

**STS/SOC 6834**  
**Advanced Topics in Social Studies of Science, Technology, and Medicine:**  
**Science and Technology in Everyday Life**

**Fall 2001 Wednesdays 9:05-11:50 Lane 151**

**Instructor: Gary Downey Lane 332 hours: T 1-2, W 2-3 IM-only hour: W 1-2**

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This course is an advanced graduate STS/SOC seminar designed to rethink the role of science and technology in everyday life. For the most part, it consists of a survey of theoretical approaches to understanding relations between science/technology and everyday life. Depending upon student interests, the course will also explore selected pathways of flow in and out of everyday life, e.g., science textbook writing, popular science and science journalism, science education and the selves of scientists, science use as consumption, science as entertainment, code-switching between academic and popular theorizing in scientific discourse.

A working hypothesis to provoke discussion:

Truth lives in everyday, popular theorizing rather than in academic theory. New academic knowledge becomes true only once it makes it into popular knowledge. The main function of the academy is pedagogical, convincing popular arenas to accept and integrate new knowledge.

Popular science writing, including textbook writing, is a positive act of re-organizing proposed scientific truths to fit or replace existing truths, rather than a watering-down of new knowledge for low-brow consumption. A key question concerns the productive work through which people, including scientists, locate science in their lives and selves.

Inside the academy, research is downstream of teaching rather than the other way around, as researchers go off to locate new knowledge to address issues in popular theory.

In short, the longstanding model of knowledge creation, diffusion, and utilization can be turned upside down. Academic theorizing remains the crucial site of cultural imagination, but popular theorizing is the site of authority and truth.

**Requirements for class participants:** (1) help shape the course around your research interests; (2) read and be prepared to discuss 175-200 pages per week; (3) lead class discussion at least twice; and (4) complete a semester-long project that fits both course material and your research interests.

**Course readings:**

Stone, Allucquère Rosanne. 1996. *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press

\*establishes and outlines the problem of science and selfhood

Gergen, Kenneth J. 2000. *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*. New York : Basic Books.

\*selfhood as a problem of identity

Martin, Emily. 1994. *Flexible Bodies: Tracking Immunity in American Culture from the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS*. Boston: Beacon Press.

\*the diffusion of new knowledge as flow of metaphors; concept of 'saturation'

de Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

\*theorizes resistance and reformulation of dominant images in the everyday

*The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, edited by David Forgacs. 2000. New York: New York University Press.

\*thinking through the concept of hegemony

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

\*what can we learn from the concept of 'nomad' thought?

Lefebvre, Henri. 1984. *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

\*focuses on quality of life in the everyday

Gross, Paul and Norman Levitt. *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

\*does their argument depend on code-switching between academic and popular theorizing?

### Schedule of Topics

August 29	Introductory discussion
September 5	The problem of science and selfhood: Stone, Sandy: <i>The War of Desire and Technology</i>
September 12	Approaches to identity 1: Gergen, Kenneth: <i>The Saturated Self</i>
September 19	Approaches to identity 2: Gergen, Kenneth: <i>The Saturated Self</i>
September 26	Following flows of metaphors in both directions Martin, Emily: <i>Flexible Bodies</i>
October 3	Shifting focus from producer to consumer de Certeau: <i>The Practice of Everyday Life</i>
October 10	How the weak make use of the strong de Certeau: <i>The Practice of Everyday Life</i>
October 17	Approaches to ideology Forgacs: <i>The Antonio Gramsci Reader</i>
October 24	Might hegemony be an issue of scale? Forgacs: <i>The Antonio Gramsci Reader</i>
October 31	Nomad thought does not live in an edifice of ordered interiority Deleuze and Guattari: <i>A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia</i>
November 7	A plateau is when circumstances bring an activity to a pitch of intensity that is not immediately dissipated. Deleuze and Guattari: <i>A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia</i>
November 14	What can we draw from this pragmatic philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari: <i>A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia</i>
November 21	A focus on quality of life in everyday life Lefebvre: <i>Everyday Life in the Modern World</i>

November 28	Case study of flow: Is this a case of code switching? Gross and Levitt: <i>Higher Superstition</i>
December 5	Case study of flow: TBA
December 12	Case study of flow: TBA

#### Some possible concepts for describing the everyday in relation to science and technology

Everyday life: de Certeau: "everyday life does provide an area which imaginative intellectual analysis and description may produce liberating effects"

Folk understandings, folk wisdom, folk ideology: note how this concept tends to privilege scientific theorizing

Sites of resistance: do people reproduce power through resistance, e.g., dropping out, or is it creative?

Ideology: must it be only an accusation? Might we see it as simply an organized model, or is it one that desires to attain universal or foundational status, and so is uncompromising?

Active audiences: Through polysemy, audiences can latch onto other meanings as vehicles of resistance

Stories: central stories vs. peripheral stories

Discourses, narrative conventions, discursive fields of power and meaning: What is a discourse? How to link these to large-scale processes?

Codes

Myths: myth of language, for example, is transparency and universality (Barthes)

Common sense: devalued by logical empiricism

Cultural stereotypes: a good way to describe dominance without accepting dominance

Styles: Adorno and Horkheimer: "style is the record of tradition"

National vernaculars:

Deeply held values and cultural themes, dominant cultural assumptions, cultural idioms: all traditional concepts in cultural anthropology

Dominant images: a newer approach to culture

Subcultures: not a piece of a culture but a subordinate culture; hence there can be tremendous overlap

Identity, identities: note how it is often understood in essential terms, vs. attempts to understand it as the product of relationships

Performance in different registers

Site for pleasures: attending to pleasures is often an important part of investigating the popular; cultural studies concept

Carnival: contrasted with the spectacle

Popular theorizing: located in relation to and on equal footing with academic theorizing

Hegemony: Gramsci: "involves not coercion but consent on the part of the dominated"

Multiplicity of selves, selves in the plural: Spivak: "one is not just one thing"

Embodied subjects, subjectivities: subjectivity is the product of a process of embodiment

Governmentality: Foucault: producing conforming or docile citizens through education

How have different intellectual traditions approached the question of the everyday?

What different methodologies are used to explore the everyday?

What counts as successful intervention in dominant images?