

Politics, ideology and values shape science at nearly every stage, from deciding what phenomena to research to how to talk about results

Science has always been political.

The science policy scholar Daniel Sarewitz subsumes the idea that scientific research is politically neutral — that is, guided purely by curiosity rather than by political need or cultural values — under the “myth of unfettered research.” Contrary to the popular image of scientists as monastic explorers of truth, science has been socially shaped and steered since its beginnings.

The ancient Greek scientist Archimedes’s role as a maker of war machines is paralleled today by the disproportionately high levels of funding awarded to fields such as physics, whose results are more readily relevant to the creation of new weapon systems.

The rise in biomedical science funding was likewise not because such research areas suddenly became more evocative of curiosity but rather because of both the desire to improve public health and high expectations for patentable and hence profitable new treatments.

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Values shape science at nearly every stage, from deciding what phenomena to study to choosing how to study and talk about them.... Calling a chemical an “endocrine disruptor” rather than an “hormonally active agent” highlights its potential for harm. Scientists make value-laden choices every day regarding their terminology, research questions, assumptions, and experimental methods, which can often have political consequences.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.**](#)