

PUBP 6748 Social Justice, Critical Theory, and Philosophy of Design

Michael Hoffmann (convener)

Potential Instructors: Hugh Crawford, Susan Cozzens, Carol Colatrella, Carl DiSalvo, Michael Hoffmann, Nihad Farooq, Anne Pollock, Robert Rosenberger

This advanced seminar asks how theories of social justice can be reformulated when seen from a science, technology, and society (STS) point of view, a point of view that is informed by traditional critical theory and an emergent philosophy of design. Whereas critical theory mainly focuses on the material conditions of human existence, philosophy of design addresses the question how technologies materialize values and thereby shape the human condition. Whereas critical theory attempts to achieve social justice by changing the ways material goods are accumulated and distributed, philosophy of design is concerned with how technologies change the ways we act in the world with and through made things and how the design of technologies fosters or inhibits freedom, and empowers or represses people. The seminar explores how science and technology have been variously contested and enrolled in epistemological and material struggles for social justice, and the role that STS scholarship can or should play in those spheres.

Introduction

In a formative era of the field of STS, the term “techno-science” was coined to highlight the inextricability of knowing about the world and creating tools to change the world. In this kind of formulation, questions of the search for truth cannot be separated from obligation to work toward creating a world as we would have it be. Yet the relationships between values of truth and justice are complicated. Deconstructing the role of science and technology in the ideological and material reproduction of inequalities has been an important contribution of much work in STS, but many scholars have suggested that critique along these lines is insufficient. This course explores diverse writings in social-justice oriented STS, in order to tease out the relationship between critique and design and explore the role of scholarship in this area in social justice projects.

Objectives:

- To learn about how social justice projects have enrolled and contested science and technology.
- To understand core concepts in social justice oriented STS.
- To explore the relationship between critique and design

Learning Outcomes:

- Awareness of the significance of social justice for practitioners of science and technology
- A thorough understanding of the core literature on social justice
- An appreciation of critical theory and philosophy of design insofar as these relate to social justice.

Assessment:

- Active participation in discussions
- Written response to readings
- Final project and presentation

Structure of the course

The seminar will be taught by the instructors listed above. They will take turns every semester. About half of the course draws from core texts on which all of the faculty agree, the other half is related to an area of the instructor's research. Each seminar includes a design project, but the details are at the discretion of the instructor. Grading will be based on essays about the theoretical class material and/or contributions to and results of the design project.

Possible Schedule

1. Core Texts

Week 1: Introduction

Weeks 2: Social-justice oriented STS literature:

- Donna Haraway "Situated Knowledges" and "Cyborg Manifesto"
- Langdon Winner *The Whale and the Reactor*
- Edward Woodhouse et al., "Science Studies and Activism"

Weeks 3 – 4: Social justice in philosophy and political theory:

- Clayton, M., & Williams, A. (2004). *Social justice*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub. A reader with classical texts from Locke and Hume to contemporary texts by Rawls, Nozick, Dworkin, Cohen, Anderson, and Miller, and contributions to issues such as The Family: Gender and Justice, The Market, Justice across Cultures: Is Multiculturalism Bad for Animals?, Justice across Borders: Brief for a Global Resources Dividend, and Justice across Generations: The Non-Identity Problem.
- Cozzens, S. E. (2007). Distributive justice in science and technology policy. *Science and Public Policy*, 34(2), 85-94.

Weeks 5 – 6: Critical theory

- Selections from Marx and the Frankfurt School
- Feenberg, A. (1990). "The Ambivalence of Technology." *Sociological Perspectives*. 33(1): 35-50.
- Feenberg, A. (1992). "Subversive Rationalization: Technology, Power, and Democracy." *Inquiry*. 35: 301-322.
- Bruno Latour, "Why has critique run out of steam?"
- Latour, B. (1994). "On Technological Mediation: Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy." *Common Knowledge*. 3(2): 29-64. (A version of this also appears in his 1999 book *Pandora's Hope*.)
- Michel Foucault, selections from *Society Must be Defended*

Weeks 7 – 8: Philosophy of design

- Bennett, Jane, *Vibrant Matter* (2010), excerpts.
- Introna (L) Towards a post-human intra-actional account of sociotechnical agency (and morality) EARLY DRAFT – Prepared for the Moral Agency and Technical Artefacts Scientific workshop - NIAS, Hague, 10-12 May 2007
- Joerges, B. (1999) Do Politics Have Artefacts? *Social Studies of Science*, 29 (3), 411-431.
- Latour, B. (2004). Which politics for which artifacts? *Domus*, June 04.
- Latour, B (2008) A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Toward a Philosophy of Design. In Fiona Hackne, Jonathn Glynne and Viv Minto (editors) Proceedings of the 2008 Annual International Conference of the Design History Society – Falmouth, 3-6 September 2009, e-books, Universal Publishers, pp. 2-10.
- Pfaffenberger, B. (1992). Technological dramas. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*,

17 (3), 282-312.

- Winner, L. (1986). Do artifacts have politics? In L. Winner, *The whale and the reactor* (pp. 19-39). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

2. Instructor-related research (weeks 9 – 16)

Anne Pollock: STS ethnographies of activist movements: e.g. Epstein *Impure Science*; Gusterson *Nuclear Rites*, Tsing, *Friction*

Michael Hoffmann: A design project in which students experience in teams how certain decisions about the design of political order will challenge them to reframe previous assumptions and perceptions when they meet the resistance of a reality that “talks back.” Uses competitive games as provided in the “Reacting to the Past” series (Carnes, M. C., & Kates, G. (2005). *Rousseau, Burke and revolution in France, 1791*. New York: Pearson Longman; Embree, A. T., Carnes, M. C., & Embree, A. T. (2005). *Defining a nation : India on the eve of independence, 1791 [i.e. 1945]*. New York: Pearson Longman). In these games, students are assigned roles, informed by classic texts and set in particular moments of intellectual and social ferment. Students are leaders of major factions within the National Assembly (and in the streets outside) as it struggles to create a constitution amidst internal chaos and external threats. Includes collaborative argument visualization to understand and communicate stakeholder perspectives.

Carol Colatrella: History of architectural design that considers gender, notably the development of the home kitchen and the application of scientific management in community and home settings. Readings would include: Dolores Hayden’s *The Grand Domestic Revolution* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *What Diantha Did*. Selections from Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *The American Woman’s Home*, Christine Frederick’s *The New Housekeeping*, Lillian Gilbreth’s *The Psychology of Management*. Additionally, articles about contemporary cases from architectural and industrial design (and perhaps city planning) that consider the needs of persons with disabilities, women, children, immigrants.

Carl DiSalvo: Values in Design; Political Design; The relationship of design to social movements; Participatory Design; Open, Participatory, and Collaborative forms of Science and Technology (e.g., Citizen Science, Hacker/Maker Culture, D.I.Y. Science). Examining the challenges of embodying / enacting values through the design of information systems (Values in Design a hybrid STS/Design method); Examining how different forms of democracy are expressed through the design of information systems

Robert Rosenberger: Ethics and technology design. Examples include Borgmann, A. (1986). *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*; Ihde, D. (2010). *Postphenomenology and Technoscience: The Peking University Lectures*; Verbeek, P.-P. (2006). *What Things Do: Reflections of Technology, Morality, and Design*.