Overview

How are power and knowledge re-oriented as expertise becomes more common, easier to access and more diverse? Are disputes about truth, accuracy, measurement or evidence being adjudicated differently, and with what impact on political or governmental practices? What technological and political thresholds have been crossed, and what continuities with older forms of expertise persist? What difference have the Internet, new media and rapid technological innovation made to the formation of collectives and how are experts adapting their skills and knowledge to them? How are practices of government, development or management being rearranged in light of more need for expertise, increasingly complex social and environmental problems, and changing understandings of the role of publics, markets and government power in addressing them?

This course addresses both classic understandings of expertise and experts, as well as newer attempts to make sense of them, primarily in social sciences and philosophy, with an emphasis on anthropology, sociology, philosophy and science studies. Key topics of scientific and technologically governed domains like climate change, surveillance and security, global health, work, international development, labor and production will be covered alongside renewed questions of expert/lay participation in citizen science, international development, participatory democracy, hacking, hacktivism and new protest movements.

The course meets once a week for 3 hours, students are expected to attend all sessions, write reading responses and conduct a quarter-long exploration of a form of expertise relevant to the course.

Goals

The goals of the course include

• To explore concepts and practices of expertise across disciplines and domains, with special attention to both disciplinary differences in approach and substantive distinctions in practice.

• To understand the relationship between expertise and nonexpertise—amateurism, lay participation, unskilled, deskilled, illegitimate expertise, etc.

• To investigate a particular form of expertise and come to an understanding of what is involved in becoming such an expert as well as how it fits into the political and technological contexts where it functions.
Requirements

Students will be graded on three things:

• **25% Discussion and intellectual engagement:** Students are required to attend at least 9 of 10 sessions (from beginning to end), participate in discussion, and present their own independent investigations on the topic in class where appropriate.

• **25% Reading responses:** Students are required to submit a total of eight reading responses. These are to be divided into four (4) prospective and four (4) retrospective reports in any combination. Prospective reports are due no later than 24 hours before class meets. These responses are expected to help guide discussion, raise issues for clarification, and connect to the ongoing research project (see below). Retrospective reading responses are due no later than 24 hours after class meets. These responses reflect on the discussion that occurred in class. Remember that you can only do four of each kind, lest your procrastination get the better of you.

• **50% Quarter long research project:** Become an expert. Can you? Why or why not? If not, what kinds of things do you need to know or experience to become this kind of expert? What would it take, and how long and in what ways, to become this expert? Pick a domain where expertise plays a key role. Throughout the course, investigate this domain in as many ways as you can. Your reading responses and discussion in class can reflect this interest, as you attempt to connect it to the readings for each week. By the end of the course you will produce a paper (no longer than 6000 words) which summarizes your understanding of the case in terms of the readings and discussions in the course. What kind of expertise is at stake? Who are the experts and how did they become experts? What is the relation of expertise to governance, ethics, politics?

Some examples of contemporary issues that might make for interesting cases: Apple iPhone backdoors, Zika, ISIS/ISIL, Flint, Michigan, Refugees and Asylum, disasters, recent or ongoing (Fukushima, earthquakes, storms), etc..

Books and Articles

Books to buy at the bookstore:


Syllabus

Part 1: [Weeks 1-2] Overviews and Classics What kinds of things do we care about when we care about experts and expertise? How is it related to professionals, scientists, skilled labor, manual and mental labor, calling, vocation, knowledge/power, doxa/epistemé, omnicompetent individuals and great communities, rational actors and think tanks and so on. What kinds of empirical, critical and philosophical work has been done in this domain?

Part 2: [Weeks 3-4] The Phenomenology of Expertise What does it feel like to be an expert? What’s the relation between the expert and the expertise? Craft, skill, mastery, vs. credentials and rituals of legitimation. How does apprenticeship relate to expertise, and how is embodied expertise transformed into bureaucratic structure or systematic forms of management and audit?

Part 3: [Weeks 5-6] Truth and Politics How is expert knowledge related to political power? How are different kinds of expertise arranged along with different forms of political and governmental systems? Who are the “meta-experts” in this form of arrangement?


Detailed Schedule

Part 1: Overviews and Classics

EXPERT

Expert is from fw expert, oF, rw expertus, L, past participle of experiri - to try. It appeared in English, as an adjective, in 1C14, at the same time as the closely related experience. It is characteristic that it began to be used as a noun - an expert - from eC19, in an industrial society which put increasing emphasis on specialization and qualification. It has continued to be used over a wide range of activities, at times with a certain vagueness (cf. qualified and the more deliberate formal qualifications). It is interesting that inexpert, as a noun in the opposite sense, was occasionally used from 1C19, but the main word in this sense is, of course, layman, generalized from the old contrast between laymen and clerics. Lay is from fw laicus, L - not of the clergy, from rw laikos, Gk - of the people. There is a comparable movement in profession, C13, from rw profiteri, L - to declare aloud, which was originally an avowal of religious belief, becoming the basis of two nouns; professor - a ranked teacher, C14, an avower, C15; and professional, C18, in a widening range of vocations and occupations. Amateur, fw
amatore. It, rw amator, L - lover, and thence one who loves something, developed in an opposed pairing with professional (first as a matter of relative skill, later as a class and then monetary distinction) from C18.

See INTELLECTUAL


Friday April 1, Orientation and Classic readings

Required Readings


Reviews

- Dominic Boyer. “Thinking through the Anthropology of Experts”. In: *Anthropology in Action* 15.2 (2008), pp. 38–46

Optional/Selections

- Diana E Forsythe. “Ethics and politics of studying up in technoscience”. In: *Anthropology of Work Review* 20.1 (1999), pp. 6–11
- Ulf Hannerz. “Studying down, up, sideways, through, backwards, forwards, away and at home: Reflections on the field worries of an expansive discipline”. In: *Locating the field: space, place and context in anthropology* (2006), pp. 23–42

**Friday April 8 Contemporary theories of expertise**

*Required*


*Optional/Selections*


**Part 2: The phenomenology of expertise**

**Friday April 15, Expertise, Corporeality and the AI Debates**

*Required Readings*


• Nick Seaver. “The nice thing about context is that everyone has it”. In: *Media, Culture and Society* 37.7 (2015), pp. 1101–1109

*Optional/Selections*


**Friday April 22: Cont’d**

*Required Readings*


• Dominic Boyer. “The corporeality of expertise”. In: *Ethnos* 70.2 (2005), pp. 243–266

Optional/Selections


Part 3: Experts in Truth and Politics

Friday April 29

Required Readings

- Peter Miller. Governing the present : administering economic, social and personal life. Cambridge: Polity, 2008, Introduction, Chapters 5, 7 and 8

Optional/Selections


Friday May 6

Required Readings


*Optional/Selections*

**Part 4: Cases**

**Friday May 13**

*Required Texts*


*Optional/Selections*


**Friday May 20**

*Required Texts*


*Optional/Selections*


**Friday May 27**

*Required Reading*


*Optional/Selections*

- *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management Safety Science*

**Friday June 3 IT/Security/Crisis**

*Required Reading*
  Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2015

Optional/Selections

• Joseph Masco. *The theater of operations: national security affect from the Cold War to the
  War on Terror.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014

Friday June 10 *Research Paper Due*