Introduction:

One of the central questions facing activists and reformers is that of expertise. We live an increasingly complex world in which experts of all sorts are unavoidable. Many of central issues facing us - from climate change to global poverty and vaccinations - are problems that require expert knowledge to adjudicate. Yet, expertise and democracy are often posed as operating by competing logics. Expert- based decision making is (ostensibly) meritocratic, where the right to participate is earned through possession of relevant knowledge. Democratic decision-making works by a different logic, where those impacted by a decision have a right to participate in the making of that decision. Can these approaches be reconciled? Or is expert decision making anti- democratic? And more to the point, what role should experts play in a democracy? How can we productively articulate expertise and democracy?

We will explore answers to these questions in both science studies and democratic theory, and will look into a range of case studies of both expertise in action and attempts to "democratize expertise." Along the way we will devote some time to the foundational perspectives that inform the case studies. As we follow the cases, we will freely draw on a range of approaches, ranging from recent STS scholarship to sociology, political science, anthropology, and philosophy.

The format of the course is itself a hybrid. There will be lively seminar-based and student-led sessions, instructor-led discussions, group work and investigation, and a traditional, individual final project. Some of the questions we will ask are:

- Can reason and truth, free from undue influence, serve as a counter-force against arbitrary power – or is reason itself forged in the crucible of power?
- Does the displacement of judgement and discretion by codified, ‘objective’ knowledge tend to strengthen the power of elites, and further weaken already marginalised social groups? Or is it an antidote to the operation of sectoral interests, and a facilitator of democratic debate?
- How is the role of expertise in policymaking changing, and how might such changes relate to the rise of the ‘knowledge economy’ and an emphasis on technological innovation?
- What is the most important political role for science today - to shape policy decisions or merely to legitimate them through a form of public theatre?
- With the proliferation of independent expert bodies, a range of crucial policy issues are being placed outside the usual play of democratic politics. Is this a welcome development, or a dangerous depoliticization?
What role can and should the public play in policymaking in highly technical domains? Are the existing theories and practices of democratic politics adequate for the problems that arise in a highly technological, globalized, and culturally diverse world?

By the end of the course, you should:

1) Have a critical awareness of the role of expertise in society, including the relationship between expertise and publics and expertise and institutional forms of democracy and decision-making.
2) Have a critical understanding of the debates surrounding expertise, having at a minimum, some fluency in the theoretical vocabulary in use.
3) Understand the significance of debates surrounding the public understanding of science, public engagement, and science-society dialogue in their historical and cultural context and assess their relevance and use for contemporary policy issues.

This one-semester course engages and complements the range of courses explicitly and implicitly focused on urban issues, and politics at Gallatin and NYU. This course was designed to be fun, but challenging. You should only take this course if you are willing and able to dedicate several hours a week to it, which will include group work, presentations, memos, and a final project.

SOME IMPORTANT CAVEATS

A note on grading. My own pedagogical philosophy and practice is one that privileges classroom dialogue over testing, openness in feedback over ranking of students, and collective discovery over individual evaluation. It has also been my experience that classrooms where the majority of students are not taking the course for a grade (for example, taking the P/NP option) are much freer ones. The Gallatin School – “The University Without Walls” was founded on such principles as well. At the very least its emphasis on academic exploration, intellectual freedom, and individualized curricula implies that grading and ranking are less important than other features of the educational experience. That said, many students do not feel they have an option, and grading is something we have to live with. The grade you will receive in this course will be transparently based on the proportions described below under “Requirements.” I will also ask of you, in your final self-assessment, to tell me what you think your final grade should be, and why.

A note on Academic Honesty:

“As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin
And finally, Presence and Respect. This class is premised on respectful and open engagement and dialogue. I do not have a specific policy on devices in class, lateness, or attendance. But the course will work best with everyone present and engaged. Please keep me posted if something is interfering with your ability to engage the class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Reaction Memos. Ten times during the Semester you will turn in a reaction memo the day before class (Thursday) by noon. Memos should be between 600-1,000 words. Comment succinctly on what you found most interesting, important, puzzling, infuriating, fundamental, etc. about the readings. While your memos should briefly summarize the main argument of the reading and highlight some quotes, they should be dedicated to analysis of the readings. Distributed over email in a timely manner, these abstracts will not only help you organize your response to the readings but will also serve as a guide for discussions. These reaction memos are worth 25%.

Group Work Memos. You will be assigned into one of four groups and you will work together in researching an instance of expertise in action. As a group, you will identify such a site, and collectively research it. This could be hearing of a participatory forum such as a local Community Board, the Landmark Preservation Commission, or the City Planning Commission. It could be a sub-committee meeting of your Community Board, such as planning, zoning, housing, or landmarks. It could also be a patient’s advocacy group on the internet, meetings about climate change mitigation, or expert testimony about charter schools. You will research the issue, follow up on its progress in the media, attend meetings – if applicable – and collect background scholarly research about it. You will turn in five group memos. This is worth 15% of your grade.

Class Presentation. Six times during the semester, students will lead the class discussion in groups of 3 or 4. You will write and distribute in class a discussion guide for the week's reading in which you briefly summarize some of the key ideas of the readings and offer some guiding questions for discussion. The discussion guide will also contain a dictionary of key terms used by the authors as well as a summary of questions submitted to the list. You will then briefly present some themes for discussion in the first fifteen minutes of class (this is a firm limit); you should not read your discussion guide, or feel each member of your group needs to present. Your presentation could consist of identifying particularly problematic passages in the text, contextualizing the debates implicit or explicit in the text, or preparing specific questions for discussion. I expect you to take some time preparing this presentation. 25%

Final Project – You will write a final, individual paper based on the information you collected as a group. Based on your experience and research, you will write a paper (10-12 pages) on this issue, analyzing it within the context of the theories we will have studied.

Required Books:
(The following books are required and are available at the NYU bookstore; some of these are available as e-books at the NYU library)

- Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy by Bruno Latour
- Are We All Scientific Experts Now by Harry Collins
- Science in Democracy: Expertise, Institutions, and Representation Paperback – August 14, 2009 by Mark B. Brown
- Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming Paperback – by Naomi Oreske
- Spin Cycle: How Research Is Used in Policy Debates: The Case of Charter Schools by Jeffrey R. Henig
- Economists and Societies: Discipline and Profession in the United States, Britain, and France, 1890s to 1990s by Marion Fourcade (Aug 2 2010)
- Disciplining Terror by Lisa Stampnitzky
- Refining Expertise: How Responsible Engineers Subvert Environmental Justice Challenges Paperback – March 4, 2013 _ Gwen Ottinger
- Science on Stage: Expert Advice as Public Drama (Writing Science) Paperback – October 1, 2000 by Stephen Hilgartne

Additional, Recommended Books:

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS
(PLEASE CHECK CLASSES FOR THE LATEST VERSIONS)

**Sept 4** - Introduction to the Class and its many components. Get acquainted, set norms for our work together, identify key elements of the interdisciplinary collaboration.

**Sept 11 – Setting the Agenda:** Habermas, Latour, Dewey (Schudson), and Bourdieu


Ch. 1 ("The Eclipse of the Public"), pp. 110-142


**Sept 18** – One Set of Views...

Collins, *Are We All Scientific Experts Now?* (entire)


Recommended Reading:


Student Presentation #1

**Sept 25** –
Lecture: Bourdieu on Science


Group Work

**Oct 2** – And Another set of views….
Brown, *Science in Democracy: Expertise, Institutions, and Representation.* (entire)

Student Presentation #2
Group Work Assignment #1 Due – Defining a site or a problem

**Oct 9 – Lecture on Latour and the ANT crowd on Science and Expertise**
Group Work

**Oct 16 – Case Studies: The Strategic Use of Research**
(A, D) Oreske. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*


Student Presentation #3

Group Work Assignment #2 Due – Background Research on the issue or problem

**Oct 23 – Lecture on Foucault on Science and Expertise**

Group Work

**Oct 30 – On The Social Construction of Categories and Disciplines**
(A, B) Disciplining Terror by Lisa Stampnitzky

(C, D) Economists and Societies: Discipline and Profession in the United States, Britain, and France, 1890s to 1990s by Marion Fourcade (Aug 2 2010)

Student Presentation #4
Group Work Assignment #3 Due – Framing the issue or Problem

**Nov 6 – Lecture on Civic Epistemologies and the Institutionalization of Expertise, the “Fifth Branch” Argument**

The Fifth Branch: Science Advisers as Policymakers by Sheila Jasanoff

Group Work

Nov 13 – No Class

**Nov 20 – Expertise in Action**
(B,D ) Science on Stage: Expert Advice as Public Drama (Writing Science) Paperback –
October 1, 2000 by Stephen Hilgartne

Student Presentation #5
Group Work Assignment #4 Due – Primary Research on the issue or Problem

Thanksgiving Break – No Class

Dec 4 – Science and Democracy as seen from ANT
The Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy.
Group Work

Dec 11 - Last Class
(ALL) Callon, Acting in an Uncertain World: An Essay on Technical Democracy
Group Work Assignment #5 Due -

Dec 23 – Final Paper Due

SUGGESTIONS OF READINGS TO HELP IDENTIFY SITES OF EXPERTISE-IN-ACTION


SUNY Press.


In addition, the following books contain many additional examples:


Brian Martin (ed.). 1996. Confronting the Experts. SUNY.

