

EnLIGHTeNING Lunch

with Darrin Durant

Wednesday, January 27, 2016

12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.

Tempe Campus: Coor 5536

How to be quixotically unreflexive: surprising results from climate change politics in Australia

Science and Technology Studies (STS) rightly criticizes experts' predilections for making sweeping and over-generalized judgments about public policy. There is a distinct lack of reflexivity involved in experts presupposing some linear bridge between factual claims and the proper policy response, even while denying that values inform technical assessment. The politics of climate change is a case in point, and we can find many STS criticisms of the IPCC and climate scientists. The typical thesis is that climate scientists are quixotically unreflexive: they cling to a deficit model of publics and have not adapted to a contentious policy field. But when we go to Brian Wynne articulating the law of reflexivity, he admits it is a contingent structural relation that varies inversely proportional to power. So what do we make of a counter-instance to the 'climate scientists are quixotically unreflexive' thesis?

Drawing upon interviews with climate scientists advising government in Australia about climate change, I do not find them to be as cavalier as the quixotically unreflexive thesis would lead us to suspect. Are Aussie's standing exceptions? Or is there some deeper story, where it is STS ignoring the contingency caveat, gripped by its own version of how to be quixotically unreflexive?

RSVP to cspo@asu.edu by noon on Tuesday, January 26
Lunch will be served (must RSVP).

Dr. Durant's research focuses on disputes between experts and publics, and he has published widely on controversies involving nuclear waste management, nuclear power, public policy about energy options, and more recently is investigating climate change policy-making. His general approach asks questions about the different contributions made and roles played by experts and lay publics. Dr. Durant is a professor in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne.



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