

**Due date:** Week 12, Monday 15 April 2024 (day end)

**Grade value:** 20%

**Length of answers to Part 1:** As required. The answers are generally short.

**Length of the answer to Part 2:** 450-500 words (regular font, double spaced) not including references.

**Submission details:** Via Léa (Assignments and Dropbox) using the Submission Form. Word or PDF document only. Make sure to keep and save a backup copy of your submission.

**Late submission penalty:** 1 point per day deducted off the earned grade.

#### **Guidelines and advisories:**

\* Any course readings or other sources used in Part 1 or 2 must be suitably, accurately and correctly referenced.

\* For Part 1, it is not necessary to reference Reading 6 (Beck's *Risk Society*). All that is required is to provide the relevant page number when referring to parts of the text *not* referenced in the question.

\* Write and submit answers on the SUBMISSION FORM.

\* References are required (i.e. not optional) wherever there is a Reference box.

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**\*\*\*All submitted work must be each student's own individual and independent work.\*\*\***

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This assignment is comprised of TWO parts. You must complete both parts.

Point distribution per section	
Part 1 (questions 1.1 to 1.4 on Rd 6)	10 points
Part 2 (short essay using Rds 6 & 7)	10 points

#### **PART 1 Questions on Reading 6 (10 points)**

Please answer ALL of the questions

Point distribution for Part 1		
Questions	Points	Q-A ratio
1.1	1 point	3/3: 1.1.1-1.1.3
1.2	2.5 points	3/3: 1.2.1-1.2.3
1.3	3.5 points	1/1: 1.3.1
1.4	3 points	1/1: 1.4.1

#### **1.1 On *Risk Society* by Ulrich Beck**

Answer all of the questions (1 point)

##### **1.1.1 In which year was the first, German edition of *Risk Society* (*Risikogesellschaft*) published and in which year was the first English translation published?**

The answers can be found at any of the three following sites. Just click on the hyperlink.

Encyclopedia.com, "Risk Society"

Sage Publishing, *Risk Society*, Preview:

goodreads, "Risk Society: Editions"

1.1.1 Answer	
Edition	Year of Publication
First German edition of <i>Risikogesellschaft</i>	
First English translation of <i>Risk Society</i>	
Reference(s)	

**1.1.2 What is the subtitle of the book *Risk Society* and what does the subtitle tell us about Beck’s “risk society” argument?**

To answer, do the following:

- State the subtitle. The subtitle is part of the overall title of the work, but is like a supplementary or explanatory part of the title which follows the main title.
- State what the subtitle means. The subtitle is telling us something about what a type of society called “risk society” means for the time period (the era) we call “modernity”. State, briefly (in a couple of sentences) what it is telling us or appears to be telling us.

1.1.2 Answer	
i. Subtitle of <i>Risk Society</i> :	
ii. The subtitle’s meaning:	

**1.1.3 What does Sheila Jasanoff (Reading 4) say was the significance and influence of the book *Risk Society*?**

In **Reading 4**, “Risk and Responsibility” by Sheila Jasanoff, mention is made of the significance the book “Risk Society” as it was presented by Ulrich Beck. (pp. 34-35). State what Jasanoff says about the effect of the book *Risk Society*? (p. 35, top para.)

Quote the relevant sentence and then state, in your own words, what it means.

1.1.3 Answer
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**1.2 On “advanced modernity” (or “late modernity”) as a “risk society” (2.5 points)**

**In the opening sentence of *Risk Society*, Ulrich Beck states:**

**“In advanced modernity the social production of *wealth* is systematically accompanied by the social production of *risks*.” (p. 19, italics in the original)**

**1.2.1 To what period of time, approximately, is Beck referring when he uses the term “advanced modernity” in the opening sentence of *Risk Society*?**

Note, “advanced modernity” is alternatively referred to as “post-modernity” or “late modernity”. Since the first week of the course, we have discussed and reviewed the differences and particularities of the three periods of

human history organized around the advent of modernity: the “pre-modern”, the “modern” and the “post-modern” (aka “late modern” or “advanced modern”) periods. Just state, approximately, in decades or in a span of years, to which period of time “advanced modernity” (aka “post-modernity”) refers.

Please provide a reference for the answer. You may reference course notes or Reading 1 (e.g. p. 17). Or, you can reference some other source like an encyclopedia or a dictionary. Make sure it is a reliable source and make sure to provide the reference in full and not just a url. Depending on the source used, a proper reference will include the following: author; article title; name of publication; date of publication.

1.2.1 Answer
Reference (required)

**1.2.2. What does Beck mean by “systematically accompanied” in the opening sentence of *Risk Society*? What does it mean to say that something accompanies something else “systematically” or in a “systematic” way?**

In the opening sentence of *Risk Society* quoted above, Beck says that risks “systematically” accompany wealth. State what this means. State what the idea of one thing accompanying something else systematically means. For instance, one could say that uplifting feelings “systematically accompany” the eating of maple walnut ice cream. You must state what the meaning of such a statement is.

Answer by stating first what “systematically” means by looking up the word “systematic” in a dictionary. Make sure to provide the relevant definition—the definition that applies to the usage in this case. Then, state what “systematically accompanying” means. You must provide the dictionary reference in full and in accordance with referencing requirements.

1.2.2 Answer
“systematic” (adj.), definition:
Reference
“systematically accompanied”, explanation or meaning:

**1.2.3 What is Beck saying is particular or significant about the period of “advanced modernity” as compared to the period that precedes it, namely “modernity”?**

That is, what is Beck saying has occurred in advanced modernity that makes it different from the previous stage or phase of modernity?

To answer this question, fill in the blank spaces and the missing information in the following table. The table compares the period of “advanced modernity” with the preceding period of modernity according to several

parameters of comparison. **The information on “Modernity” is provided** and the information on “Advanced Modernity” must be entered in the appropriate cell. The page references indicate where the answers may found.

1.2.3 Answer		
<b>Analysis table: Beck on the particularities of “advanced modernity”</b>		
<b>Period of Modernity</b>  <b>Parameter of comparison</b>	<b>Modernity (classical industrial society or class society)</b>	<b>Advanced Modernity (risk society)</b>
<b>1 Key outcome of social production</b> (p. 19, 1 <sup>st</sup> para.)	<i>Wealth</i>	Wealth and _____
<b>2. The character of problems and conflicts in society</b> (p. 19, 1 <sup>st</sup> para.)	<i>The distribution of scarce resources. Problems and conflicts occur in relation to the distribution of scarce resources.</i>	Problems and conflicts arise from _____
<b>3. The distributional logic (the system or procedure behind the distribution of goods and resources)</b> (p. 19, 2 <sup>nd</sup> para.)	<i>Logic of wealth distribution</i>	Logic of _____
<b>4. Type of “good” or resources being distributed</b> (p. 26, bottom para.)	<i>Consumer goods, incomes, educational opportunities, property etc.</i>	
<b>5. Distributional controversy (the issue or problem of distributing the “good” or resource; what is at issue in the distribution of the “good”)</b> (p. 26, bottom para.)	<i>Acquisition: acquiring desirable goods (e.g. income, education) in scarcity; acquiring goods that are in limited or in scarce supply. The controversy has to do with who can acquire or get the desired and desirable goods and who cannot.</i>	A negative logic consisting of four types of relation to goods (i.e. risks) List the four (one is provided):  1.  2.  3.  4. <i>reinterpretation (answer provided)</i>
<b>6. The <u>effects</u> of the modernization process (what resulted from the modernization process)</b> (p. 19, 2 <sup>nd</sup> full para., last sentence)	<i>Effects of modernization on the size of productive forces (i.e. workers in industrial production): Productive forces grew exponentially meaning that the number of individuals engaged in industrial production (manufacturing) increased significantly</i>	Effects of modernization on the scale of risk, harm and hazard:

### 1.3 The risks of “risk society” (3.5 points)

#### 1.3.1 What is different about the risks of “risk society”?

Beck says that the risks of “risk society” have a “new quality” as compared to risks of earlier periods of modernity, like the risks of the second industrialization (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Let’s understand what this “new quality” is. The table below will help you to understand what is different about the risks of the “risk society” (or of “advanced modernity”) as compared to risks of previous periods. Write the answers in the blank spaces below the questions (in the orange rows). In some cases, questions are written in two versions for clarity. One answer is provided.

**All of the answers come from the paragraph that begins on page 21 and continues on page 22.**

Grading	
9 correct	3.5 points
7-8 correct	3 points
6-7 correct	2.5 points
5-6	2 points
1-5 correct	.25 each

1.3.1 Answer
<b>Analysis Table: the “new quality” of post-modern or late-modern risks: dimensions and characteristics</b>
<b>Question: 1. Old risks or the risks of the “old modernity”:</b> What <b>three</b> risks does Beck identify as the risks of “old modernity”? One is associated with the “immiseration” of large segments of the population during the modernization and industrialization processes of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century, the other two are associated with “automation processes” (late-19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries)? (pp 21 bottom-p. 22 top)
Answer
The immiseration risk: 1.
Risks related to automation processes 2. 3.
<b>Question: 2. Categories of “new quality” risks:</b> What are the two categories of risks that are “new” in advanced modernity? What are the two categories of risks that Beck says have <u>upset</u> the public for some years and are of a “new quality”. (p. 22, top para.)
Answer
1.
2.

**Question: 3. Scope of the risks (victims):** What and who do the new risks, by their nature, endanger? What and who is exposed to or vulnerable to the dangers and afflictions of the new risks? (p. 22, top para.)

Answer:

**Question: 4. Scope of risks (duration):** What is the time span of these new risks? How long do they last? For how long do they continue to pose a threat? (p. 22, top para.)

Answer:

**Question: 5. Scope of risks (geographical spread):** What is the spatial or geographical extent of the threat posed by the new risks? How far does the harm or damage spread from the place of the event or occurrence? (p. 22, top para.)

Answer:

**Question: 6. Calculation:** What usual or normal bases of calculation fail to fit the new risks? What examples of calculation of threat and harm are inoperative or inapplicable when it comes to the new risks? (p. 22, top para.)

*Answer:*

*The calculation of risk cannot follow the usual conceptual form of the accident and insurance, medical precautions and so on. The calculation of harm and consequence used in cases of accidents, in insurance or in medicine don't apply to new risks. (answer provided)*

**Question: 7. The emblematic case:** Which type of unwanted occurrence is identified as emblematic of the new risks of advanced modernity or post modernity (the risk society)? What example does Beck give of the kind of accident that is most representative or emblematic of the risks with this “new quality”? (p. 22, top para.)

Answer:

**Question: 8. Specific cases or instances of the “new” risks of late modernity:** What are specific cases of risks that are among the “new” risks of late modernity? What does Beck mean by risks “produced in the late modernity”. (p. 22, bottom para.) There are two cases given: one “above all” and one other set of risks.

Answer:

- 1.
- 2.

**Question: 9. Common characteristics of the “new” risks of late modernity:** What do the “new” risks of late modernity have in common in terms of harm, visibility and existence? (p. 22 bottom – p. 23 top)

Answer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Question: 10. Key definers of the “new” risks of late modernity:** According to Beck, which professions and institutions acquire important social and political roles in advanced modernity by virtue of being risk definers? (p. 23, top para.)

Answer:

- 1.
- 2.

#### 1.4 Risk and knowledge in “risk society” (3 points)

##### 1.4.1 What are some of the problems or challenges of knowledge and knowing regarding risks in “risk society”?

Beck addresses questions of knowledge and knowing in “risk society” and specifically *what* can be known about potential dangers and harms particular to risk society and *how* they can be known. The following questions deal with the problems and challenges of knowledge and knowing in “risk society” as Beck presents them in the opening paragraphs of the section entitled “On the Knowledge Dependence of Modernization Risks” (pp. 26-27). Please answer the seven questions. For purposes of clarity, some questions are formulated in more than one way.

All of the answers can be found in the top paragraph on page 27.

Grading	
7 correct	3 points
5-6 correct	2.5 points
1-4	.5 each

1.4.1 Answer	
Question	Answer (p. 27, top para.)
1. By what <i>means</i> can we (individuals) know about scarce consumable goods (e.g. education and income)?	
2. By what means do we (individuals) know about the existence of risks and hazards? Through what is our knowledge and understanding <i>mediated</i> or transmitted?	
3. What are the limitations of knowledge about the things that impair health and destroy nature?	
4. What is the circumstance of dependence in which we find ourselves when wanting to understand “objectively” what impairs health and destroys nature?	

5. What are the “newer risks” which “escape human powers of direct perception”?	
6. What limitation do the victims of the “newer risks” or hazards face when it comes to knowing about them? What is it about the new risks and hazards that limits what victims can know about them?	
7. What is required for us to see (perceive) and to interpret the hazards of advanced modernity or risk society?	

## PART 2: Risk, knowledge and the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster of 1986: A Short Essay (10 points)

### 2.1 Essay

#### Essay Question

Why and how is the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster of 1986 (the explosion and its aftermath) a good example (i.e. relevant, informative) of the knowledge dimensions and challenges of risk in “risk society”? Put differently, why and how is the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster a good example of the problems and challenges of knowledge and knowing in “risk society”, namely *what* is and isn’t known and what can and cannot be known - especially by lay people (i.e. non-specialists) - about the potential or probable harms and losses they face in the time and in the context of “risk society”?

#### Answer the Essay Question by using the following two sources:

1. Reading 6: Chapter 1 of *Risk Society* and, specifically, Ulrich Beck’s accounts of risk in advanced modernity (risk society) and his account of *what* can be known about the risks of advanced modernity and *how* we can know them. It will be sufficient to use the parts of the Reading referred to in Part 1 of this assignment.
2. Reading 7: The first, second and third chapters of the book *Chernobyl Prayer*, by Svetlana Alexievich in which she gives a background to the Chernobyl accident and presents the story of Lyudmila Ignatenko, the wife of a fire fighter who fought the fire at reactor 4 on the night of the explosion and later died of radiation poisoning.

***You may use other sources in the answer, but the answer must be formulated using Readings 6 and 7 as central sources.***

The essay will be an analytical consideration of one of the signal technological accidents of our time, the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster of 1986. In the essay, you will consider the incident from the standpoint of what the occurrence tells us about what can and cannot be known about late-modern risks or “risk society” risks. You must point out the ways that the Chernobyl accident was an occurrence that was symptomatic or characteristic of risk in advanced modernity or what Beck calls “risk society”. But, you must address this from the standpoint of knowledge and knowing. That is, you must the question of *what* we can and cannot known about such risks and *how* we can know about them. The chapters from *Chernobyl Prayer* will serve as evidence to support your answer. That is, you will use the events, incidents and observations presented in *Chernobyl Prayer* to illustrate the points you are making about knowledge and risk in “risk society”.

The essay should be informed and shaped by all the understanding you have acquired in the course, so far, of the human experience of risk and of the knowledge challenges and questions that accompany that experience of risk



in post-modern times (our time) and in previous times. We have been making these comparisons and examining knowledge questions as they relate to risk in the present since day one of the course and in all the work that has been done, from OEA1 to the Reading Questions to the Project comparing sources of information on risks.

As stated above, it is sufficient for the essay to draw on the parts of Reading 6 that are covered in Part 1 of the assignment. Reading 6 may be challenging text to read in places. But it comes from a highly influential work on the present era of post- or late-modernity. You may decide to use more of Beck's text to formulate your answer to the essay question. That is up to you. If used correctly, other parts will no doubt enhance the quality of the essay.

The answer, should follow the usual format for essays: introduction, body or development and conclusion.

**Introduction:**

state what you are going to be addressing in the essay; you may also summarize some of the key points you will be making.

**Body/development:**

- there should be a summary of some of the key points that Beck is making about the challenges and limits of knowing and knowledge when it comes to dealing with the potential harms and losses in "risk society";
- there must be a demonstration of how the challenges and limits of knowing and knowledge are illustrated by or exemplified in the Chernobyl incident;
- the account of the Chernobyl incident in *Chernobyl Prayer* must be used **explicitly and specifically** (with appropriate page references) to show how these knowledge limits were and are manifest in the Chernobyl disaster and its aftermath as an emblematic occurrence of the time and the context of "risk society".

**Conclusion:**

a brief wrap-up or summary of what preceded.

The following are two quotes from *Risk Society* that may be helpful in your reflections:

"Compared to these global consequences [consequences of atomic or nuclear accidents, chemical contamination, environmental destruction], the hazards of primary industrialization indeed belonged to a different age. The dangers of highly developed nuclear and chemical productive forces abolish the foundations and categories according to which we have thought and acted to this point, such as space and time, work and leisure time, factory and nation state, indeed even the borders between continents. To put it differently, in the risk society the unknown and unintended consequences come to be the dominant force in history and society." (p. 22)

"In modernization risks, then, things which are substantively-objectively, spatially and temporally disparate are drawn together causally and thus brought into a social and legal context of responsibility. As we have known at least since Hume, however, presumptions of causality escape your perception. They must always be imagined, implied to be true, believed. In this sense too, risks are *invisible*. The implied causality always remains more or less uncertain and tentative. Thus, we are dealing with a *theoretical* and hence a *scientized* consciousness, even in the everyday consciousness of risks." (p. 28, italics in the original).

2.1 Answer (450-500 words)

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References
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**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Read these questions and instructions carefully and completely. Complete this assignment to the best of your ability. There is no absolutely right or wrong answer to the essay question. However, there are answers that, to some degree, are either well crafted and thought out or are not well crafted and thought out. The essay answer must be written with attention to accuracy, precision and relevance. Each submission must be the student's own, independent and original work.

## Glossary

### Explanation of some vocabulary found in Chapter 1 of *Risk Society* (Reading 6):

**Risk positions:** Ulrich Beck uses this term to refer to a condition or situation in which people find themselves in contemporary times. It is a condition of being subject to probable harm (risk) and of being exposed to the dangers and hazards that accompany modernization and that are particular to late-modernity (e.g. chemical spills, toxins in food or consumer products, radioactive particles in the air). Beck contrasts victimization in risk positions (e.g. exposure to toxins in the air) with victimization in class positions (e.g. being laid off from work, suffering a workplace injury). He says that the proliferation of risks and the changes in the nature of risks means that our present and future are defined more by our vulnerability to late-modern hazards and dangers (risk positions) than by our socio-economic standing and circumstances (class positions).

**Risk society:** Ulrich Beck used this term to refer to the kind of society or social circumstance that emerges, in industrialized western countries in the first instance, in the period of “advanced modernity” (also known as “late modernity” or “post-modernity”). The “risk society” is the concept Beck uses to define the circumstance whereby societies and individuals are faced with actual and potential dangers, harms and losses that result from the “side effects” of modernization (the overall process that produced modern societies through such accompanying processes as industrialization, urbanization and individualization). These “side effects” of modernization have been manifest in late-modernity in the form of unprecedented types of hazards and afflictions, of which the most serious and consequential is radioactivity from nuclear plant accidents, but which also take the form of chemical contamination, air and water pollution and environmental degradation among others. Remember, Beck wrote *Risk Society* before the most serious nuclear plant accident in history, the Chernobyl accident (1986), and before there was knowledge of climate change.

**Society of scarcity or scarcity society:** Ulrich Beck uses this term to set up a contrast between societies in which the focus of conflict and struggle is scarce resources (“scarcity society”) and a society in which the focus of conflict is dealing with risks (“risk society”). A “society of scarcity” is one in which the supply and distribution of material “goods” like income, housing, educational opportunities, consumer products are not proportional to the needs of individuals. A “society of scarcity” is a society

in which social wealth is unequally distributed and disproportionately accessible. It is in abundant supply for some and in scarce supply for others. Societies of scarcity emerged with “modernization”.

**Optional additional sources:**

Jerónimo, Helena Mateus. "Risk Society." *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, edited by Carl Mitcham, vol. 3, Macmillan Reference USA, 2005, pp. 1647-1649. *Gale eBooks*

“How to Think About Science, Part 5”, *Ideas*. CBC Radio, 2010.

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/how-to-think-about-science-part-5-1.465006>

Ulrich Beck talks about the place of science in a risk society (first 32 minutes).

++END++