

NST3HP

Natural Sciences Tripos Part III: History and Philosophy of Science

Questions released at 12 noon on Wednesday 10 March 2021

Answers to be submitted by 12 noon on Wednesday 17 March 2021

Before you begin read these instructions carefully:

*Students should answer **one** question from the following list of 14 questions.*

The essay should be submitted by 12 noon on Wednesday 17 March 2021 by being uploaded to the HPS Part III Coursework site on Moodle.

The question number, title and word count should be stated on the first page of the essay.

NST Part III History and Philosophy of Science

Set essay

*Answer **one** question. Your answer should not exceed 2,500 words.*

1. How, if at all, are scientific facts socially constructed?
2. Has the conservation of biological diversity always been an imperial project?
3. Can a value-laden science be objective?
4. Does controversy help scientific images become iconic?
5. “The presence of the Empire provided a constant pressure to assert the universality of science” (Katherine Anderson, “Science, state and empire”). Does the use of scientific instruments in nineteenth-century India offer any evidence for this claim?
6. What is the proper place of Randomised Controlled Trials in evidence-based policy?
7. “The Covid-19 crisis resists easy comparisons with earlier pandemics and historians need not make them. There are better ways to use the past to illuminate the present.” Discuss.
8. In your view, what are the most significant ways in which actual scientific knowledge deviates from the traditional philosophical ideal of the single truth that is unaffected by contexts?
9. In what ways, if any, did eighteenth-century naturalists appropriate natural knowledge from other cultures?
10. What can we learn from past visions of the scientific and technical future?
11. Can evolutionary psychology explain the nature of sexual desire?
12. “Any process of decolonization requires us first to recognize the epistemic violence inherent in conventional histories” (Warwick Anderson). What might this process entail for practitioners of the history of science?
13. Is the direction of time the sort of thing that can be non-fundamental?
14. Whose voices are represented in early modern medical records, and what challenges does this pose for historians?

END OF PAPER