

COURSE DETAIL

SOCIOLOGY OF RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

Country

France

Host Institution

Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Sciences Po)

Program(s)

Sciences Po Paris

UCEAP Course Level

Upper Division

UCEAP Subject Area(s)

Sociology

UCEAP Course Number

166

UCEAP Course Suffix**UCEAP Official Title**

SOCIOLOGY OF RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

UCEAP Transcript Title

RISK & UNCERTAINTY

UCEAP Quarter Units

4.50

UCEAP Semester Units

3.00

Course Description

At least since the 1980s, risk and its forms of calculation and management have been gaining ground as a relevant topic in the social sciences, which crosses different empirical approaches that include, for example, disasters and natural catastrophes, services and financial markets, to security policies and technologies. This course introduces the sociology of risk and offer a brief overview of the consolidation of this field of study and its main theoretical references, as well as exploring the issues, concepts and methodologies raised by the literature. The course is divided into three parts. First, it starts with a brief review of the two classic approaches of sociology and anthropology, namely, respectively, the theory of risk society (Beck, 1992 [1986]) and the theory of cultural risk perception (Douglas and Widalvsky, 1983). Next, it discusses some of the main contributions of governmentality studies to the development of research on risk governance technologies (Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 1991; O'Malley, 2009). While these three currents are more focused on ways of controlling and reducing dangers, threats and risks, in the third part, the course discusses studies that show the positivity of risk and uncertainty in the liberal tradition and the growing demand for “assuming” and “taking risks” in contemporary financial capitalism (Baker and Simon, 2010). Throughout the course, students are encouraged to use the concepts learned as analytical tools for building a sociological understanding of contemporary empirical facts.

Language(s) of Instruction

English

Host Institution Course Number

DSOC 25A25

Host Institution Course Title

SOCIOLOGY OF RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

Host Institution Course Details

<https://syllabus.sciencespo.fr/en/?202520/291233>

Host Institution Campus

Host Institution Faculty

Host Institution Degree
Seminar

Host Institution Department
Sociology

Course Last Reviewed
2025-2026

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