

# Syllabus for SCIE300: Science and Society

Spring 2018

Dickinson College

Instructor: John MacCormick

## Goals

Students will

- critically analyze the interactions between the academic study of science and the societies in which that study takes place, especially the United Kingdom and USA
- gain a technical understanding of a selection of scientific topics relevant to the interactions between science and society
- deepen their ability to write and present information that combines scientific, technical, political, and cultural ideas
- increase their understanding of the culture, geography, and politics of the United Kingdom

## When and where

- Class meetings during the spring UEA semester scheduled approximately every second week on Tuesdays, 7:00-8:30pm (1/16, 1/23, 1/30, 2/6, 2/27, 3/13, 4/17, 5/1, 5/15). Location is room SCI 0.67.
- One-week study and travel excursion at the beginning of the UEA Easter vacation (3/19-3/25)
- Three excursions on Saturdays during the semester (2/3, 3/3, 4/21)
- For details of office hours, please see the instructor's website. As a guideline, office hours are usually Wednesday and Friday 10-11am in Building 6, level 2, room BIO 2.12.

Every effort will be made to keep to the above schedule, but some changes may be necessary. Attendance at all of the above events is required.

## Books

The following are required texts for the course:

*Sustainable Energy – without the hot air* by David MacKay. UIT Cambridge, 2008. Free electronic version available from [withouthotair.com](http://withouthotair.com).

*Superintelligence: Paths, dangers, strategies* by Nick Bostrom. Oxford University Press, 2014.

*Waterland* by Graham Swift. Originally published in 1992 by Knopf, but there are many editions and any is acceptable.

Electronic or printed versions of these books are acceptable.

## Assessment and grading

The final grade will most likely be calculated as follows, based on seven reading assignments (abbreviated RA1, RA2, ... RA7), a class presentation and discussion (abbreviated CPD), and a substantial “science and society paper” (abbreviated SSP). Brief descriptions of these assignments are as follows:

- RA1-7 will comprise short- and long-answer questions based on assigned readings.
- CPD will require each student to present and lead a discussion based on a chapter from one of the two nonfiction course texts. Students will select their own chapter to present on a first-come first-served basis.
- SSP will consist of two milestones: a paper proposal (SSP1) and the final paper (SSP2). The topic for the SSP assignment will be chosen by each student based on individual interest within the general area of science and society.

The weighting and timing of the assignments are likely to be as follows:

	% of final grade	due dates
Reading assignments (RA1-RA7, about 4% each)	30%	1/23, 1/30, 2/6, 2/27, 3/13, 4/17, 5/1
Class presentation and discussion (CPD)	15%	various
Science and society paper (proposal SSP1, final paper SSP2)	SSP1: 10% SSP2: 30%	SSP1: 3/18 SSP2: 5/18
Participation, Attendance and Engagement (PAE)	15%	

The instructor may change the number and value of the assignments and the due dates, but will make every effort to communicate any changes clearly, fairly, and with ample warning. Details of the PAE grade will be explained on an ongoing basis and will incorporate items such as attendance, punctuality, reading quizzes, Moodle discussion participation, active participation in site visits, and ad hoc site-based assignments. All reading assignments (RA1-RA7) are due at the start of class on the due date. Other assignments are due at 11:59 PM UK time on the due date, unless otherwise specified.

Final scores will be converted to grades according to the following thresholds (or possibly more generous thresholds): 93%=A; 90%=A-; 87%=B+; 83%=B; ... ; 60%=D-.

## Late Work Policy

Each student is permitted a total of four no-penalty days of lateness for submitted work over the entire semester; every subsequent day of lateness incurs up to a 25% penalty for the late assignment. Late days can be used only in whole day units. Accounting for late days is mostly via an honor system: students should keep count of their late day usage. To use one or more late days on a given assignment, state clearly at the start of your submission how many days you are using and the total used so far in the semester. Late days cannot be used on certain assignments, such as presentations.

**Plagiarism, copying, and collaborating**

The College's standard policy on plagiarism applies and you should be familiar with it. Unless an assignment specifically states otherwise, all work should be your own.

**Accommodations**

The instructor will follow college policy on [accommodations](#) for students who need them.