

Discussion Series: Brainstorming Audiences Beyond the Mistrusting Monolith

[BEGINNING OF QUARTER]

Discuss Gawande vs. Oreskes on Science and Mistrust [20 minutes]

We'll begin by reflecting on which of the questions below today's readings by Atul Gawande and Naomi Oreskes helped you answer, or see in a new way. Answer the questions below based on the arguments put forward in today's readings, and your own experience.

- What is science? What is it *not*?
- What can make science seem difficult to trust?
- Why *should* we trust science?

Discuss Communities and Relationships Beyond Mistrust [25 minutes]

While the sciences might seem to share similar challenges from skeptical publics, they probably face these for different reasons, and with different groups. We'll get beyond generalizations in this discussion, by reflecting on the challenges your field may face from "skeptical" audiences, and why they may face them. We'll pay equal attention to adjectives BEYOND skeptical, too.

In groups of 2-5 in similar scientific fields, discuss the questions and fill in the chart below to record a few ideas. We'll review these as a class to see common trends you're noticing today, but also how (and why) these vary across branches of the sciences.

Fields of science in our class	Do any specific people or groups mistrust scientists or science in your field? Why?	What outlooks besides "mistrust" could publics hold about your field? (Bonus: what outlooks do you think your classmates may hold about your field?)
Micro/Cell Dev Bio/Chem		
Macro-Bio/Psych + Brain		
Earth Sci/Zoology		
Anthropology + Sociology		
Physics + Nuclear Chemistry		
Fin Math, Stats, Data Sci		

[END OF QUARTER]

Set Intentions for Final: Revisit Public's POV of Your Discipline [10 minutes]

Earlier this quarter, we saw that some scientists prioritize making public audiences see their field as trustworthy. All science writers can contribute to this goal by portraying science as a way of thinking rather than a set of facts (Gawande), and as a social endeavor led by scientists who hold values (Oreskes). More generally, though, all science writers can (subtly or dramatically) influence how publics feel about/see their discipline.

Here, we'll revisit a question we raised in week 2 to think about how you want your audience to view not just your topic, but your field of science in general. Then, you'll share answers as a class to see the wide range of goals that you have in mind as science writers and scientists.

- Free-write for 5 minutes to answer this question:
 - How do you want *your* audience to view *your* field, after reading your project?
 - (If you're not sure where to start, begin by free-writing on this question: "how do you think your audience views your discipline right now?")
 - (If your audience is "the general public" or "people who are interested in __," revisit week 2 materials and free-write to brainstorm 2+ groups WITHIN those broader categories. Ex: who is interested in __?)
- Report out to make a wide list of ways that publics can view your fields, and/or science. (Usually, everyone is able to contribute a different term to the list!)
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