HSCI 5533
GLOBAL CIRCULATIONS:
EXPLORING THE MEANING
OF PLACE IN THE HISTORY
OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY

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Course Description
We will explore the historiography of modern science and technology through the lens of
global circulations, with a particular interest in examining the importance of place for
understanding the history of science and technology. How have conceptions about the
universal and the local shaped the ways historians have understood science? What practices,
assumptions, and desires motivate the movement of scientific and technological practices and
artifacts around the world, and how do these change over time? Should we question the
common assumption that the character of modern science and technology is
unproblematically “Western”? How might such a challenge revise traditional narratives in the
history of science and technology?

Readings
Readings will be available on reserve in either Bizzell or the History of Science Collections
(in the event that entire, or substantial portions of books are assigned) or on D2L (for articles,
or shorter chapter excerpts.) Please make a serious effort to PLAN AHEAD and make sure
you have the reading you need in plenty of time.

Assignments and Grading
Please note: I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE ASSIGNMENTS. Anything arriving after the due
date and time will be viewed as not completed. All assignments should be submitted to the
appropriate dropbox on D2L.
(1) 10% of grade: Each week, students will provide by the start of class time one of two brief writing assignments:

- A one-page summary of the key arguments and crucial findings of one major reading for the week (i.e. a reading of more than 100 pp.)

- OR -

- A one page discussion of key points of intellectual connection between several of the assigned readings

(2) 20% of grade: For the week of Oct 14, when there will be no class, I would like students to read one of the suggested readings, or a reading of their choice that connects to the subjects covered in this class (approved by me), and write a book review. This review should be roughly 1000 words. This will be due Oct. 21 before the start of class.

(3) 70% of grade: The major project of the semester is a critical, historiographic research essay, 20-25 pp. on a topic of your choice (but approved) that is relevant to the course.

Class organization

As is usual in graduate courses, this will be a seminar. Students are expected to come to class with the readings fully prepared for discussion. This means preparing not just a summary of the readings (which you will do in writing), but also a few critical remarks/questions/observations for each reading (these can be raised in discussion, and need not be written up formally). What are the most important findings, or the issues of significant value raised by the author(s)? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each study? What methodological issues are raised? How does this work connect to other literature in the field? If multiple readings are assigned, it might be useful to compare the approaches of the authors, when appropriate. Each week, one or two students will prepare some questions to lead the discussion.

Attendance, Swine Flu, and the Possibility of Disaster

Graduate courses need to be viewed as professional obligations. Graduate students are expected to attend class every week, without fail, and to be prepared every week, without fail. However, I don’t think that you should attend class if, for example, you have swine flu. Or if you are attending a professional conference. Or other reasonable, but unusual occurrences. Please give me notice if one of these, or some other very serious issue prevents you from being in class. Otherwise, please plan your life such that you minimize the possibility of disaster.
Class Meetings

8/26: Organizational Meeting

9/2 Considering the Importance of Place in the History of Science and Technology

9/9 Challenging the Geographies of the Scientific Revolution

9/16 What is Science? Indigeneity and the Needham Question
Francesca Bray, “Technics and Civilization in Late Imperial China: An Essay in the Cultural History of Technology.”, *OSIRIS* 13, 11-33.

9/23 Indigeneity and Local Knowledge
Alix Cooper, *Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe*, 1-50.

9/30 The problem of colonialism: circulation and location
George Basalla, “The Spread of Western Science”, *Science* 156, no. 3775, 611-22

10/7 Material cultures of modern technoscience: How has science become universal?

10/14 No class Choose a book from suggested readings, or a book of your own choice on a topic relevant to the course, and write a review.

10/21 An Introduction to the History of Technology


10/28 The problem of “technology transfer”


11/4 Culture, Technology, Modernity


11/11 Mechanisms and Media


11/18 Considering the Global: viewing the world.

*Global Power Knowledge: Science and Technology in International Affairs*, OSIRIS 21. Choose three articles.

12/2 Research Workshop (to be continued 12/9 if necessary)