

**Department of Sociology  
University of Calgary**

**SOCI 401.46  
Sociology of Risk  
Winter 2015**

**Course Times:** Monday 11:00-11:50am, Wednesday 11:00-11:50am, Friday 11:00-11:50am

**Course Location:** SH288

**Instructor:** Dr. Dean Curran

**Office:** SS 918

**Email:** [dcurran@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dcurran@ucalgary.ca)

**Phone:** 403-220-6520

**Office Hours:** Monday 9:40am-10:50am, Friday 10:00am-10:50am

**Course Overview**

This course provides an introduction to contemporary sociology of risk. The first part of the course introduces the primary theoretical approaches to the sociology of risk: the cultural approach, governmentality, systems approach, edgework, and risk society. The second part of the course builds upon these theoretical approaches to look at specific areas of concern of contemporary risk: individualization, the globalization of risks, health risks, environmental risks, financial risk, crime risk, and the politics of risk.

**Aims and Objectives**

At the end of this course, students should have knowledge and understanding of:

- The dominant approaches to risk in contemporary sociology.
- The debates regarding whether we are living in a 'risk society' and if so, how this risk society should be conceived.
- How these debates over sociological approaches to risk relate to key debates in contemporary sociological theory, regarding modernity, realism and constructivism, cosmopolitanism, and how to understand shifts in contemporary inequalities.

This course should also enhance students' ability to:

- To theorize in a critical and analytical manner about how to conceive of risk and how particular risks relate to social life.
- Write clearly and cogently about contemporary social theory.
- Make a contribution to existing debates in the sociology of risk by fashioning and defending their own arguments.

**Theory and Theorizing**

In this course it is essential that students engage in a theoretical manner with the course material in their participation, presentations, and writing. It is essential that students not merely describe and summarize the readings. A theoretical analysis seeks to abstract

certain key ideas, arguments, concepts from the specific content of a text and then reconstructs the arguments, ideas, or concepts in such a way that we are able to better grasp the relations between different ideas and concepts. This process of abstraction and reconstruction may be for the purpose of: better understanding a specific concept of a theorist (such as Weber's "rationalization" or Durkheim's "anomie"); better understanding the relation between the different concepts of a specific thinker (such as how Marx's theory of class relates to his theory of value); or better understanding the relation between two thinkers' conception of social reality (such as the connection between Marx's understanding of "alienation" and Durkheim's "social facts"). This improved understanding through the process of abstraction and reconstruction may be for such purposes such as: (1) helping to better understand the theorist's work in their own terms, (2) critiquing the work of the thinker, or (3) identifying how to apply the basic theories of a thinker to a very different context than the one for which they were originally formulated.

### **Required Texts**

- Lupton, Deborah (2013) *Risk*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition
- Readings in Course Reader

Students are expected to bring the readings to the class to discuss the material.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Format of the Course

- 13 three X a week 50 minute lectures and discussions (with exceptions of weeks reading days). Fridays will be days devoted primarily to discussion. From weeks 3-11 Wednesdays will usually be the days where presentation take place)
- 4 critical reading summaries (Due at the beginning of Wednesday or class)
- 1 Presentation
- 1 Theory Paper (**Due April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015**)
- 1 Final Exam (To be scheduled in the exam period)

### **Course Assessment**

Participation: 10%

4 one-page reading summaries: 10% (2.5% each)

Presentation: 15%

Theory Paper: 35%

Final Exam: 30%

### **Course Participation (10%)**

Students are expected to regularly attend the lectures and other presentations, and to have completed the readings prior to the Wednesday lecture. It is important that each student be prepared to contribute to the discussion of the readings, both for their own learning and for the benefit of the class as a whole. It is particularly important that students who hand in their critical reading summary for a given week be prepared to discuss the texts for that week.

#### **4 Critical Reading Summaries (4x2.5%=10%)**

These summaries will be marked based on the level of critical engagement with the texts. They are expected to be between 400 and 500 words in length and to outline the argument of one of the texts and provide a critical analysis of this argument. They must be handed as a print copy on Wednesday of the week that the readings are based. To hand in the reading summaries in it is necessary to attend the class. It is particularly important that students cite specific page numbers multiple times in their reading summaries (i.e. (Foucault 2010: 367)). Course summaries can be on one reading, but the reading must be longer than ten pages.

#### **1 Presentation 15%**

Given that this is a 400 level course, with capped enrollment, more of an effort will be made to have student participation and contribution in the course. Each student will be expected to present once over the course. The presentations will run from week 3 to week 11. Since the schedule of the presentations will depend on enrollment, more information will be provided on presentations in week two.

#### **Theory Paper 35% (Due April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015)**

The theory paper is a core component of assessment for this course. The paper assignments is intended to enable students to develop a substantive theoretical paper and to further develop the skills associated with this task. The readings in this course are intended to provide an in-depth introduction to many of the key debates in the sociology of risk. Students are heavily encouraged to plan ahead and consult with the instructor regarding their proposed essay topics. The paper should be 3000 words (10% allowance either way).

#### **Final Exam (30%) (Exam Period)**

The final exam will take place during the exam period and will cover the entire course material, both readings and lectures.

#### **Submission and Late Policy**

Reading summaries must be handed into the instructor as a hard copy before the beginning of the Wednesday class and will not be accepted after this time. The term paper is to be handed in as a hard copy in class to the course instructor the day of class that it is due. The paper will receive a late penalty of FIVE (5) MARKS PER FULL OR PART DAY (a weekend counts as two full days). Any paper more than one (1) week late without a valid extension will receive a mark of zero (0). Accommodations are unlikely to be allowed for late entry other than illness or another serious and documented situation – talk to me prior to the deadline. Please note essays are not to be submitted to the sociology main office.

#### **Instructor Contact Policy**

**Email:** Please use “SOCIO 401” in the subject line of all course-related emails. It may take up to 48 hours (not including weekends) for me to respond to you. Email responses will also be kept short. To discuss anything in-depth, come along during office hours.

**Office Hours:** During office hours you are free to drop by without an appointment at any time. If you are unable to make that time, please contact me in advance so that we can try to arrange an appointment. Office hours are a very effective and efficient way of providing help and I encourage all students to make use of my office hours.

### **Class Etiquette**

Use of cell phones or internet on laptops are disruptive to lectures and discussions and are not permitted. To facilitate focus in class, a two-minute break rule will be instituted for those who need to go to the bathroom, etc. However, the time limits of this break (only 2 minutes) must be respected for this practice to continue.

### **Laptop Policy**

With a view to encouraging conversation and the presenters, laptops will not be permitted on days devoted primarily to discussion (each Friday) or presentation days (Wednesdays, week 3-11). If a laptop is necessary, please speak to me about possible exceptions.

### **General Referencing Guidelines**

1. Always include page numbers of the source you are referencing - just using a date is not enough. Harvard style (in text citations with date and page e.g. (Marx 1848: 139) is recommended). This is important for all writing in the course and failure to properly reference can significantly affect marks in papers and summaries.

Your final letter grade will be determined according to the following schedule:

95-100 A+	67-69 C+
90-94 A	63-66 C
85-89 A-	60-62 C-
80-84 B+	55-59 D+
75-79 B	50-54 D
70-74 B-	49 or less F

### **Course Notes (Important, but not written by me).**

1. **Grade Reappraisal:** Within two weeks of the date the exam/assignment is returned, students seeking reappraisal of examinations or assignments must submit a written response to the instructor explaining the basis for reconsideration of one's mark. The instructor will reconsider the grade assigned and will then book a time with the student to discuss his or her work and rationale. It should be noted that a reconsidered mark may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.
2. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor. **Submission of all course materials must be arranged with the instructor. Do not hand in things to the Sociology Office.**
3. **Academic Misconduct:** Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>
4. **Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from

public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. "If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment."

5. **Ethical Research:** Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required. Research with human subjects should not be undertaken in this theory course.
6. **Deferrals:** If possible, please provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to write an exam or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student. If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a "make up" test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a "make up" test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology. Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at: [http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Sp\\_Su\\_DFE\\_App.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Sp_Su_DFE_App.pdf)  
Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>  
Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).
7. **Student Representation:** The 2014-15 Students' Union VP Academic's email is: Hana Kadri [suypaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suypaca@ucalgary.ca). The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: [arts1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@ucalgary.ca), [arts2@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts2@ucalgary.ca), [arts3@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts3@ucalgary.ca), and [arts4@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts4@ucalgary.ca). You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>
8. **Emergency Evacuation:** In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at Professional Faculties - Food Court. Please check these assembly point locations for your other classes at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>
9. **Safewalk:** The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For

Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

10. **Academic Accommodation:** Students who require academic accommodation, must register with Student Accessibility Services (formerly the Disability Resource Centre) at MC 452 (or phone 403-220-8237). Please provide academic accommodation letters to the instructor as early in the semester as possible and no later than two weeks after the course begins.

## Course Readings

### Week One: Introducing Risk

January 12, 14, & 16, 2015

- Lupton, D. (2013) *Risk*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Routledge: London **chapters 1-2.**
- Althaus, C.E. (2005) ‘A disciplinary perspective on the Epistemological Status of Risk’ *Risk Analysis* 25(3): **567-588.**

### Week 2 Douglas and the Cultural Approach

January 19, 21, & 23, 2015

- Lupton, D. (2013) *Risk*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Routledge: London, **chapters 3, 6.**
- Douglas, M and Wildavsky, A. 1982 *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. **Introduction, pp. 1-15.**

### Week 3 Governmentality

January 26, 28, & 30, 2015

- Lupton, D. (2013) *Risk*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Routledge: London., **ch 5.**
- Ewald, F. 1991 ‘Insurance and Risk’ in G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller (eds) *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Rose, N (1990 *Governing the Soul: the Shaping of the Private Self*. London: Routledge, introduction, pp.1-11.

### Week 4 Luhmann

Feb 2, 4, & 6, 2015

- Luhmann, N. 1993 *Risk: A Sociological Theory*, New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction. Chapter 1 ‘the concept of risk’ pp.1-31.
- Excerpt of Chapter 2 [on D2L]

### Week 5 Risk Society

Feb 9, 11, & 13, 2015

- Lupton, D. (2013) *Risk*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Routledge: London. **Chapter 4 sections 1-2.**
- Beck, U. (1992) “On the Logic of Wealth Distribution and Risk Distribution “*Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London, Sage, **chapter 1.**
- Scott, A. 2000 ‘Risk Society or Angst Society? Two Views of Risk, Consciousness and Community’ in B. Adam, U. Beck and J. van Loon (eds) *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory*, London: Sage, **pp. 33-46.**

## Reading Week No Class

### Week 6 Individualization

Feb 23, 25, & 27, 2015

- Lupton, D. (2013) *Risk*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Routledge: London. **Chapter 4, section 3- end of chapter.**
- Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) “Losing the Traditional” *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequence*. London: Sage, **pp. 1-21. [get from E-book]**
- Giddens, A. (1999) ‘Risk and Responsibility’ *The Modern Law Review* 62(1): **1-10.**

### Week 7 Edgework

March 2, 4 & 6, 2015

- Lupton, D. (2013) *Risk*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Routledge: London, chapter 8, pp. **203-238.**
- Lyng, S. (2008) “Edgework, Risk, and Uncertainty” in J.O. Zinn (ed *Social Theories of Risk and Uncertainty: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp.**106-37.**

### Week 8 Global Risks and World Risk Society

March 9, 11, &13, 2015

- Beck, U. 1999 *World Risk Society*, Malden, MA: Polity, chapter 1, **pp. 1-18.**
- Martell, L. 2008 ‘Beck’s Cosmopolitan Politics’, *Contemporary Politics* 14(2): **129–43.**

### Week 9 Health Risks

March 16, 18 & 20, 2015

- Goldin and Mariathan (2014) *Butterfly Defect*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, chapter 6 ‘Pandemics and Health Risks’ pp **144-164.**
- Lupton, D. (2012) “‘Precious cargo’: foetal subjects and reproductive citizenship. *Critical Public Health* 22(3): **329-40.**
- March 16<sup>th</sup>, special writing session, on Monday. Lecture on Weds, and Presentations on Friday.

### Week 10 Environmental Risks

March 23, 25, & 27, 2015

- Curran, D. 2013a ‘Risk Society and the Distribution of Bads: Theorizing Class in the Risk Society’, *British Journal of Sociology* 64(1): **44–62.**
- Beck, U. 2013b ‘Why “Class” is too Soft a Category to Capture the Explosiveness of Social Inequality at the Beginning of the 21st Century’, *British Journal of Sociology* 64(1): **63–74.**
- Curran, D. 2013b ‘What is a Critical Theory of the Risk Society? A Reply to Beck’, *British Journal of Sociology* 64(1): **75–80.**

### **Week 11 Finance (Good Friday)**

**March 30 & April 1, 2015 [2 days]**

- Rothstein, Henry Michael Huber & George Gaskell (2006) ‘A theory of risk colonization: The spiralling regulatory logics of societal and institutional risk’, *Economy and Society* 35(1): **91-112**.
- Engelen, E., Ertürk, I., Froud, J., Johal, S., Leaver, S., Moran, M., Nilsson, A. and Williams, K. 2011 “Financial Innovation or Bricolage?” *After the Great Complacency: Financial Crisis and the Politics of Reform*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, **pp 37-65**.
- Perrow, C. (1984) *Normal Accidents: Living with High Risk Technologies*. New York, Basic, introduction **pp. 3-14**

### **Week 12 Crime Risks**

**April 6, 8, & 10, 2015 [possibly 2 days]**

- Aradau, C. and Munster, R.V. (2007) “Governing Terrorism through Risk: Taking Precautions, (un)Knowing the Future” *European Journal of International Relations* 13(1): **89-115**.
- Garland, D. (2001) “Chapter 1: A History of the Present” *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, **pp. 1-26**

### **Week 13 The Politics of Risk (no class on Friday).**

**April 13 & 15, 2015 [2 days]**

- Furedi, Frank (1997) *Culture of Fear*. London: Cassell, Chapter 1 “The Explosion of Risks” **pp.15-39**. [on D2L]