

Fall 2002 8-22-02

**STS 6834 Activism, Intervention, and Knowledge for Its Own Sake (Advanced Topics in Social Studies of Science, Technology, and Medicine)**

**Gary Downey Mondays 9-11:45 AM Lane 132**

**Office hours: T-Th 2:00-3:30**

**Course Description**

The main purpose of this advanced graduate seminar is to analyze in STS terms the transformations now taking place in the political positioning of academic scholarship. This exploration involves identifying, describing, locating in historical perspective, and assessing alternative perspectives on the appropriate relationship between theorizing inside and outside of the academy.

Much of the course is built on close analysis and discussion of texts. Energetic exchanges among diverse perspectives would be most welcome, productive intellectually, and likely beneficial to all participants. Each participant will also be responsible for taking the lead in surveying a specific area of scholarship selected for that purpose, with a mode of presentation and discussion designed to maximize the benefits for all participants.

Rather than expecting students to pay full price at the University bookstore, I am testing a method that relies on the online purchase of used books, especially through Amazon.Com's system. Readings for the first two classes will be available online.

**Readings**

Selected articles

Bush, Vannevar 1944 *Science: The Endless Frontier*

Whitehead, Alfred North 1929 *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*

Ortega y Gasset, Jose 1944 *The Mission of the University*

Michael, John 2000 *Anxious Intellectuals: Academic Professionals, Public Intellectuals, and Enlightenment Values* (Duke U Press)

Posner, Richard 2001 *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Harvard U Press)

Bender, Thomas 1993 *Intellectuals and Public Life: Essays in the Social History of Academic Intellectuals* (may replace with something else)

LaFollette, Marcel 1990 *Making Science Our Own: Public Images of Science 1910-1055*

Freire, Paulo 2001 [1970] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Other readings recommended by participants. I look forward to a semester full of intense reading and discussion.

**Requirements**

I am purposing assigning readings in this course that I have not mastered myself and want to give more focused consideration. Accordingly, I view us as privileged participants engaged in a shared STS learning experience. At the same time, I recognize that I am course leader and bear the responsibility of assigning grades to enrolled

participants. To that end, consider the following requirements. The writing project is a negotiable output.

- (1) I no longer give incompletes in graduate classes. I would like enrolled students to complete all work by the grade deadline, take what you get, and move on.
- (2) All participants must come to class having read the material and prepared to discuss it at length. Each participant will be responsible for leading discussion at various points. A condition of the experiment in ordering books is that “I couldn’t get the book” is not an acceptable reason for not being prepared. In the worst-case scenario, we will organize a ‘phone-tree’ of photocopy (for your own purposes, to meet copyright law; and with a non-CIS copier).
- (3) I will give you a short, written, mid-semester evaluation offering an estimate of your final grade based on your performance to date. I will also request regular evaluations and recommendations from you.
- (4) Each participant must complete a quality writing assignment. I recommend sharing a bibliographic mapping, or literature review, 12-15 pages equivalent, with copies for all participants. The exact structure is negotiable. One alternative is to prepare a clear, coherent class presentation with a well-organized and detailed notes to share. Remember the importance of quotations.

### **Some Initial Questions**

- (1) Gary’s predisposition: popular epistemology (see below) and Carnegie Foundation work
- (2) Ongoing projects of other participants?
- (3) What is a public intellectual?  
Different national contexts?  
What connections exist between the repositioning of the public intellectual and the empirical restructuring of universities?
- (4) Philosophy of the university and academy?  
What’s included in the academy anyway (cf. France, Germany, etc.)?  
What interpretations exist of the mission of the university and the academy?  
Is the academy inherently an agent of social change?  
Is the rise of accountability legitimizing reactionary critiques of the academy?  
Do older accounts avail themselves of interpretations that have previously been hidden?
- (5) Science and the public?  
What general questions emerge about relations between science and the public?  
Does scientific theorizing function as one category of popular theorizing?
- (6) Empirical changes in academic and university work (we will focus less here)  
Exactly what sorts of changes are indeed taking place?
- (7) Case studies of activist programs by academic and nonacademic intellectuals?