

Vesalius College

Course description

Course title: Science and Society

Course code: COR 291E

Teacher responsible: Jean-Pierre De Greve

Course description:

After a brief introduction of some historical perspectives, students explore their own scientific attitude through a case study experiment (at home), to answer the question “what do you need to do to achieve a solution in a scientific way?” The relevance of concepts and themes for the daily life will be explored through short presentations on scientists, their concepts and the impact of their science on society. We will also explore how scientifically literate the public is, through an analysis of a study on the public awareness of science. Students will also have to read several papers on controversial themes in science and technology and their societal impact. These themes will then be discussed in workshops.

Finally, several workshops are dedicated to learn how science and society interact in a communicative way, and to develop reporting abilities on science in various ways.

Course objectives:

To familiarize the student with the language, subject matter, and methods of investigation and current concepts of science in its relation to society and daily life, and to be able to read, write and speak about these issues.

The student will

- have gained awareness of the place, size and importance of science in human activities
- have experienced problem solving through teamwork, rational analysis and debate
- have learned the skill of writing comprehensive abstracts
- have gained insight in the relation between observations and scientific modeling.

Grade weighting scheme:

- 1) 1 experimental assignment + report 50pts
- 2) Case study of a scientist and societal impact of his/her work 60 pts
- 3) 1 Exam 100pts
- 4) Active class participation: 30 pts
- 5) Case study of an important issue in society with a major technological-scientific content 60 pts

Totaling the above sections comes to 300 points. At the end of the semester I will assign grades according to the College rules.

Used course material (handbooks, readers, readings, newspapers, magazines) and references:

Reader and additional articles made available on Pointcarré.