



New Course, Spring 2018: HIST 492S / 692S

History of Science Activism

Thursdays, 2:30-5:00

Professor Sigrid Schmalzer

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This combined graduate / undergraduate seminar will examine the history of social and political movements on issues related to science, technology, and medicine. Examples include movements for organic agriculture, against nuclear energy, promoting science literacy, opposing genetic determinism, for climate justice, and much more. We will adopt an interdisciplinary approach to explore the different forms science activism has taken—from intellectual debates, to professional movements of practicing scientists, to state-directed campaigns, to grassroots community organizing—and the different historical contexts in which they have emerged. These explorations will help shed new light on the current political climate in the US: we will ask what it means to "defend science" and to what extent scientists, scholars, and activists have developed an analysis of the power relations involved in the so-called "attack on science." Students will read a wide variety of secondary and primary sources, present regularly during class meetings, write two papers rooted in analysis of the assigned materials, and pursue a final project on a subject (and in a format) of their own choosing.