Sociology of Science

Last Updated: Wed, 11/19/2025

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 3082

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
34993

Instructor First Name: Andrew

Instructor Last Name: Buskell

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

How do scientists establish scientific *facts*? What is the nature of scientific authority? And just who are these scientists in the first place? If scientists are just like you and me, how do their positions in society, their politics, and their culture shape their scientific work — and how does their work shape society, politics, and culture in return?

This course introduces you to the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), a methodologically diverse and interdisciplinary approach to understanding connections between the production of knowledge, the innovation of technology, and the conflicting values and demands of social life. Through case studies drawn from historical and contemporary science, you will learn key STS concepts and theories, apply novel methods, and develop skills for ethically navigating your own scientific career.

Course learning outcomes:

The central aims of this course are to develop:

1. **Course specific knowledge,** i.e. to:
    1. Identify accounts of scientific change and the growth of scientific knowledge and to explain how different accounts understand the activity of science and scientists.
    2. Illustrate key theories, concepts, case studies in the science and technology studies literature and to examine how these apply to ongoing issues in scientific work.
2. **Research skills and techniques,** i.e. to**:**

    1. Summarize social scientific methods (e.g. ethnography and interviewing), diagnose when and where such methods are appropriate, and evaluate efforts at applying them.
    2. Assess secondary source material; notably, to critically appraise key arguments and ideas in support of general literature reviews
    3. Design, plan, and construct research papers, lab books, and reports that incorporate STS concepts, cases, and real-world evidence.
3. **Critical reasoning skills as they are applied to the sociology of science,** i.e. to:
    1. Appraise and assess accounts of how power, identity, and politics shape the development of scientific knowledge, technical artefacts, and infrastructure.
    2. Survey and critique claims of scientific progress and to assess the authority of scientific and technical experts
4. **Ethical skills for navigating the production of scientific work,** i.e. to:
    1. Describe everyday writing practices of scientists (record-keeping, publishing, citing, grant-seeking), identify areas of ethical concern, and devise solutions and policies to address these areas of concern.

Required course materials:

All course materials will be available through Canvas. Optional texts that complement this course include:

1. Sismondo, Sergio. 2010. *An Introduction to Science and Technology Studies*. 2nd ed. Blackwell.
2. Latour, Bruno. 1987. *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society.* Harvard University Press.

Grading policy:

A: 90–100

B: 80–89.5

C: 70–79.5

D: 60–69.5

F: 0–59.5

Attendance policy:

Showing up on time is required and expected. If you are more than 15 minutes late for a class, you will be marked absent. While there is no penalty for missing a single session, there are repercussions for missing multiple classes. If you miss **5 or more classes**, the highest grade you can achieve is a "B", 7 or more a "C", and 9 or more a "D".

You can think of this another way. You have 4 "freebies" — 4 absences to use to go to career fairs, music concerts, or if you're just not feeling the reading for that week.

There are legitimate reasons for missing a class: situations necessary for career advancement (graduate school visits, job interviews, professional conferences where you are presenting), related to your health (serious illness, mental health), or related to your family and legal status (bereavement, court appearances, religious holidays, visa appointments). If you have something you believe counts as a legitimate reason for your absence that is not on this list, get in touch with me to discuss.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Honesty and transparency are important features of good scholarship. On the flip side, plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses with serious consequences. If you are discovered engaging in either behavior in this course, you will earn a failing grade on the assignment in question, and further disciplinary action may be taken.

Your work should be crafted and written on your own. You may talk with others about your ideas— you may even use the ideas discussed in class seminars—but these ideas must be made your own. That means working by yourself to develop your own ideas, providing your own reasons, and explaining things in your own words.

You are required to cite all sources you use in your submitted coursework. This includes both direct quotations and cases where you use someone else's ideas. "Sources" include papers, journals, conversations, anything found on the internet, and so on. Basically, if the thought did not originate with you, you should provide an in-text citation and a reference list. For a clear description of what counts as plagiarism, cheating, and/or the use of unauthorized sources, please see the Student Code of Conduct: http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/19.

If you have questions about my integration of the university's honor code into this course, please do not hesitate to ask: my aim is to foster an environment where you can learn and grow, while ensuring that the work we all do is honest and fair. For more information about Georgia Tech's standards with respect to academic integrity, you can also check out the following link: http://honor.gatech.edu/

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion