

History of Science / Medical History 133: *Biology and Society, 1950–today*

Professor Nicole Nelson

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Office hours: W 12:00–2:00 pm, or by appointment

Spring 2015

Social Science 5208

MW 11:00–11:50, plus discussion section

From medical advancements to environmental crises and global food shortages, biology and the life sciences are implicated in some of the most pressing social issues of our time. This course explores events in the history of biology from the mid-twentieth century to today, and examines how developments in this scientific field have shaped and are shaped by society. The course is divided into three thematic units. In the first unit, we investigate the origins of the institutions, technologies, and styles of practice that characterize contemporary biology; such as the use of mice as “model organisms” for understanding human diseases. In the second unit, we delve into areas of biology that have raised controversies about regulation, governance, and public participation; such as the introduction of genetically modified plants into the food supply. The final unit asks how biological facts and theories have been and continue to be used as a source for understanding ourselves. Within the units, each week begins with an examination of an historical event or controversy that provides an entry into a discussion about how biology and society interact. The creation of a cloned sheep named Dolly and the ensuing media coverage and controversy, for example, demonstrates how new reproductive technologies are challenging fundamental categories that we use to describe the life course such as “parent” and “offspring.”

The course content is delivered through two lectures and one discussion section per week. Students will also read a selection of historical, sociological, and popular articles each week in preparation for class, which will be contextualized and discussed in lecture and section. Evaluation will be based on the quality of students’ participation in section, two short writing assignments, and midterm and final exams. This course will help students in the sciences, social sciences, or humanities to develop the analytical and writing skills needed to confront complex social issues involving the life sciences. No prior knowledge of biology, history, or social theory is required.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

- develop an appreciation for the ways in which the institutions, practices, and ways of thinking associated with contemporary biology are specific to a particular place and time, and have changed over time;
- be able to identify and state the significance of key people and events in the recent history of biology;
- understand key theoretical frameworks for describing interactions between biology and society, and be able to apply these frameworks to new empirical cases
- be able to identify and evaluate the strength of the arguments and evidence used in an academic paper;
- be able to extrapolate complex arguments to new contexts and assess how new information would change the argument.

Course materials

There are no textbooks assigned for this course. A course pack containing all of the required readings is available for purchase at the Social Science Copy Center (Social Science 6120), and a copy of the course pack will also be at the reserve desk at College Library in Helen C. White Hall. Lecture slides will be available for download from the Learn@UW website the day before lecture.

Assignments and grading

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>% of final grade</i>	<i>Due date</i>
Discussion section participation	15%	formative assessment at mid-semester
Reading summary assignment	15%	February 11–26, as assigned
Midterm exam	25%	March 18
Critical thinking assignment	20%	April 24, 5:00 pm
Final exam	25%	May 14

Discussion section participation You are expected to arrive at section having read the assigned readings for the week, and to participate actively in discussion or other in-class exercises—mere attendance is not enough for a good section grade. A rubric outlining expectations for section participation will be distributed and discussed in the first week of sections, and you will receive written feedback and an interim grade on your participation at mid semester.

Reading summary assignment This assignment focuses on your ability to understand a complex academic argument and how it is constructed. You can choose the reading you would like to work with for this assignment (a list of eligible course readings and a schedule will be distributed in section), and the assignment will be due on the day that the reading you selected is due in section. A detailed description of the assignment and a grading rubric will be distributed and discussed in section.

Critical thinking assignment This assignment focuses on your ability extend an academic argument to a new context, and assess how new factors or information would impact that argument. Starting with one of the course readings on biology and the public, you will demonstrate your understanding of the author's argument and do research to find new evidence that would challenge or change the argument. A detailed description of the assignment and a grading rubric will be distributed and discussed in section.

Midterm and final exams Exams will contain a combination of multiple choice questions, identification questions (where students must identify and state the significance of a person, event, or concept from the course), short answer questions, and essay questions. A study aid with a list of example identification questions will be distributed in class prior to the midterm and final exams.

Course policies

Email Due to the size of the course, I am unable to answer questions via email. For short questions (e.g. assignment due dates), please post on the course questions forum on the Learn@UW website, and one of the TAs or I will reply there. For longer questions (e.g. feedback on a draft assignment), or if you have personal concerns you would like to discuss, please come see me during office hours. If you are not able to meet during office hours, you can email me to arrange an alternative meeting time.

Discussion section absences Attendance will be taken weekly at discussion sections, and counts towards your discussion section grade. For absences due to illness, family emergencies, scheduled conflicts, or other legitimate reasons, you can make up the missed participation grades by handing in a 250 word informal reading response instead of attending class. You must contact your TA in advance of the missed class (except in exceptional circumstances) to clear your absence with him/her and agree on a due date for your reading response.

Grading and late assignments All assignments will receive a numeric score (e.g. 29/30), which will also be displayed as a percentage score on the Learn@UW website. Your final percentage grade will be converted into a final letter grade using the conversion table below. Late assignments will be penalized by 3% of the total assignment points per day, unless you have made prior arrangements with your TA or me.

A	AB	B	BC	C	D	F
93.0–100%	88.0–92.9%	83.0–87.9%	78.0–82.9%	70.0–77.9%	60.0–69.9%	0–59.9%

Students with disabilities I am available to discuss academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Please present your McBurney visa to your TA and/or me within the first three weeks of the semester (except in unusual circumstances) so that there is enough time for appropriate arrangements to be made.

Academic integrity All students are expected to adhere to the University of Wisconsin—Madison's core values regarding academic integrity. Plagiarism or other academic misconduct may result in a zero on the assignment or exam, a lower grade in the course, or failure in the course. See the Dean of Students Office website for more information about the academic misconduct process (<http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html>).

Course schedule

January 21: Course Introduction

No assigned readings or sections for this week

January 26 and 28: Historical narratives and origin stories about contemporary biology

- Kary Mullis. 2000. *Dancing naked in the mind field*. Vintage Books, January, pp. 3–14

Unit One: The institutions and social practices of biology

February 2 and 4: From big physics to big biology (World War II)

- Nicolas Rasmussen. 2002. "Of "small men," big science, and bigger business: The Second World War and biomedical research in the United States." *Minerva* 40:115–146

February 9 and 11: University–Industry relations – Bayh Dole Act (1980)

- Steven Shapin. 2003. "Ivory Trade." *London Review of Books* 25, no. 17 (September): 15–19
- Daniel S. Greenberg. 2007. *Science for Sale: The Perils, Rewards, and Delusions of Campus Capitalism*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 233–42

February 16 and 18: Model organisms – *C elegans* (1963)

- Daniel Engber. 2011. "The Trouble with Black-6." *Slate* (November 17)
- Susan E. Lederer. 1992. "Political Animals: The Shaping of Biomedical Research Literature in Twentieth-Century America." *Isis* 83 (1): 61–79

February 23 and 25: Reshaping the clinic – BRCA genes (1994, 1995)

Guest lecture by Dr. Don Waller, Department of Botany

- Robert C. Green and Nita A. Farahany. 2014. “Regulation: The FDA is overcautious on consumer genomics.” *Nature* 505 (January 16): 286–287
- Andrew J. Hogan. 2013. “Locating genetic disease: the impact of clinical nosology on biomedical conceptions of the human genome (1966–1990).” *New Genetics and Society* 32 (1): 78–96

Unit Two: Governance and participation in biology

March 2 and 4: The popularization of genetics – The Human Genome Project (1990)

- Dorothy Nelkin and Susan Lindee. 2000. “The DNA mystique: the gene as a cultural icon.” In *Perspectives in medical sociology*, 3rd ed., edited by Phil Brown, 406–424. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland
- Martin Richards. 2006. “Heredity: Lay Understanding.” In *Living with the genome: ethical and social aspects of human genetics*, edited by Angus Clarke and Flo Ticehurst, 177–182. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

March 7 and 9: Toxic landscapes and environmental politics – Silent Spring (1962)

Guest lecture by Dr. Mrill Ingram, Department of Geography

- Gregg Mitman. 2007. *Breathing space: how allergies shape our lives and landscapes*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 130–166

March 16: Regulation of biotechnology – Asilomar (1975)

- Sheila Jasanoff. 2005. *Designs on nature: science and democracy in Europe and the United States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 42–67

March 18: In-class midterm exam

No sections this week.

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March 23 and 25: Who gets to participate in biology? – Colony collapse disorder (2006)

Guest lecture by Dr. Sai Suryanarayanan, Department of Community and Environmental Sociology

- Harry M. Collins and Trevor J. Pinch. 1998. “The science of the lambs: Chernobyl and the Cumbrian sheepfarmers.” In *The golem at large: what you should know about technology*, 113–125. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

- Daniel Lee Kleinman and Sainath Suryanarayanan. 2013. "Honey bees under threat: a political pollinator crisis." *The Guardian* (May 8). <http://www.theguardian.com/science/political-science/2013/may/08/honey-bees-threat-political-pollinator-crisis>

March 28–April 3: March break

Unit 3: Biology and the Self

April 6 and 8: Seeing humanity through biology – Sociobiology (1975)

- Robert M. Sapolsky. 1998. "The trouble with testosterone." In *The Trouble with Testosterone: And Other Essays on the Biology of the Human Predicament*, 147–159
- Jonathan M. Metz. 2010. "Why Against Health?" In *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*, edited by Jonathan M. Metz and Anna Kirkland, 1–11. NYU Press

April 13 and 15: Neuroscience and the Decade of the Brain (1990)

- Iliana Singh. 2005. "Will the "real boy" please behave: dosing dilemmas for parents of boys with ADHD." *The American Journal of Bioethics: AJOB* 5 (3): 34–47

April 20 and 22: Race and Reproduction – Dolly the cloned sheep (1997)

- Charis Thompson. 2001. "Strategic naturalizing: kinship in an infertility clinic." In *Relative values: reconfiguring kinship studies*, edited by Sarah Franklin and Susan McKinnon, 175–202. Durham, NC: Duke University Press

April 24: Critical thinking assignment due

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May 5 and 7: Globalizing biology

- Margaret Lock. 1996. "Death in Technological Time: Locating the End of Meaningful Life." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10 (4): 575–600

May 4 and 6: Conclusion

No readings or sections this week

May 14, 7:25–9:25 pm: Final exam

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Room to be announced