Course Overview

Are there any commonalities in such disparate events as the 9.11 terrorist attacks, disruptive climate disasters, 2008 financial crisis and the Great Recession, and the Fukushima nuclear accident? Spanning just the first decade of the new century, these events illustrate the scope and pattern of emerging risks around the world. German sociologist, Ulrich Beck, theorized the intricate relations between modern society and risks with the notion of risk society more than two decades ago. The world has since witnessed the emergence and proliferation of risks of an unprecedented level, kind, and logic. This course first reviews scholarly effort to understand the nature of risk as well as human and societal responses to risks. We then examine recent tendencies in which risks are increasingly politicized, globalized, and scientized and explore local, national, regional, and global schemes of risk governance.

Course Evaluation

The following distribution of the grade components may change depending on the progress of class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Students are expected to participate in class discussion based on the course readings beyond their personal opinions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Half-open book tests to check if students are following up well with the course readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Papers</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Students will write a short response paper on a selected course reading. In this paper, students will critically review the arguments or claims of the reading, survey the existing literature, and present alternative views or make counter-argument. Students are strongly encouraged to utilize real-world data to support their own views or claims.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Students will present a 25-minute presentation (followed by a 10-minute Q&amp;A) on an issue of their choice related to the course followed by 10-minute Q&amp;A. The presentation grade consists of two parts – one on the content and style of presentation and the other on participation as audience.</td>
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Course grades will be assigned in light of two considerations: (1) how well a student did on each component, (2) how much progress he/she has made over the course. It is therefore important not only to do well but keep doing well or improving (after all, earlier mistakes are easier to make up for than later ones).
Course Policy

- Students will commit fully to academic honesty. In particular, students should make every effort to avoid plagiarism (presenting someone else’s idea without giving due credit). Note that simple paraphrasing won’t do. Substituting just a few words in the original source will still constitute plagiarism. The best way to avoid plagiarism is to cite all information that is not your own unless it is common knowledge.

- It is students’ responsibility to keep updated on the course through email notices or course website.

- Attendance grades (part of the participation grade) will be assigned by a random check.

- Late assignments are accepted with penalty (which increases by the degree of lateness).

Course Schedule

All readings are mandatory except those recommended readings marked with asterisks. Most readings will be available in pdf. For full citations refer to the references at the end of the syllabus.

Week I: Course Introduction & Theoretical Approaches

- Lupton, Ch 1: Introduction, Ch 2: Theorizing Risk

Week II: Risk & Culture, Risk Society

- Douglas & Wildavsky, Introduction: Can We Know the Risks We Face?, Ch 1: Risks are Hidden, Ch 2: Risks are Selected


  * Beck, Ch 4: Clash of Risk Cultures: The Overlapping of the State of Normalcy and the State of Exception

Week III: Risk Perception


- Bostrom & Cirkovic, Ch 5: Cognitive Biases Potentially Affecting Judgment of Global Risks

  * Slovic, Ch 5: How Safe Is Safe Enough? A Psychometric Study of Attitudes Toward Technological Risks and Benefits

Week IV: Science & Technology Risks

- Perrow, Ch 1: Normal Accident at Three Mile Island, Ch 3: Complexity, Coupling, and Catastrophe, Ch 9: Living with High-Risk Systems
• Abbott, Kenneth W., et al., Transnational Regulation of Nanotechnology: Reality or Romanticism?
  * Tesh, Ch 5: Understanding Risk

Week V: Global Catastrophic Risks
• Film: Life After People (History Channel)
• Bostrom & Cirkovic, Ch 1: Introduction, Ch 6: Observation Selection Effects and Global Catastrophic Risks
  * Posner, Ch 3: How to Evaluate the Catastrophic Risks and the Possible Responses to Them, Ch 4: How to Reduce Catastrophic Risks

Week VI: Global Financial Crisis – Déjà vu?
• Reinhart & Rogoff, Ch 1: Financial Crises: An Operational Primer.
• Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, Conclusions of the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, Ch 1: Before Our Very Eyes
  * Hacker, The Great Risk Shift

Week VII: Climate Change as Global Risk
• Film: Six Degrees Could Change the World (National Geographic)
• Borgerson, Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming
• Various Articles from Climate Change, Global Environmental Change

Week VIII: Midterm

Week IX: Global Security Risk
• Porfiriev, The Perception and Management of Security and Safety Risks: Implications for International Negotiations
• Various Articles from the Journal of Conflict Resolution, International Security

Week X: Global Energy Risk
  * Goodstein, Out of Gas: The End of the Age of Oil
  * Graetz, The End of Energy: The Unmaking of America's Environment, Security, and Independence

Week XI: Global Governance (Theories)
• Ostrom, Ch 1: Reflections on the Commons
• Finkelstein, What is Global Governance?
• Rosenau & Czempiel, Ch 1: Governance, Order, and Change in World Politics
• Young, Ch 5: The Effectiveness of International Regimes

Week XII: Student Presentations

Week XIII: Global Governance of Risks
• OECD, Ch 4: Emergency Management of Future Global Shocks, Ch 5: Strategic Approaches for Managing Future Global Shocks
• Peel, Ch 2: Global Risk Governance and Its Legitimacy, Ch 7: Democratizing Global Risk Governance
  * Alexander, et al., Ch 1: Managing Systemic Risk: The Rationale for International Financial Regulation

Week XIV: Regimes of Risk Regulation

Week XV: Course Wrap-Up

Week XVI: Final Exam

References


Keywords: global governance; international finance; international security; emergent risks; governance capacity. The study of international politics often entails specialization in discrete areas of activity. Whether it is the study of international security, trade, finance, energy and the environment or global health, most analyses focus on specific areas or issues. We often train students to think in this way; we certainly govern academic departments in this way. The Global Risks 2014 report highlights the need for coordinated action between different countries and sectors to mitigate threats and avert potential crises. This imperative is strongly emphasized in a formal Recommendation on the Governance of Critical Risks that was developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with Oliver Wyman input and approved by the OECD Council of Ministers in May. Governing Complexity: Design Principles for Improving the Governance of Global Catastrophic Risks. Global Governance Institute Policy Brief Series. London: University College London. Contents. I. Introduction. 1 II. Complexity and Global Catastrophic Risks. 4.