Classification Syllabus

STS 10-01 Reading Lab, Fall 2020
Moon Duchin and Heather Rosenfeld

1 Course Basics

Designing this course has been a collaboration between Moon Duchin, a mathematician, and Heather Rosenfeld, a geographer. We both have a longstanding interest in STS in addition to our primary disciplinary training. We work together in the MGGG Redistricting Lab, where we study geometry, geography, and gerrymandering. When we start going to campus again, you can find us in Barnum Hall ML 35-36 (up the red staircase from the main entrance).

Course Blurb

What's the difference between anthropology and sociology? How do we decide which fish are male and which are female? Who invented race? What qualifies as post-punk, or as a sub-atomic particle? Classification and taxonomy are unavoidable for everyone from physicians to philosophers to geographers. And when classification is undertaken by the powerful, there are major consequences for the classified—from being Jewish in the Third Reich to Coloured in Apartheid South Africa. Today, standards, conventions, and data structures are a prerequisite for all kinds of large-scale record-keeping, and therefore to being a person in the world.

What is a Reading Lab?

Every semester the STS program offers a variety of Reading Labs: discussion-based courses that meet once per week for 75 minutes to talk through a short and important reading. You can "pair" these with related courses from any department to make those count toward an STS major or minor. So for instance if you take Classification together with Organic Chemistry, or together with Sociology of Race and Ethnicity, then the 2 SHUs from this class and up to 3 SHUs from the other class combine to put 5 SHUs towards an STS degree, counting as a core class. Talk to the instructor(s) about getting a class approved for pairing.

We love this format for learning, because it encourages you to apply an STS framework to your other courses. In this case, classification really is everywhere...

Course Logistics

Class meets Fridays 10:30-11:45 on Zoom (tinyurl.com/classification-class). The course website is found at sites.tufts.edu/classification, and we'll link all the readings there. Because it is a discussion-driven class, synchronous attendance is essential. Up to two class meetings can be excused for personal reasons if you make them up by attending an STS Lunch (sites.tufts.edu/stslunch) and writing a response to the presentation.

Each week we'll give you 30 pages of reading and the course standard is that you (a) **read all of it**, (b) **take notes**, (c) **say a thing in class**! A good way to frame comments for class is to call attention to a sentence or two in the reading and respond to that. In other words, we recommend that you prepare a discussion prompt—but what you end up saying may be different and can certainly respond to the conversation rather than sticking to your script. We'll also have a class slack channel to make it easier to interact off of zoom.

There are no writing assignments and there is no final exam. The course is letter-graded, with the grade based on your demonstration of having contended with the reading material and your contributions to the discussion.

Living in a Pandemic – and A Word on Community Norms

We are living through a once-a-century disaster, a pandemic coupled with a political and moral reckoning. We absolutely understand how crazy this time is and we know things may come up that preempt your participation, or just that distract your attention. Please just be in touch with us.

This course is designated VIRTUAL, and zoom is our basic modality. We ask that you turn on your camera when you can in order to foster the feeling of community and discussion.

It is fundamentally important that each of us feels respected in class and that we all find ways to speak. Some of us are more inclined to speak up than others: if that sounds like you, please remember to also *make space* for others who need a clear opening in order to participate. We'll talk more about norms on the first day of class. We encourage you to change your zoom name to the name you'd like to be called, and indicate your pronouns if you'd like.

How the Class Will Run

Moon and Heather will each give a 5 minute talk (possibly with slides) to kick off each class. Then we'll split you into breakout rooms at random for about an hour of discussion, with about ten students in each group. We expect each person to contribute to the discussion in each class session—if for some reason you did not get to do that on a given day, please get some comments posted on slack and talk to us about how to make it easier to participate live.

Auditors are welcome for the 10-minute intro! But the discussions are for enrolled students only. (Speak to us for special cases.)

While the weather is good, one of us might come up to campus on Fridays and hold an outdoor meeting of the class! In weeks where we do this, the other one will hold the zoom session as usual.

Generalities

Tufts maintains an Accessibility office called the StAAR Center (formerly Student Accessibility Services) at StaarCenter@tufts.edu or 617-627-4539. For all your coursework, you can contact StAAR to make an appointment with an accessibility representative to determine appropriate accommodations. For this particular class (with no writing and no exams), you will probably find it to be more effective to reach out to us about any difficulties you anticipate—but we are happy to work with StAAR if that is helpful!

2   Week by Week

	Date	Theme	Readings
Week 1	Sept 11	Introduction	Bowker and Star, *To Classify is Human* • Plato, *Phaedrus*
Week 2	Sept 18	Taxonomy	Michel Foucault, *Natural History* and *Structure* Ankeny and Leonelli, *What's So Special About Model Organisms?* • Kinsey, code sheet • Daston, *On Scientific Observation* • Nicole Nelson in STS Lunch Seminar
Week 3	Sept 25	Definitions	Mary Douglas, *The Abominations of Leviticus* Imre Lakatos, *Proofs and Refutations* • Wittgenstein on color • legal definitions of tomatoes and porn

	Date	Theme	Readings
Week 4	Oct 2	Censuses	Melissa Nobles, Preface to *Shades of Citizenship* Ian Hacking, *Public Amateurs, Secret Bureaucrats* • Bouk and boyd, *Are the Census Data Fit for Purpose?* • B.R. Ambedkar, *From Millions to Fractions*
Week 5	Oct 9	Producing Data (Structures)	Chris Phillips, *The Bases of Data* Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Carl Correns's Experiments on Xenia* Iain Morland, *Intersex* • Bowker and Star on apartheid • Mendeleev periodic table
Week 6	Oct 16	Social Learning / Machine Learning	Sally Haslanger, *Tracing the sociopolitical reality of race* Quayshawn Spencer, *How to be a biological racial realist* • Joseph M. Pierce, *In Search of An Authentic Indian* (blog)
Week 7	Oct 23	Medicine and Representation	Steve Epstein, *Histories of the Human Subject* Sarah Igo, *America in Aggregate* • Galen, Aristotle charts
Week 8	Oct 30	Mapping	Mark Monmonier, *Data Maps: A thicket of thorny choices* • DuBois data maps • Tufte data maps
Week 9	Nov 6	State as Classifier	Nikolas Rose, *Governing By Numbers: Figuring Out Democracy* James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: Intro*
Week 10	Nov 13	Boundary Work	Thomas Gieryn, *Boundary-work and the demarcation of science from non-science* • Interview with Manan Ahmed (youtube) • Crystal Lee in STS Lunch Seminar
Week 11	Nov 20	Policing	Sylvia Wynter, *No Humans Involved: An open letter to my colleagues* • Laura Alex Frye-Levine in STS Lunch Seminar (TBC)
Week 12	Dec 4	Species	Syl Ko, *By "Human," Everybody Just Means "White"* Donna Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto* (selections) • Agassiz and scientific racism
Week 13	Dec 11	Citizenship	Katherine Verdery, *Whither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'?* Lauren Berlant, *Citizenship*

The readings are provided every week as PDFs and the bullet points are optional extras (images, talks, etc).
You can often find bullet point material in the "mentions" folder in each week's Dropbox.

Last updated Sept 8, 2020.