

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Paris-Saclay, 25 February 2021

### **Université Paris-Saclay launches a SPOC on “Critical Thinking and Science in Society”**

**Université Paris-Saclay is offering all of its first year undergraduate students a new course in the form of a Small Private Online Course (SPOC). The course is designed to help students separate fact from fiction and promote a vision of the scientific approach that values its rightful place at the heart of society.**

The “Critical Thinking/Science in Society” SPOC aims to help students develop their critical thinking skills by studying various perspectives linked to scientific or socio-scientific controversies.

The module is based on the influence of the social world on science and the impact of science and technology on society. Students are invited to learn how to untangle truth from falsehood by studying controversial topics such as the flat Earth, sexual dimorphism of the brain, gravitational waves and transhumanism.

Launched on 1 February 2021, the SPOC lasts 11 weeks and is made up of five sessions. Each session demonstrates an aspect of the interaction between science and society, and helps to develop student’s critical thinking skills with a different topic. The course is made up of fun and interactive activities, e.g. drag and drop quizzes, multiple-choice questionnaires, rounds of true or false, etc. The activities are based on a range of varied and accessible resources: TEDx extracts, animations, texts, podcasts, videos and music.

#### **Session 1 - Observing distorted arguments from a distance**

Topic: the flat Earth

#### **Session 2 - Identifying differences in points of views on complex scientific issues and understanding where they come from**

Topic: sexual dimorphism of the brain

#### **Session 3 - Establishing under what conditions a scientific observation is deemed credible by the scientific community**

Topic: gravitational waves

#### **Session 4 - Identifying different language registers in socio-scientific controversies: mythical, imaginary, scientific, technical, political, economic, ideological, ethical, regulatory**

#### **Session 5 – Understanding the complexity of these controversies (going beyond two-sided arguments of true/false or good/bad)**

Topic for the last two sessions: transhumanism

Some 3,500 first year undergraduate students will follow the course, which will be graded through continuous assessment.

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## ABOUT UNIVERSITÉ PARIS-SACLAY

Université Paris-Saclay brings together ten constituent faculties and institutes, four Grandes Écoles, the Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques, two associate institutions and shared laboratories with six national research organisations.

With 48,000 students, 8,100 lecturers and 8,500 administrative and technical staff members, Université Paris-Saclay offers a comprehensive and varied range of undergraduate to doctorate level programmes and engineering degrees, renowned for their quality thanks to the reputation and commitment of the University's academic staff.

Located in the south of Paris on vast sites that stretch across Paris, Orsay, Évry and Versailles, Université Paris-Saclay benefits from a strategic geographical and socio-economic position that is strengthened by its international visibility. A leading University, Université Paris-Saclay is recognised for its excellent Mathematics and Physics programmes but also for Biological and Medical Sciences, Agriculture, Engineering, and its extensive Humanities and Social Sciences courses. Close to Paris, Université Paris-Saclay is nested in a protected natural area, at the very heart of a dynamic economic hub.



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