

**Sciences Po**  
**Master of Public Affairs 2007-2008**

**Syllabus, Core/Elective Course, 1<sup>st</sup> semester (5 credits)**

**Course Title:**

Risk Governance (1)

**Policymaking, knowledge and uncertainty**

**Instructors:**

Olivier Borraz, CNRS senior research fellow, CSO-Center for the Sociology of Organizations (CNRS-Sciences Po) : o.borraz@cso.cnrs.fr / + 33-1 40 62 65 77

Pierre-Benoit Joly, INRA senior research fellow, TSV-Social Transformations related to Life Sciences and Life Forms (INRA) [joly@ivry.inra.fr](mailto:joly@ivry.inra.fr) / + 33- 1 49 59 69 55

**Course Description:**

In today's world, policymaking can be a highly contentious and difficult process, due to the multiple uncertainties which characterize policy issues. The paradox of living in a "knowledge society" is that a growing number of problems on the agenda of governments, international organizations, multinational firms and large non-governmental organizations reveal gaps in the available data ("known unknowns" and "unknown unknowns"), rely on information open to multiple viewpoints (ambiguity and controversy), and rest on a difficulty in anticipating the future.

Risk governance offers a framework for the management of this state of uncertainty. Although this framework covers a wide range of instruments, tools and concepts, risk governance revolves around a central process: the production, interpretation and use of knowledge for policymaking, when knowledge is either initially lacking, incomplete, open to debate or dependent on alternative futures. Albeit closely related to risk management, the use of the term governance highlights the political nature of decision making on uncertain issues.

Health and environmental issues offer the opportunity to study some of the most uncertain issues of all, aggregating scientific, natural, technological, social, political and financial uncertainties, not to mention legal, ethical and moral constraints. Health and environmental risks entail problems of assessment, regulation, coordination, standardization, mitigation, alert, learning and insurance. Often associated to crises, scandals and controversies, they are at the heart of many commercial and political conflicts at the international level, and have involved in recent years institution building (agencies, organizations, treaties, rules and procedures). Nonetheless, our societies remain vulnerable in many areas to both natural and man-made risks.

**Course Objectives:**

The objective of Risk Governance (1) overview course is to introduce students to the basic concepts and tools related to policy making under uncertainty and ambiguity. RG1 comprises three modules: (i) the social construction of risks; (ii); production and use of knowledge for policy making; (iii) Actors' response to global or uncertain risks.

Students will have the opportunity to apply these concepts and tools during the preparation of an individual essay on a specific case study.

By the end of this course, students will be prepared to analyze complex situations of risk governance.

### **Course Requirements:**

- Students following this Overview Course will have to prepare an *essay* on a policy problem characterized by uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity. The essay will not deal exclusively with health or environment but must focus on the dynamics of a socio-technical controversy, decision-making on a highly complex issue, or the analysis of organizational or institutional transformations.
- There will be required readings to do prior to each class.
- Attendance to the class is compulsory.

### **Assessment and Grade Distribution:**

- 50% of the grade each semester will be based on participation in class discussions
- 50% of the grade each semester will be based on an individual essay

### **Course Outline:**

#### **Module 1/ The social construction of risks**

##### *Session 1. Introduction to risks (Olivier ; 9 octobre)*

- Beck, U. (1998). Politics of risk society. In J. Franklin ed. *The Politics of Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity*, Cambridge, UK, Polity Press: 9-22.
- Giddens, A. (1998). Risk society: the context of British politics. In J. Franklin ed. *The Politics of Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity*, Cambridge, UK, Polity Press: 23-34

##### *Session 2. The emergence of risk issues (Olivier; 16 octobre)*

- Hilgartner, S., Bosk, C.L., (1988). The rise and fall of social problems : A public arenas model. *American Journal of Sociology* 94(1): 53-78.
- Renn, O. (1992). The social arena concept of risk debates. In S. Krimsky and D. Golding eds. *Social theories of risk*. Westport, Praeger.
- Kasperson, R. E., Renn, O., Slovic, P., Brown, H.S., Emel, J., Goble, R., Kasperson, J.X., Ratick, S., (1988). The social amplification of risks: A conceptual framework. *Risk Analysis* 8(2): 177-187.

*Session 3. Risk controversies (Pierre-Benoit; 23 octobre)*

- Hilgartner, S. (1992). The social construction of risk objects: or, how to pry open networks of risk. In J.F. Short and L. Clarke eds. *Organizations, uncertainties and risk*. Boulder, Westview Press: 39-53.
- Jasanoff, S. (1987). EPA's Regulation of Daminozide: Unscrambling the Messages of Risk, *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 12(3-4): 116-124
- Rip, A. (1986). Controversies as informal technology assessment. *Knowledge : Creation, Diffusion, Utilization* 8(2): 349-371.

**Module 2 / Production and Use of knowledge: Risk Analysis**

*Session 4. Risk assessment / risk management (Pierre-Benoit, 6 novembre)*

- NAS, *Risk assessment in the Federal Government: Managing the process*, Washington, DC, National Academy Press, 1983 (summary, introduction and chapter 1).
- UK OSI Guidelines for expert advice:  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmsctech/900/900-i.pdf>

*Session 5. Expertise (Pierre-Benoit : 13 novembre)*

- Rip, A. (1985). Experts in public arenas. In H. Otway and M. Peltu eds. *Regulating Industrial Risks. Science, hazards and public perception*. London, Butterworths.
- Weingart, P. (1999). Scientific expertise and political accountability: paradoxes of science in politics. *Science and Public Policy* 26(3): 151-161.

*Session 6. Institutional design (Olivier ; 20 novembre)*

- Demortain, D. (2007). European Agencies. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). In D. Benamouzig and O. Borraz eds. *Food and Pharmaceutical Agencies: Between Bureaucracy and Democracy. A commented bibliography*. Grenoble, Publications de la MSH Alpes.

**Module 3 / Actors' response to global or uncertain risks** (4 dates : 4, 11 décembre, 8 et 15 janvier ; PBJ out le 18/12)

*Session 7. World Economic Forum (Charles Emmerson)*

*Session 8. Swiss Re*

*Session 9. World Health Organization (intervention by Antoine Flahault) (18 décembre)*

## General Bibliography:

- Hood, C., Baldwin, R., Rothstein, H. (2001). *The Government of Risk: Understanding Risk Regulation Regimes*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Hutter, B., Power, M. (2006). *Organizational Encounters with Risk*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Löfstedt, R., Frewer, L., (1998). *Risk and Modern Society*. London, Earthscan Publications.
- Power, M. (2007). *Organized Uncertainty: Designing a World of Risk Management*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Renn, O. (2007) *Risk Governance*. London, Earthscan Publications.
- WEF (2007) *Global Risks 2007*, Geneva, World Economic Forum