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Science and Technology Studies Pioneer Sheila Jasanoff Named 2022 Holberg Prize Laureate

(BERGEN, Norway) – Today, [the Holberg Prize](#)—one of the largest international prizes awarded annually to an outstanding researcher in the humanities, social sciences, law or theology—named American scholar Sheila Jasanoff as its 2022 Laureate.

Sheila Jasanoff is the Pforzheimer Professor of Science and Technology Studies (STS) at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. She will receive the award of NOK 6,000,000 (approx. EUR 595,000 / USD 675,000) during a 9 June ceremony at the University of Bergen, Norway.

In a career spanning more than four decades, Jasanoff has come to be regarded as a pioneer in the field of STS, which examines the creation, development, and consequences of science and technology in their historical, cultural, and social contexts. Her research has made her one of the world's leading contemporary scholars at the nexus of science, technology, law, democratic theory, and public policy.

Jasanoff has developed many of the analytical concepts for theorizing the role of science and technology in the law, politics, and policy of modern democracies. She is best known for her idiom of *co-production*, which states that the ways in which we know and represent the world are inseparable from how we choose to live in it. Jasanoff argues against the separation of natural and social orders that underwrites much of the sciences, revealing taken-for-granted questions of ethics, culture, and power.

Her most recent theoretical innovation, elaborated in the edited volume *Dreamscapes of Modernity* (2005), is the idea of *sociotechnical imaginaries*: collectively held visions of desirable futures that societies hope to attain through advances in science and technology. With this influential concept Jasanoff has transformed the field of future studies by demonstrating the central role of science and technology in our understandings of progress.

A central theme of Jasanoff's research is *public reason*: or how ruling institutions justify exercises of power and authority in contemporary democracies. Fundamental to this is how their practices of argumentation, delegation, and transparency are shaped by commitments to particular ways of knowing, visions of progress, styles of reasoning, and ideas of adequate representation. Her writings on law and science, risk management, the comparative politics of regulation, and science in environmental decision-making figure as foundational texts on those topics.

Jasanoff's work has had a profound influence on contemporary thinking about public policy, democracy and scientific expertise. As the world is facing the challenges of climate change, the pandemic, the rise of social media driven politics and mistrust in expert institutions, as well as increasingly advanced biotechnologies, Jasanoff is regarded as a unique and influential voice in all of these arenas. Crucially, Jasanoff engages with these challenges by way of working to translate between science, policy and ethical reflection.

Describing the key purpose of her work, Jasanoff says: "Possibly the most basic question I have tried to address is what difference it makes that we humans live in scientifically and technologically advanced societies." "This", the Laureate explains, "is fundamentally a question about the meaning of science and technology in the everyday lives of individuals, social groups, and nations."

"I find it odd that we have armies of scholars working on the evolution and meaning of literary, artistic, musical, and other forms of cultural creativity", Jasanoff says, "but not on how it affects us to examine nature, learn to control its functions, and make tools that have the potential to change what it means to be human."

To date, Jasanoff has authored or co-authored 10 books and edited or co-edited eight. She has also written more than 130 articles and chapters. Her most influential works include: *The Fifth Branch: Science Advisers as Policymakers* (1990), where she explores scientists' role as advisers on policy; *Science at the Bar: Law, Science and Technology in America* (1995), which challenges conventional ideas about science and law, and *Designs on Nature: Science and Democracy in Europe and the United States* (2005), where she introduces the notion of *civic epistemology*. This concept refers to the stylized, culturally specific ways in which national publics expect policy-relevant knowledge to be produced and put to use. In *Designs on Nature*, Jasanoff focuses particularly on the role of civic epistemologies in legitimating regulatory responses to emerging biotechnologies.

Jasanoff's more recent work includes *Science and Public Reason* (2012), where she draws together a dozen of her essays on risk, law, and comparative policy and explores the forms of evidence and argument used by democratic governments in making state decisions accountable to citizens. In *The Ethics of Invention: Technology and the Human Future* (2016), Jasanoff argues that technologies both open up and close down the kinds of futures available to humanity. In *Can Science Make Sense of Life?* (2019), she explores a series of moves by which the life sciences in the 20th century took on the power not only to describe what life *is*, but also, inappropriately, to declare what life is *for*.

"Through sharing her work in both academic and popular forums", says Holberg Committee Chair Heike Krieger, "Jasanoff is a significant public intellectual, offering timely comments on topics of public concern such as fake news and climate change."

About the Laureate

Sheila Jasanoff completed her PhD in Linguistics from Harvard University in 1973 and earned a law degree there in 1976. Since 2002, she has been Pforzheimer Professor of Science and Technology Studies at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, where she was Professor of Science and Public Policy from 1998 to 2002. She is an Affiliate of the Department of the History of Science and Visiting Professor at Harvard Law School. At Harvard, Jasanoff founded and directs the Kennedy School's Program on Science, Technology and Society. Previously, she was Founding Chair of the STS Department at Cornell University. In 2002, she founded the Science and Democracy Network, an international community of STS scholars dedicated to improving scholarly understanding of the relationships among science, technology, law, and political power.

She was previously Professor (1990–1998), Associate Professor (1984–1989) and Research Associate (1978–1984) at Cornell University. From 1976 to 1978, she practiced environmental law as an associate with Bracken, Selig and Baram. Jasanoff has been Visiting Professor at Tel Aviv Law School (2017), London School of Economics (2016), Paris Sciences et Lettres (2014), University of Cambridge (2005–2007), Kyoto University (1999), Harvard University (1995), and Yale University (1990–1991), as well as Distinguished Visiting Professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2009), Honorary Visiting Professor at University of Sussex (2007), Karl W. Deutsch Guest Professor at Social Science Center Berlin (2004), and Adjunct Professor at Boston University (1993).

Jasanoff has served on the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Board of Directors and as President of the Society for Social Studies of Science. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, as well as a foreign member of the British Academy and the Royal Danish Academy. She is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Her honors include the Social Science Research Council's Hirschman prize, the Humboldt Foundation's Reimar-Lüst award, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, as well as honorary degrees from the Universities of Twente and Liège.

About the Holberg Prize

Established by the Norwegian Parliament in 2003, the Holberg Prize is one of the largest annual international research prizes awarded to scholars who have made outstanding contributions to research in the humanities, social science, law or theology. The Prize is funded by the Norwegian Government through a direct allocation from the Ministry of Education and Research to the University of Bergen. Previous Laureates include Julia Kristeva, Jürgen Habermas, Manuel Castells, Onora O'Neill, Cass Sunstein, Paul Gilroy, Griselda Pollock and Martha Nussbaum. To learn more about the Holberg Prize and the call for nominations, visit: holbergprisen.no/en.

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