Global Risk Policy  
PPHA 41350  
Spring 2024  
Course Syllabus

Time: Wednesdays 1:30pm-4:20pm  
Room: Keller 2112  
Teaching Assistant TBD

Harris School of Public Policy  
University of Chicago  
Instructor: Michele Wucker  
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TBC

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:30 am to noon in ROOM TBD; via Zoom by appointment

Course Materials: canvas.uchicago.edu

Course Background and Goals
Global Risk Policy will give students the tools to analyze and evaluate various areas of public policy –including taxes, financial regulations, social safety nets, disaster preparedness and response, early warning systems, risk communications and education-- through a risk management lens. They will engage with questions including:

• How do public policies encourage or discourage risk-taking, whether “good” (education, entrepreneurship) or “bad” (speculation, safety violations, crime)?
• What safety nets do governments and private organizations provide in both typical and extraordinary circumstances?
• Who cleans up after those who take dangerous risks that go bad and let them go on endangering others?
• What risk trade-offs are people willing to make, and how should this be reflected in public policy?
• How might using a risk lens change the way governments design policies and how favorably (or not) citizens view those policies?

Through comparative analysis, case studies, class participation, individual and group projects, and readings from practitioners and academics, students will gain a new understanding of and ability to discuss key aspects of risk policy issues and systems.

Prerequisites: None (beyond a strong interest in the material)
How This Class Will Work
This class meets once weekly in person for a three-hour seminar. All students are expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss all the readings assigned for that week. On a rotating basis, all students will be asked once during the term to introduce the assigned readings and themes to kick off class discussion. The final two weeks will involve student group presentations and discussion

Seminar participation will include making regular, thoughtful contributions to the course via Canvas and/or in class as well as introducing class discussion of the readings in one course session during the quarter. Students are expected to submit a minimum of one Canvas post per session and are especially encouraged to raise critical questions that are worth discussion in class.

- **Attendance.** Because discussion is an important part of the learning experience, students must attend all classes over the quarter. Because, well, life happens, if you miss one class you won’t be graded down. Beyond that, however, you risk your final grade being reduced unless you have a documented medical or family emergency. Each class missed (apart from that first freebie) will reduce the final letter grade by one notch (ie A- to B+). If you miss class, you must watch the recorded lesson. If you are experiencing mild symptoms of illness, please participate via Zoom so as to not infect class participants.

- **Late Work:** All assignments are expected to be turned in on time. Late assignments will be downgraded one half-grade (A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) per day late, including weekends. Exceptions may be made only for serious medical or family problems with documentation.

- **Electronic Etiquette.** Cell phones must be put away and in silent mode or turned off during class. I encourage class participants to take notes by hand and to limit your use of a laptop during class. However, if you feel that you need to take notes on your laptop rather than by hand then you may do so on the condition that you turn off WiFi and do not use your laptop for any other reasons (such as email or social media) during class. If you are found to be doing so the privilege to use the laptop will be revoked.

- **AI/LLM policy:** In this course, we will be developing knowledge, analytical and writing skills that are important to discover and practice on your own. Generative AI has been known to “hallucinate” information and references, and much of the text it generates is at a high school level at best. In other words, you will not do yourselves any favors by relying on it for writing or analysis. Under no circumstances should any student use an AI/LLM tool to write any assignment in this course. If a student would like to propose another use, they must submit a written request with an explanation of how they will use a particular tool in their assignment; they may then use it only if the instructor grants written permission in advance. If you are unclear if something is an AI tool, please check with your instructor. Using without advance written permission from the instructor will violate the University’s academic integrity policy.
Assignments
Students are expected to:

1) Participate actively in class discussions;
2) Write a paper addressing their choice of the policy questions raised in this course – either through focus on an individual country or comparative analysis across countries;
3) Participate in a group presentation at the end of the course.

Students will write a paper related to one of the class session topics.

The paper topic should be chosen by Week 3. An outline/early draft is due in Week 5. The final paper is due in Week 8.

Students will be grouped into teams of 4 to 6 people based on individual paper topic choices and will create joint presentations to be delivered to the full class in Weeks 8 and 9.

Activities will contribute to the final grade as follows:

Paper Draft (due week 5): pass/fail
Paper (~5000 words, due week 8): 50%
Group Presentations (weeks 8 and 9): 20%
Class participation and attendance: 30%

Evaluation Criteria
Successful papers and presentations will include the following elements:

- Be clearly written, argued, and presented
- Be free of grammatical and typographical errors
- Demonstrate a strong point of view
- Show thoughtful organization and structure
- Include references
- Include original and insightful analysis
- Include appropriate visual presentation of supporting data
- Have relevance and potential for impact
- Successfully incorporates feedback on the draft

In addition, each member within the team will assess every member’s role in the group assignment (including their own) via a confidential peer review form that considers each member’s intellectual contribution, initiative, workload, and conduct.

Readings, Topics, and Schedule
What do we mean by risk policy—and why does it matter?
● Risk policy across disciplines: sociology, behavioral economics, psychology, finance, political science, anthropology, communications
● Risk policy across issue areas: financial markets, blended finance/access to credit, crisis response, insurance (health, flood, political risk, liability), workplace and unemployment, entrepreneurship and innovation, workplace, global catastrophic risk, governance, risk pricing, social safety nets.
● Risk assessment, cost-benefit analysis and “acceptable risk”
● How risk ecosystems encourage or discourage different types of risks

Assignments to be completed ahead of class:
● Read You Are What You Risk Chapters 1 and 2 pp 13-30

Week 2 (March 27): Comparative Risk Policies: Everyone for Themself or the Nanny Society?
Nations create their risk policies by drawing from cultural, legal, political, and societal norms that inform the trade-offs inherent in these policies.
● Risk perceptions, norms, and policies: variation and causes
● Risk trade-offs across policy buckets
● Risk governance: What is risk governance and what does it look like?

Assignments to be completed ahead of class:
● Pick one of the risk assessments in the bibliography below, or another one of your choice, and come prepared to discuss in class
  ● Read You Are What You Risk Chapter Seven, pp 95-116

Week 3 (April 3): Risk and Economic Development
Which policies catalyze or stifle innovation and economic growth? How are positive and negative externalities distributed or shared?
● Risk and economic development
● The role of insurance in protecting from and in encouraging risky behavior
● Innovation and risk
● Risk Values: tolerance of failure, recognition of success
● Externalities
Assignments to be completed ahead of class:

- **Submit proposed paper topics and sources: Be prepared to discuss in class**
  - Read *You Are What You Risk*, Chapter Eight

**Week 4 (April 10): Financial Risk, Pricing, and Moral Hazard**

How can governments design policies that encourage constructive risk taking, address market failures involving access to credit, and discourage moral hazard?

- Financial crisis and bailouts
- Community-based risk pooling
- Bank regulations and mark-to-market rules
- Risk pricing and resource allocation

Assignments to be completed ahead of class:

- Read Bridget M. Hutter, “Risk, Regulation, and Management, pp 202-227 in *Risk in Social Science*

**Week 5 (April 17): Risk Umbrellas and the Workplace**

What is the appropriate mix of responsibilities for building and maintaining risk umbrellas that protect societies and economies?

- Balancing employer and employee risk
- The challenge of gig work
- Education
- Insurance

Assignments to be completed ahead of class:

- **Draft of Paper Due**
  - Read *You Are What You Risk*, Chapter 11

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**Week 6 (April 24): Risk Governance: Sharers and Bearers**

How should policy makers and stakeholders balance the responsibility for protecting from risk?

- Risk policy and social norms
- Positive and negative externalities
- Privatization or socialization of risk rewards and burdens?
- Emerging governance norms

**Assignments:**

- Read David Hume Institute, “The Great Risk Transfer: Campaign Recommendations Institute and Faculty of Actuaries,” April 2021. [paper] [video] Summary: Susan Murray, “The Great Risk Transfer: How government has heaped risk onto individuals in one of the biggest changes to modern society.” *The Scotsman*, May 17, 2021

**Week 7 (May 1): Global Catastrophic Risk**

What are the best mechanisms for nations, organizations, and citizens to cooperate with their global peers in addressing global catastrophic risks that transcend borders?

- Global and local risk governance
- Case study: Climate crisis
- Global risk pooling

**Assignments to be completed ahead of class:**

Week 8 (May 8): Risk Staging and Communications
How do communications by and among governments, organizations (including media), and citizens shape the way we perceive and respond to various risks?

- The role of risk messaging
- Risk perceptions in risk policy
- Risk literacy around the world

Assignments to be completed ahead of class:

- **Class Presentations: Come prepared to ask questions of classmates and discuss presentations**
- **Final paper due**

Week 9 (May 15): Class Presentations and Discussion

- Final presentations and Wrap-up Discussion/Takeaways

Assignments to be completed ahead of class:

- **Remaining Class Presentations: Come prepared to ask questions of classmates and discuss presentations**
- **Think about key takeaways from the semester and come prepared to share them with the class**

**Core/Required Reading:**


**Related/Recommended Reading and Resources**
The following websites and books are optional but may be helpful as resources for papers, group projects, or further exploration.

**Risk Assessments**
Director of National Intelligence, Annual Threat Assessment

Global Risks Report, World Economic Forum (annual)


Ipsos Perils of Perception Index [ https://www.ipsos.com/en/perils]
Lloyd’s Register Foundation World Risk Poll
[latest: https://wrp.lrfoundation.org.uk/]


Our World in Data, COVID Public Policy Health Responses and Stringency Index
US Government Accountability Office High Risk Report (biannual)
[latest: https://www.gao.gov/high-risk-list]

World Values Survey [https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp]

About top-risks lists (with links to additional risk lists):

Reports


Journal Articles


Books
Banerjee, Abhijit and Esther Duflo. *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the way to Fight Global Poverty.*


Additional Information and Policies
Grading policies and procedures

Grading Rubric:
A: 93% and above:
A-minus: 90-92.9
B-plus: 87-89.9%
B: 83-86.9%
B-minus: 80-82.9%
C-plus: 77-79.9%
C: 73-76.9%
C-minus: 70-72.9%
D-plus: 67-69.9%
D: 63-66.9%
D- 60-62.9
F: 59.9% and below

• Disability Accommodation: Please let the instructor know if you have any disabilities that need accommodation, per university ADA policy: “Any student who believes they may need assistance should inform the Office of Student Disability Services by the end of the first week of class. Once you have received an accommodation letter, it should be presented to the course instructor immediately.”

• University of Chicago Student Resources. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, counseling services are available. Student Counseling Service (SCS) urges you to attend to your mental wellbeing and to reach out to them for support. All SCS services are covered by the Student Life Fee, and there is no additional cost for students to access their services. See https://wellness.uchicago.edu/mental-health/student-counseling-service-spring-quarter-faq/. Students seeking new services/resources can call 773.702.9800 during business hours (Monday–Friday 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.) and ask to speak with a clinician. Students needing urgent mental health care can speak with clinicians over the phone 24/7 by calling the SCS at 773.702.3625.

General Resources Available to Students
• Harris Academic Support Programs and Handbook
• Student Wellness
• University Learning Resources

Harris School and University of Chicago Policies
• Harris School Policies
• University General Policies
• University Academic Polices
• Policies on audio and video recordings and deletion.
**Academic Integrity**

All University of Chicago students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Among other things, this means that students shall not represent another’s work as their own, use un-allowed materials during exams, or otherwise gain unfair academic advantage.

The University’s policies regarding academic integrity and dishonesty are described [here](#). It is worth explicitly stating the University’s approach here: “It is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another’s statements or ideas as one's own work. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously.”

The Harris School’s policies are available in the Harris Student Handbook Canvas site.
- The Academic Honesty and Plagiarism section expresses the main principles.
- Detailed guidelines for more specialized student work (e.g., problem sets including computer code) are offered in the section titled Harris Integrity Policy for Problem Sets Involving Code.
- Harris’s specific procedures for handling suspected violations of these policies are available in the section Harris Procedures for Allegations of Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Dishonesty and are also re-produced as an Appendix to this document.
- All students suspected of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Harris Dean of Students for investigation and adjudication. The disciplinary process can result in sanctions up to and including suspension or expulsion from the University.
- Other penalties for violations could be imposed instead, alone or in combination. For example: Students will receive a grade of 0 on the exam or problem set in question as well as the next lowest problem set grade. This will often result in the student earning a failing grade in the course.
- The student will receive a grade of 0 on the exam or problem set in question and cannot earn higher than a B- in the course, regardless of their performance on other assignments and exams.
- At the instructors’ discretion, the student may receive a failing grade for the course regardless of their performance on elements of the course.
- Students found in violation of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade in the course. • The student will receive a grade of 0 on the assignment or exam in question (subject to the discretion of the instructor).
- The student may be asked to re-do the assignment or retake the exam (without credit) to ensure that the student has learned how to properly cite sources or demonstrate that he or she has command of material covered.

The University’s policies regarding students with disabilities are available [here](#). Students who have disability accommodations awarded by the University Student Disability Services Office should inform the Harris Dean of Students Office by the end of the first week of class. The Harris Dean of Students Office will work with the student and instructor to coordinate the students’ accommodations implementation. Harris students are not required to submit their accommodations letter to the instructor. Students from other divisions in the University must submit their accommodations letter to either the instructor or the Harris Dean of Students Office. Students who do not yet have formal accommodations in place but who feel they need...
accommodations on a temporary or ongoing basis should contact the Harris Dean of Students Office or Student Disability Services.

It is also worth noting that teaching in a remote environment may generate other questions and issues related to providing accommodations to students with disabilities. Some suggestions are available here.

**Diversity and Inclusion**
The Harris School welcomes, values, and respects students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and we believe that rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem solving requires the expression and understanding of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and traditions. The University and the Harris School have developed distinct but overlapping principles and guidelines to ensure that we remain a place where difficult issues are discussed with kindness and respect for all.

The University’s policies are available [here](#). Specifically, the University identifies the freedom of expression as being “vital to our shared goal of the pursuit of knowledge, as is the right of all members of the community to explore new ideas and learn from one another.

- To preserve an environment of spirited and open debate, we should all have the opportunity to contribute to intellectual exchanges and participate fully in the life of the University.”
- The Harris School’s commitments to lively, principled, and respectful engagement are available here: “Consistent with the University of Chicago’s commitment to open discourse and free expression, Harris encourages members of the leadership, faculty, student body, and administrative staff to respect and engage with others of differing backgrounds or perspectives, even when the ideas or insights shared may be viewed as unpopular or controversial.” We foster thought-provoking discourse by encouraging community members not only to speak freely about all issues but also to listen carefully and respectfully to the views of others.

**Appendix: Full Harris Academic Integrity Procedures**
Harris Procedures for Allegations of Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Dishonesty

*First Violation*  If a student is accused by an instructor or teaching assistant of plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty, the student will be summoned to meet with the Dean of Students and the instructor. In the meeting, the student and instructor both present information about the situation. If it is determined by the instructor and the Dean of Students that the student has, in fact, plagiarized or cheated, the following sanctions will be imposed for the first violation:

- The student will generally receive a grade of 0 on the assignment or exam in question. Please note that grading decisions are fully at the discretion of the instructor, who may decide to impose harsher grade penalties.
- The student may be asked to re-do the assignment or re-take the exam (without credit) to ensure that the student has learned how to properly cite sources or demonstrate that he or she has command of material covered.
- A formal letter of finding is sent to the student stating that the student has been found in violation of the code of academic honesty and what the sanctions were. The letter, along with any evidence presented, is archived in Harris Student Affairs records until the student graduates if the student has no other violations.
• Students found in violation of the academic honesty policy are not permitted to withdraw from the course to avoid grade penalties from the instructor.
• In cases where plagiarism or academic dishonesty is egregious, the case may be referred to the Area Disciplinary Committee even on a first offense. The Dean makes all decisions about which cases will go before the Area Disciplinary Committee.

Second Violation. If a student who has already been found in violation academic dishonesty is again accused of academic dishonesty, the case will be sent to the Harris Area Disciplinary Committee. Details about the Area Disciplinary Committee procedures can be found in the University Student Manual. Information about the first violation, including the formal letter of finding any evidence, will be presented to the Area Disciplinary Committee, along with evidence of the current allegation. If the student is found in violation of academic honesty a second time, the Area Disciplinary Committee can assign sanctions including transcript notes, disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion from the University.

Academic Dishonesty Appeals. If a student has been found in violation of academic honesty and does not believe that either the finding or the sanction is fair or correct, the student has the right to appeal the finding by requesting a hearing from the Area Disciplinary Committee. More information about the Area Disciplinary Committee is available here.