

The Politics of Science and Expertise

Fall 2024

Casey Petroff
Syllabus Version 2.0

This course investigates the development of modern science through the lens of political economy theory and methods. Questions we will address include:

Is science different from other kinds of scholarship, and if so, how? What are the “rules of science”?

What are the historical origins of modern science, and to what extent can progress be attributed to scientific culture?

Under what circumstances should the public trust science?

How did politics affect the scientific response to the COVID-19 pandemic around the world?

There are no prerequisites for this class, which is worth four credits towards a degree requirement.

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:05 AM – 12:20 PM, Morey 502

First day of class: Thursday, Aug. 27th

Last day of class: Tuesday, Dec. 5th

No class on

- Thursday, September 5th
- Thursday, October 3rd
- Tuesday, Oct. 15th
- Thursday, Nov. 28th

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Harkness Hall 322

I try my best to answer all student emails within a 24

See Attendance Policy above.

Reading assignments take place collaboratively using the Perusall platform. This platform allows you to make comments that are visible to other students and respond to one another. Grades reflect the quantity of comments, the quality of comments, the substance of your questions, and helpfulness to your colleagues (i.e., answering questions posed by others). Just posting annotations summarizing the article is not enough to get credit – you should be critically engaging with the work (perhaps including why you disagree with it!). The window for contributing on Perusall closes at 5pm the Monday of the week on which readings are discussed.

At the beginning of the course, I will circulate a sign-up sheet for reading presentations. You will select one or more readings (depending on class size) throughout the semester for which you will create a ~10 minute presentation for the beginning of class (depending on class size, this may be collaborative with another student). Your presentation should summarize the reading but, just as importantly, critique it. Additional details will be posted on Blackboard. Presentation materials (i.e., any slides, etc.) are due to me Monday at 5pm the week of your presentation (whether you present on Tuesday or Thursday); I can use my laptop to project them in class.

You will collaborate with one or more of your peers (depending on class size) in a group project; details will be announced later.

For Writing Section Students:

If you elect to join the writing section, you will write one 6-10 page paper (topic announced later). Requirements related to the writing section will be scaled to make up 20% of your

Aug. 26 th	Class introduction: syllabus, expectations, etc. Defining science; positive vs. normative research	Perusall demo (optional) + academic honesty engagement (due Monday)
Sept. 2 nd	Cognition, biases, and models	<i>Why Trust Science?</i> (Oreskes 2019)
Sept. 9 th	The historical origins of modern science – part I (natural philosophers and the Golden Age of Islamic Science)	<i>Lost Enlightenment</i> (Starr 2013) <i>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</i> (Kuhn 1970)
Sept. 16 th	The historical origins of modern science – part II (t	

Oct. 14 th	Misincentives II: Should we do anything about it?	"Race to the Bottom" (Hill and Stein 2024) "I'm so sorry for psychology's loss, whatever it is" (Mastroanni 2023)
Oct. 21 st		