

STS 501 / PHIL 561: Topics in Science and Technology Studies
Winter 2021, Term 1

Instructor: Alison Wylie

Contact: alison.wylie@ubc.ca

Meets: Term 1, Mondays 2:00-5:00

Canvas course website: <https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/80270>

The thematic focus of this seminar is the nature, status, production and circulation of data, facts and evidence. The empirical foundations and products of science have been a perennial focus of research in all the cognate fields of STS, and their study in contextualist, constructionist terms has been a flashpoint for science wars-style debates within these fields, between them, and in public debate about the status and authority of the sciences. So this conceptual framework provides a useful lens for reviewing “classic work in the history, philosophy, rhetoric, and sociology of science,” taking stock of the formation of STS as a field, and exploring current work that represents new and emerging lines of inquiry.

That said, this thematic frame leaves us with a very broad remit for the seminar so, based on input from prospective participants in the seminar, I have identified a dozen primary texts around which to organize the syllabus, listed below. In some cases we will read selections drawn from these texts; in others we will read the full text alongside reviews and commentary on them. In the first weeks of the term we will review a set of classic articles on relativism, reflexivity, and “third wave” science studies to provide a context for the primary texts; these will include work by Barnes and Bloor, Collins and Evans, Jasanoff, and Latour.

This seminar will be reading- and discussion-intensive; requirements include weekly discussion posts, in-class seminar presentations, and a thesis-driven research paper. This is a core course for STS students, and will count for Epistemology & Philosophy of Science seminar credit for students in Philosophy.

- Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (1935/1979)
- Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery* (1958)
- Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition (1970)
- Porter, *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (1996)
- Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge* (1998)
- Howlett and Morgan, *How Well Do Facts Travel* (2012)
- Tallbear, *Native American DNA* (2013)
- Leonelli, *Data-Centric Biology* (2016)
- Leonelli and Tempini, *Data Journeys in the Sciences* (2020).
- D'Ignazio and Klein, *Data Feminism* (2020)