

Call for Participants:

TU Dresden Summer School 2016: “Risk Communication and Narratives of Risk”

The perception of risks has increased strikingly in recent years. Not least, that holds true for the assessment of environmental risks, food and nourishment risks, financial risks, and safety risks. Increasingly, these risks have been condensing into threatening scenarios in a confusing world full of uncertainties. It is also common in this world for risks to be perceived decreasingly as chances, but rather as threats.

On one hand, the consolidation of risk perception leads to an intensified demand for academic expertise. On the other hand, the reliability of such expertise is increasingly being called into question, because, in a world perceived as dangerous, mistrusting all types of expert statements becomes ubiquitous. Experts are regarded as a privileged elite and frequently met with suspicion. The media revolution in the last few years strengthened this impression to an even greater degree, with its explosive growth of information and communication, in which an expert’s knowledge and a newcomer’s opinion are hardly differentiable.

As a result, risk communication has become a central challenge and even a fundamental problem in the world of science. Furthermore, risk communication strengthens risk perception. The more often risks are discussed, the more real and threatening they appear. If nothing else, this phenomenon is connected to the fact that transformations of the semantics of risk and risk narratives play a considerable role in the communication of risks. If risk appears semantically as simply danger and no longer as chance, that narrows the perception of risk considerably. With that being said, however, it is in no way clear whether actual or previously unfelt risks are captured by such risk perceptions. Risk narratives, which include narratives of catastrophe as well as those of salvation, represent risks commonly in the vein of end-times scenarios, conspiracy stories, or heroic rescues.

That is why the questions “How can expert knowledge and risk communication be better negotiated?” and “How does one analyze and communicatively consider the semantics of risk and risk narratives?” are central to the Summer School “Risk Communication and Risk Narratives”.

For that purpose, the TU Dresden, as the site for risk research in various subject areas, is also calling for an intensive exchange by means of field-specific perspectives and methods used in grappling with the topic of risk. The specific problems of risk communication are particularly suited for academic cooperation across the boundaries of the so-called “two cultures” of *the sciences* and *the humanities*.

Participating Disciplines: Literary Studies, Media and Film Studies, Environmental Sciences, Food Chemistry, Business and Economics, Political Science, Linguistics

Time and Location: The TU Dresden Summer School “Risk Communication and Risk Narratives” will take place from October 3–7, 2016 at the TU Dresden and the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden.

Participants: The invitation is aimed toward up-and-coming academics (primarily doctoral candidates and post-docs) from all participating disciplines. PhD candidates and post-docs of journalism and communication studies may apply as well. A mixture of applications from the fields of *the sciences* and *the humanities* will be considered in the selection. In addition to a short personal statement and Curriculum Vitae (in tabular form), it is integral for applications to include an outline of your own research project, a project idea, and/or a proposed question, which you would like to discuss as part of the Summer School.

The Summer School will be held in English. Travel costs can be reimbursed according to the guidelines of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) up until a fixed maximum. Accommodation will be financed in full by the organizers.

Application submissions (until May 31th, 2016) and any questions should be addressed to:
projekt_risiko@mailbox.tu-dresden.de