

| Degree     | Type | Year |
|------------|------|------|
| Philosophy | OT   | 3    |
| Philosophy | OT   | 4    |

## Contact

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## Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

## Prerequisites

This optional subject is intended for Philosophy students who are already in the final part of their degree (3rd and 4th year) and who have a special interest in thinking about the problems of our present from an interdisciplinary perspective. Knowledge of the English language is recommended at the level of reading comprehension. Fortunately, however, the bulk of the readings can be done in Spanish and some in Catalan.

## Objectives and Contextualisation

The course equips students with analytical concepts, case studies, and carefully chosen readings by influential authors, which are rooted in the field of "Science Studies," encompassing disciplines such as history, philosophy, sociology of science, and STS studies. Its purpose is to enable a critical examination of the multifaceted challenges of our current era of uncertainty, spanning areas such as politics, public health, environmentalism, identity, and globalization.

The course offers a critical perspective on "modern science," primarily referred to as Western science, which until recently, has been commonly regarded as *neutral, objective, and "autonomous" in relation to society*, founded upon an assumed *universal rationality*. In contrast to this conventional understanding, the course introduces a notion of "science" that is adaptable, contingent, and ever-evolving—an understanding that encompasses various fields of knowledge, their materiality, and their social dimensions in a continuous manner.

By undertaking a critical analysis of the crises that significantly influence our present, ranging from environmental concerns to health issues and global challenges, new fluid boundaries of our knowledge come to light. These boundaries are actively "constructed" by historical actors themselves as instruments of authority and power.

Throughout this STS seminar, numerous historical examples are presented, which, when coupled with diverse analytical frameworks, establish a fresh approach to connecting the past and the present—a new form of "presentism." This approach aims to assist us in making informed decisions about our lives today and in developing an original, rigorous way of thinking.

## Competences

### Philosophy

- Analysing and summarising the main arguments of fundamental texts of philosophy in its various disciplines.
- Applying the knowledge of ethics to the moral problems of society, and assessing the implications about the human condition of changes in the world of contemporary techniques.
- Identifying the main philosophical attitudes in the field of aesthetics and critically applying them in the art world.
- Placing the most representative philosophical ideas and arguments of a period in their historical background and relating the most important authors of each period of any philosophical discipline.
- Recognising and interpreting topics and problems of philosophy in its various disciplines.
- Recognising the philosophical implications of the scientific knowledge.
- Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must be capable of communicating information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.
- Using the symbology and procedures of the formal sciences in the analysis and building of arguments.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Ability to maintain an appropriate conversation.
2. Accurately drawing up normative texts.
3. Accurately using the specific lexicon of science history.
4. Analysing and summarising information.
5. Analysing historical cases about scientific facts.
6. Assessing the legitimacy of the thesis defended by participants of the most important contemporary controversies.
7. Autonomously searching, selecting and processing information both from structured sources (databases, bibliographies, specialized magazines) and from across the network.
8. Carrying out a planning for the development of a subject-related work.
9. Carrying out oral presentations using an appropriate academic vocabulary and style.
10. Communicating in the studied language in oral and written form, properly using vocabulary and grammar.
11. Correctly drawing up a previously analysed non-regulatory text.
12. Distinguishing and analysing classical and current debates of the History of Art.
13. Distinguishing and analysing representative texts of the main genres of the philosophical literature.
14. Documenting a philosophical issue and contrasting its sources.
15. Effectively communicating and applying the argumentative and textual processes to formal and scientific texts.
16. Establishing relationships between science, philosophy, art, religion, politics, etc.
17. Explaining aspects of the history of science by using the discipline's specific terminology.
18. Explaining the philosophical importance of contemporary science and its implementation area.
19. Explaining the specific notions of the History of Philosophy.
20. Identifying the main ideas of a related text and drawing a diagram.
21. Indicating the main current topics of philosophical discussion.
22. Judging the moral impact of new technological developments on humans.
23. Leading working groups, overseeing collective tasks and working with commitment in order to bring together various positions.

24. Organizing their own time and work resources: designing plans with priorities of objectives, calendars and action commitments.
25. Producing an individual work that specifies the work plan and timing of activities.
26. Recognising and implementing the following teamwork skills: commitment to teamwork, habit of cooperation, ability to participate in the problem solving processes.
27. Recognising and using the several forms of reasoning in the history of philosophy.
28. Reflecting on their own work and the immediate environment's in order to continuously improve it.
29. Relating elements and factors involved in the development of scientific processes.
30. Relating several ideas of the current philosophical debates.
31. Relating the various orders of the philosophical ideas of different authors and historical moments.
32. Solving problems autonomously.
33. Specifying the general impact of new technological developments on humans.
34. Submitting works in accordance with both individual and small group demands and personal styles.
35. Summarising the topics and arguments exposed in a classical philosophical debate.
36. Using suitable terminology when drawing up an academic text.

## Content

The course presents three main subjects which are organized as follows:

### Liquid Sociologies: Disciplines and Boundaries

The "liquid" complexity of our present (Z. Bauman) compels us to move away from essentialisms and to analyze knowledge boundaries with flexibility (Th. Gieryn). We live in times of fragmentation, fragility, uncertainty, and instability, which must be critically and constructively addressed.

### Liquid Sociologies: Scientific Communities

Moving beyond an essentialist view of science and knowledge, it is necessary to reflect on the various "science-society" relationships developed throughout the twentieth century (Merton). From early approaches to science as a collective yet autonomous phenomenon, we observe a progressive blurring of the boundaries between science and society (Kuhn, Latour)

### Liquid Sociologies: Controversies and Symmetries

We are particularly interested in instances of disagreement and conflict (S. Schaffer). Controversies are disputes over boundaries (Th. Gieryn). Scientific knowledge must be approached symmetrically, granting epistemic value to all discourses on nature, society, and the individual. Furthermore, the struggle for authority and recognition is typically settled in the public sphere (J. Habermas).

### Liquid Sociologies: Ethnographies and Rituals

Science, especially the natural sciences, often struggles to integrate into broader cultural contexts. A new approach is needed—one that regards science as a cultural phenomenon, mediating between the natural and the social (Geertz, Latour). This entails proposing "ethnographies" that delve into local and contingent knowledge, give voice to multiple actors, and question the presumed "universality" of knowledge.

### Knowledge in Transit: Discourses and Publics

There is no clear boundary between science and its communication to society. Knowledge is produced through ongoing interactions between so-called experts and laypeople, who compete for power and social recognition (S. Hilgartner, L. Fleck). The publics of science constitute a fluid category (A. Nieto-Galan). Within this context, it becomes possible to develop a critical discourse on the deeply political nature of science communication and education.

### Knowledge in Transit: Circulation and Scales

Knowledge in transit (J. Secord) occurs both within a given society and across different social and cultural groups. This circulation must be critically examined from a postcolonial perspective (S. Harding), while amplifying the voices of historically marginalized "subaltern" actors (A. Gramsci). The crisis of Western scientific exceptionalism has led to the emergence of plural modernities.

### Knowledge in Transit: Experts and Intellectuals

What role do experts play in liberal democracies? Is it possible to reconcile science and democracy (H. Collins)? How can we distinguish between expert governance and the influence of "intellectuals" (E. Said)? To address these questions, we must critically examine the relationships between knowledge and power (Th. Adorno, M. Foucault), and between science and politics.

### Knowledge in Transit: Professionals and Activists

Just as the "publics of science" (students, visitors, patients, amateurs, readers, etc.) attain epistemological relevance in specific contexts, activists-broadly defined-must also be viewed through this lens (M. Armiero). Environmentalists, feminists, patient advocacy groups, among others, can offer a "strong objectivity" (S. Harding), such that the perspectives of marginalized and oppressed groups help co-construct more "objective" narratives of our world.

### Modernities: Progress and Nostalgia

It is crucial to revise an overly uncritical vision of progress (W. Benjamin) and to propose new ways of interpreting the past for its applicability in the present (N. Oreskes). The "new presentism" encourages the use of historical case studies to strengthen our analytical and political positioning in the present.

### Modernities: Toxics and Environmentalism

In recent decades, "green" critiques of scientific and technological progress have gained strength across various perspectives: environmental history (D. Worster), political ecology (J. Martínez Alier), the role of toxics as sociotechnical agents (J. R. Bertomeu), ecofeminism (C. Merchant), and slow violence (R. Nixon).

### Modernities: Health and Globalization

Public health offers a powerful lens through which to analyze "science-technology-society" relations. Pandemics, as crises of public health systems, represent ideal case studies (Foucault, Bensaude-Vincent). They compel us to interrogate the mechanisms of medical authority and the demarcation of expert boundaries (Th. Gieryn, R. Porter).

### Modernities: Uncertainties and Utopias

What are-or could be-the utopias of our present? How might we overcome the "postmodern pessimism" (L. Marx) or the bleak vision of Retrotopia (Z. Bauman), with its longing for an idealized past? Some of the proposals explored in previous sessions may offer tools to transcend the risk and uncertainty that characterize our current society (U. Beck).

## Activities and Methodology

| Title                                                         | Hours | ECTS | Learning Outcomes                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type: Directed                                                |       |      |                                                            |
| Discussion of case studies                                    | 32    | 1.28 | 5, 4, 12, 16, 17, 15, 10, 20, 21, 1, 27, 30, 31, 29, 35, 3 |
| Theoretical lectura                                           | 48    | 1.92 | 5, 4, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28, 30, 29               |
| Type: Supervised                                              |       |      |                                                            |
| Tutorials                                                     | 10    | 0.4  | 14, 8, 15, 10, 9, 36, 20, 23, 1, 24, 35                    |
| Type: Autonomous                                              |       |      |                                                            |
| Reading texts, writing an essay, preparing oral interventions | 38    | 1.52 | 4, 13, 25, 8, 18, 20, 23, 1, 24, 26, 32, 35                |

Based on a set of analytical concepts, readings by key authors, and case studies, the course provides students with a range of intellectual tools to critically analyze various political, health-related, environmental, identity-based, and global issues of the present.

The course is structured around three major thematic blocks: *Liquid Sociology*, *Knowledge in Transit*, and *Modernities*. Each session includes a theoretical component presented by the instructor, as well as a text or material -also accessible through the virtual campus- which will be presented each day by a different student.

The virtual campus will host a collection of theoretical and practical materials designed to complement and support the development of classroom activities.

15 minutes will be reserved from a class, within the calendar established by the institution/program, for students to complete the evaluation surveys of the teachers' performance and the subject evaluation, in order to remind the teachers of the need to promote the surveys among the students.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

## Assessment

### Continuous Assessment Activities

| Title                          | Weighting | Hours | ECTS | Learning Outcomes                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Final exam                     | 35%       | 3     | 0.12 | 5, 4, 2, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 15, 36, 20, 21, 6, 33, 27, 11, 28, 30, 31, 29, 35, 3                           |
| Partial exam                   | 25%       | 3     | 0.12 | 5, 4, 2, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 15, 10, 36, 20, 6, 33, 11, 28, 31, 29, 35, 3                                   |
| Participation in the classroom | 20%       | 6     | 0.24 | 17, 18, 19, 15, 10, 9, 21, 6, 22, 1, 27, 30, 31, 35, 3                                                          |
| Written essay                  | 20%       | 10    | 0.4  | 5, 4, 7, 2, 12, 13, 14, 25, 16, 8, 17, 18, 19, 15, 10, 36, 20, 6, 23, 24, 33, 34, 26, 11, 28, 31, 29, 32, 35, 3 |

#### 1. Midterm Exam (25%)

A critical commentary on two texts related to the first two major thematic blocks of the course: "*Liquid Sociologies*" and part of "*Knowledge in Transit*." The exam will take place in the classroom, without access to books, notes, or mobile phones. Students will be expected to connect the texts with the theoretical issues previously discussed in class.

#### 2. Final Exam (35%)

This exam will include questions requiring analysis and synthesis, focused on part of the content of "*Knowledge in Transit*" and the entirety of the "*Modernities*" block. It will also contain a comprehensive question requiring students to relate different concepts from across the course. The exam will be conducted in the classroom without access to books, notes, or mobile phones.

#### 3. Written Essay (20%)

Students must produce an original text of 2,000 words (including footnotes and a final list of references) in response to one of the discussion questions proposed during the course. The essay should engage with class content and offer a critical analysis of the contribution of a specific author. It is essential to use and cite relevant hermeneutic sources (academic books and articles, press articles, websites, ChatGPT, podcasts, etc.). The essay must propose an original idea or concept and justify its usefulness for analyzing the chosen issue as a case study. The teaching staff will provide appropriate readings once the topic is selected.

#### 4. Active Participation in Class Discussions (20%)

Assessment will consider attendance, presentation of assigned readings, questions raised following the professor's lecture, facilitation of debates, and similar contributions.

This course does not allow for a single-assessment system.

#### CALENDAR

The Department of Philosophy agreed that the first-semester students would have two periods dedicated to assessment activities and one week during which students could specifically prepare for the exams, in the format that each instructor will specify at the beginning of the course. During the week prior to the exams, there will be collective tutorials and classroom Q&A sessions. No new evaluable material will be introduced during this time.

Dates are as follows:

- October 27 - October 31: review or tutorial week
- November 3 - November 7: assessment week
- January 8, 9, 12, 13, 14: assessment week

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#### RESIT EXAM

To be eligible for the resit exam, students must have submitted the 2,000-word essay (20%), taken the exams (60%), and obtained a minimum final average grade of 3.5 (out of 10). The resit will consist of an in-class exam similar to the final exam of continuous assessment and the individual submission of a new 2,000-word text improving on aspects of the original essay.

Students will receive the grade "Not assessable" if they fail to submit or complete at least one-third of the required assessment activities.

#### AI

This subject allows the use of AI technologies as an integral part of the submitted work, provided that the final result reflects a significant contribution from the student in terms of analysis and personal reflection.

The student must clearly (i) identify which parts have been generated using AI technology; (ii) specify the tools used; and (iii) include a critical reflection on how these have influenced the process and final outcome of the activity.

Lack of transparency regarding the use of AI in the assessed activity will be considered academic dishonesty; the corresponding grade may be lowered, or the work may even be awarded a zero.

In cases of greater infringement, more serious action may be taken.

If the student commits any irregularity that could lead to a significant variation in the grade of an assessment, this assessment will be graded 0, regardless of the disciplinary process that may be initiated. If several irregularities occur in the assessment acts of the same subject, the final grade for this subject will be 0.

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## Software



No specific software required.

## Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

| Name           | Group | Language | Semester       | Turn          |
|----------------|-------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| (SEM) Seminars | 1     | Catalan  | first semester | morning-mixed |
| (TE) Theory    | 1     | Catalan  | first semester | morning-mixed |