THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

MSc Science and Technology in Society

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Programme Director, November 2025

EDINBURGH
Extraordinary futures await

MSc Science and Technology in Society (SaTiS)

1-year (full-time) | Start date: September 2026

Dr Rhodri Ivor Leng - Programme Director

Department of Science, Technology & Innovation Studies (STIS)
School of Social and Political Science

Overview

- A (brief) introduction to Science and Technology Studies
- About the SaTiS Programme
- Why study with us at Edinburgh?
- Time for questions

What is Science and Technology Studies (STS)?

How do science and technology shape, and are shaped by, society?

Science and technology shape:

- How we live and work
- How we govern and make decisions
- How we imagine and plan for the future

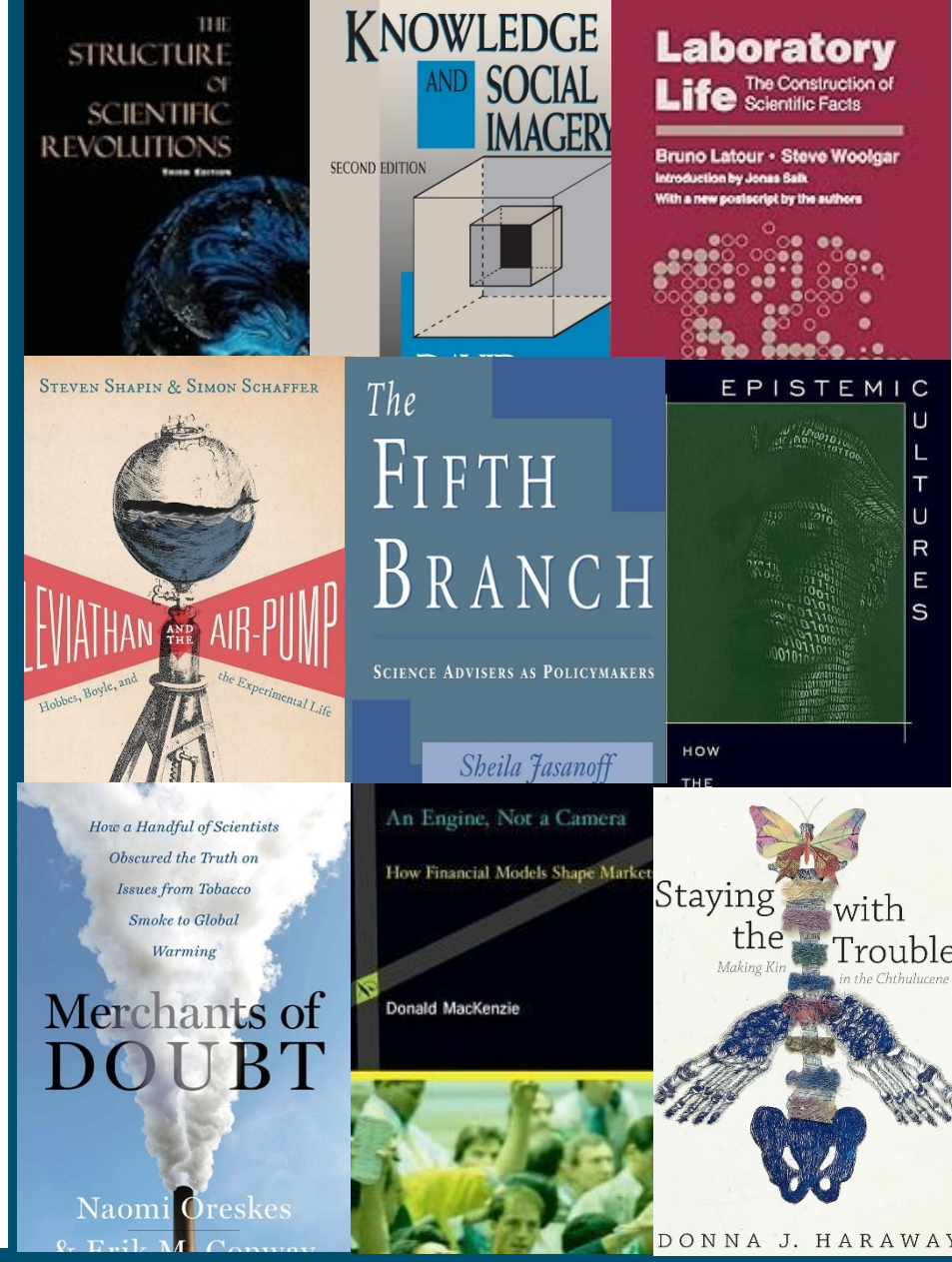
STS explores:

- How scientific knowledge develops and gains authority
- Why some technologies flourish while others fade
- Who benefits from innovation, and who bears the risks

What is STS?

An interdisciplinary field:

- Emerged in the 1960s from developments in the sociology, history and philosophy of science
- Combines expertise and ideas from different disciplines to understand the development, governance and societal impacts of knowledge and technologies
- A global community of scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds, with core journals and many books!



Why STS matters?

Science and Technology in our changing world:

- Science under pressure: trust, misinformation, public and political support, precarity, geopolitics
- Disruptive Technologies: AI, gene editing, renewable energy, digital economy
- Societies in crisis: climate change, inequality, energy transitions, public health, misinformation

Decisions matter:

- We need a well-functioning S&T system to tackle these challenges. This requires understanding how S&T interact with society, and is critical for policy, innovation, and ethics.

Overview of MSc SaTiS

Mode: On campus

Duration: 1 year

Credits: 180 (6 courses + 15,000 word dissertation)

Delivery: A combination of lectures, discussion-based seminars, and a guided independent study.

School: Social and Political Science

College: Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Location: Central Edinburgh

Science, Technology and Innovation Studies

Our department has an international reputation as a leading centre of excellence in science and technology studies, established through the legacies of the Science Studies Unit and the Research Centre for Social Sciences.

Programme Aims

What you will learn:

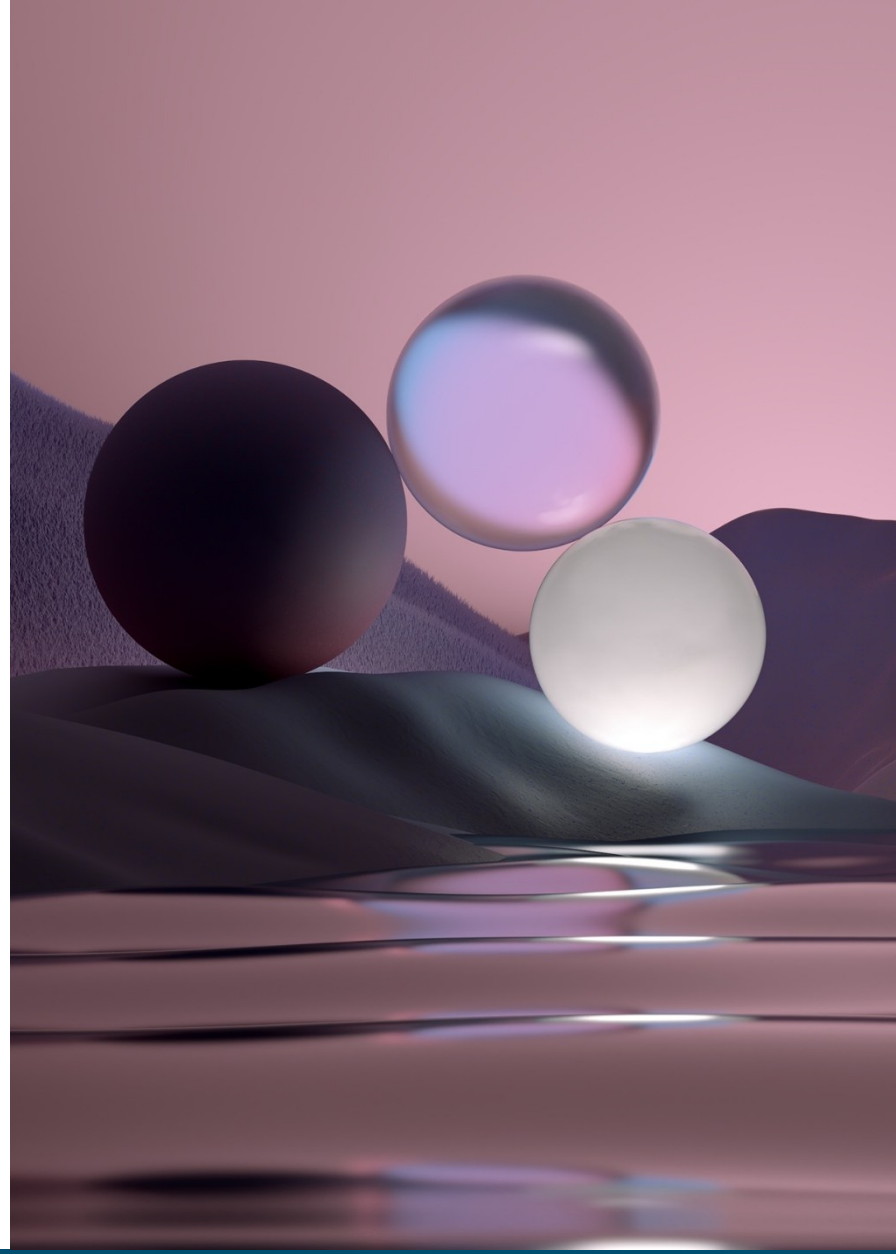
- Understand the complex interplay between science, technology, and society
- Analyse how power, politics, and culture shape knowledge and technology
- Apply STIS perspectives to global challenges and contemporary research issues — from climate, AI, and pandemics to funding, trust, open science, and responsible innovation
- Develop analytical, research, and communication skills using qualitative, quantitative, or computational methods

Programme Structure

Foundations – Semester 1

Three compulsory courses (20-credit):

- PGSP11352: Science, Knowledge & Expertise
- PGSP11353: Understanding Technology
- PGSP11558: Innovation Systems & Risk Management



Programme Structure

Pathways (40 credits) – Semester 2

Energy & Environment

- PGSP11132: Energy Policy and Politics
- PGSP11400: Innovation in Sustainable Food Systems

+

Life Sciences & Bioeconomy

- PGSP11331: Biobusiness
- PGSP11476: Social Dimensions of Systems & Synthetic Biology

+

Data & Society

- STIS11007: Data and Society
- PGSP11467: Controversies in the Data Society

+

One 20 credit option module

- STIS11006: Research Design for STIS or
- Level 11 courses in Schedules A to Q, T and W

http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/25-26/dpt/ptmscsctso1f.htm

Programme Structure

Dissertation (60 credits) – Summer period

- **Independent research dissertation (15,000 words)**
  Pursue your own topic in depth, guided by a supervisor.

- **Placement-based dissertation (12,000 word dissertation + 3,000 word project diary)**
  Collaborate with an organisation (e.g. NGO, think tank, policy body, research institute).

Past Topics

Development of quantum computing fields and their relationship to national innovation systems (Japan)

Hydrogen fuel adoption in Scotland

Scientific evidence in policy

DIY Biology and citizen science activism

Societal impacts of algorithms

Surveillance technologies and society

Careers

This programme prepares you to work at the nexus of science, technology, and society.

Your expertise will be particularly valued in research, analysis, policy, evaluation, and consultancy roles

- Policy Officer/Advisor
- Analyst at innovation policy consultancy
- Technology management consultant
- Science and technology consultancy or management
- Science Writer
- University researcher
- Project development
- Technology PR

Why Edinburgh?

Our department:

- Founded in 1966, STIS is one of the foundational centres for studies of science, technology and innovation.

- It has a world-leading reputation for excellence in the field. ~30 Faculty and ~ 20 Fellows

- It is known particularly for its development of:

Sociology of Scientific Knowledge
Social Shaping of Technology

Edinburgh's Science Studies Unit (Influential figures, such as Bloor, Barnes, Shapin, Edge)

Why Edinburgh?

Our expertise:

A truly interdisciplinary department, home to academics with skills in:

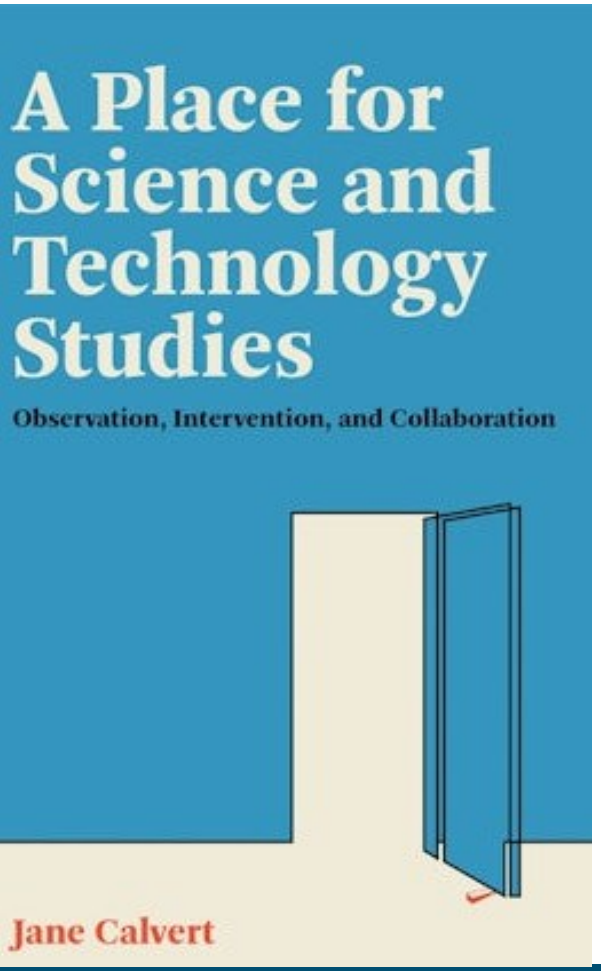
- Qualitative methods (interview; ethnography)
- Historical and archival methods
- Quantitative and computational methods (statistics, network analysis, computational text analysis)

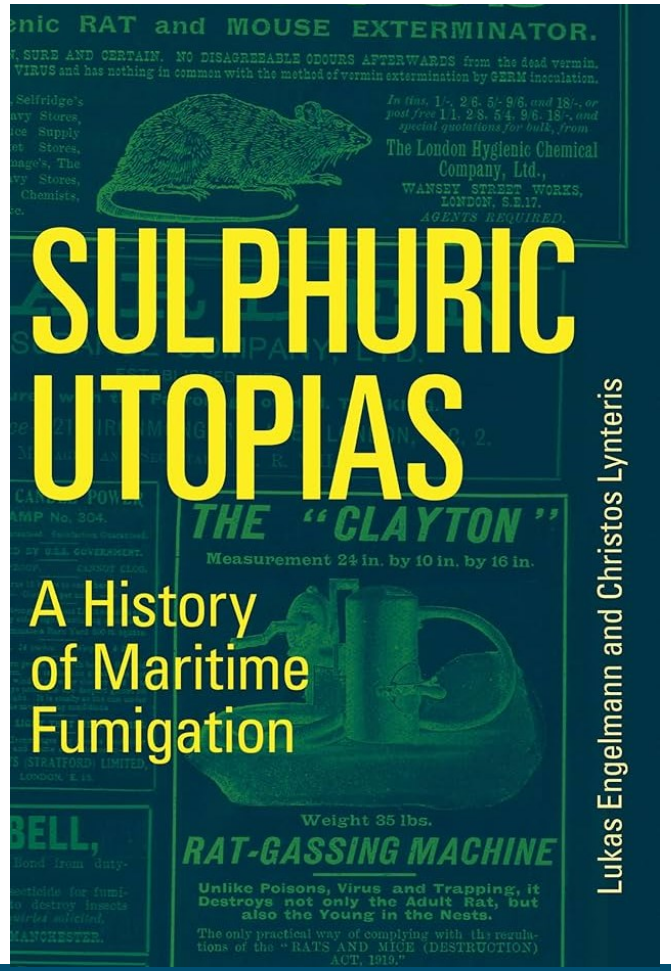
Our experience:

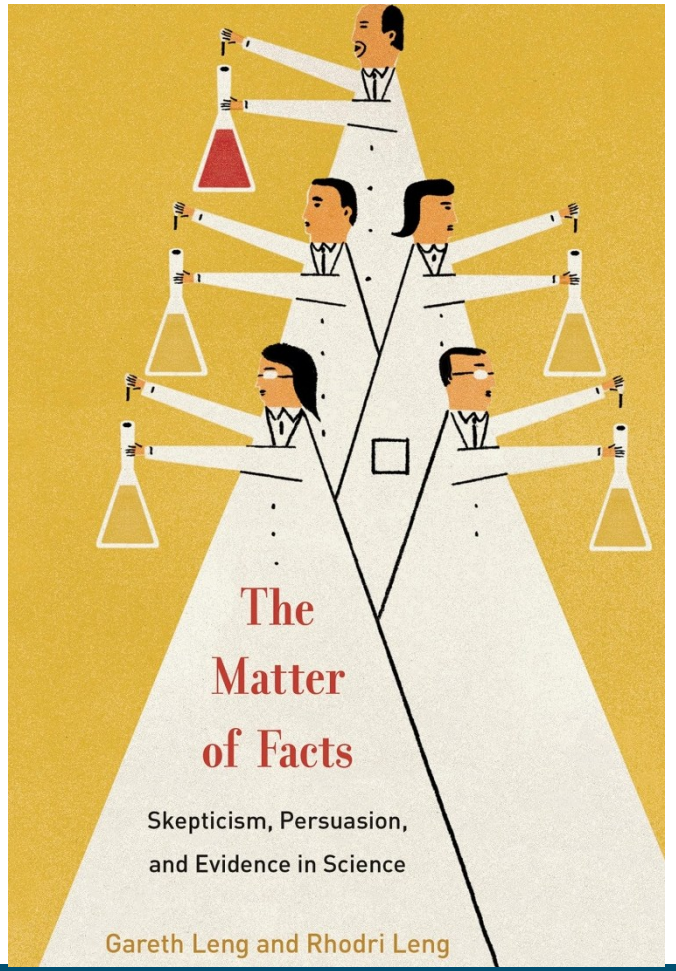
Our academics work across a broad range of scientific domains, including: biology, physics, computer science, environmental science, medicine and others.

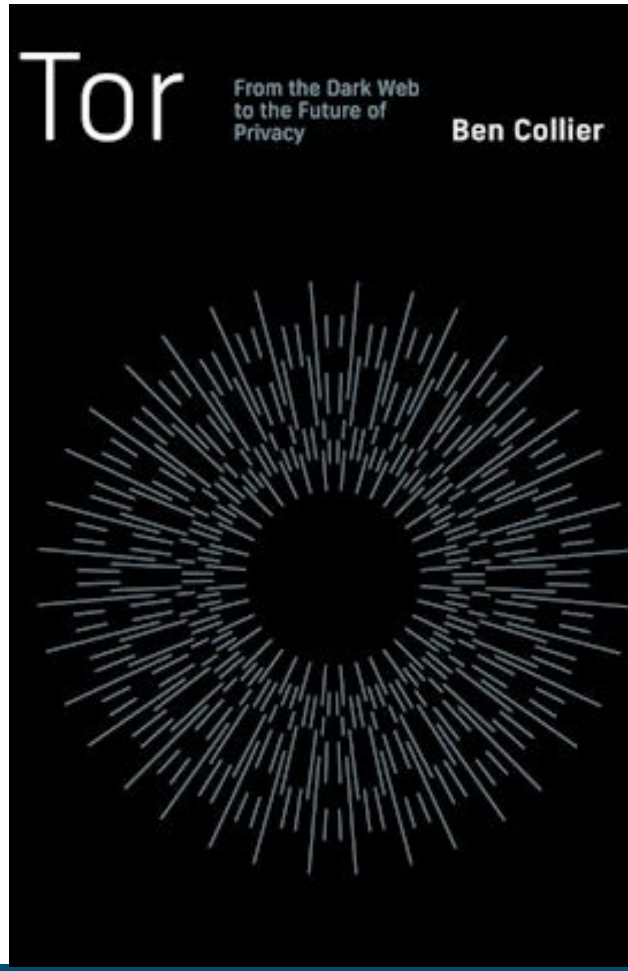
Why Edinburgh?

Our cutting edge research









Why Edinburgh?

Our collaborations and impact:

- Centre for Science, Knowledge and Policy (SKAPE): https://www.skape.ed.ac.uk/
- UK Energy Research Centre: http://www.ukerc.ac.uk
- Innogen: https://www.innogen.ac.uk
- ClimateXChange: https://www.climatexchange.org.uk
- Centre for Data Culture and Society (CDCS): https://www.cdcs.ed.ac.uk/

ISSTI
THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

SKAPE

innogen

DCS

Why Edinburgh?

Our student experience:

- Small class sizes and community feel
- Taught by leading academics at the cutting edge
- STIS is an evolving discipline – suits self-motivated students, and allows you to follow your interest.
- A dedicated STIS seminar series with department talks and external speakers (Biweekly)
- Cohort activities and sessions (Biweekly)

Why Edinburgh?

Student testimonials

“The programme has helped me develop interdisciplinary perspectives on the work I do. I now work as an analyst for the Civil Service, where it is important to consider how data will be interpreted and used once it leaves my desk. SaTiS has equipped me with the tools to contextualise the quantitative analysis I do in a policy landscape of competing frameworks and values. I thoroughly enjoyed the programme - due to the wide variety of courses to choose from, I was able to tailor it to my specific interests.” - Val, UK Government Operations Research Analyst, SaTiS Graduate 2023

“The SaTis programme is small enough that you know all of your lecturers—yet faculty's expertise is wide enough to pursue serious questions across science, technology, and society. Courses pair well close reading with research design, and practical methods, so you learn to move from ‘good question’ to ‘defensible analysis.’ If I may offer a modest example, a tentative question—‘Who really drives Japan’s quantum computing?’—became a bibliometric study mapping the field and situating it within the wider research system: an STS question tackled with Innovation-Studies tools. Edinburgh as a study place does its quiet magic in the background: museums for curiosity, rain for concentration, and historic buildings full of calm, well-designed study spaces.” - **Ren Makishima**, SaTiS Graduate 2025/26

Why Edinburgh?

Our school and university

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Questions?

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Next steps…

https://edin.ac/student-chat-pg

Contact details for follow-up questions

- We apologise if we did not get through all of your questions in the time allotted for this session. If you have further questions that have not been answered, please email: futurestudents@ed.ac.uk

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Thank you

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