

CBEN Wins grant for undergraduate nanotech course

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Class will present technical aspects alongside analysis of societal impacts

The Center for Biological and Environmental Nanotechnology at Rice University today announced the award of a \$100,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to develop **the first introductory nanotechnology class** to be offered at Rice University, a research-intensive institution known worldwide for its excellence in nanotechnology research.

The course, titled "Nanotechnology: Content and Context," will be offered jointly by the departments of chemistry and anthropology this fall. The grant, awarded under NSF's Nanotechnology in Undergraduate Education program, allows Rice to join a small but growing number of schools offering undergraduate nanotech classes aimed at preparing students for a future in which nanotech is an integral part of the technology landscape.

"What's innovative about the Rice approach is the combination of technical content with social context," said Kristen Kulinowski, executive director for education and public policy at CBEN, a faculty fellow in the department of chemistry and principal investigator on the grant. "As students are introduced to the science and engineering aspects of nanotechnology, they will be considering the ways that new technologies like nanotech are funded by, introduced into and ultimately impact on society."

After an introductory segment that looks at nanotechnology from the perspective of the futures it may enable, the course is organized around four technical theme areas that cover the following aspects of nanotechnology: (1) scale, measurement, and manufacture; (2) machines and money; (3) life and how to change it; (4) risk and the environment.

Other faculty involved in the course include

anthropologists Chris Kelty and Hannah Landecker; nanotechnologists Vicki Colvin (CBEN Director), Kevin Kelly, Matteo Pasquali and Robert Raphael; and Rice staff members David Caprette and Anne Papakonstantinou.

"The breadth of expertise of the participating faculty is representative of the highly interdisciplinary nature of nanotech itself," Kulinowski said. "The central role played by the anthropologists signifies the importance of engaging our students in exploring the social dimensions of technology development."

Source: [Rice University](#)

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