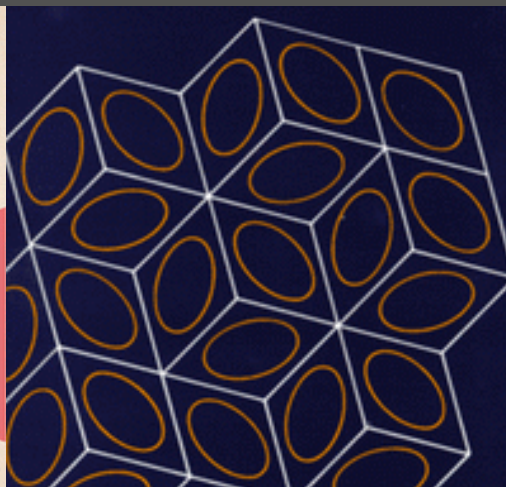
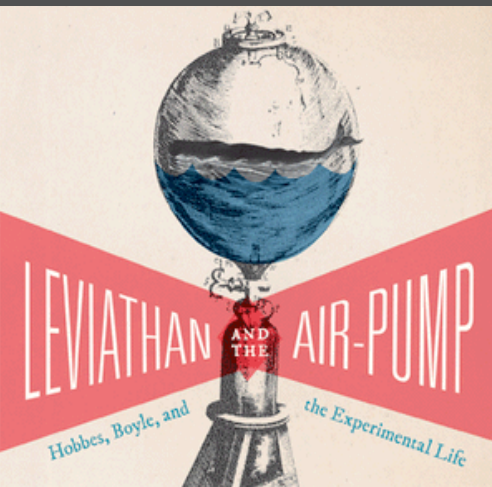


# Science Wars Revisited: Science, Objectivity, and Democracy



SE | 2 SWS | WS 2018/19 |

Moduls: SOZ-MA-1, SOZ-MA-6, SOZ-MA-8, SOZ10-BA-SP, SOZ-BA-SP, GS-BA-6, PW-BA-SP, STS-MA-M2

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## contents

What we are witnessing today is the crisis of both objectivity and democracy. It almost seems that in the so-called “post-truth era” objectivity, facts, and truth are threatened in a similar way as the climate or endangered species are. But what exactly is “objectivity”? What does the notion of “facts” refer to, and what are the consequences of arguing that facts are constructed? How to make sense of the relationship between science and politics? How can science and democracy inform each other? Do democracies need facts and evidences? And do facts and evidences need democratically organized societies, in turn?

By critically revisiting the “science wars” of the 1990s, an academic dispute between scholars from the natural sciences and the humanities about the nature of scientific knowledge production, in this seminar, we will explore the relationship between science, objectivity, and democracy. Is it justified to call the dispute between some natural scientists and some scholars from the humanities already a war? What can ‘we’ learn from the science wars? What does it mean to emphasize the historically contingent and socially constructed nature of scientific knowledge as well as the situatedness of the knowledge producer both in general and against the backdrop of immanent planetary catastrophes and growing anti-science resentments in many parts of the world in particular? Is there another science war happening at this very moment—but this time one that according to Bruno Latour might really deserve to be called a war?

Reading classic as well as contemporary contributions in Science and Technology Studies, we will not only ask what objectivity entails and how science can be understood as a social practice, but also discuss how both scholars from the natural sciences and science studies respond to anti-science rhetoric and policies by discussing the recent attacks on the climate sciences and on gender studies.

Requirements **Teilnahmeschein:** attendance and participation and presentation

Requirements **Leistungsschein:** attendance and participation, presentation, and term paper (expanding on a topic of the course, 15 pages, deadline March 30, 2019).

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# schedule and literature

## Meeting 1: Wednesday, 5 December 2018 | Room SH 0.106

### 10:15-11:45 Objectivity

Daston, Lorraine, and Peter Galison. 2007. *Objectivity*. New York: Zone Books, pp. 17-42.

#### Discussion:

Harding, Sandra. 1993. "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology. 'What is Strong Objectivity'?" In Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (Eds.). *Feminist Epistemologies*. New York: Routledge, pp. 49-82.

### 12:15-13:45 Truth

Shapin, Steven. 1994. *A Social History of Truth. Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, pp. 65-125.

#### Discussion:

Haraway, Donna. 1997. *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium.FemaleMan©\_Meets\_OncoMouse™*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 23-39.

### 14:15-16:00 Knowledge

Fleck, Ludwik. 1986 [1936]. "The Problem of Epistemology." In Robert S. Cohen and Thomas Schnelle (Eds.). *Cognition and Fact. Materials on Ludwik Fleck*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 79-112.

## Meeting 2: Wednesday, 16 January 2019 | Room SH 0.106

### 10:15-11:45 Revolutions and Crises

Kuhn, Thomas. 1996 [1962]. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, pp. 52-91.

#### Discussion:

Fleck, Ludwik. 1986 [1960]. "Crisis in Science." In Robert S. Cohen and Thomas Schnelle (Eds.). *Cognition and Fact. Materials on Ludwik Fleck*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 153-158.

### 12:15-13:45 Relativism

Bloor, David. 1991 [1976]. *Knowledge and Social Imagery*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, pp. 3-45.

#### Discussion:

Latour, Bruno. 1991. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 91-129.

### 14:15-16:00 Science Wars I – The Escalation

Gross, Paul R., and Norman Levitt. 1994. *Higher Superstition. The Academic Left and Its Quarrels With Science*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapter: "The Academic Left and Science", pp. 1-15.

Sokal, Alan. 1996. "A Physicist Experiments With Cultural Studies." *Lingua Franca*, (May/June): 2-5.

### Meeting 3: Friday, 25 January 2019 | Room SH 3.105

#### 10:15-11:45 Science Wars II – Finding a Common Ground

Sokal, Alan. 2008 [1998]. "What the Social Text Affair Does and Does Not Prove." In *Beyond the Hoax. Science, Philosophy and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 149-166.

#### Discussion:

Latour, Bruno. 1999. *Pandora's Hope. Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, pp. 1-23.

#### 12:15-13:45 From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern to Matters of Care

Latour, Bruno. 2004. "Why Has Critique Run Out Of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern." *Critical Inquiry*, 30 (2): 225-248.

#### Discussion:

Puig de la Bellacasa, María. 2011. "Matters of Care in Technoscience: Assembling Neglected Things." *Social Studies of Science*, 41 (1): 85-106.

#### 14:15-16:00 Science and Democracy

Jasanoff, Sheila. 2018. "Science and Democracy." In Ulrike Felt, Rayvon Fouché, Clark A. Miller, and Laurel Smith-Doerr (Eds.). *The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, pp. 259-287.

#### Discussion:

Lührmann, Anna, et al. 2018. "State of the World 2017. Autocratization and Exclusion?" *Democratization*, 18 May 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1479693>.

### Meeting 4: Wednesday, January 30, 2019 | Room SH 0.106

#### 10:15-11:45 Science in the Post-Truth Era: Wars on Science – Climate Sciences

Hoffman, Steve G. 2018. "The Responsibilities and Obligations of STS in a Moment of Post-Truth Demagoguery." *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 4: 444-452.

#### Discussion:

Hayhoe, Katharine. 2018. "Post-Truth Predicaments. How Can Scientists Get Through to a Public That's Seemingly Indifferent to Objective Facts?" *Nature* 541: 425-427.

#### 12:15-13:45 Science in the Post-Truth Era: Wars on Science – Gender Studies

Pluckrose, Helen, James A. Lindsay, and Peter Boghossian. 2018. "Academic Grievance Studies and the Corruption of Scholarship." *Areo*, October 2, 2018.

Engber, Daniel. 2018. "What the 'Grievance Studies' Hoax Actually Reveals." *Slate*, October 5, 2018.

#### Discussion:

Villa, Paula-Irene. 2015. "'Anti-Genderismus': German Angst?". In Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte (Eds.). *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe. Mobilizing Against Equality*. London, pp. 99-116.

Klein, Hans-Peter. 2016. "Die Wissenschaft leidet unter dem Diktat der Gender-Studies." *NZZ am Sonntag*, 15. Mai 2016.

