Special Topics in Social/Cultural Anthropology

Anthropology of Science, Technology, and Medicine

Course Number: 189
Semester: Spring
Year: 2016
Location: 220 Wheeler
Instructor: Hayden, C
Units: 4
Time: M W 4-5:30 pm
CCN: 02717

Whether we are contemplating the promises and perils of pharmaceutical consumption, the militarization of everyday life in the U.S., or the question of whether it matters that Google may be tracking our every move as its search functions fundamentally shape what and how we know, science and technology (including information technology) are fundamental parts of the political and social worlds we inhabit, and of our intimate senses of ourselves. This course addresses these questions in three clusters.

First, it provides an advanced introduction to key conceptual work in the anthropology of science including work by Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour, Emily Martin, Michel Foucault, and others. The goal is to lay a foundation for stepping back and asking, what critical tools are available to us for thinking about how truth-effects are produced in the world today? How do we know what we know? And who is the “we?”

Second, course readings will ask, how might the consumer and technological objects (pharmaceuticals, smartphones) that saturate many lives in the U.S. and globally fundamentally shape not just personal experiences of the world but the very foundations of what counts as, for example, “health” in the first place? (As with Joseph Dumit’s book *Drugs for Life: How Pharmaceutical Companies Define Our Health*).

Third, have new information technology, media platforms, and data-rich practices (data mining, self-tracking) now fundamentally changed the questions we must pose vis-à-vis knowledge and truth? Here we will look at crowd-sourcing knowledge production (and labor), the rapidly growing self-tracking movement (especially vis-à-vis health) and the tracking of racialized police violence, and recent work on the infrastructures of “the cloud” to examine the forces that are giving shape to the circuitry of knowledge, experience, health, and work today.

Readings may include (but are not limited to) Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto,” Dumit’s *Drugs for Life*, Latour’s *Science in Action*, selections from the work of Foucault, Deleuze, and Marx, Orit Halpern’s *Beautiful Data*, Tung-Hui Hu’s *A Prehistory of the Cloud*, and more.