POLI 216: Contemporary Liberal and Democratic Theory: Politics and Expertise

Winter 2021
Fri, 9-11:50 am

Instructor: Zeynep Pamuk
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Office hours: Thu, 2-4 pm

Course description

This course focuses on the use and misuse of knowledge and expertise in politics. We will examine the role of expertise in legitimating state power, evidence-based policy and its critiques, the dangers of technocracy and populism for democracy as well as worries about misinformation and "post-truth" politics. We will reflect on whether a democratic use of expertise is possible and what it would take to realize it. We will also study two specific issue areas involving expertise in politics: central banking and artificial intelligence.

Assessment

Grades will be determined based on participation (30%) and a 20-page final paper (70%).

Participation and presentations

Active participation and engagement with the materials is expected from all students and forms part of the grade for the course. Each student will be expected to do two 15-minute presentations. The first will be a presentation on the week's readings, to get the discussion started, the second will be a presentation of your proposed final paper topic on our last session. Presentations will not be graded directly, but will be evaluated as part of your participation grade.

Course schedule

Week 1. Introduction: The Problem of Expertise

Stephen Turner, "What Is the Problem with Experts?" *Social Studies of Science* 31.1 (2001): 123-49.

Week 2. Experts and the Modern State

James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, Chs. 1 and 2

Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, Ch. 3

F.A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," *American Economic Review* 35.4 (1945): 519-530.

Week 3. Evidence-Based Policy

Charles E. Lindblom "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review* 19.2 (1959): 79-88.

Esther Duflo, "The Economist as Plumber," *American Economic Review* 107.5 (2017): 1-26.

Angus Deaton and Nancy Cartwright, "Understanding and Misunderstanding Randomized Controlled Trials." *Social Science & Medicine* 210 (2018): 2-21.

Luciana de Souza Leão and Gil Eyal, "The Rise of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) in International Development in Historical Perspective," *Theory and Society* 48.3 (2019): 383-418.

Week 4. Technocracy and Populism

Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society,* Ch. 5

Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, Ch. 2

Christopher Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, "Populism and Technocracy: Opposites or Complements," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 20.2 (2017): 186-206.

Daniele Caramani, "Will vs. Reason: The Populist and Technocratic Forms of Political Representation and Their Critique to Party Government." *The American Political Science Review* 111.1 (2017): 54.

Week 5. Democratizing Expertise

James Bohman, "Democracy as Inquiry, Inquiry as Democratic: Pragmatism, Social Science, and the Cognitive Division of Labor" *American Journal of Political Science* (1999): 590-607.

Elizabeth Anderson, "The Epistemology of Democracy" *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology* 3.1 (2006): 8-22.

Philip Kitcher, *Science in a Democratic Society*, Ch. 5

Mark B. Brown, "Survey Article: Citizen Panels and the Concept of Representation," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 14.2 (2006): 203-25.

Week 6. Public Communication of Expertise

Stephen John, "Epistemic Trust and the Ethics of Science Communication" *Social Epistemology* 32.2 (2018): 75-87

Michael Lamb and Melissa Lane. "Aristotle on the Ethics of Communicating Climate change." In *Climate Justice in a Non-Ideal World* (2016): 229-254.

Robert Keohane et al. "The Ethics of Scientific Communication under Uncertainty." *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 13.4 (2014): 343-368.

Shanto Iyengar and Douglas S. Massey, "Scientific Communication in a Post-Truth Society." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116.16 (2019): 7656-61.

Week 7. Participation, Protest and Science Activism

Steven Epstein, *Impure Science* Ch. 7

Scott Frickel et al. "Undone Science" *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 35.4 (2010): 444-473.

Anna Kirkland, *Vaccine Court,* Chs. 3 and 5

Week 8. Case 1: Central Banking

Paul Tucker, *Unelected Power* Chs. 8 and 9

Jens Van't Klooster "The Ethics of Delegating Monetary Policy." *The Journal of Politics* 82.2 (2020): 587-599.

Leah Downey, "Delegation in Democracy: A Temporal Analysis," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 2020: doi/10.1111/jopp.12234.

Week 9. Case 2: Artificial Intelligence and Algorithms

Ruha Benjamin, *Race After Technology*, Chs. 1 and 4

Kate Crawford. "Can an Algorithm be Agonistic?" *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 41.1 (2016): 77-92.

Davide Panagia. "On the Possibilities of a Political Theory of Algorithms." *Political Theory* (2020).

Week 10. Final Paper Presentations