COURSE DESCRIPTION: Scientific change has profoundly reshaped human life in the past 200 years, transforming both the material world in which we live and our knowledge of how that world works. But change has worked in the opposite direction as well: social priorities and political agendas have shaped the development of scientific knowledge and medical practice. This class invites students in the sciences and the humanities to explore the dynamic relationship between science, medicine, and our broader society. From global telecommunications to the atom bomb, and from Darwin to genomics, the emergence of modern science has been intimately tied to technological development, shifting political structures, changing conceptions of racial and sexual difference, and even our definitions of life and illness. While the geographic focus of the course will be on Europe and the United States, we will consistently explore the relationship between modern sciences and the increasingly global nature of commerce and politics since the nineteenth century. The guiding premise throughout this course is that science is an intrinsically human activity and hence an integral part of our modern world.

AREA OF CONCENTRATION: Americas, Europe

TEACHING METHOD: Lecture and discussion sections

EVALUATION METHOD: Short papers, participation, and final exam

GRADING BASIS: Student option

TENTATIVE READING LIST: Course reader including selections from Charles Darwin, Dimitrii Mendeleev, Louis Pasteur, Agnes Mary Clerke, Albert Einstein, Richard Feynman, Rachel Carson, Stephen J. Gould, and others.

INSTRUCTOR PROFILE: Daniel Stolz is a historian whose research investigates the role of science and technology in the formation of the modern Middle East. His forthcoming book, The Lighthouse and the Observatory, focuses on science, Islam, and the Egyptian state in the late nineteenth century. Other courses he has taught at Northwestern include Creationism: A Global History, Science and Religion in Global History, and Technology and Society in the Middle East.