Science & Global Politics in the Modern Era: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Understanding the historical roots and contemporary challenges of issues where science and politics intersect -- matters such as climate change, public health, biotechnology, social media and more -- have ramifications not only for individual societies, but internationally. Governments are under constant pressure to decide what to fund or favor in scientific and technological policy decisions, and individual citizens live with the ramifications of these decisions for generations. The food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the machines we work with, the systems within which we are enmeshed, how we are born, have sex, live, and die: all of these individual and collective actions are part of a larger web in which science, technology, and politics play a role. And in an increasingly interconnected world, the decisions of one nation have implications across the family of nations.

These global dynamics are further impacted by the often conflicting needs and goals of non-Western nations as compared to those of the West in matters of science and technology. This course approaches questions about the global politics of science and technology from within a comparative framework, encouraging students to develop an international perspective on this topic, for both western and non-western nations. In addition to this comparative framework, this course is interdisciplinary in nature, placing historical study of these issues directly into dialogue with sociology, political science, anthropology, and philosophy in the very nature of the subject matter of the course itself, by taking up issues of value, culture, politics, ethics, and social norms.

The course readings will use case studies to facilitate this comparative and interdisciplinary framework, lectures will provide important connective and background material, internet assignments will provide contemporary focus on our subject matter as well as exploration of new modes of creating and sharing knowledge, and class discussions will allow students to build analytical perspectives by bringing together their own diverse interpretations. The final project, in the form of an 8-10 page research and analysis paper, offers students the opportunity to pursue a theme that both builds on the semester’s work while also reflecting their own interests.

Books

*Science, Policy, and the Value-Free Ideal* / Heather Douglas  
*The Firecracker Boys: H-Bombs, Inupiat Eskimos & the Roots of the Environmental Movement* / Dan O’Neill  
*Contagion & Chaos: Disease, Ecology and National Security in the Era of Globalization* / Andrew Price-Smith  
*Seeds, Science and Struggle: The Global Politics of Transgenic Crops* / Abby Kinchy  
*Cached: Decoding the Internet in Global Popular Culture* / Stephanie Ricker Schulte
Rules of the Road

**Attendance:** Attendance is required. 3 unexcused absences are allowed for lecture; missed classes beyond this will result in your grade being lowered by 5% increments. If you need to miss class for an illness serious enough to merit a trip to the doctor, a family emergency, etc., please contact the instructor.

**Academic Misconduct:** Cheating will not be tolerated. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying the work of another student, using the written work of another author without attribution, or any conduct that seeks to compromise the examination process. Such conduct will result in an automatic F on that examination and the student may be referred to the Dean for disciplinary action.

**Due Dates:** Exams will not be accepted if turned in late, and will be graded F. (This requirement will be waived only in the case of a medical or family emergency. To the extent possible, permission should be sought before the due date.)

**Religious Holidays:** Student absences due to religious observances are excused. Please see me in advance to reschedule any work without penalty that may fall on religious holidays.

**Students with Disabilities:** Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible, so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure your full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities.

**Grading Scale:** The letter grades for this course conform to a 4 point scale, as follows:

- 4.0-3.5 = A (A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, A-/B+ =3.5)
- 3.49-2.5 = B (B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, B- = 2.7, B-/C+ =2.5)
- 2.49-1.5 = C (C+ = 2.3, C = 2.0, C- = 1.7, C-/D+ =1.5)
- 1.49-0.5 = D (D+ = 1.3, D = 1.0, D- = 0.7)
- 0.49 and below = F