This course explores a series of questions that lie at the intersection of rhetoric, science studies and philosophy:

--What does it mean to understand science as a material practice rather than an epistemic project? As a doing rather than a finding or discovering?

--How can science become more engaged in policy and address “matters of concern” to our society?

--What are the implications and possibilities opened to rhetoric (both in theory building and in rhetorical practice) by contemporary work in science studies (Latour et. al.) and philosophy of science (Harmon et. al.)?

There are undoubtedly many ways to approach these questions, but I am going to organize our exploration around the work of Bruno Latour and the recent commentary on Latour by Graham Harmon and the emerging movement known as “object oriented ontology” or, more recently “speculative realism.” Latour is perhaps the most prominent scholar in science studies and, at the risk of being reductive or omitting other important strains of the discipline, I am going to use his work to represent science studies. At least two other science studies scholars of similar theoretical position are Anne Marie Mol and Andrew Pickering whose work will figure as supplements to Latour’s.

**Mapping the questions to the readings**

The first question above-- What does it mean to understand science as a material practice rather than an epistemic project?—is a central question of science studies over the last 20 years. And this question occupies the first half of Latour’s career from *Laboratory Life* (1979), *Science in Action* (1987) *The Pasteurization of France* (1988), to *Aramis or the Love of Technology* (1996). It also leads science studies to the argument of “multiple ontologies” and “postplural” science studies, e.g. Anne Marie Mol *The Body Multiple*, Andrew Pickering *The Mangle in Practice* and *The Cybernetic Brain*. (A brief explication of this is in Graham and Herndl forthcoming).

The second question above-- How can science become more engaged in policy and address “matters of concern” to our society?—emerges from Latour’s realization that science and science studies must be concerned with politics and policy. It is part of Latour’s response to what he calls “ecocide,” the human destruction of the ecosystem and ourselves along with it. This concern appears most prominently in about 2004 in his essay “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam” and in *Politics of Nature* (2004) and *Reassembling the Social* (2007). There are other articles and
book chapters devoted to this topic and one or more of you might want to explore this as your written project. Latour's work on policy has been influential in political science and we will read this emerging work in Braun, and Whatmore’s edited collection *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy and Public Life* (2010). This is reflected in rhetoric by scholars such as Herbert Simons who argues for a “reconstructive rhetoric,” and by rhetorical scholars arguing for ethics, especially working from Levinas.

The third question above—What are the implications and opportunities for rhetoric in this intersection—has heretofore been a concern mostly for scholars in rhetoric of science and technology, but has recently emerged into wider rhetorical circles. So, Scott Barnett explores an ‘object oriented rhetoric,” Marilyn Cooper uses of Latour to explore agency. This rhetorical literature on Latour and science studies appears in journals in “English” rhetoric like *TCQ* and *CCC*, but also in “Communications” and “Speech” rhetoric journals like QJS. That to say, this is an interdisciplinary project that is absolutely current and still being formed.

My primary goal is to explore the three questions I have articulated. Secondarily, I’d like to think through the connections and differences between Speculative realism, Latour’s work and the new materialism as it emerges in many disciplines.

**WORK**

**Reading and talking:** The biggest piece of work in the course is doing all the reading and coming to class prepared to discuss it with your colleagues. I expect everyone to be in class and to talk every week. Missing classes and being silent in class will lower your final grade significantly.

**Writing:** The second part of your work will be a substantial piece or pieces of writing. Since some of you are completely unfamiliar with this material while others will have read greater or lesser parts of it, I will let each of you determine what purpose and form your writing will take. Think about what form of writing is going to be most useful for you and write me a proposal in the form of a “writing contract”: what will you write? how long will it be? when will I get it? Ph.D. students should aim at 15-20 pages for a continuous argument; MA Students 10-15 pages. Since reading logs are not continuous or new argument, they should be longer (in total). For reading logs Ph.D. students 20-30 pages, MA 15-20 pages. One Caveat: all papers and logs have to be about the materials and topics in this class. One piece of advice: the more you link the reading logs to other readings in rhetorical theory or rhetoric of science, the better sense of the field you’ll have. Writing contracts are due Wednesday 2/1/2012.

Your final grade will be determined by your participation in the class discussions and your written work in equal proportions. The last day to turn materials in will be the day scheduled for the final exam, April 30. We will meet that day and each of you will make a brief 5-7 minute presentation about your writing project for the course.
On the first day of class, we will talk about alternative electronic and collective forms of writing that we might work on as a group: a class blog, a website with documents and annotations, a video of you all singing a chapter from *Pandora’s Hope* in Gregorian chant. I’d like to take advantage of electronic and collaborative opportunities and am happy to consider some reasonable alternative to traditional writing assignments.

**Books**


**Articles and book chapters**


---. “From Order to Disorder” *Laboratory Life*. 15-42.
---. “Opening Pandora’s Black Box” *Science in Action* 1-17


**Reading Schedule**

**Mon. January 9**
Latour, Bruno. “Why has Critique Run Out of Steam”
Latour, Bruno. “Opening Pandora’s Black Box” *Science in Action* 1-17
Graham and Herndl “Multiple Ontologies” TCQ read pages 1-16.

**Mon. 1/16**  MLK Holiday

**Mon. 1/23**  Latour. *We Have Never Been Modern*
Lynch, John. “Articulating Scientific Practice” (435-56)

**Mon. 1/30**  Harmon, Graham. *Prince of Networks*. Part I, 1-95
Spinuzzi, Clay. “How Are Networks Theorized” (62-96)

**Mon. 2/6**  *Pandora’s Hope* Chapters 1-6 (1-215)

**Mon. 2/13**  *Pandora’s Hope* Chapters 7-Conclusion (216-300)

**Mon. 2/20**  *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*

**Mon. 2/27**  Harmon *Prince of Networks*. Part II: “Objects and Relations” (99-233)
Barnett “Toward an Object Oriented Rhetoric.”

**Mon. 3/5**  Latour and Harmon. *Prince and the Wolf*

**Mon. 3/12**  Spring Break

**Mon. 3/19**  Latour. *Reassembling the Social*  (4Cs starts Wed of this week)
Mon. 3/26 Latour Politics of Nature

Mon. 4/2 Latour Politics of Nature
   Rivers “Some Assembly Required”

Mon. 4/9 Braun and Whatmore Political Matter

Mon. 4/16 Braun and Whatmore Political Matter

Mon. 4/23 Latour “Compositionist Manifesto”

Wed 5/2 3:00-5:00 final exam/meeting