Comm 4660/STS 4661: 
Public Communication of Science & Technology 
Spring 2021

This syllabus (including any updates) is also available through Cornell’s Canvas site  
This version updated: 4 Feb 2021

Professor
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Office hours
Tuesday, 1:00-3:00 via Zoom.
Make appointments via: https://bruce-lewenstein.youcanbook.me/

Class time and location
Tues & Thurs, 8:05-9:20 am
Via Canvas/Zoom

Course description
Our broad topic is "public communication of science and technology" (PCST); this semester, our specific topic will be science and culture – how can we understand science as a part of the public culture around it? What do popular science toys tell us about childhood? Where do science museums fit in family culture? What kinds of images appear on television or in movies or in cartoons? What do celebrity scientists tell us about celebrity in the modern world? We’ll be exploring the meaning of science in today’s culture – or do I mean the meaning of today’s culture when viewed through science?

The course objectives are:
● To learn about various points of intersection of science and public culture in the last 100 years or so (mostly in the United States, but some excursions further afield)
● To learn to read, analyze, and critique scholarly literature (about science and culture)
● To learn to write scholarly analyses of science and culture

This will be a seminar course. That means that everyone does the reading and everyone comes to (virtual) class prepared to explore the readings. To "explore the readings" means you've read the texts, you've thought about them, and you're ready to see where the arguments lead. It also means you've identified inconsistencies or problems with the logic and are ready to tear the text apart. You will usually find material that is intellectually challenging: it may require multiple readings to make sense, or it may challenge beliefs you already have (even though you may not have known that you have them). You will be expected to justify your reactions to the texts with specific references to the texts or, when relevant, to other texts.
For most class sessions, one or two of you will lead the discussion. The leader(s) will come to the Zoom room with a specific set of questions raised by the readings. Those questions may emerge from the content of the reading, or they may question the logic or approach taken by the author(s). Discussion leaders will circulate the questions the day before class, via Canvas.

**Readings**
All readings should be done before the week begins (that is, before Tuesday’s class – actually, by Sunday would be good, so you can make better contributions to class discussion board – see below). Most readings will be posted online (with direct links to publications, links through the Cornell library system, and occasionally to scanned copies of material not available online). Some readings will involve you exploring a set of links online.

**Grades**
About 30% of your grade will depend on class participation, Canvas discussion board/reading response participation, and your activity as a discussion leader; 40% on short during-the-semester papers (you can drop the lowest score); and the remaining 30% will depend on your final paper.

**Assignments**
1. Each week, post a short (less than one page) response to the readings on the Canvas discussion site. I also encourage you to respond to the postings of other students, so that we have discussion going on throughout the week – more online engagement counts towards "class participation." You may skip up to 3 weeks and still receive full credit.
2. Short papers
   a. 12 February: What do you think science communication is? (1-2 paragraphs)
   b. 2 March: Science museum visit reflection (1 page)
   c. 23 March: Science in culture analysis (1-2 pages)
   d. 8 April: Movie review (1-2 pages)
   e. 29 April: Book review (1-2 pages)
3. Final paper
   a. ~20 April: Paper proposal (1 page)
   b. 4 May: Draft paper (10-15 pages)
   c. Finals week (19-25 May – exact date TBD): Final paper (revised 10-15 pages)

**Note:** The next few sections of this syllabus look like boilerplate. But they’re not. Reading and understanding them is critical to success in this course and in your overall education. Please let me know if you have any questions.

**Academic integrity**
Academic integrity is crucial to your personal scholarly identity. Your rights and responsibilities in this area are outlined in the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity: [https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/academic-integrity/](https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/academic-integrity/).
Violations of the code of conduct include but are not limited to:

- Submitting work in this class that has also been submitted for a grade in another course without prior permission of both instructors.
- Using, obtaining, or providing unauthorized assistance on examinations, papers, or any other academic work.
- Misrepresenting another person's work as your own (including but not limited to purchased term papers and plagiarism).

You are responsible for obeying the Code of Academic Integrity. Ignorance of the code is not an excuse.

The most common problem for many students is plagiarism, which will not be tolerated and will be sanctioned, up to and including failure of the course. Students from cultures outside the United States should be especially aware that American standards of acknowledgement and use of material prepared by others (including one's professors) can be much different than those in other cultures. More information about plagiarism is available at http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm.

To address issues of academic integrity, we will use the Turnitin system for most formal assignments. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

If you have any questions about how to interpret Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity in the context of assignments or activities in this class (especially any that involve collaboration with your colleagues), please feel free to contact the instructor or the University Ombudsman.

Students with special circumstances
Cornell University (as an institution) and I (as a human being and instructor of this course) are committed to full inclusion in education for all persons. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to students with temporary and permanent disabilities, to students with DACA or undocumented status, to students facing mental health issues, to students with other personal situations (such as family emergencies or religious observances), and to students with other kinds of learning needs. Please feel free to let me know if there are circumstances affecting your ability to participate in class. Some resources that might be of use include:

- Office of Student Disability Services, https://sds.cornell.edu/
- Cornell Health (Mental Health Care), https://health.cornell.edu/services/counseling-psychiatry
- Undocumented/DACA Student Support, https://scl.cornell.edu/identity-resources/undocumented-daca-support
- Learning Strategies Center, http://lsc.cornell.edu/
I would be glad to help you identify other resources if needed.

**Equity and Justice**
Students enrolled in this course represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives that are unique and valuable. I am committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that is inclusive, respects diversity, and promotes equity and justice. We will treat students of all backgrounds including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, immigration status, religion, and political ideology fairly and with honesty, integrity, and respect. While working together to build a supportive and inclusive learning environment in this course, I ask everyone to:

- Share their unique experiences, values and beliefs.
- Be open to the views of others.
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.
- Appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community.
- Value each other’s opinions and communicate in a respectful manner.

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<th>Again: Let me know if you have any questions, if you'd like to discuss any of these issues, or if you're curious why I emphasize them so much.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Now, on to the details of our daily work!</td>
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Course plan

Note: Many of the links to readings require access to the Cornell University library. If you are not on the campus network, use one of the world’s great Cornell library inventions: Passkey. https://www.library.cornell.edu/services/apps/passkey.

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<tr>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9 Feb 11 Feb</td>
<td>Intro: Science and Culture</td>
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<td>DUE, Friday, 12 February, 5:00 pm: Brief reflection on science and public culture</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>16 Feb 18 Feb</td>
<td>Science and culture</td>
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<td>• Kirby, David A. (2019). <em>Knowledge Production Between Popular Culture and Scientific Culture</em>. In A. Görgen, G. A. Nunez, &amp; H. Fangerau (Eds.), <em>Handbook of Popular Culture and Biomedicine: Knowledge in the Life Sciences as Cultural Artefact</em> (pp. 15-23). Cham: Springer International Publishing. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90677-5_2">https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90677-5_2</a> [Cornell library access]</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>23 Feb 25 Feb</td>
<td>How to analyze science and culture</td>
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| 4 | 2 Mar | **Science, culture, and communication**  
   |   | http://thescienceandentertainmentlab.com/bluegrass-beards-tattoos-and-stem-cells/ [Optional: If you're interested in watching the movie, I found it on the Roku Channel and possibly Amazon Prime]  
   |   | DUE, Tuesday, 2 March, 5:00 pm: Science museum (virtual) visit reflection |
| 5 | 9 Mar | **Science in culture: Museums and literature**  
   | 11 Mar |   | NOTE: No class on Tuesday, 9 March: Wellness day (as is 10 Mar)  
| 6 | 16 Mar | **Science in culture: Amateurs**  
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>23 Mar</td>
<td><strong>Science in Culture: Movies</strong></td>
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  DUE, Thursday, 25 March, 5:00 pm: Science in culture analysis (short paper) |
| 8    | 30 Mar | **Science in Culture: Television** |  
  NOTE: No class on Thursday, April 1st …APRIL FOOLS! (Yes, we will have class.) |
### Science in culture: The Internet

- Landrum, Ashley R., & Olshansky, Alex. (2020). Third-Person Perceptions and Calls for Censorship of Flat Earth Videos on YouTube. *Media and Communication*, 8(2), online only. [link](https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i2.2853)

#### DUE, Thursday, 8 April, 5:00 pm: Movie review (short paper)

### Science in culture: Humor

- Stemwedel, J. D. (2013). #Overlyhonestmethods: Ethical implications when scientists joke with each other on public social media. In J. Goodwin, M. F. Dahlstrom, & S. Priest (Eds.), *Ethical issues in science communication: A theory-based approach* (pp. 287-298). Charleston, SC: CreateSpace. [on Canvas](https://www.library.cornell.edu/)

#### Some experiment reports


#### Let’s also make a list of shows to watch -- several of John Oliver’s come to mind.

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<th>References</th>
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|   | 22 Apr       | • Besley, John C., Hardy, Bruce W., Tallapragada, Meghnaa, & Yuan, Shupei. (2019, 11 January). Calling it a 'war on science' has consequences. The Conversation. [https://theconversation.com/calling-it-a-war-on-science-has-consequences-108302](https://theconversation.com/calling-it-a-war-on-science-has-consequences-108302)]
|   |              | **DUE, ~20 April: Final paper proposal**   |                                                                            |
|   |              | **NOTE:** 23 April, 26 April are wellness days |                                                                            |
|   |              | • And some short pieces about science communication and #MeToo  |
|   |              | **DUE, Thursday, 29 April, 5:00 pm: Book review** |                                                                            |
### 13 May

**Science and visual culture**

DUE, Tuesday, 4 May, 5:00 pm: Draft final paper

### 14 May

**11 May**

**13 May**

**Science and...YOUR culture**
- TBD
- Consider: [http://guerillascience.org/](http://guerillascience.org/)

### Finals

**19-25 May**

DUE: Final paper due at time specified for this course