The Concept of Risk in International Relations and Security

MACIS Research Seminar, Spring Term 2015
Wed 15-17

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Seminar Description

This research seminar focuses on the rise of “risk” as a new concept in security politics and the consequences for security issues and security governance. We will discuss the key literature dealing with risk methods and risk tools in national and international politics and critically engage with texts discussing how different actors conceptualize and handle public security challenges. We will learn which theoretical concepts to apply to contemporary security issues such as terrorism, non-proliferation, cyber-security, energy security, and climate change, among others. We will consider the methodologies, concepts, and tools used to gain knowledge about these threats. We will analyze governance approaches to manage them. During the semester, students will also have time to work on their individual research designs for their seminar papers (which can serve as a basis for their master thesis). After taking this seminar, students should have acquired the necessary understanding of both theoretical concepts and how to apply them to contemporary police issue to write their Master’s thesis in this area.

Course Requirements

The quality of your experience in this course depends on your preparation and active participation. Students will be expected to read the required literature, subject it to critical examination, and discuss it in class.

Participants will also be required to compose a research paper for the course (approx. 25 pages, double spaced). These papers should investigate a question related to the course. Students will prepare a research design that outlines the research question and the relevant literature for the research paper during the semester and will present their research ideas in class. The final research papers are due on 31 August 2015 (University students: A different deadline applies)

Topics

The list of topics and the readings are TENTATIVE and subject to change until the beginning of the semester. All texts will be made available on the online platform Moodle (http://moodle.let.ethz.ch/).

1) From Threats to Risk in International Relations and Security


2) Reflexive Security and Risk

3) Insurance and Security
• Ericson, Richard and Aaron Doyle (2004), „Catastrophe risk, insurance and terrorism”, Economy and Society 33/2, pp. 135–173.

4) Beyond Copenhagen: Securitization and Risk

5) Governmentality and Risk
• Amoore, Louise and Marieke De Goede M (2005), „Governance, risk and dataveillance in the war on terror”, Crime, Law and Social Change 43/2-3, pp. 149–173

6) Risk Management and Risk Governance
• Klinke, Andreas and Ortwin Renn (2002), „A New Approach to Risk Evaluation and Management: Risk-Based, Precaution-Based and Discourse-Based Strategies”, Risk Analysis 22/6, pp. 1071–94.

7) Preparedness and Catastrophic Events
• Little, Adrian (2011), ”Political Action, Error and Failure: The Epistemological Limits of Complexity . " Political Studies 60/1, pp. 3-19

8) Resilience I

9) Resilience II

10) tbd

11) & 12) Presentations