

Philosophy 2330: Science
Fall 2021
Third short essay assignment

Please complete your essay and upload it into Blackboard before class on Thursday, Oct 28th. Your essay should be submitted anonymously so please do **NOT** put your name or any other identifying features on your essay.

Preface: At the end of chapter 1 of *“Why Trust Science?”*, Naomi Oreskes concludes:

We have an overall basis for trust in the process of scientific investigation, based on the social character of scientific inquiry and the collective critical evaluation of knowledge claims. And this is why, *ex ante*, we are justified in accepting the results of scientific analysis by scientists as likely to be warranted.

The social character of science includes things like the communal certification of expertise including the academic system (such as awarded PhDs) and the peer review system. As Oreskes points out earlier (page 55),

[T]his does leave us with a view of science that makes some people uncomfortable: that science is fundamentally *consensual*. Longino summarizes “To say that a theory or hypothesis was accepted on the basis of objective methods does not entitle us to say it is true but rather than it reflects the critically achieved consensus of the scientific community. [And] it’s not clear we should hope for anything better.

Do you agree with Oreskes (and Longino) here? If you agree that we can’t do any better, is this a good reason to “trust science”? Note that an obvious danger with this kind of view is the worry a collective “group thinking” where everyone is wrong for the same reasons and they just keep confirming each others’ views and rejecting any opposing views. The “objectivity” of the scientific method was supposed to overcome this kind of problem but Oreskes doesn’t think it can.

You are to write an argumentative essay that should discuss Oreskes’s argument in this chapter. Your essay should engage with some aspect of Oreskes argument here, have a clear thesis, and give good reasons why a reader should believe it. The essay should be between one and two pages (500-700 words) in length.