies. For more information on this, please consult with me.

Course Readings:

The readings will include key STS articles/chapters and books. The articles and chapters will be available online in the Social Science Reference Library’s online reserves.

The following book is required and easily available through online book vendors in new and used formats. You will also be able to find used copies of *Laboratory Life* in our local bookstores:


I will recommend other books as we go along in the course, but only to help develop your own reading and research interests. You will not be required to purchase any of them.

Course Requirements:

In-class discussion (30%): This seminar is primarily designed as a reading/discussion seminar. This means that you are responsible for coming to class having read and reflected on the material and prepared to discuss the chapters and articles at length. Each of you will also be responsible for organizing and leading discussion of the reading for two weeks. This will mean pairing up with another person, preferably from another department, in the seminar.

Analytic Reading Memos (7 x 10%): To help facilitate discussion, as well as develop your analytic and writing skills, you will be asked to prepare a three- to four-page (double-spaced) essay that highlights and analyzes the main themes of the readings, and raises questions, critical concerns, and any reflective comments you might have. You will write essays for ten of the weeks/topics. You can choose whichever weeks you want, and the first three assignments will not be graded, but will be returned with comments so that you have an opportunity to improve upon your analysis and writing. These essays are due the day of class when the readings will be discussed.

Research Paper Option: You are welcome to replace the required analytic reading memos with a research paper, a research grant proposal, or a dissertation proposal that
fits within the frame of science and technology studies and preferably uses at least some of the readings in this course. However, you will still have to write analytical reading memos for the weeks/topics on which you present. (This is primarily to aid your presentation preparation.)

**Topics and Schedule of Readings:**

**Meeting 1:** HISTORY OF STS AND OVERVIEWS OF EARLY SOCIAL STUDIES OF SCIENCE


**Meeting 2:** CLASSICS FROM AN EARLIER ERA: DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON SCIENCE AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE


Highly recommended:


**Meeting 3:** SCIENCE AS SOCIAL INTEREST: SOCIOLOGY OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE (SSK) AND THE RELATIVIST PROGRAMME


Recommended:


Meeting 4: SCIENCE AS POLITICS: ACTOR NETWORK THEORY (ANT) AND BEYOND


Recommended:


**Meeting 5: STUDYING THE PRODUCTION OF SCIENCE TO LEARN ABOUT THE PRODUCTION OF SOCIETY: ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL SCIENCE STUDIES**


**Meeting 6: SCIENCE AS PRACTICE, WORK AND ORGANIZATION: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM**


Recommended:


Meeting 7: SCIENCE AS EPISTEMIC CULTURES OR SYMBOLIC CULTURES


Meeting 8: FEMINIST STUDIES OF SCIENCE


Meeting 9: RACE AND SCIENCE


Meeting 10: POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES OF SCIENCE OR TRANSNATIONAL SCIENCE


Meeting 11: ECOLOGIES OF HUMANS, ANIMALS, PLANTS


Meeting 12: SCIENCE, GOVERNMENT, AND POLICY


Meeting 13: INTERNET AND SOCIETY

Guest speaker: Cabell Gathman

