

Soci 419.05, Technoscience and Biomedicalization, Fall 2007

Instructor: Dr. Ariel Ducey

Office Hours: Mondays, 2-3 p.m.; Fridays, 11:30 – 12:30, or by appointment

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Sociology Department Website: [www.soci.ucalgary.ca](http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca)

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## Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to the sociology of science and technology, by focusing on the case of medicine. Over the semester, we will consider why the terms “technoscience” and “biomedicalization” might be apposite for understanding contemporary developments in the relationship between medical practices and science and technology.

In addition to becoming familiar with several contemporary medical practices—for instance, separation surgery of conjoined twins, genetic screening and testing, assisted reproductive technologies—we will consider differing interpretative viewpoints that can be applied to such practices, and discuss which viewpoints are most compelling and persuasive.

The questions that anchor this course, and can guide a reading of the material, are:

- 1) What are the relationships between science, technology and society?
- 2) How are boundaries between the normal and abnormal, healthy and ill, drawn? What role does medicine play in drawing those boundaries? How are those boundaries changing?
- 3) How do developments in medicine (and science and technology more broadly) change possible identities and subjectivities?
- 4) What are the implications of contemporary biomedicine and technoscience for various forms of inequality and suffering?

Finally, the course is situated in a theoretical context that seeks to understand in the broadest possible terms how biomedicalization and technoscience affect the fundamental features of our society, including how we define ourselves as members of that society and are governed by it.

## Readings

- 1) There are three books for this course, available in the University of Calgary bookstore:
  - a) Alice Domurat Dreger, *One of Us*, Harvard University Press, 2004.
  - b) Charis Thompson, *Making Parents*, MIT Press, 2007.
  - c) Alice Wexler, *Mapping Fate*, University of California Press, 1996.
- 2) There is also a *custom course packet* available in the bookstore, containing a number of articles.

You are expected to read about 50-100 pages per week, depending on the difficulty of the text. Readings must be completed *before* the class for which they are assigned; I will divide the longer readings and books over several days. I may add, omit, or change some readings during the

semester as needed. Any changes in the course schedule will be announced in class and you are responsible for finding out about such changes if you are absent.

### Participation

As a 400-level course with a smaller number of students, participation in class will be expected. This is a rare opportunity at the undergraduate level to practice articulating ideas and questions in a scholarly setting, and excellent preparation for those going on to graduate study.

In particular, if I ask you to think about a particular issue in the readings, you must come to class prepared to participate in discussing it (having done the reading and identified relevant points and sections of the text).

In addition, students are expected to turn in, on at least **five occasions** during the term, **questions for class discussion**. *On the first day of any new reading (or section of reading)*, students may submit, in writing, **at least two** questions they have about the day's assigned text and would like to see discussed in class. The questions must be typed and include the student's name. Questions will be given a score of 5 (less than satisfactory), 8 (satisfactory/good), or 10 (excellent) points (total possible points: 50).

Think of the questions as "thought notes," in which you share an idea, concern, or question provoked by the course readings about which you'd like to hear others' thoughts. Questions do not have to show a perfect understanding of the text, but they should show a considered effort to understand it and its important themes.

I will use your questions to guide lecture and discussion. I may also require the class as a whole to prepare to discuss particular questions or use them as practice or real exam questions.

### Homework

Aside from the reading and discussion questions, I may assign practice exam questions as homework. These will be short, draft responses to questions I provide. They must be typed and handed in on time. They too will be graded on a 5, 8, or 10 basis.

### Examinations

There will be three take-home examinations for this class. The take-home examinations will be short answer and short essay, with a total length each not exceeding 2,000 words (8 double-spaced pages). The exams will focus on course material introduced since the previous exam, but may require you to address earlier sections of the course as well.

## Grading

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- |                                 |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| 1. First two take-home exams    | 25% (each) |
| 2. Third take-home exam         | 30%        |
| 3. Homework                     | 5%         |
| 4. Written discussion questions | 10%        |
| 5. Participation in class       | 5%         |

The following scale converts percentage grades to letter grades for this class.

A+ = 95-100
A = 90-94
A- = 85-89
B+ = 80-84
B = 75-79
B- = 70-74
C+ = 65-69
C = 60-64
C- = 55-59
D+ = 50-54
D = 45-49
F = below 45

The following description of letter grades comes from the U of Calgary Calendar:

- A indicates superior performance, excellent mastery of the material.
- B indicates above average performance, good mastery of the material.
- C indicates satisfactory performance, a basic understanding of the material.
- D indicates marginal performance, minimal understanding of the material.
- F indicates unsatisfactory performance.

## Instructor Contact Information

I am available, without an appointment, during office hours and at other times by appointment. My office is Room 938, Social Sciences Building. My office phone number is 220-5054, and my email address is [aducey@ucalgary.ca](mailto:aducey@ucalgary.ca).

In general, prefer that you contact me by email for administrative purposes only. For instance, you may email me to schedule an appointment outside of office hours. Students with substantive questions should come to office hours or schedule an appointment. If you have questions related to grading, readings, or wish to discuss the course in greater depth, see me during office hours or make an appointment.

Exam Policies: You must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam. All requests for deferral of an examination due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferred exams may be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. If you have missed an exam for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a “make up” exam as close to the original exam as possible. The date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferred exam. Deferred exams will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

Ethics Research: Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Academic Misconduct: cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

Since it is important that you read and discuss the work of others in academic papers and research, please take the time to review the following website: [Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It](#).

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor’s office or the Department main office. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor’s office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

Safewalk: The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

#### **Academic Accommodation**

Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student’s responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

Handing in Papers Outside of Class, Return of Final Papers, and Release of Final Grades

1. When students are unable to submit papers at class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant rather than at the Sociology Department main office.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the Sociology Department main office. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, (i.e., outside an instructor's office, the department office, etc.). Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will only be available for pick-up during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or the beginning of the next term.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology department. They are only available online.

## Course Schedule (last revised, September 3, 2007)

Sept 10, M	Introduction to the course	
Sept 12, W	<b>Foucault, "17 March 1976"</b>	Theoretical frames
Sept 14, F	Foucault, continued	
Sept 17, M	Foucault, continued	
Sept 19, W	Foucault, continued	
Sept 21, F	<b>Rabinow, "Artificiality and enlightenment"</b>	
Sept 24, M	Foucault and Rabinow	
Sept 26, W	<b>Dreger, <i>One of Us</i></b>	Technology, Medicine, and Normalization
Sept 28, F	Dreger, continued	
Oct 1, M	Dreger, continued	
Oct 3, W	Dreger, continued	
Oct 5, F	NO CLASS	
Oct 8, M	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)	
Oct 10, W	<b>Wexler, <i>Mapping Fate</i></b> **First take-home exam due	Biomedicine and the New Genetics: Promises and Perils
Oct 12, F	Wexler, continued	
Oct 15, M	Wexler, continued	
Oct 17, W	Wexler, continued	
Oct 19, F	Wexler, continued	
Oct 22, M	<b>Alper, "Genetic Complexity in Human Disease and Behavior"</b>	
Oct 24, W	<b>Rapp, "Refusing Prenatal Diagnosis"</b>	
Oct 26, F	<b>Gould, "Eugenics Past and Present"</b>	
Oct 29, M	<b>Winner, "Do artifacts have politics?"</b>	
Oct 31, W	Winner, continued	
Nov 2, F	<b>Ard &amp; Zucker, "The Commercialization of Genetic Technologies"</b>	Biocapital
Nov 5, M	<b>Thacker, "The incorporate bodies of recombinant capital"</b>	
Nov 7, W	Thacker, continued	
Nov 9, F	Thacker, continued	
Nov 12, M	NO CLASS	
Nov 14, W	No new reading **Second take-home exam due	
Nov 16, F	<b>Mentor, "Witches, Nurses, Midwives, and Cyborgs"</b>	Technology and Subjectivity
Nov 19, M	<b>Thompson, <i>Making Parents</i></b>	
Nov 21, W	Thompson, continued	
Nov 23, F	Thompson, continued	
Nov 26, M	Thompson, continued	
Nov 28, W	Thompson, continued	
Nov 30 F	<b>Rose &amp; Novas, "Biological Citizenship"</b>	Citizenship under Biopower
Dec 3, M	Rose & Novas	
Dec 5, W	<b>Biehl, "The Activist State: Global pharmaceuticals, AIDS, and Citizenship in Brazil"</b>	
Dec 7, F	Wrap up	
Dec 14, Friday	Third take-home exam due	