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Office hours: Tuesdays 4-6pm in Barrows Hall 474. Please sign up ahead of time.

Soc 190. Sociology of Knowledge, Science & Expertise  
Spring 2011  
Tuesday 10-12PM, 80 Barrows

This class will introduce students to topics in the sociology of knowledge, expertise, science and technology. We will begin with an examination of the social origins of knowledge: how do we know what we know, and how do we conceptualize and categorize the world around us? We will then address the question of truth and authority claims: how do we know that what we know is “true”? Who decides, and by which methods? How do knowledge claims compete with one another, particularly in highly contentious domains, like medicine or the law? Finally, we will investigate the political underpinnings of the knowledge order through an analysis of democratic and market struggles around knowledge and expertise, as well as the never-ending remaking of other people’s truths through the international circulation of categories, tools and experts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>Counts for</th>
<th>Due on</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay version #1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>February 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam (in class)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>March 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay version #2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>April 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two presentations (on readings, on own topic)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>January 25-April 26, May 3</td>
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<td>Final version of essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>May 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class attendance and participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>January 25-May 3</td>
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COURSE MATERIAL
All the course readings have been posted on bSpace as pdf documents or can be accessed through this syllabus by clicking on the hyperlinks. I have also arranged for Copy Central (2560 Bancroft Way) to prepare a reader, so you can also get it there and not worry about it for the rest of the semester.
ESSAYS / PRESENTATION
Version 1: Pick an empirical topic of your choice, dealing with questions of knowledge & expertise. Explain your case in depth, discuss the empirical puzzle you’re interested in and why this reader should care. No more than 5, double-spaced pages.
Version 2: Develop an analytical perspective on your case, using existing scholarship (including the literature read in this course). No more than 5, double-spaced pages.
Version 3. Final version integrating the two (no more than 15, double-spaced pages), complete with a fully developed argument, a proper analytical structure with substantive titles & subtitles, and a reference list. Please supply all three versions of your paper, including my comments on #1 and #2. You will be asked to give a 5 minutes oral presentation about your paper during the last class meeting (RRR week).

MIDTERM EXAM
This exam will be a mix of essay-type and short answer questions about the class material. This is closed-book test, which means you cannot use notes or electronics (this policy includes cell phones and MP3 players).

IN CLASS PRESENTATIONS
1. You will be asked to give a short presentation on the readings at one point during the semester. Please send a one-page memo by 8:00 pm the night before class (Monday).
2. You will also present your own work during the last class meeting (RRR week).
INTRODUCTION – January 18

PART I. THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

Commonsense and The Social Determination of Knowledge (I) – January 25


Recommended


Commonsense and The Social Determination of Knowledge (II) – February 1


Recommended


Categories and Classification – February 8 and 15


Recommended


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Essay # 1 due –February 15 in class

PART II. COMPETENCE, TRUTH, OBJECTIVITY: CREDIBILITY INSTITUTIONS

Competence & skill –February 22


Recommended


**Objectivity** – March 1


Recommended


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**Midterm exam** – March 8 in class

**Numbers** – March 15


Recommended


Spring break: No class — March 22

PART III. KNOWLEDGE, SCIENCE AND EXPERTISE AS POLITICS.

Social Struggles and the Assertion of Authority within Fields – March 29


Recommended


Knowledge and Democracy – April 5


Recommended


The Commodification of Knowledge and Science –April 12


Recommended


Knowledge and Domination –April 19


Recommended


Conclusion & Review –April 26.

Individual presentations on final essay –May 3

Final essay due –May 3 in class.