The last couple of decades have seen significant writing and practice around “science and the public” – public participation in technology development and technoscientific truthmaking. Efforts such as consensus conferences, technology assessment, café scientifiques, and social movements have sparked dialog about when and how to integrate various publics into the production of and decisionmaking around science and technology.

This course assumes both a theoretical and practical approach to this issue, looking at ways of conceiving of the relation between technoscience and the public and ways of working with it. It is built primarily around three theoretical engagements and three practical engagements.

We will explore the following types of theory: democratic theory, particularly participatory and deliberative theories; social movements theory, particularly those engaged with science and technology; and theories of expertise, particularly competing or alternative formulations of expertise and those focused on variants of public knowledge.

We will explore the following forms of practice: policy-oriented public engagements, particularly efforts at participatory decisionmaking in science and technology; public education or learning efforts, particularly those dealing with informal or non-specialist training; and public activation or empowerment approaches, particularly those rooted in social movements and the arts.

This is a graduate seminar with a prominent project component. Students will be expected to work in groups or individually over the semester to study or conceptualize a “science and the public” activity.